Huntington's Shift to the Declinist Camp: Conservative Declinism and the 'Historical Function' of the Clash of Civilizations

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Abstract

Samuel Huntington, a severe critic of decline theory and an adamant revivalist, shifted radically to the declinist camp with the end of the Cold War, his penultimate declinist vision being found in *The Clash of Civilizations*. A chronological analysis of his work (intellectual biography), though, shows continuity in his analysis of what is 'wrong' with America. His true focus is not relative, but absolute decline, or normative (moral) decline, a concern he shares with the new declinists, that is, right-wing realists who were also revivalists. For them decline is a code word for what is wrong with America, normatively, and an instrument of mobilization to return America to a state they consider ideal. The clash of civilizations thesis is part of this project. Unlike these new declinists, Huntington is a Democrat who grounds his appreciation of the new declinists' 'conservatism' in his analysis of America's 'liberal' exceptionalism, which makes it difficult for the country to adopt a realist foreign policy.

Keywords: *clash of civilizations, conservative realism, imperial overstretch, internal stagnation, liberal exceptionalism, moral decline*

In the November 2001 edition of *New Political Economy*, the issue of the 'resurgence' of American hegemony was raised by the editors, and the case for and against was argued by several authors, including myself. An important, and much overlooked, aspect of the dialogue of revival versus continued decline is the identity, composition, and motivation of decline theorists in the USA. My esteemed colleague, Michael Cox, was one of the first to bring this to light in his contribution to that volume, providing a penetrating analysis of the contents and context of the American-dominated decline debate.[1] Apparently, American decline theory is not merely the product of diligent scholars pouring over statistics while meditating over the nature of power. In the same vein, I wish to draw attention to a new, and very American, phase in the continuing development of declinist thought pioneered by one of the least likely candidates of anti-revivalism – Samuel P. Huntington.

What has puzzled many observers who have followed Huntington's career is his near Spenglarian belief in the inevitable decay and decline of western, and not merely American, power as expressed and formulated in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, published in 1996. Here and elsewhere he claims that the USA did occupy a unipolar moment with the collapse of communism, but this moment soon passed, shifting the USA into a uni-multipolar world, with a multipolar one eventually developing in the 21st century.[2] The

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West as a whole occupies a 'multi-polar world based loosely on civilizations rather than ideologies'.[3] This does not square well with the positions Huntington has taken over US power. With the collapse of communism he became one of the pioneers of a school of foreign policy thought known as 'primacy' or 'preponderance', which takes the view that the USA is not *primus inter pares* (first among equals), but *primus solus*.[4] The USA is the only remaining superpower in a unipolar world, and this state of affairs, they argue, can and should continue.

Before the end of the Cold War Huntington was known for criticizing and denouncing vehemently the 'simplifications and contradictions of the theorists of . . . "declinism"'.[5] Huntington was insistent that his country was 'less likely to decline than any other major country' in history and even speculated that the declinists were so unscientific in their methodology that they may just simply 'want to believe in decline'.[6] He has been arguing against the thesis of US decline since the 1970s, when it first began as a result of the defeat in Vietnam and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system.[7] Huntington is actually a 'revivalist', being the author of the well-known article 'The U.S. – Decline or Renewal?' in which he argued that 'renewal' was 'far closer to the American truth than the image of decadence purveyed by the declinists'.[8] But, despite all of this, with the end of the Cold War Huntington began to shift from the revivalist to the declinist camp. His initial foray into declinism began with an emphasis on the economic dimension of power and how Japan posed a serious threat to America's global economic position, specifically in his articles 'America's Changing Strategic Interests', published in the 1991 edition of *Survival*, and his article in the 1993 edition of *International Security*, 'Why International Primacy Matters'. Like most declinists, Huntington was concerned about Japan's dramatic rise to economic pre-eminence, America's trade deficit with Japan, growing Japanese penetration of the American economy and political system, and the marked contrast between the savings and investment rates of the two countries. He concluded that the USA is, and should be, 'obsessed with Japan for the same reasons that it was obsessed with the Soviet Union', seeing Japan as a 'major threat to its primacy in a crucial area of power'.[9] He even talked of an 'economic cold war' between the two countries.

In *The Clash of Civilizations*, he provides a full-fledged account and theorization of American and western decline. But his civilizational account of decline does not grow naturally out of his economic account of the Japanese challenge. In his book, his analysis of decline centres round comparisons between the West and the 'Third World' in the areas of demographics and share of world gross national product and how decolonization has robbed the West of the critical tool of imperial occupation that kept the 'Third World' under control politically, economically, and culturally. There is no logical progression from one issue and theory to the next, with very different accounts being provided. The Japanese threat disappears from his list of priorities in the clash of civilizations thesis. Although he does say that, 'apart from Japan, the West faces no economic challenge', he also says that, despite this, the West 'dominates international political and security institutions *and with* Japan international *economic* institutions'.[10] In other words,

even the economic challenge posed by Japan does not amount to much in international affairs – let alone an economic cold war – because Japan has been effectively co-opted into the western system.

Taking a step further back into Huntington's past, we see even greater and more glaring contradictions concerning the Japanese 'threat'. When discussing decline in his 1988–89 article he deals with the Japan-declinists, arguing that the Japanese economy cannot 'grow indefinitely at ten percent or more per year' and how it has already 'lost its edge in growth'. He was particularly critical of Clyde Prestowitz, an American official who saw in Japan (potentially) the next global hegemon. Huntington's response was: 'With all due respect to Clyde Prestowitz, this proposition will not hold up. Japan has neither the size, natural resources, military strength, diplomatic affiliates nor, most important, the ideological appeal' to do this.[11] But in his first post-Cold War articles, he sees Japan as a country bent on economic domination and a serious rival to America's status as a unipolar power. In fact, he cites Prestowitz in his *International Security* article to back up his argument about the reality of the Japanese threat! The reasons behind these significant, and continuous, reversals in position are the proper subject of this article, as are the insights they provide about declinism in post-Cold War America.

It could be argued, of course, that all of Huntington's writings since the fall of communism have been riddled with contradictions and a politicized usage of theory, and that it is better to ignore him and his writings altogether. The clash of civilizations thesis is a case in point, given the standard criticism levelled at the contradictory, fluid, and loose definition of 'civilization' he uses and builds his theory on.[12] I beg to differ. The significance of his shift away from revivalism develops out of the fact that it is not an isolated incident involving only his opinions, but part of a much larger intellectual shift that has occurred in America in the post-Cold War era. Huntington's shift from the revivalist to the declinist camp was a shift in position, but did not involve him joining the ranks of the declinists he had castigated in the past.[13] On the contrary, what actually happened is that the revivalists of the past in general – not just Huntington – became the new declinists, replacing the old declinists who had largely disappeared from the political scene under the impact of America's apparent revival with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic boom during the Clinton presidency.[14] Ironically, with the final triumph of America over communism, a triumph the revivalists predicted and participated in, they have become pessimists and now predict the near-inevitable retreat of US influence over the world. What has emerged with the retreat of liberal declinism under the onslaught of post-Cold War triumphalism is a conservative 'appropriation' of the declinist debate and agenda.[15]

Huntington is part of a larger group and did not develop his ideas in an intellectual and political vacuum. He belongs to a school of thought with a generalized analysis of American follies and weaknesses, a fairly cogent set of recommendations, and – most important of all – a set of ideological and theoretical credentials that unites them in their outlook and advice. To explain this unexpected and perplexing transformation, we must deal with the parallel shift in

Huntington's views and the views of this group of new declinists in tandem, while focusing predominantly on Huntington and his unique and distinctive contribution to right-wing declinism. This contribution cannot be properly gauged and understood outside of this larger context, given that it is an original contribution *to* this school of thought. As a final note on methodology, given the contradictions in Huntington's post-Cold War writings, it is best to deal with him from a chronological perspective, constantly bearing in mind how what he says now relates – in whatever fashion – to what he has said in the past, while also bearing in mind his career, political allegiances, and dominant intellectual concerns. He is best approached through the academic instrument of 'intellectual biography', a conclusion we can reach with the briefest glance at his works. As Robert Kaplan says, Huntington's first book – *The Soldier and the State*, published in 1957 – 'formed the template of an entire career'.[16] In the preface to his book, Huntington talks about the necessity of theoretical frameworks, abstraction, generalization and simplification, even though 'actual personalities, institutions, and beliefs do not fit into neat logical categories'. But, he argues, there is no real choice in the matter, given that 'neat logical categories are necessary if man is to think profitably . . . and to derive from it lessons for broader applications and use' and that is all that can be hoped for if one is to be scientific.

The ideal measure of the success of a theory is the 'degree to which it encompasses and explains facts better than any other theory'.[17] From this premise Huntingdon begins a book of 'relentless, empirical generalizations'.[18] He makes essentially the same points, and follows the same methodology, when it comes to his clash of civilizations thesis, often defending it from the charges of oversimplification on a paradigmatic basis: paradigms by their very nature simplify reality and in the process exclude important data and variables.[19] To a researcher unaware of Huntington's past, this paradigmatic defence of his thesis may seem like a desperate attempt to defend the indefensible, leaving him open to the charge of being pseudo-scientific rather than scientific. In reality, Huntington is expressing his intellectual commitments and following his academic style, which would imply that he does take the civilizational thesis very seriously and believes in much of what he says. Therefore, we can only reach valid conclusions over Huntington's post-Cold War shift to the declinist camp with reference to his intellectual biography.

The Soldier and the State represents an important source of continuity in more than just methodology. The conclusions Huntington reaches in this work and in a closely related article – 'Conservatism as an Ideology' – re-emerge in one of his more recent articles, 'Robust Nationalism'.[20] As I shall demonstrate by the end of this article, the themes Huntington explored in his first book are present, if latently, within the clash of civilizations thesis. The works of Samuel Huntington represent a rich, complex, and interweaved tapestry in which his contemporary advice grows out of his lifelong political concerns and intellectual style. As much as he modifies his views and as much as his rhetoric changes over the ages, the Huntington of today is essentially the Huntington of yesterday. Also important is

the context he was operating in when he formulated his ideas and switched positions. His shift to the declinist camp and his incorporation of decline theory into his formulation of the clash of civilizations can only be approached through this methodology, as I intend to demonstrate from this point onward.

What does Huntington mean by 'decline'?

Relative and absolute measures of 'western' decline

The first step to understanding the reasons behind Huntington's shift in position involves disentangling what he means by the word 'decline'. How he defines it, what its dimensions are, and what interests him the most will draw us to the true objectives behind his shift. In the book, he argues that the West is declining relatively because of its declining share of world GNP, production, and investment, the diffusion of weapons technology, and – most importantly, for he lists it as the first factor – demographics. In quantitative terms, the West is in decline, while 'the Rest' are catching up. This forms a lethal mixture: not only do you have more non-western people, you have more non-western people with more weapons, better education, and more money. He then goes on to discuss decline in absolute terms, comparing the West now to the West in the past, focusing mainly on what could be called 'moral decline'. He talks about unemployment, deprivation, rising crime rates, the weakening of family bonds, and what has been called 'civil wars between vested interests'.

Such absolute decline is '*Far more significant* than economics and demography' and includes 'cultural suicide . . . political disunity in the West . . . increases in antisocial behaviour . . . family decay . . . general weakening of the "work ethic"' and 'decreasing commitment to learning and intellectual activity'. Absolute decline is far more significant because what happens 'within a civilization is as crucial to its ability to resist destruction from external sources as it is to holding off decay from within'. Despite the gloomy picture Huntington paints, for him the 'overriding lesson of the history of civilizations . . . is that many things are probable but nothing is inevitable'. Civilizations 'can and have reformed and renewed themselves'. This clearly means that the 'central issue' for the West is whether it is 'capable of stopping and reversing the internal processes of decay'. This is how he ties relative decline to absolute decline – the solution for internal decline is external expansion. Civilizations 'grow . . . because they have an "instrument of expansion," a military, political, cultural and economic "organization that accumulates surplus and invests it in productive innovations"'.[21]

Civilizations only really decline when they stop applying this surplus to new ways of doing things. This comes about because of internal, moral decay, something that allows social groups to control the surplus and spend it on consumption instead of investment.[22] From this we can conclude that when he discusses the decline of the West, he is discussing the decline of a specific 'ideal' version of the

West, or to be more accurate, a specific ideal version of the USA, given that there is not a single chapter title, or subheading within a chapter, in the whole of his book that has the words 'United States' or 'America' in it. US decline is discussed under the rubric of 'The Fading of the West: Power, Culture and Indigenization' (chapter four). This is what the word 'decline' really means to Huntington. Decline is a 'code word' for his concerns over the troubling state he believes the USA to be in, and this dilemma has a predominantly moral (political/ideological) character to it. America has fallen from grace, no longer conforming to some state of affairs Huntington considers ideal. Much the same can be said for the new declinists Huntington is a member of. As Schlesinger puts it, the real problem confronting American pre-eminence is that it is 'being undermined by internal weaknesses rather different from those that have affected great powers in the past'.[23]

The real focus of these conservative declinists is on internal factors, namely, 'excess of democracy' and 'cultural rot'.[24] By excess of democracy they mean the elevation of parochial interests over strategic interests in the making of foreign policy, particularly the parochial objectives pursued by ethnic groups and business lobbies in the absence of an overarching strategic imperative.[25] As for cultural decay, this refers to concerns these theorists have over the contemporary state of American culture and the effects it has on American authority abroad. America does not really have a culture at all when compared to the rest of the world, where 'high' culture dominates the intellectual and artistic production of society. Instead, the USA only has a 'popular culture' that takes as its 'ideal human type' the 'popular entertainer or sports star', whose dominant characteristics are 'inherent talent, self-centeredness, energy, and aggressiveness'. These characteristics are 'not the distinguishing qualities of a mature person', but an 'adolescent'.[26]

As attractive as American pop culture may be around the world, the image projected of America is negative, that of a nation that does not stand for anything higher but for unfettered animal appetites – mass consumerism, sexual promiscuity, and greed. Brzezinski calls this the 'dissonant message' America is broadcasting to the world.[27] To rule effectively as a global hegemon, the USA must put forward a 'particular vision of politics, economics, culture, and ultimately of such fundamentals as human nature and the meaning of life itself' in order to legitimize this empire's dominance in the eyes of the peoples of other nations.[28] For this whole school of thought, and not merely for Huntington, decline is a code word for America's fall from grace, and the school's conservative ideology frames the contours of this fall. Returning to Huntington, the question now is as follows: what is the ideal America he believes in and how is it sustained?

American exceptionalism and the decline of Truman's America: conservatism and the 'promise of disappointment'

The specifics of Huntington's vision of America can be gleaned in considerable detail from a glance at his pre-civilizational writings, particularly those that were directly about the USA. The list includes: *The Crisis of Democracy* in 1975, a work he (co-)authored for the Trilateral Commission, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* in 1981, and *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Practice of Civil-Military Relations* in 1957.[29] *The Crisis of Democracy* was a report on the 'governability' of developed democracies, a study sanctioned in response to the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s brought on by the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. He analysed these developments 'in terms of growing disrespect for authority and a general "excess of democracy"'. His response came in the form of recommendations for a 'greater degree of moderation in democracy' and restoration of a 'democratic balance'. All of this was to be achieved through a 'rediscipliningof society around elitist and hierarchical notions of "expertise, seniority and experience"'.[30]

In this report, Huntington took the Truman presidency as his ideal, looking back 'nostalgically to the old days before the crisis' and marvelling at how Truman was 'able to "run the country with the help of a few Wall Street lawyers and financiers"'.[31] His views on the Truman administration go back to *The Soldier and the State*, where he expressed his admiration for the president's skill at filling foreign policy posts with a 'fairly close knit band of bankers and lawyers, soldiers and diplomats'. He believed that only such people could truly be 'almost completely divorced from partisan politics' and possess all of the 'inherent and real conservatism of the banking breed' needed to manage foreign policy on the basis of *realpolitik*. The liberal New Dealers Truman used in domestic policy were hostile to the balance of power approach and threatened a return to isolationism. Chomsky's analysis of Huntington's remark, which does shed light on his class allegiances, is a little too extreme and classical Marxist because Huntington was probably talking about how Truman ran 'foreign' policy, and not the affairs of the whole country, with the aid of Wall Street bankers and lawyers.

Also, there is some hostility to the business community evident in *The Soldier and the State* (I deal with this more fully in the next section). But this hostility is directed at the 'optimistic, individualistic, progressive ethos' of the 'usual American industrialist'. These were not the kind of businessmen Truman was interested in, nor the kind of businessmen Huntington helped represent in the Trilateral Commission; such business interests play an important part in his conception of the ideal America. His work for the Trilateral Commission represents a continuation of the class heritage of the Truman administration. Chomsky, therefore, is not far off the mark, given the other things Huntington has to say about this presidency. Despite Truman's commitment to continuing Roosevelt's New Deal through the Fair Deal, 'Roosevelt embodied the will of the people', whereas 'Truman escaped from it'. The Democrat interests he repre-

sented had 'little concern for the foreign policy carried out *on their behalf* by the bankers and diplomats'. The end result of Truman's approach to managing the affairs of state was 'not a Jacksonian "tribune of the people" but rather . . . a Burkeian virtual representative of the nation'.[32] According to Huntington's own characterization of himself in 'Robust Nationalism', he is a follower of a 'conservative form of liberalism' that is 'opposed to popular or democratic liberalism'.[33]

The Crisis of Democracy represents an important juncture in postwar US history in terms of class coalitions and elite activity. The early 1970s witnessed major reversals in US foreign policy tied to power struggles within the USA itself. The USA, under the leadership of Richard Nixon, entered a phase of aggressive economic nationalism culminating in the destruction of the Bretton Woods monetary system in 1973, with more dollar diplomacy following and threats of a trade war. Nixon's policies were driven partly by an attempt to reorder the structure of elite power within America, hoping to unseat those who had dragged America into the Vietnam War and debilitated its economy through excessive military expenditures, while appeasing European and Japanese protectionism. American foreign policy since the beginning of the postwar era was largely directed by the 'American establishment', that is, political, economic, and intellectual elites that centred round the East Coast. Nixon was renowned for being 'resentful of the East Coast brahmins' and wanted to remove this establishment and replace it with the vested interests and electoral coalition that centred round himself.[34] As Nixon made clear in an interview in 1972, it was during the 1960s that he first became aware that the USA 'saw a breakdown in frankly what I call the leadership class of this country'.[35] His policies of aggressive nationalism infuriated the 'traditional East Coast centres of Atlanticism' and forced them to regroup and respond by trying to fill the power vacuum left by Nixon's resignation.[36] The old establishment and its economic and electoral basis were in tatters, while the formation of a new establishment and a new configuration of power was on the horizon with Nixon out of the way.

The institute that sanctioned and published this report, the Trilateral Commission, was set up both to imitate and replace the Council on Foreign Relations, which had become mired in the ideological controversies of the Vietnam War and so incapable of maintaining elite consensus. Intellectuals such as Huntington (and his friend Zbigniew Brzezinski, who also co-authored the report) were supposed to take the place of such intellectuals as George Kennan and Dean Acheson. The 'Crisis of Democracy' project, according to one of the authors of the report, was aimed at providing a 'diagnosis of the "delegitimation of the traditional modes of social control"'.[37] New modes of social control needed to be designed and put in place to consolidate the position of this new elite in society and in politics. This project was the first step taken in this effort. The 1960s and 1970s also represented an important juncture for the USA – in Huntington's eyes – given the country's unique nature as a nation-state. Huntington explored these challenges and threats extensively in his book *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, published

in 1981. Unlike other societies, the USA 'has no meaning, no identity, no political culture or even history apart from ideals of liberty and democracy and the continuing efforts of Americans to realize those ideals'.[38]

Every society has a set of ideas and values its citizens strive toward, although they will never achieve them, given that they are ideals and human nature is imperfect. This inability to achieve these ideals is actually a healthy characteristic of any society because it generates the drive to continue attempting to fulfil these goals. This process is far more pronounced in the case of the USA because it is a 'founded society', a country with very little history and made up of a multi-ethnic, multiracial, and multi-faith community with no geographic attachment to the land. America is not a 'nation-state in the classical sense of the term'.[39] It is, in political terminology, an 'ideological-state'. All America has to unite its people are its ideals. Huntington, following the analysis of André Béteille, considers the USA to be a 'disharmonic society because its social and political inequalities "exist in a moral environment which is committed to equality"'.[40] Huntington calls the particular dialectic that is set up in America between ideals and the failure to achieve them the 'Promise of Disappointment'. The material, tangible manifestation of this inability in the real world is what he calls the 'ideals-versus-institutions gap'. This gap generates a 'tension' in American society that is its 'distinguishing cleavage', defining 'both the promise and agony of American politics'.[41] It makes the USA the 'modern disharmonic polity par excellence'.[42]

Historically, this tension came about because of the degradation of the initial state of affairs within the USA when it was founded, the ideal state, often termed 'American exceptionalism'. In common parlance, this refers to various features of US society and polity that have distinguished the USA from its European ancestry, namely, the 'relative lack of economic suffering, social conflict, political trauma . . . "standing armies . . . monarchies . . . aristocracies"'. By the 1960s and 1970s many of these distinguishing characteristics had gone, with an America developing that looked 'very like a monarchy' with 'some of the elements of aristocracy'.[43] This analysis ties into his work for the Trilateral Commission, given that the authors of the report traced many of the dysfunctions and much excess of democracy to the growing tide of 'disgust with the corruption, materialism, and the inefficiency' of American democracy, and with the 'subservience of democratic government to "monopoly capitalism"'.[44] These developments signalled what Daniel Bell has called the 'end of American exceptionalism', the main manifestations of which have been: 'the end of empire, the weakening of power, the loss of faith in the nation's future . . . deep structural crises, political and cultural, that may prove more intractable to solution than the domestic economic problems'.[45]

Although Huntington accepts the weight of these many changes, he does not see this as an end to American exceptionalism because of the natural impossibility of making the ideal real. On the contrary, he actually sees this as a good thing because it gives people the motivation to improve their society. He goes as far as saying that if that 'tension disappears, the United States of America as we have

known it will no longer exist'.[46] Huntington makes his case on this point by tying the fate of the US system to its foreign policy. Promoting liberty abroad for Huntington means using all the instruments of state power, including the military, to reorder the internal affairs of countries around the world. Therefore, promoting liberty abroad produces a 'paradoxical' situation because it means curtailing it at home, bringing about the dreaded centralization of power and the expansion of bureaucracies that Americans have feared since the days of George Washington – Eisenhower's dreaded 'military-industrial complex'.[47] For Huntington the opposite is also the case, since the 'operation of liberty at home involves the limitation of American power' abroad.[48]

This contradictory state of affairs became worse, both internally and externally, thanks to the problems the USA faced in the 1960s and 1970s (declining power, social strife, and moral decay). Huntington's advice to future generations of Americans is to continue believing in America's ideals, despite the reality of the limits of achieving them, and specifically because of the existence of these limits. He sees the centralization of power in federal hands as a good thing, to be accepted and cherished by the American people. He also has no problem with the centralization of political power (through an active foreign policy) participating in the creation of a semi-aristocratic economic and social order. In the postwar era, the closest approximation to this could be found during the Truman presidency, with Cold War containment and the Soviet 'threat' giving Truman the excuse to shape America according to Huntington's ideals.

Conservatism in Huntington's liberal schema: civil–military relations, businessmen, and the 'liberal threat'

Huntington established his conservative credentials with the publication of *The Soldier and the State*, while explicating the theoretical details of his conservative vision in 'Conservatism as an Ideology', both of which were published in 1957. The objective of this article was to find the proper 'role' for conservatism in a country such as America, where liberalism is so central to its essence and existence. For Huntington, there are three theorizations of conservatism: the aristocratic, the autonomous, and the positional. The 'aristocratic' notion sees conservatism as an ideology representing the interests of a particular group in society against the interests of all others, namely, the feudal-aristocratic-agrarian elites of Europe that were threatened by the French Revolution, the ideology of liberalism, the forces of industrialization, and the bourgeoisie. He concludes early on that this form of conservatism has no place in America simply because America has no feudal tradition. The 'autonomous' notion sees conservatism as an ideology like any other, universally valid on theoretical grounds and so applicable anywhere. He rejects this notion out of hand, saying that it goes against the very essence of conservatism, as elaborated by Edmund Burke, which is a rejection of transcendental value systems and their radical implications for social change in

favour of slow historical development – the effort to 'conserve'. Huntington adopts the 'positional' characterization, which sees conservatism as an ideology 'arising out of a distinct but recurring historical situation in which a fundamental challenge is directed at established institutions and in which the supporters of those institutions employ the conservative ideology in their defense'.

Conservatism is the 'intellectual rationale of the permanent institutional prerequisites of human existence', valuing 'being against mind . . . order against chaos'. This is more of a Hobbesian and Machiavellian construction of it than a Burkian one, but he believes that this conception fits in with the tradition established by Burke. It is that 'system of ideas employed to justify *any* established social order, *no matter* where or when it exists', against challenges to its 'nature or being, *no matter* from what quarter'.[49] From this proposition and his reading of conservatism's history, he reaches the conclusion that one can be a liberal and a conservative at the same time.[50] Given that the essence of conservatism is the rejection of radical change, it does not matter *what* is being conserved, merely that the status quo of whatever kind is being kept the same and only altered gradually over time, bearing in mind the lessons of history. This ability to combine conservatism and liberalism makes conservatism possible in the USA, all the more so since there are no aristocrats in the USA to support the aristocratic variant. He sees the role of conservatism, then, as lying in the preservation of America's 'liberal, popular, and democratic' institutions from the threat of the Soviet Union and communist ideology.

Employing conservatism in the context of the Cold War 'requires American liberals to *lay aside* their liberal ideology and to accept the values of conservatism for the *duration* of the threat'.[51] Of course, given that he is a realist thinker and having seen how he associates conservatism with realism in *The Soldier and the State*, we know that adopting conservatism and abandoning certain tenets of liberalism is of a much more permanent nature for him. As Huntington himself says in this book, liberalism was 'Magnificently varied and creative limited to domestic issues', but 'faltered when applied to foreign policy and defense'. Liberals have a positive interpretation of human nature and human progress that blinds them to the irrationality, weakness, and evil inherent in human nature that comes out in the international arena because the world is a realm where relations between nation-states are not ruled by law, unlike relations between individuals within nation-states. He also believes that realist conservatism is needed to protect the military, another key bastion of realist thought and advice, from liberalism.

At the heart of liberalism is the (presumed) 'reason and moral dignity of the individual' and the glorification of 'self-expression' and the autonomy of the individual. The military ethic, its professional ethos, is obedience and an appreciation of the irrationality and evil of human action, which leads to the constant preparation for disaster, and so a conservative mentality. Liberalism 'normally either denies the existence of power, minimizes its importance, or castigates it as inherently evil', making it 'opposed to large military forces, balance of power diplomacy, and military alliances'. The military professional in the eyes of the

liberal is 'backward, incompetent, and neglectful of the importance of economics, morale, and ideology'. The end result is a military establishment ruled by the liberal ethos. This is a military that could never be effective in war or even provide useful advice aimed at avoiding and preventing wars. He lists liberalism as the 'gravest domestic threat to American military security'.[52]

Therefore, despite the inherently 'situational' and 'positional' nature of conservatism, in the exceptionally liberal context of a country such as America, it must be embraced continuously. Moreover, as we established previously, the best guarantee of making conservatism a permanent feature of the American political psyche is to allow conservatively and internationally oriented businessmen to play a key role in steering foreign policy. Such conservative business elites also play a useful function in protecting the military from the excesses of liberalism by serving as a 'bridge between the military and the rest of society'. Huntington, then, is more of a Hamiltonian than a Burkian, given that it was also Alexander Hamilton who combined conservatism with a 'realist philosophy' that could 'reconcile the military to the rest of society'.[53] Adopting realism and conservatism helps acclimatize the liberal populace to the very illiberal ethos of the military and their restricted notion of American objectives abroad – protecting the national interest and eschewing international moral crusades.

Concerns over the status of foreign policy elites and their social, economic, and cultural grounding pervade Huntington's construction of the clash of civilizations. According to Bruce Cumings, much of Huntington's work really represents a 'plea' for renewed Atlanticism driven by a 'disillusioned lament on the passing of the Eastern establishment and its Anglo-Saxon counterparts in Europe'.[54] The cultural basis of the elites in the countries that helped tie the fates of the USA and western Europe together has gradually been falling apart. He is also worried about the 'decline in the ethnic identities of European Americans' and how this would affect the traditional Eurocentric focus of American foreign policy if these new groups could 'construct a broad national consensus to support their particular foreign policies'.[55] He deals with these problems in *The Clash of Civilizations* under the rubric of the possible 'de-Westernization' of the USA under the impact of the transformations brought about by immigration, the ideology of multiculturalism, and the economic pull of East Asian prosperity.[56] As Cumings also says, this plea for renewed Atlanticism is coming 'precisely at the same time when American trade with Asia towers over Atlantic exchange'.[57]

Huntington, then, is not just concerned with protecting the interests of conservative business elites because they are realists and opposed to isolationism, but also because they maintain America's dominant cultural composition at the elite and popular levels. From this one could conclude that, as Jacob Heilbrunn does, Huntington 'represents the last gasp of the oldest ethnic lobby in America: the "wasp" establishment' that is 'losing its prerogatives and privileges', including its near '"monopoly" on foreign policy wisdom' in the postwar era.[58] This applies by extension to the conservative declinists, given that Heilbrunn levelled this accusation at both Huntington and James Schlesinger and their complaints over the

effects of democratic excess (ethnic lobbies) on the proper conduct of superpower foreign policy. To substantiate Heilbrunn's point, we only have to look at views of a like-minded individual such as Zbigniew Brzezinski – Huntington's friend, colleague, and intellectual confidant. He is quite explicit in his advocacy of a return to establishment rule, complaining about the 'collapse of the Wasp elite' at the levels of political, economic, and cultural domination of American society.[59] At the same time, though, it is important to moderate and supplement this conclusion with reference to the honest concerns Huntington and other conservative declinists have over the way US foreign policy has been run since the triumph over communism.

Huntington describes himself as a child of the philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr, a classical realist theorist who rejected moral triumphalism and believed that history was fundamentally ironic, possibly turning victory into defeat in the long run. Niebuhr believed that even if the USA won the Cold War, the outcome could actually be detrimental to US power because the triumph could 'cause the nation to *overextend* itself' thus '*dissipating* its power in an excess of righteousness'.[60] Imperial overstretch, it seems, is a permanent characteristic of realist thought. It is not just a liberal argument opportunistically taken up by some realist declinists who are contradicting their previous positions. Even at the level of the Republican Party, there is more than partisan politics behind their adoption of imperial overstretch. For quite some time now the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which finds a ready outlet for its views in the Republican Party, has been complaining about 'operational overstretch' with US forces located in so many hotspots across the globe. A good illustration of this is what happened during the war over Kosovo. To maintain its large naval presence in the Persian Gulf during this war, which demanded many ships originally heading for the Gulf, the US navy had to divert the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* from the Pacific. As a result, the Pacific theatre was without a carrier, something 'unlikely to escape notice in Beijing or in other Asian capitals that count on a strong U.S. military presence to maintain the regional balance of power'.[61]

In the particular case of Samuel Huntington, there is much more than partisan politics involved, given that he is not a Republican, but a 'lifelong Democrat' who worked for prominent Democrats such as Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey and, of course, Jimmy Carter.[62] As conservative as he is, he is at heart a liberal and his positions essentially flow out of his ideological predispositions. As a liberal, he is even more aware than his Republican declinist colleagues of the internal dangers facing US foreign policy, given that these stem from America's liberal identity.[63] For Huntington, the realism of conservative businessmen and the military represents a halfway point between isolationism driven by liberal disgust of power politics and liberal overextension driven by moral triumphalism.[64]

Huntington is not only engaged in a battle with cultural decadence and ethnic lobbies, but is involved in a battle over the American liberal soul. His reasons behind the adoption of this realist vision of US decline go beyond the considerations listed previously: multipolarity, the notion of superpower foreign policy,

and the decline and fall of the American WASP establishment. At the heart of his formulation of decline theory and the clash of civilizations is the analysis of what he considers to be the positive and negative features of American liberal exceptionalism and how economic elites and the military bring out the best and avoid the worst of America's liberal identity, while the country's identity in its turn brings out the worst and avoids the best in businessmen and soldiers. As mentioned earlier, there is some hostility to the civilian business community in Huntington. Just as he believes that promoting certain business interests will keep US foreign policy realist and protect the military, he also believes that a realist perception of foreign threats and a strong military establishment can play a role in promoting such business interests, keeping liberalism in check by changing the political and ideological composition of the civilian business community.

In *The Soldier and the State*, Huntington argued against the image of the business community as inevitably tied up with the interests of the military-industrial complex and American military adventures abroad. On the contrary, America's business elites have always been believers in 'business pacifism', an ideology based on economic liberalism and imbued with religious moralism that makes 'most American businessmen see international trade and multilateral treaties as more important than power politics'. The Cold War, which solidified and expanded the role of the military, helped cure the civilian business community of its pacifism through anti-communist hysteria, the promotion of conservative business elites, and by militarizing the mindset of the business community via the military-industrial complex. It is the conservative military establishment and its embrace of tragic realism that allows this ideal type of businessman to come to the fore. Civil–military relations are a two-way street for Huntington, with the conservatives supporting each other in both segments of the relationship in a virtuous circle. In the contemporary context, the business community is slipping back into its old pacifist habits thanks to the end of the geopolitical/ideological conflict of the Cold War. America gravitating toward East Asia, and away from western Europe, is partly driven by business lobbies only interested in the economic opportunities in this region, completely oblivious to the strategic implications.

As Robert Kaplan says, public figures 'who now worry about the American business community's growing economic involvement with an authoritarian China' are in actuality 'revisiting an old Huntington argument'.[65] A more ominous threat, though, is posed by such business interests because of globalization. In 'Robust Nationalism', he complains about how 'economic globalization is creating a growing gap between denationalized elites and nationalist publics' across the world, but particularly in the USA. He is highly critical of the fact that patriotism has become 'passé among large sectors of American elites' and accuses these elites of posing a threat to America's 'national unity' and 'cultural integrity' equal to excessive immigration.[66] It may seem odd that he is worried about globalization given his work for the Trilateral Commission, an institution that was founded by and represented transnational interests, but we should by now have become accustomed to such apparently contradictory positions.[67] The truth is that

Huntington's attachment to the transnational interests of the Trilateral Commission and their agenda only goes so far.

According to Pierre Hassner, Huntington has long taken a very critical view of the arguments put forward by transnational theorists over how globalized multinational corporations and international markets really are.[68] Huntington is the author of a well-known article critiquing such liberal theories of transnational interdependence, 'Transnational Organizations in World Politics', published in the 1973 edition of *World Politics*. In this article, he argues that the 'so-called "multinational" corporations . . . are often very transnational in their operations, reasonably multinational in personnel, but, with a few exceptions . . . almost wholly national in control'.[69] The essence of a transnational corporation is its attempt to treat the national markets of the international economy as one, but the ownership and staffing of such corporations is still national.[70] According to Robert Kaplan's overview of Huntington's works and intellectual career, much of the clash of civilizations thesis is actually rooted in his critique of such naive views of globalization. His 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article was 'partly conceived in one' of his 'seminars, where the paradigm of a world unified by globalization was challenged in classroom discussion'.

Huntington strongly believes that 'beyond the universities, luxury hotels, and spanking new suburbs the world was being coarsened with new social and cultural tensions – feeding new political conflicts'. These conflicts are 'immensely threatening to an elite whose cosmopolitan lifestyle was insulated from the realities that Huntington was describing'.[71] The clash of civilizations is part of a wake-up call to the follies of a business pacifism that was more than just blind to the enduring reality of power politics, but blind also to the contradictions generated by globalization itself. Hence, the need for conservatism, tragic realism, and the eschewing of liberal triumphalism, with its belief that global communications and economic integration would create a world conducive to transnational business interests and the western culture that breeds them. Globalization is there to promote American interests, and not the other way round. As he reminds us in his article on transnational organizations, 'Transnationalism' – economic free market penetration – is the uniquely 'American mode of expansion'. As I.F. Stone says, *Pax Americana* is the '"internationalism" of Standard Oil, Chase Manhattan, *and* the Pentagon'.

Globalization itself is not even possible without US hegemony because it needs US protection from (civilizational) enemies thrown up by globalization, as it needed protection from communism and 'Third World' nationalism in the past. As Huntington concluded in *World Politics*, the 'pre-eminence of one nation-state in large points of the world *favors* the emergence of transnational organizations under the sponsorship and control *of that* nation-state'. He rejects the dichotomy between the rule of the nation-state and the transnational business sector, concluding that the 'existence of one not only implies but requires the existence of the other'.[72] But the realist conservatism needed to reign in the excesses of globalization, among other excesses, cannot flourish without an external threat, a conclusion he had reached as early as 1957. As he says in *The Soldier and the*

State, 'So long as the Cold War continued', American security 'would depend on the ability' of the country to 'evolve an intellectual environment more favorable to the existence of military professionalism'.[73]

In the post-Cold War world, there is nothing to prevent conservatism and its embrace of the military ethos from slipping into its truly situational character, receding into the past while liberalism reasserts itself. This brings us full circle, back to our class analysis of Huntington's views and how the clash of civilizations, and external enemies generally, impact on state–society relations. This brings us to the final chapter in our analysis of Huntington's shift to declinism, synthesizing the many sides of his historical concerns as he himself does in order to understand what he hopes to achieve, and how, via the instrument of 'civilizational' decline.

Liberal exceptionalism and conservative remedies for decline: the 'historical function' of threats

The role of foreign policy in the unique American context is at the centre of Huntington's declinist turn, forming the motivation behind his concerns over geo-economic competition with Japan, and then, civilizational conflict. The way that Huntington handles the Japanese 'challenge' is actually explained, in his own words, by his article in the 1997 edition of *Foreign Affairs*, 'The Erosion of American National Interests'. Here he says that during the 1980s the '*perceived* economic challenge from Japan ... generated public and private efforts to increase American productivity and competitiveness'. As for the civilizational threats posed by the Islamic and Confucian East, he also admits that they are not viable because the Islamic fundamentalist threat is 'too diffuse and too remote geographically', while 'China is too problematic and its potential dangers too distant in the future'. In fact, 'thanks to the extent to which democracy and market economies have been embraced throughout the world, the United States lacks any single country or threat against which it can convincingly counterpose itself'. He finishes off by saying that the 'End of History', 'if it occurs, could be the most traumatic and unsettling event for America'.

The reason, again, is that the USA, 'perhaps more than most countries, may need an opposing other' to achieve its goals. Even psychologically, the 'existence of an enemy may have positive consequences for group cohesion, morale, and achievement'.[74] Huntington's instrument for altering domestic attitudes and the structure of state–society relations is foreign policy. He hopes to use external threats, Japanese or otherwise, to overcome the problems America and the West as a whole are facing. Even in his first two post-Cold War articles, however much blame he places on the Japanese, the emphasis is on the internal determinants of success and his advice is that America and Americans should do more. Although Huntington does not believe in a Japanese threat, he does develop his own theory of the rise and fall of great powers, which is grounded in the notion of 'internal

stagnation'.[75] Overcoming internal stagnation in the face of Japan involves absorbing some of the adversary's virtues, namely, 'collectivity, consensus, authority, hierarchy, discipline' (the contrasting US virtues typically being 'individualism, competition, dissent, egalitarianism, unbridled self-interest').

The end result of these cultural differences is that Japan 'fixes on the long haul and saves and invests', while the USA 'focuses on the short term and spends and consumes'.[76] Japan's export drive is grounded in a social and economic prioritization of 'producer' interests over 'consumer' interests.[77] Even in Huntington's article on decline he agreed with the declinists that during the Reagan era far too much of the influx of money into the USA was spent on consumption. The USA was 'living in a style it cannot afford and is imbued with an "eat, drink and be merry" psychology'. The real culprit is 'consumerism'. He also agreed that some of the characteristics of American society create various weak spots that need to be tackled. Individualism, mobility, and competition 'weaken cooperation, institutional loyalty and commitment to [the] broader community'.[78] These virtues also result in a constitutional system 'ill designed to produce sustained and coordinated action to deal with serious and long-term problems', and often leads to the subordination of the national interest to 'parochial and short-term concerns'.[79] In the post-Cold War context, this becomes a much greater problem because there is no longer any enemy around with which to unite the public and political elites.

The USA must now 'create the institutional means to develop a more comprehensive approach to national security, to pull together what is foreign and domestic, and what is military and economic'.[80] The best way to pull together these various aspects of policy and create a comprehensive institutional structure is, unsurprisingly, through the presence – real or imagined – of enemies. He made this more than abundantly clear in 'The Erosion of American National Interests'. For Huntington, then, Japan functions mainly as a kind of conceptual 'mirror' used to point out the deficiencies of the USA, and provide an outline of the appropriate remedies.[81] The logic of these arguments dictate that, since the Japanese system works and the American system does not, America should 'imitate' Japan.[82]

Huntington's theory of decline dictates that the appropriate method of overcoming decline in the USA paradoxically comes through emphasizing the 'reality' of decline. This is because declinism is a 'theory that has to be believed to be invalidated'. Declinism actually plays an 'indispensable role in preventing' what is being predicted because it forces political and economic elites to do something about decline and reverse it. In contrast to the rigid economic and political institutional structures and cultures of Europe and Japan, the USA is 'distinguished by the openness of its economy, society and politics'. What has and will continue to rescue the USA from decline is its emphasis on 'competition, mobility and immigration' – the 'central sources of American strength'. These positive factors are, of course, the product of American exceptionalism, the country's uniquely liberal construction. Arguments about decline, therefore, 'serve a useful

historical function'. In consequence, there is 'every reason . . . to encourage belief in such prophecies in order to disprove them. Happily, the self-renewing genius of American politics does exactly that'.[83] This view does not just cover the nature of America's institutions, but encompasses the populace whose will and desire to protect liberalism animates American political life.

Huntington sees a cyclical quality to American history, whereby Americans respond to the excesses of authority through an assault on authority in an effort to protect their Republican liberties and reassert the American creed. The ideas–institutions gap generates 'creedal passions' in the American people, 'holding officials and institutions to impossible standards in a way no other country does'. This has meant that America has 'periodically reinvented itself through evolution rather than revolution' – hence, the promise of disappointment. But, the 'aftermath of creedal passion is cynical indifference followed by the *return* of conservatism' because such passions hold government and society to standards that cannot be met in the real world. The 'promise of disappointment', thus, has an important realist element to it. Creedal passions, paradoxically, promote conservatism and so a foreign policy of *realpolitik*. Huntington believes that the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s 'constituted a "creedal passion period," something that erupts every few generations in Anglo-Saxon culture', driven by a sort of 'Puritan' sense of disappointment with American institutions that 'were not living up' to exceptionalist ideals in the context of Vietnam. The end result, in the long run, was a conservative wave that elected Reagan and led to the reassertion – or revival – of US hegemony, the same hegemony that was lambasted when it got the country into Vietnam.

Huntington hopes to repeat this task in the post-Cold War era. As he said in an interview with Robert Kaplan, 'Power is now seen as corporate. So the next outburst of creedal passion may be against hegemonic corporate capitalism'.[84] It is unclear how he connects this to his objectives behind the clash of civilizations thesis, but it could be that he believes that the ideological feeding frenzy created by the belief in so-called civilizational threats will generate an all-encompassing renovation of internal American affairs, including the loyalties of the upper class under the impact of a nationalist public united against such threats. Moreover, given the paradoxical nature of creedal passions, we can expect this assault on corporate power to reassert corporate power in the long run as businessmen adapt and become less 'anational' and more patriotic, but still in control. The paradoxical nature of the promise of disappointment would also lead us to believe that this creedal movement – he hopes – will result in a conservative, realist, multipolar American foreign policy. Given the paradoxical nature of American power, we can also expect such a foreign policy and such a re-disciplining of business elites and the public to lead to a fairly aristocratic social order with a good amount of centralization of political power.

Lastly, given the nature of civil–military relations in a liberal country such as America, only this paradoxical nature of American power can bring back the Truman model of civil–military relations. In fact, Huntington has such faith in this

model he seems to believe that it can play an important role in reasserting WASP culture within the American establishment and across the country against the culturally corrosive influx of immigrants, alongside external threats and a re-assertion of western civilizational values. In *The Soldier and the State*, he idealizes the military academy of West Point even more than the Truman presidency, seeing it as a synthesis of 'Army, Government, College, and Church', a symbol of a multi-ethnic America united around the military ethos. As he says, 'West Point is a gray island in the midst of a *many colored* sea, a bit of Sparta in the midst of *Babylon*'.[85] Huntington also sees West Point as something even greater.

This is the kind of America he saw during the Truman presidency, and the kind of America that was taken apart in the 1960s and 1970s, with the final – only potential – deathblow coming now with the end of the Cold War. Decline is intimately tied up with the manufacturing of foreign threats because a threat can only be properly used to alter domestic structures and attitudes if these domestic factors are seen to be debilitating to American power and the country's standing in the world. Cultural decay has to be tied to the global balance of power. Threats can only become 'mirrors' exposing what is wrong on the home front and what needs to be changed if the power of the adversary stems from the absence of these debilitating factors on its own home front. This is Huntington's unique and distinctive contribution to the conservative declinist school: his hope to reformulate America on Hamiltonian lines via a combination of concerns over moral decline and the growing power of other civilizations. This explains the contradictions of his account of US decline, solving the puzzle of his declinist turn.

Notes

1 Michael Cox (2001) 'Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony', *New Political Economy* 6(3): 311–40; Michael Cox (2002) 'September 11th and U.S. Hegemony – Or Will the 21st Century Be American Too?', *International Studies Perspectives* 3(1): 53–70.

2 Samuel P. Huntington (1998) 'Global Perspectives on War and Peace or Transiting a Uni-Multipolar World', American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Bradley Lecture Series, URL (consulted August 2002): http://www.aei.org/bradley/bl051198.htm.

3 Robert D. Kaplan (2001) 'Looking the World in the Eye', *Atlantic Monthly* 288(5): 68.

4 Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross (1996–97) 'Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy', *International Security* 21(3): 5–53; Anthony McGrew (1994) 'The End of the American Century? The United States and the New World Order', in Anthony McGrew (ed.) *The United States in the Twentieth Century, Book 4: Empire,* p.241. London: Open University Press.

5 Pierre Hassner (1996–97) 'Morally Objectionable, Politically Dangerous', review of *The Clash of Civilizations* by Samuel Huntington, *The National Interest* 46: 63. According to Lawrence Kaplan, Huntington 'debunked many of the arguments that he now advances' and 'dismissed' them as mere 'wishful thinking'. See Lawrence F. Kaplan (2000) 'Fall Guys', *New Republic*, 26 June, 222(26): 22. According to Michael Cox, Huntington considered the declinists to be the 'enemy within, spreading despondency and dismay amongst the troops' and, consequently, he produced a response that 'combined vitriol and sharp insight'. See Cox, 'Whatever Happened to American Decline?', p.326 (see note 1). To add to this list of contradictions and reversals, it should be pointed out that some doubt has been shed over his association with the primacy

school, given that primacy theorists all believe in the permanence and pre-eminence of unipolarity. Hence, the 'Unipolar Moment'. They do not believe the world is or should be multipolar at all. See Tom Barry and Jim Lobe (2002) 'The Men Who Stole the Show', *Special Report #18*, pp.1–8, Foreign Policy in Focus, URL (October): www.fpif.org.

Similar doubts have been shed over the apparent membership of the primacy school by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger, confirmed multipolarists in their own right. See Jim Lobe (2003) personal communication (e-mail), 'Jim Lobe; RE: Primacy and the Men Who Stole the Show', 11 January. It seems that these three thinkers joined the primacy school because they object strongly to the positions take by the other two schools (new internationalism and neo-isolationism) for ideological and strategic reasons. See McGrew, note 4. Primacy, on the other hand, being steeped in realism and power politics concerns, is closer to their mindset and provides them with a political platform from which to influence decision-makers. Moreover, as shall become clear later, Huntington, Brzezinski, and Kissinger are all new declinists, and 'decline' is something primacy theorists steadfastly reject, as evidenced by the comments of Lawrence Kaplan, an avid supporter of primacy theory.

6 Huntington, quoted in Kaplan, note 5, p.22.

7 For an excellent account of the decline debate, and rebuttal of the decline thesis, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr (1990) *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. New York: Basic Books.

8 Samuel P. Huntington (1988–89) 'The U.S. – Decline or Renewal?', *Foreign Affairs* 67(1): 77. Huntington did more than argue against decline and for revival, he actually participated in the revival of US hegemony during the Cold War. During the Carter administration, when Huntington was coordinator for security planning, he authored 'Presidential Directive 18', a comprehensive overview of US–Soviet relations which argued that the advances made by the Soviets in the 1970s were 'temporary, and that the West would eventually move out ahead'. See Kaplan, note 3, p.80. His recommendation was a military build-up, which helped prevent the National Security Council (NSC) from taking an accommodationist stance toward Moscow. Subsequently, the NSC initiated the massive build-up of the last two years of the Carter administration and the entire Reagan presidency.

9 Samuel P. Huntington (1991) 'America's Changing Strategic Interests', *Survival* 33(1): 8.

10 Samuel P. Huntington (1993) 'The Clash of Civilizations?', *Foreign Affairs* 72(3): 39. Unless otherwise noted, all emphases in quotations are added by the author.

11 Huntington, note 8, pp.83, 92.

12 See Emad El-Din Aysha (2003) 'Samuel Huntington and the Geopolitics of American Identity: The Function of Foreign Policy in America's Domestic Clash of Civilizations', *International Studies Perspective* 4(2): 113–32. Stephen Chan (1997) 'Too Neat and Under-Thought a World Order: Huntington and Civilisations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 26(1): 137–40; Albert L. Weeks (1993) 'Do Civilizations Hold?', *Foreign Affairs* 72(4): 24–5.

13 The declinists of the past emerged out of the caldron of the 1970s with the war in Vietnam tarnishing America's reputation as a superpower and its political values, while America's growing economic problems spread out into the international arena, reeking chaos and havoc on the world economy and America's postwar international commitments. The dominant characteristic of declinism in this era was its moral disgust with US foreign policy grounded in far more than an objective critique of America's strategy, capabilities, and priorities. The declinism of this era was predominantly 'left-wing declinism', with the declinists coming from the liberal side of the political spectrum in America and with the likes of Walter Russell Mead and David Calleo offering a way of saying '"Come home, America" on scientific rather than ideological grounds'. See Kaplan, note 5, p.22. According to Michael Cox, in the 1980s, this liberal critique of US foreign policy and its domestic economic consequences took on a renewed sense of urgency under the Reagan administration and its attempt to remake America along right-wing lines, leading to a passionate liberal defence via declinism against Reagan's assault on the (liberal) America of the New Deal social compact.

14 See Emad El-Din Aysha (2001) 'The United States Boom, "Clintonomics" and the New Economy Doctrine: A Neo-Gramscian Contribution', *New Political Economy* 6(3): 341–58; John Gray (1998) *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. London: Granta Books. This is not to say that the declinists never believed in anything they said about 'imperial overstretch' and 'American exhaustion' or that left-wing declinism was a transient phenomena with no grounding in a true analysis of the military-driven fiscal contradictions of the Reagan era. David Calleo still holds the mantle of imperial overstretch high, as his articles in the *World Policy Journal* attest,

while Immanuel Wallerstein has continued to ground his views on decline in the predictions of world-system theory. See David P. Calleo (1998) 'A New Era of Overstretch? American Policy in Europe and Asia', *World Policy Journal* 15(1): 11–25; Immanuel Wallerstein (2002) 'The Eagle Has Crash Landed', *Foreign Policy*, July–August (131): 60–64. Nor does the politicized nature of their ideas mean that they are wrong. But the point is that declinism in America did serve a 'normative purpose': the objective of reigning in American power to maintain a certain way of life within America's borders.

15 The revivalists, now turned declinists, represent the opposite end of the intellectual and political spectrum. They tend to belong to the ranks of 'tough-minded foreign policy "realists," conservatives in the Kissingerian mold', according to Kaplan, note 5, p.22. They include such names as former Republican Defence Secretary James Schlesinger, former Bush (senior and junior) official Richard Haass, the realist Kenneth Waltz, conservative journalist and policy advisor Robert D. Kaplan, former CIA consultant and intellectual Cold War warrior Chalmers Johnson, conservative political scientist James Kurth, and former Carter hawks Zbigniew Brzezinski and, of course, Samuel Huntington. Their ideas have largely been taken up and propagated by conservative think tanks and the Republican Party. They have taken up from where the old declinists left off, believing that America is overextending its military and foreign commitments beyond its economic ability to afford such costs, turning 'imperial overstretch' into an 'article of faith', in the words of Kaplan, note 5, p.23. Like Huntington many castigated the liberal declinists for their recommendations on managing decline, arguing that this would lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, only to take up this position with the end of the Cold War. Moreover, given how they have propagated their ideas via the Republican Party and particularly through the platform of the George W. Bush electoral campaign, it is safe to say that like all declinists, they are consciously using decline as an 'instrument for claiming political power' because he 'who understands the causes of decline must be given the power to avert it'. See Kenneth Minogue (1997) 'The Appeal of Decline', review of *The Idea of Decline in Western History* by Arthur Herman, *The National Interest*, summer (48): 87.

16 Kaplan, note 3, p.68.

17 Samuel P. Huntington (1985) *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations,* p.vii. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

18 Kaplan, note 3, p.74.

19 Samuel P. Huntington (1993) 'If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World', *Foreign Affairs* 72(5): 186–94.

20 Samuel P. Huntington (1957) 'Conservatism as an Ideology', *American Political Science Review* 51(2); Samuel P. Huntington (1999–2000) 'Robust Nationalism', *The National Interest*, winter (58).

21 Samuel P. Huntington (1998) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* p. 303. London: Touchstone Books. The quotes included are from Carol Quigley.

22 Even the problem of demography, a relative measure, is bound up with absolute notions of decline because the decline in western birth rates has led to the need for extensive immigration. These immigrants 'reject assimilation and continue to adhere to and to propagate the values, customs, and cultures of their home states', threatening the cultural cohesiveness of western societies. But, this problem can be alleviated through reversing absolute decline. Immigration can function as a 'source of new vigor and human capital provided' that the children of the immigrants are 'assimilated into the cultures' of the West. See Huntington, note 21, pp.30, 304. All that is needed is a reinvigoration of western moral values and a reassertion of western cultural identity in order to push forward assimilation. Migrants cannot be expected to take up the cultures of their hosts if their hosts themselves do not believe in the core values of these cultures.

23 Kaplan, note 5, p.22.

24 Kaplan, note 5, p.22.

25 They argue that not only is there no longer a 'commonly accepted vision of the national interest' with the end of the Cold War, the very idea of a 'national interest in the abstract' has fallen out of favour, with talk of it inviting 'rebuke'. See James Schlesinger (1997) 'Fragmentation and Hubris: A Shaky Basis for American Leadership', *The National Interest*, autumn (49): 4, 6. This 'domesticization of foreign policy' is eating away at the proper conception of foreign policy as 'actions consciously designed to promote the interests of the United States as a collective entity'. See Samuel P. Huntington (1997) 'The Erosion of American National Interests', *Foreign Affairs* 76(5): 41–2. This has made US foreign policy very inconsistent and unpredictable, confusing allies and forcing the USA to pursue a foreign policy not becoming of a superpower. Equally important is the contribution such ethnic lobbies make to imperial overstretch, involving the USA

in location after location across the world just because the populations of countries that ask for US help have fellow ethnic lobbies representing them in the USA. For a rebuttal see John Gerard Ruggie (1996) *Winning the Peace: American and World Order in the New Era*. New York: Columbia University Press and Jacob Heilbrunn (1997) 'Huntington's Disease', *New Republic* 217(23): 4–5.

26 James Kurth (1997) 'The Adolescent Empire: America and the Imperial Idea', *The National Interest*, summer (48): 14–15.

27 See Zbigniew Brzezinski (1993) *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Robert Stewart; Zbigniew Brzezinski (1995) 'A Symposium on the National Prospect', *Commentary* 100(5): 38–9.

28 James Kurth (1996) 'America's Grand Strategy: A Pattern of History', *The National Interest*, spring (43): 6. Kurth goes as far as saying that the 'most important feature of an empire is how it seeks to order not just its own territories but an entire world, to set a standard for a way of life and for the spirit of an age'. See Kurth, note 26, p.6. The USA, as a result, has become the 'great power that opposes much of what was once thought of as Western civilization', as Kurth is quoted stating in Kaplan, note 5, p.25. As Huntington puts it, quoted in Kaplan, note 5, p.24: 'What does it tell about the West . . . when Westerners identify their civilization with fizzy liquids, faded pants, and fatty foods?' It tells us that the USA, and much of the West, suffers from 'internal processes of decay' that run 'far too deep to be reversed by mere changes of policy or presidential administration'. See Huntington, quoted in Kaplan, note 5, p.24. Such views make this right-wing variety of declinism even more driven by a 'normative purpose' than its liberal predecessor, given that it is the normative dimension that is at the heart of its whole analysis of US and western decline.

29 It is important to note here that Huntington's field of specialization is domestic politics and the nature of different regimes. Most observers think of him as a foreign policy specialist, given that *The Clash of Civilizations* is about international relations. He is not an international relations theorist to begin with, but an 'intellectual of statecraft who specializes in questions of governance, particularly the problems of hegemonic governance', according to Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996) *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*, p.240. London: Routledge. After all, his academic post is in Harvard University's Department of Government. He currently holds the prestigious post of Weatherford Professor of Government. His doctoral dissertation was actually on 'Clientalism', describing how 'federal agencies . . . get taken over by the very industries that they are supposed to regulate', as noted by Kaplan, note 3, p.6. He does have a strong relationship to the discipline of International Relations, given that Huntington is categorized as a 'realist' by international relations theorists. See Gwyn Prins (1998) 'The Four-Stroke Cycle in Security Studies', *International Affairs* 74(4): 781–808; Posen and Ross, note 4; McGrew, note 4. But, according to Vincent Ferraro, even though Huntington 'likes to style himself as a realist', which assumes that America is a normal country like any other, 'his writings all betray a fascination' with the issue of the 'universalistic projection of American values'. His link to the 'realist tradition in America . . . is . . . very weak'. He is, in effect, a distinguished scholar of 'American exceptionalism'. See Vincent Ferraro (1999) personal communication (e-mail), 'Vinnie Ferraro; Re: Huntington Bio', 22 April. His view of American exceptionalism is an issue that will soon become relevant here and throughout the rest of this article.

30 Huntington, quoted in Ó Tuathail, note 29, p.241.

31 Huntington, quoted in Noam Chomsky (1993) 'Old Wine, New Bottles: Free Trade, Global Markets and Military Adventures', *Z Magazine*, 10 February, URL (consulted 3 April 1998): http://www.worldmedia.com/archive/talks/9302-uva.html.

32 Huntington, note 17, pp.377, 380, 383.

33 Huntington, 'Robust Nationalism', p.32 (see note 20).

34 Max Holland (1991) 'Citizen McCloy', *The Wilson Quarterly* 15(4): 41.

35 Nixon, quoted in Walter LaFeber (1994) *The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750 to the Present*, Vol. 2, p.634, 2nd edn. New York: Norton.

36 Kees van der Pijl (1984) *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class*, p.256. London: Verso.

37 Michel Crozier, quoted in Armand Mattelart (1994) *Mapping World Communication: War, Progress, Culture*, trans. Susan Emanuel and James A. Cohen, p. 227. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

38 Samuel P. Huntington (1989) 'American Ideals Versus American Institutions', in G. John Ikenberry (ed.) *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays*, p.256. Boston, MA: Scott, Foresman and Company.

39 Huntington, note 25, p.35.
40 Béteille, quoted in Samuel P. Huntington (1981) *The Dilemma of American Ideals and Institutions in Foreign Policy*, p.2. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
41 Huntington, note 38, p.256.
42 Huntington, note 40, p.2.
43 William Clarke in 1881 and Henry Fairlie in 1975, quoted in Huntington, note 38, p.255.
44 Crozier, quoted in Mattelart, note 37, p.227.
45 Bell in 1975, quoted in Huntington, note 38, p.255.
46 Huntington, note 38, p.256.
47 A.J. Bacevich (1997) 'Tradition Abandoned: America's Military in the New Era', *The National Interest*, summer (48): 16–25.
48 Huntington, note 38, p.254.
49 Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', pp.455, 460 (see note 20).
50 He justifies his position with reference to Burke in particular, how he was anything but aristocratic, being a 'liberal and a Whig, the defender of the Lockean constitution' and a Smithian *Wealth of Nations* 'liberal free trader'. See Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', p.463 (see note 20).
51 Huntington, 'Conservatism as an Ideology', pp.472–3 (see note 20). In the American context, according to Huntington, it was 'Federalists like John Adams and Alexander Hamilton' who first 'expounded conservative principles to defend a liberal constitution'. See Kaplan, note 3, p.71. Hence Huntington's association with Hamiltonianism in 'Robust Nationalism' when he characterizes himself as a conservative liberal. 'Robust Nationalism' reiterates his previous analysis of conservatism, its three modes, merely updating his views to the contemporary context and emphasizing Hamiltonian liberal conservatism more.
52 Huntington, note 17, pp.90, 91, 148, 457.
53 Kaplan, note 3, pp.74, 73.
54 Bruce Cumings (1999) 'Still the American Century', *Review of International Studies*, December (25): 272.
55 Kurth, note 28, p.15.
56 See Ruggie, note 25; Tuathail, note 29.
57 Cumings, note 54, p.272.
58 Heilbrunn, note 25, p.5.
59 Brzezinski, 'A Symposium on the National Prospect', p.38 (see note 27).
60 Kaplan, note 3, p.69.
61 A.J. Bacevich (1999) 'Combat Unready', *New Republic* 220(24): 22; see also James Schlesinger (1998) 'Raise the Anchor or Lower the Ship', *National Interest*, fall (53): 3–12.
62 In his early years, he was a New Dealer, explaining that at Harvard, 'We were all liberals, and Franklin Roosevelt was God . . . I couldn't imagine that anyone thought differently'. Huntington, quoted in Kaplan, note 3, p.71.
63 The example of Niebuhr is equally illustrative of the ideological seriousness with which Huntington takes his views on overstretch and decline, given that Niebuhr was a Democrat too, but of an older breed who believed in a 'compelling combination of morality and practical realism'. Huntington, quoted in Kaplan, note 3, p.71.
64 Huntington sees such a threat possibly developing out of the war in Afghanistan. He cautions the USA to take a 'restrained approach to the world' to allow the USA to mobilize 'in case of emergency . . . more quickly' than if US forces 'were involved in too many places at once'. See Kaplan, note 3, p.82. This could result equally from too much particularism (particularistic policies of ethnic lobbies) or, in the contemporary context, from 'some grand conception of human rights or how to organize the world'. See Kaplan, note 3, p.82. By judging American foreign policy on the basis of 'universal principles' a 'pacifist strain in American liberalism' develops when it comes to defending 'hard-core national interests, and an aggressive strain when it comes to defending human rights'. See Kaplan, note 3, pp.73–4.
65 Kaplan, note 3, p.74; see also John B. Judis (1997) 'Chinatown', *New Republic* 216(10): 17–20.
66 Huntington, 'Robust Nationalism', p.40 (see note 20).
67 See Jeffrey A. Frieden (1977) 'The Trilateral Commission: Economics and Politics in the 1970s', *Monthly Review* 29(7): 1–18; Stephen Gill (1990) *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, Vol. 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

68 See Hassner, note 5.
69 Samuel P. Huntington (1973) 'Transnational Organizations in World Politics', *World Politics* 25(3): 336.
70 Huntington even rejects the transnational views of George Ball, former Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs under Kennedy and a director of Lehman Brothers investment house. Ball was one of the 'advance men' of 'economic one-worldism' who believed that businessmen are 'more influential than statesmen' and should take up the task of diplomats. See William Spencer, quoted in Huntington, note 69, p.363. Strongly disagreeing with someone like George Ball is evidence of how independent Huntington is when it comes to the transnational agenda of the Trilateral Commission, given that Ball is usually taken as the archetype of the transnational interests represented by the Trilateral Commission. See Frieden, note 67.
71 Kaplan, note 3, p.80.
72 Huntington, note 69, p.344. Stone, quoted in Huntington, note 69, pp.344–5, 362, 365.
73 Huntington, note 17, p.457.
74 Huntington, note 25, p.32.
75 He traces his views to an intellectual tradition 'going back to Plato and Aristotle which focuses on the inability of a society to renew itself'. See Huntington, note 8, p.88. The one decline theorist with which he sympathizes is Mancur Olson and his theory that it is the 'development of vested interests . . . that reduce economic efficiency and constrain economic growth'. See Olson, quoted in Huntington, note 8, p.88. Huntington follows the same line of analysis in *The Clash of Civilizations* when he refers to Carol Quigley and her views on how vested interests get in the way of the proper usage of surplus to renew a civilization internally. One can conclude, then, that the arguments developed in *The Clash of Civilizations* originate here and just represent the same logic on a grander scale, with the main difference being the rhetorical cover.
76 Huntington, note 9, p.16.
77 See Samuel P. Huntington (1993) 'Why International Primacy Matters', *International Security* 17(4): 68–83.
78 Huntington, note 8, pp.78, 93.
79 Huntington, note 8, p.93; Huntington, note 9, p.15.
80 Huntington, note 9, p.15.
81 This intellectual strategy follows on quite naturally from Huntington's new-found association with the declinist camp. Many declinists, particularly those who see Japan as the main cause of US decline, believe that Japan is the 'mirror image' of the USA: it is 'strong precisely where we are weak; its economy reverberates with the equal and opposite reactions to our American actions'. See Burstein, quoted in Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1993) 'Japan as Threat: Geo-Economic Discourses on the USA-Japan Relationship in US Civil Society, 1987–91', in Colin H. Williams (ed.) *The Political Geography of the New World Order*, p.192. London: Belhaven Press. Sebastian Mallaby, in his account of the Japan-declinist debate, entitled his article 'In Asia's Mirror: From Commodore Perry to the IMF'. See Sebastian Mallaby (1998) 'In Asia's Mirror: From Commodore Perry to the IMF', *The National Interest*, summer (52): 13–21.
82 Given the views of the right-wing declinists on the role of internal factors in perpetuating US decline, it is not surprising to find that they exhibit a 'reflexive sympathy for America's detractors abroad, whether they be Serb, Russian, or Chinese'; 'Singapore's authoritarian "Asian values," in particular, have been singled out for praise by [Robert] Kaplan, Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, and other conservative realists'. See Kaplan, note 5, p.25. One can see such praise for 'authoritarian Asian values' in Huntington's Japanese mirror. Japan historically was a feudal society, and still contains many of its feudal traits in terms of its social structure (which is closer to a caste than a class system), its weak and rather undemocratic political system, and its traditional, group-oriented, family-oriented value system. One can also see Huntington's civilizational threats in the conservative declinists' admiration of such countries as China, Russia, and Serbia.
83 Huntington, note 8, pp.89, 90, 96. This is, by extension, also the 'historical function' that *The Clash of Civilizations* serves. Civilizational threats enable a 'civilization' – such as the USA – to use its 'instrument of expansion' (foreign policy) to renew itself and overcome internal stagnation. Furthermore, since he discusses US decline under the umbrella of the West, renewal of the USA encompasses the reversal of western decline also.
84 Huntington, quoted in Kaplan, note 3, p.80.
85 Huntington, note 17, p.465.