Samuel P. Huntington


Huntington earned a bachelor’s degree from Yale University in 1946 and then served in the U.S. Army. Afterward he attended the University of Chicago, where he received a master’s degree in 1948, and Harvard University, where he earned a doctorate in 1951 and joined the faculty. In 1959 Huntington became associate director of the Institute for War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, but he returned to Harvard in 1962. At Harvard he served as chairman of the Department of Government (1967–69; 1970–71) and was director of the Center for International Affairs (1978–89) and of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies beginning in 1989. From 1996 to 2004 he served as chair of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

Although Huntington began his career as a specialist in American politics, his research and analysis branched into comparative politics, foreign policy, international relations, and modernization. His first major work, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (1957), examined the relationship between military professionalism and political power and the contradiction between American liberalism and military conservatism and helped to set the terms of debate about the proper form of civil-military relations. Perhaps his most important work is Political Order in Changing Societies (1968), in which he argued that in developing countries political decay and instability were at least as likely as the development of liberal democracy and that the “most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government.”

Huntington founded the journal Foreign Policy in 1970 and later served as president of the American Political Science Association (1986–87). He was an adviser to Vice President Hubert Humphrey during Humphrey’s unsuccessful 1968 presidential campaign, chairman of the Democratic Party’s Foreign Policy Advisory Committee in the mid-1970s, and coordinator of security planning in the National Security Council (1977–79) during the administration of President Jimmy Carter.
Emphasizing the rise of East Asia and Islam, he argued in the controversial *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) that conflict between several large world civilizations was replacing conflict between states or ideologies as the dominant cleavage in international relations. Although he cautioned against intervention in non-Western cultures in *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington was generally identified with hawkish opinions on foreign policy and had been a target of leftist student protesters during the Vietnam War.

He published major works on various subjects, including national security strategy, defense policy making, American political ideology, transnational organizations, conservatism, the governability of democracies, processes of democratization, and the comparison of U.S. and Soviet governments. His books include *The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics* (1961); *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (1981), which assessed periodic attempts to make American political institutions and behaviour conform to the traditional national creed of liberty, equality, and hostility to authority; *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (1991), which explained the process of widespread democratization of countries in the 1970s and ’80s and compared it with previous historical periods; and *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (2004), which examined sources of U.S. political culture and emerging threats to unified national identity.

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