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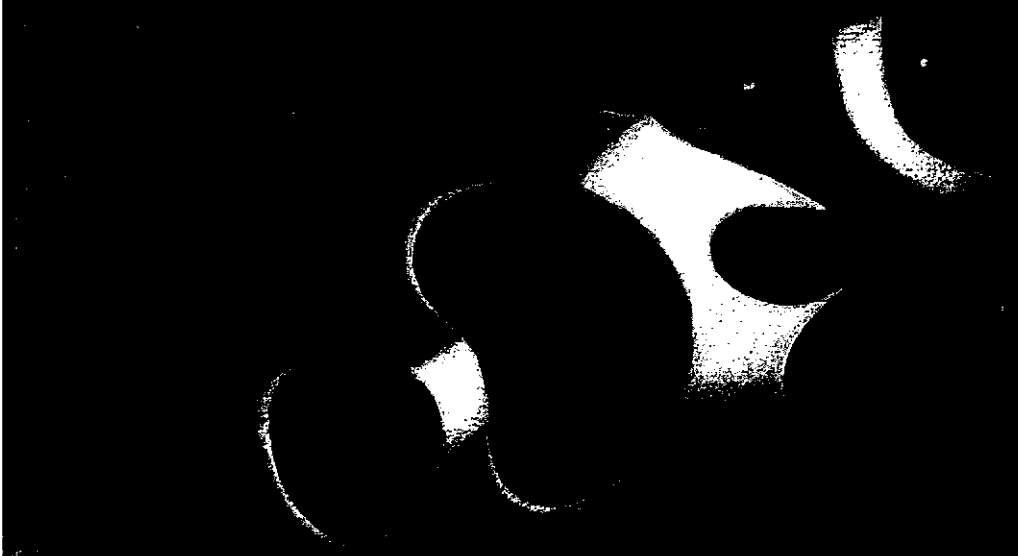

Swimming against the stream

Why globalization is making [illegible]

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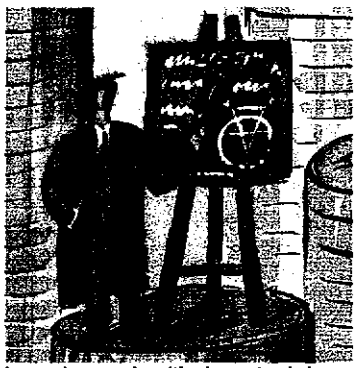

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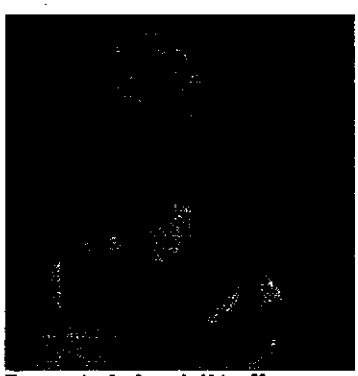

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review

Clashing over the future

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order

By Samuel Huntington
Touchstone (paperback), £8.99

Anticipating the Future: Twenty Millennia of Human Progress

By Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal
Simon and Schuster, £20

Reviewed by Rob Jenkins

"Sweeping" – a term beloved of reviewers – has been applied to both of these books. But it is a slippery word, which can connote either meaningless generalisation or the ability to discern patterns in the great tide of human events. Fortunately, it is the latter sense of the term that, in its own way, each of these two ambitious volumes embodies. While Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal undoubtedly cover a greater swathe of time – extending, rather tongue-in-cheekishly, to the year 7000 in the book's final pages – it is Sam Huntington's research which ranges farthest afield conceptually in search of evidence to buttress his claims.

And in the end it is Huntington who has the more compelling argument. It is compelling not because one is obliged to accept the author's main conclusion – that future conflicts will overwhelmingly be between states from different civilisations – but because the book's tightly argued structure compels us to examine closely each of the logical steps that leads him to it. Buzan and Segal, on the other hand, are short on hard data, or even detailed analysis of events. Their aim is to provide an accessible guide to what is important in the contemporary world and to understand how it came into being. A laudable enough goal, to be sure, but one that forces them to skim the surface of events. That they do so with considerable intelligence, and often elegance, is consistent with the reputation for thoughtful scholarship each of these authors has earned over the years.

But they remain constrained by their chosen genre, especially when it comes to doing what their title suggests – anticipating the future. Indeed, the book's most irritating feature is Buzan and Segal's effort to "try out a new method of linking the present to the future" – that is, they "start from the future, and look back at the late twentieth century as it might be seen by historians located fifty, five hundred and five thousand years in the future". This turns out to be more of a gimmick than a method. Chapter 15, an extract from a history textbook of 2050, does little more than reiterate the arguments set forth in chapters 6-13, in which Buzan and Segal diagnose the ills of late 20th century modernity. But with one crucial difference: with the benefit of anticipated hindsight, the authors are able to demonstrate that, lo and behold, the world ultimately did see the wisdom of their preferred policy prescriptions before it was too late. Early in the 21st century, for instance, "the concern over the demise of social cohesion in the developed world... also led to a series of government measures to strengthen the basic threads of the social fabric", and "by 2010 substantial elements of the business class had come around to the view that if profits were to be maintained, the 'political' needed to be put back into political economy, and the 'eco' back into economics". How convenient.

It is difficult to grasp the value of the "view from the future" device, apart from allowing Buzan and Segal to exhibit an undeserved smugness. One of those on the receiving end is none other than Huntington himself: "Quite the most curious aspect of the [millennial] miasma", according to the 21st century textbook, "was the gloom about intercivilisational conflict". Buzan and Segal (disguised as future historians) have two fundamental disagreements with Huntington. His argument "ignored the cross-cultural fusions that undermined one of its assumptions, and blithely overlooked the more potent fact that most of the civilisations were too strongly divided within themselves to operate as a combined unit in a power rivalry with others". The second point – concerning the diversity within civilisations – was a constant theme of those who criticised the original article-length version of "The Clash", which was published in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. Huntington has dealt with his detractors quite well in the book version, and Buzan and Segal have nothing new to offer on this score.

On the first point, however, they have developed a full-fledged counter-hypothesis: that the creation of a "world culture" – inspired by aspects of Western modernity, but not synonymous with it – will transform identities in ways that blur the distinctions between civilisations, thus reducing the chances of conflict. Buzan and Segal spend several pages elaborating upon this notion of "mondo culture". They are careful to represent it as a "fusion culture", lest it smack of cultural imperialism by the west. They liken it to the Hellenistic period, in which the ideas of classical Greece lived on beyond the era of Athenian political dominance. Hence their buzzword – "Westernistic culture". After much discussion of "open", "interleaving", and "multiple" identities, the creation of hybrid art forms, and the paradox of global niche marketing, their utopian vision of intercivilisational harmony reaches a crescendo of optimism: "When Chai Ling (from Shanghai in the new Chinese federation) took the Country and Western charts by storm in 2025," the history textbook of the future informs us, "it was a demonstration of the virtues of fragmented culture, global scale, and complex pluralism."

Buzan and Segal's analysis is built not just on popular culture, but on a globally accepted "liberal business culture", which "steadily shifted the focus of diplomacy from high politics to commerce", and "was in many ways the key to the transformation of western hegemony into the complex identities with which we live today". Huntington disagrees. Readers of this magazine will be either amused or offended by his term for those who populate this cosmopolitan business culture: "Davos People". Huntington's point is that this is a special sub-species, a small (admittedly influential) minority which is by no means capable of holding back the flood of resentment and reawakening that is driving people across the non-western world to reassert the worth of their own cultures. Huntington is well aware that identities are imagined as much as inherited. His argument, however, is that across the world they are being constructed in opposition to western values, rather than in some sort of fusion with them.

The Clash of Civilizations is one of the most misunderstood books of recent years. Some of this has to do with Huntington's no-nonsense style. Phrases such as "Islam has bloody borders" naturally unleash a torrent of protest. But the evidence he produces for these and other contentious statements is impressive. (So is Huntington's ability to disarm his critics by quoting such icons of the academic left as French historian Fernand Braudel. He also, by the way, approvingly cites ideas from some of Buzan's earlier writings.) More to the point, the interpretive uses to which he puts his facts are compelling, and usually based on a fair sifting of competing explanations. For instance, he is open to the possibility that the lack of a "core" (or hegemonic) state within Islamic civilisation may account for the tendency for crises along its borders to turn violent. In other words, despite his emphasis on

culture, Huntington avoids the trap of "essentialising" civilisations – that is, of reducing them to essential features which can then support any line of analysis. This is demonstrated most forcefully in his fascinating account of "torn countries" – those in which leaders must choose the civilisations with which they will align. Is Turkey Islamic or European? Both, you might answer. But the view from Turkey is that the European Union wants to exclude it not because of human rights but because of religion. Civilisation, in short, matters.

In perhaps the book's most brilliant section, Huntington dissects the wars that followed the break up of the Soviet Union, arguing that external support in these "fault line" wars led to escalation along civilisational lines. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, for instance, centred on Azerbaijan and Armenia, but also drew in Turkey and Russia in a process which Huntington calls "kin country rallying". The United States ultimately became involved because of its large Armenian diaspora, and found itself on the opposite side from its Nato ally, Turkey, which backed its Islamic brethren in Azerbaijan. Such conflicts – particularly in east Asia – are likely to increase in number, as "core states" of the world's civilisations begin to assert their autonomous spheres of influence outside of western control. Sooner or later, Huntington argues, NATO will be reconfigured to include the Catholic countries of central Europe and the Baltic states, and to exclude Muslim Turkey and Orthodox Greece. Greece's backing for Orthodox Serbia throughout the Yugoslav war is evidence that something has to give. Sooner, in his view, would be better than later.

Anticipating the Future and *The Clash of Civilizations* are both works deeply rooted in understandings of history. Buzan and Segal see history as "progressive", as moving forward and building upon itself. This, they acknowledge, is the basis of their optimism. Huntington sees history as operating in cycles – not in terms of "iron laws", and certainly not impervious to human intervention, but in the sense that ancient enmities furnish convenient sources of political identity for people whose lives are up-ended by dizzying change. His, however, is not pessimism, except when measured alongside Buzan and Segal's frankly unconvincing Pollyanna routine. Huntington sees the world beginning to reorder itself, and wants statespeople to accommodate these changes by respecting difference. Attempting to promote western values as universal truths, he argues, is dangerous. In this, he has much more in common with the post-modernists than they might like to admit. Unlike Buzan and Segal, Huntington does not rely on convenient synthetic concepts like "mondo culture" when facts get uncomfortable. Which is why the only prediction about the future worth making is that his book will remain a classic for many years to come, while theirs will not even make the bibliography of that history textbook of 2050.

Secrets and lies

Privacy on the Line: The Politics of Wiretapping and Encryption

By Whitfield Diffie and Susan Landau
MIT Press, $25.00 (£17.95)
Reviewed by Miranda Read

Just when you thought it was safe to pick up the phone... technology turns the tables. *Privacy on the Line* focuses on the problematic politics of technology's double role as codemaker – protecting telecommunications through cryptography – and codebreaker – intercepting telecommunications through cryptanalysis – in three main spheres: personal privacy, national security and commercial secrecy.

Telecommunications are intrinsically and increasingly interceptable: cables, microwave relays and optical fibres are vulnerable to attack all along their lengths. "In the digital world, we encrypt... you can't just close doors or whisper to have privacy," claim authors Whitfield Diffie and Susan Landau.

They provide an explanation of the processes rather than the technicalities of cryptography and cryptanalysis in layman's terms – but with a twist of Bond bravado. The authors draw an analogy with locks and keys: "the secret information is called the key and its function is very similar to the function of a door key in a lock: it unlocks the message so that the recipient can read it". The most famous process in communications intelligence is that of breaking codes: cryptanalysis. The authors detail the development of codebreaking (by the end of which the reader is well equipped to turn professional), taking in pioneering systems such as Clipper and the capstone chip, designed by the US government to maintain its eavesdropping capabilities. There are even diagrams for the technologically challenged.

The best thing about the book is its illustration of the complex nature of maintaining a perfectly balanced public-private world through reconciling the rights of the individual with the responsibility of the state in an era of technological progress. The authors present privacy as historically a fundamental human right. But at the same time, they tend towards a utopian ideal of autonomy, without suggesting the technological means for realising such an ideal: "Confidentiality – and the perception of confidentiality – are as necessary for the soul of mankind as bread is for the body."

National security is depicted as a contentious issue in the story of the growth of the US intelligence industry. A catalogue of the uses and abuses of "national security" as a pretext for employing wiretaps in domestic political intelligence include an ingenious example of the first British military action of World War I – the cutting of an undersea cable which forced the Germans to use radio for messages to North America and made their communications vulnerable to interception, and, of course, the Watergate saga.

There is a concise but compelling snapshot of how since the end of the Cold War, issues of national security have grown to include economic espionage. The authors claim the governments of Japan and France are notorious for eavesdropping on the communications of US businessmen.

Although the book has a strong US bias this does not detract from its interest. It has a varied tone. Gripping examples of electronic warfare appeal to the reader's imagination – especially one chilling reference to a persistent theory of the strange movements of Korean Airlines flight 007, which led to its being shot down: "its purpose was to provoke the radars of the Kamchatka Peninsula air defence system into action so that other aircraft RC-135's designated Cobra Ball – could observe them". These are complemented by anecdotal evidence of the internal wrangling between the National Security Agency and the FBI; historical accounts of wiretapping and excerpts from US Intelligence Acts.

The authors highlight regulation and technological progress as crucial issues for the future of cryptography. Regulation could risk the very survival of democracy by building government surveillance capabilities into our security equipment. And how secure will secret messages be if the powers of mathematical and computing resources for cryptanalysis outpace cryptography?

Thought provoking and requiring minimal decoding of jargon (except perhaps for a slight acronym overload), this is a well researched work and a great story. Though of course, one way to ensure privacy on the line would be to practice the Mafia's code of *omertà*. Silence is golden.■