The rise and fall of Anglo-America


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Abstract

Book synopsis: As the 2000 census resoundingly demonstrated, the Anglo-Protestant ethnic core of the United States has all but dissolved. In a country founded and settled by their ancestors, British Protestants now make up less than a fifth of the population. This demographic shift has spawned a "culture war" within white America. While liberals seek to diversify society toward a cosmopolitan endpoint, some conservatives strive to maintain an American ethno-national identity. Eric Kaufmann traces the roots of this culture war from the rise of WASP America after the Revolution to its fall in the 1960s, when social institutions finally began to reflect the nation's ethnic composition. Kaufmann begins his account shortly after independence, when white Protestants with an Anglo-Saxon myth of descent established themselves as the dominant American ethnic group. But from the late 1890s to the 1930s, liberal and cosmopolitan ideological currents within white Anglo-Saxon Protestant America mounted a powerful challenge to WASP hegemony. This struggle against ethnic dominance was mounted not by subaltern immigrant groups but by Anglo-Saxon reformers, notably Jane Addams and John Dewey. It gathered social force by the 1920s, struggling against WASP dominance and achieving institutional breakthrough in the late 1960s, when America truly began to integrate ethnic minorities into mainstream culture.

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Professor Burk's main interests lie in Anglo-American relations, something she focussed on during her time as Gresham Professor of Rhetoric. All of Professor Burk's past lectures can be accessed here. Read More. It seems to me that one ought not to look at the history of the British Empire - or of any empire, for that matter - as one of a simple rise and fall. Granted, if one looked at a series of maps, if one paid attention only to the broad trajectory, that is clearly the historical theme. However, as those of you who have attended my earlier lectures this year will already realise, the history is more of a series of waves, depending on when and where: most would see the loss of the American colonies in 1783, for example, as a decline. The rise of China to superpower status is not inevitable—its economy could stall, the Chinese empire could break up, the Communist Party could loose its grip on power. Nor is the decline and fall of the United States ineluctable. But they are possible. The Pax Americana may have spoken (some) English, but nothing guarantees that global capitalism will continue to do so.