

# Culture, Identity and Democracy in the Face of Modernization

BY FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, PH.D.

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I OUGHT TO START WITH A BIT OF GOOD NEWS, given that if you open the newspaper this morning, it doesn't look like the world is in very good shape. But it does seem to me that—if you consider the world as a whole—a great deal of mankind is undergoing a very rapid and positive process of modernization.

India and China are the two most populist countries in the world. China's economy has grown more than 10 percent in the last calendar year and India's is up around 8 percent. They're really at the top of growth statistics for the world, and this is remarkable for countries that together have about 2.2 billion people. This process of growth over the past three decades has lifted several hundred million people out of poverty.

So for a fairly important and large part of mankind, the basic pattern is a very positive one of growth and development. Incidentally, this is what my book called *The End of History and the Last Man* is about—that this process of modernization is a unified one. When I wrote it, certain consistent things were happening; for example, the empowerment of women. One realization that typically occurs in a growing modern society is that it makes no sense to exclude 50 percent of the population from the labor force, so now we're seeing more women working outside the home in places like India, China and other parts of East Asia that have modernized.

Now, the big question has to do with politics. India has been a democracy since it became an independent country, but China is an authoritarian country and has been very successful as an authoritarian modernizer. Will China's growing wealth lead to a democratization of its political system? I don't know.

Generally speaking, democracies can happen at any level of development, but they tend to stick much better and consolidate when per capita gross domestic product reaches about \$6,000. China isn't there yet; it's around



## About the Author

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\$2,000 or \$2,500 so it's got quite a way to go. But Japan, South Korea and Taiwan opened up their political systems when they hit that level; the same could happen in China simply because it's very hard to have good government over a long period of time without accountability.

That's basically what a democratic political system is all about. If the people in power are corrupt and mess up in a big way—poison a river or become embroiled in a scandal—there's a way to throw them out. China doesn't really have that kind of a system right now. So the question is: As people get more educated, as they own property, as they connect more to the outside world, will they demand to be able to participate in politics as well? As I said, I don't know the answer. China is not Taiwan and South Korea. It's a much bigger, more complex society. So we will simply have to see.

But the whole question of whether China democratizes begs a larger theoretical argument that, in a sense, I've been carrying on with Samuel Huntington, my former mentor at Harvard University and the author of several books. His two most recent are *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1998) and *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (Simon & Schuster, 2004), which I will refer to when we start talking about immigration.

Huntington is a good friend of mine, but we disagree about some very basic issues. One of the issues we disagree about is how central culture is to the development of modern institutions. I think he would say something like: Westernization and modernization are separate things and you can have modernization without having Western values. Therefore, it's possible to imagine an Islamic republic of Iran that produces cars and semiconductors and participates in a modern economy, yet is run by a group of poorly educated mullahs. I also think he would say that Western liberal democracy, the sort of system we enjoy, is not a universal aspiration or a form of society that all people eventually will evolve into because it has very definite roots in a certain kind of European Christian culture.

The nub of the question really revolves around that view. To what extent is modern democracy the result of the evolution of people living in basically Christian societies? There's a lot to this argument if you look at it historically.

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY

Many great philosophers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche have argued that modern democracy is basically a secular form of the Christian doctrine that all human beings are universally equal under God. In the Enlightenment, too, this concept was shorn of its religious content and turned into a secular doctrine of universal human rights. Therefore, other societies that do not start from that Christian starting point will not evolve similar beliefs in universal rights and all the political structures based on this structure.

*Not everybody in the world thinks of himself or herself simply as an individual. Frequently, people think of themselves as members of groups, and those group identities are much more important to them than their identities as isolated individuals. What has never been fully established in the political theory of many modern liberal democracies is the extent to which modern societies need to show deference to groups rather than individuals.*

My view is different. I disagree because I think that Huntington is undoubtedly right that the origins of modern democracy lie in European Christian culture. But I think that once the doctrine is invented and elaborated, it becomes a kind of universal property that other societies can enjoy. An analogy would be the scientific method. The scientific method was invented in Europe at a certain point in the early modern period by people such as Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes. This method of experimentation and use of empirical data surfaced in Europe at that particular time for very specific historical reasons, but afterward anyone could use it.

It doesn't matter whether you're African or Chinese or Latin American, the scientific method produces certain results, and people use it regardless of where it came from culturally. I think many institutions of modern democracy are a bit like that. Though they may have had their historical origin in European Christian culture, they

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are useful for a lot of other people who don't come from that background.

Take modern India, which has absolutely none of the structural conditions that social scientists point to as supportive of a democracy—just this question of equality. The traditional Hindu society is stratified into many different castes; there's no universal equality. Yet India has had one of the most successful and stable democracies in the world because in this extremely diverse and complex society, it keeps government accountable and responsive to the local needs of different constituencies.

That's an example of how the political system comes out of one cultural setting and is transferred to another where it works fairly well. The big issue is how important culture is to this process of modernization and, as countries modernize, will there be a continuing convergence in the kinds of institutions that exist?

### **GROUP RECOGNITION IN INDIVIDUALLY DIVERSE SOCIETIES**

Now, we get to the bad news. There are still a lot of problems in modernizing societies as they develop, including those in Western Europe and the United States. Many problems have to do with the continuing question of culture and identity. Though I believe culture is not fully determinative of whether you can have a liberal democracy, it certainly creates a lot of important challenges for democracies.

Now, with your indulgence, there's a bit of political theory involved here because there's an unresolved issue in the way we think about our politics and that, I think, is at the core of some of our contemporary problems with issues such as multiculturalism. When John Jay wrote *Federalist I*, he talked about the United States being blessed with one people, one language, one religion. And at that time the United States was, in fact, that. He was forgetting about African-Americans and Native Americans, of course, but basically the European settlers of North America were white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

Cultural diversity was a non-issue, and the original theorists of modern liberal democracy—including John Locke and Thomas Hobbes—really conceived of the problem of a free society as the freedom of individuals from the power of the state. And when we think about the U.S. Bill of Rights, we think of it as rights that protect indi-

viduals from the power of even democratic majorities in a liberal democracy.

The problem is that not everybody in the world thinks of himself or herself simply as an individual. Frequently, people think of themselves as members of groups, and those group identities are much more important to them than their identities as isolated individuals. What has never been fully established in the political theory of many modern liberal democracies is the extent to which modern societies need to show deference to groups rather than individuals.

When groups want recognition, to what extent does our tolerance and pluralism—or our belief in tolerance and pluralism—require us to give official recognition rights? The issue becomes particularly acute when that minority is formerly despised or outcast or marginalized in the society and, therefore, the demand for equal recognition is particularly large. This hole in the theory about group recognition is the hole through which the truck of multiculturalism has been driven.

In some sense this concept started with Canada, which was the first country to seriously embed multiculturalism in a modern democratic political system—a policy that came about because of the demands of the Québec nationalists for a separate recognition of linguistic and other rights in Québec. The Meech Lake Accord outlined an amendment to the Canadian Federal Charter that permitted Québec to pass linguistic laws making it illegal for ethnic French Canadian citizens, and even immigrants to Québec, to send their children to English-speaking schools.

That kind of law wouldn't be legal anywhere but in Québec. If you went to Alberta or British Columbia, you couldn't have such a law. So if you say modern constitutionalism is equal protection under a uniform constitutional system, the Meech Lake Accord violates it. It allows for special rights for ethnic Francophones in a way that violates a certain basic liberal principle.

In Europe you get a lot of these variations, too, because they come out of a much more corporatist history where there's recognition of the Catholic and Protestant churches, and different kinds of corporate groups. But this general pattern of groups demanding recognition of group rights is now almost universal, and has been driven

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by other groups including homosexuals, women and African-Americans. Indigenous people all over the world are demanding protection. And not just as individuals under some form of constitutional democracy; they want recognition of their status as members of groups with special rights.

For the most part, these demands have been neuralgic in the U.S. political system with affirmative action and similar issues. But even in the case of the Québec nationalists, I think that though this policy might be really irritating to Anglophones in Western Canada, it's not the end of Canadian democracy. It's a small deviation from a general liberal principle, and nobody's going to go to war over stopping the Québécois from demanding these group rights. The basic liberal order is still there.

But what happens when those group rights become much more serious in ways that challenge some fundamental principles of equality and democracy in a democratic society? That's the question that is now arising in Europe with Muslim populations.

### THE ROLE OF MODERNIZATION IN RADICAL IDEOLOGY

At this point I want to back up and switch to the second issue, which has to do with my particular interpretation of radical Islamism: what it is, what the terrorist problem we're facing is—and this broad foreign policy challenge that has led to intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and that, obviously, is continuing. The basic argument I'm going to make is that the problem that we're facing from these radicals is fundamentally not a cultural problem or a religious problem, but a manifestation. It's a severe manifestation of the same kind of milder identity politics that exists in places like Québec.

Sociologically, the drivers of modern identity politics and adherence to radical Islamist doctrines are remarkably similar. That is to say, you wouldn't get this kind of radicalization in a truly traditional Muslim society. But it does occur when those traditional societies meet the modern world. Therefore, radicalization is as much a product of the modernization process as it is of any kind of traditional form of Islam.

This viewpoint gets plenty of responses from angry readers. They say: Don't you understand that the problem we've been facing since Sept. 11 is the religion Islam?



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Islam is a highly intolerant, militant religion. If you read the Koran and the Hadith, it proclaims a need for perpetual jihad and intolerance. Unless you change the religion you can't deal with this problem.

I agree that religion is an important part of what's happening, but that interpretation is just a manifestation of the essence of the religion Islam and is wrong because if you live in a truly traditional Muslim society, you don't have any reason to be unhappy with your identity. Your identity is fairly clearly set for you by the surrounding society.

Islam, like Judaism, is a very legalistic religion. What it typically means to be a believing Muslim is to follow a whole series of rules that are set down in the Koran and the Hadith as well as by countless interpreters, mullahs and fatwabs that prescribe virtually every aspect of your behavior. In a traditional Muslim society, this framing of identity begins with the family, but also includes the local mosque, the village. In many Muslim countries, local regions have their own saints that they worship in various traditions, all the way up to the state, which is the ultimate guarantor and protector of religion.

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In this kind of society, you absolutely know who you are. All you have to do is follow the rules that are prescribed for you and that qualifies you as being a Muslim believer. Identity questions really don't come up. I think the problem arises when you take a person out of this traditional society and move that person to Rotterdam or a French suburb or some other place—Hamburg or Berlin—a neighborhood in which none of those assumptions about the social supports for your Muslim identity exist.

### OFFERING IDENTITY TO SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS

By the way, this is not my original interpretation. There's a very interesting book by French Islamic scholar Olivier Roy called *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Columbia University Press, 2004; see review in *Real Estate Issues, Volume 31, Number 1, Summer 2006*) that I'm borrowing from very heavily. Waugh says the real problem with radical Islam is its de-territorialization and globalization of Muslims and the Muslim diaspora. When you take people from traditional societies and move them to places in Western Europe or elsewhere, all of a sudden identity becomes a big problem because they simply do not know who they are. This problem is particularly pressing in Western Europe, where these immigrants have a much more difficult time integrating into mainstream societies than in the United States.

Obviously there are many differences in that comparison, but I think it is broadly true. And it explains why so many of the radicalized people are second- or third-generation Muslims who were born in Western Europe or other modern societies and grew up in that context.

Think about it. Mohammad Atta, the ring leader of the Sept. 11 attacks, was an engineering student, middle-class Egyptian, but he was radicalized in Hamburg, Germany. Mohammad Bouyeri, who killed Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in Amsterdam about three years ago, was a second-generation Muslim born in Holland. He went to a Dutch high school, spoke fluent Dutch and yet perpetrated this act. We've now seen the first anniversary of the July 7 attacks in London and, again, these are all British citizens, born in the UK. They ate fish and chips and watched rugby until they were 17 or 18, then all of a sudden they get seduced by this particular ideology. There's a whole series of cases like this where the radicalization is not occurring in some cave in Afghanistan. It is

occurring in the heart of modern, democratic, liberal, tolerant Europe.

In fact, going to Afghanistan is something you do after you've been radicalized in the modern world. Roy's explanation is that this act as a version of identity politics. The first generation of Muslim immigrants to Europe came with the cultural values of the local village and doesn't face an identity problem. But the second- and third-generations are not successfully assimilated into the local identity. They don't feel Dutch or French or German, and this produces an acute sense of what sociologists call loss of identity, or anomie. They don't know what rules they're supposed to operate under, and that's the point at which the appeal of someone like Osama bin Laden becomes very persuasive.

He says to them: I'll tell you exactly who you are; you are a member of a universal Muslim Ummah that stretches from Tangiers to Jakarta. It's a kind of universalist, very purified version of Islam that's been stripped of all of the local saints and customs and traditions that make up life for a truly traditional Muslim. And so in a way it's a much more ideologized version.

This radicalism also involves a good deal of modern ideas. If you look at the history of Islamism, starting with the Muslim brotherhood in the 1920s in Egypt, they import many ideas from radical political movements in Europe at that time—ideas like civil society and the state, revolution, the aestheticization of violence. Hassan Al-Bana, the Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, actually dressed his youth corps in shorts and did outdoor exercises because that's what Mussolini's fascists were doing in Italy.

So there is a kind of melding of modern European political ideas with religious ideas coming out of Islam that get combined in this modern, well, semi-modern ideology. And that is the doctrine that appeals to these second- and third-generation Muslims searching for their identity.

If you agree with this interpretation, it's a little hard to know whether it's good news or bad news. You could say it's good news because we've seen this before, not from Muslims but from other alienated people in Europe. In the 1890s, they were anarchists; in the early 20th century, they were Bolsheviks or fascists; and a generation later they

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were members of the Bader-Meinhof gang. These groups saw radical ideology as a way to solve their personal identity problems.

### **DOES ISLAM NEED A REFORMATION?**

So why are these ideas that have been around for more than 100 years appealing, particularly in Western Europe? I think you have to explain this phenomenon in terms of an emergent identity problem that is precisely the result of modernization and globalization; where individuals are struggling with these issues and aren't isolated in a little village that's cut off from ideas in the broader world.

In a sense, it's familiar. The problem with that familiarity is that it's also extremely dangerous. The wars of the 20th century were consumed with neutralizing radical ideologies that took hold of entire nation-states and made international relations extremely difficult.

Islamic radicals now are influential in one important nation, Iran, and may gain power in others. But at this point they're not taking over like in the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, and I question whether that's in the cards. Nevertheless, we need to realize that even though it's a familiar problem, it's still a very dangerous one.

It also means that in a certain way, the Bush administration's analysis of the problem is 180 degrees off. After Sept. 11, the Bush administration analyzed the problem and implemented a policy to try to fix it. Bush and his advisors based their policy on the theory that the root cause of this kind of Islamic radicalism was the lack of democracy in the Middle East. If this interpretation is correct, though, the causal relationship is almost exactly backwards.

I'd argue that modernization and democracy produce the alienation that leads people to be susceptible to this kind of radical doctrine. In fact, more modernization likely would encourage more terrorism, not the reverse. I support the Bush administration in trying to promote democracy because I think in the long run it will lead to a more stable situation. But in the short run, it probably will spur additional problems.

There's one interesting suggestion that Roy makes about where this all may lead. He and other scholars who study the world of modern Islam have lamented the fact that there's been no equivalent of the Reformation in Islam—no Martin Luther who stood up and argued for a more

modern version of the religion that would be compatible with modern capitalism and democracy. Roy actually suggests that we do have a Muslim Luther living among us. We just haven't recognized him. His name is Osama bin Laden.

Luther was not a modern liberal or a believer in pluralism and tolerance and everybody getting along with everybody else. What Luther did was disconnect the practice of the Christian religion from the external observance of social rules. The Catholic Church at the end of the Middle Ages was all about confessions and rosaries and buying indulgences. Luther said no, that's not the essence of the Christian faith. The essence of the Christian faith, he said, is the direct connection that every believer can have with God by reading the Bible—not external observance of any rules laid down by the Catholic Church.

Roy's argument is that, in a sense, this is happening in Western Europe with the evolution of Islam in these secular lands. Many modern Islamists have argued in a way parallel to Luther that what it really means to be a Muslim is not obeying all of the social rules laid down by the outside society. It's the inner belief that matters.

If this understanding of what it means to be a Muslim takes hold, it may eventually, as in the Christian West, lay the basis for a much greater separation of church and state. Observers often criticize Islam for not clearly separating the realm of private belief from politics, but it's possible this practice may be evolving.

### **TRANSCENDING RELIGIOUS-BASED VALUES TO BUILD NATIONAL IDENTITY**

The next question is how countries will deal with this kind of challenge, not just the Muslim challenge. When considering identity politics it is important to distinguish and talk a little bit about where identity comes from in modern societies because it's very different in the United States and in Europe.

In any modern society that is open and pluralistic, identity has always been weak. But I think that in the United States, people have a stronger or clearer sense of national identity—and one that is easier for individuals who are culturally different to adopt—than immigrants in Europe.

So what is American identity? A great sociologist, Seymour Martin Lipset, wrote that America's strong identity is built around a political creed that focuses on

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values such as individualism, equality, liberty, laissez-faire and populism. These are creedal ideas not rooted in ethnicity, and are potentially open to people around the world. They're about loyalty to the American Constitution and the founding principles of liberty and equality, which are the foundation of the country. Therefore, it's a political identity that is much more accepting of people who leave other countries and settle in the U.S.

Now, to get back to Samuel Huntington, the first half of *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* discusses the question of American identity in detail. Yes, he writes, there's this creedal identity that Lipset talks about, but religion and the Anglo-Protestant culture also are important. He says if North America had been settled by Portuguese, Spanish or by French immigrants, it would look like Brazil, Mexico or Québec.

*The unquestioned cultural value of a work ethic and the belief that it is work—your labor—that gives you dignity as a human being, is something that is very broadly shared. And not only among white Anglo-Saxon Protestants; it's a general legacy that all Americans have.*

But it doesn't. It looks like the United States because it was settled by people who came from a dissident sectarian Protestant tradition in England and formed the dominant culture in the United States. Many people don't like to hear that our culture is religiously rooted, but I think as a matter of historical fact that is absolutely the case.

I agree with Huntington that religion was important, that in many respects that culture has been torn away from its original religious and ethnic roots and has become a more general property of Americans as Americans. For example, Huntington has a chapter that revisits Max Weber's argument that American work ethic is linked to this Puritan form of Protestantism coming out of the Reformation that was particularly important in the Puritan sects that settled New England. Empirically, there's no question that this is true. Americans just work their heads off. If you look at hours worked per year, Germans work about five or six weeks less than Americans and virtually every other European country works a great deal less.

But if you think about the United States and who works hard in this country right now, it seems to me that it is as likely to be a Russian cab driver or a Korean grocery store owner or a Mexican day laborer as a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. The cultural value, the unquestioned cultural value of a work ethic and the belief that it is work—your labor—that gives you dignity as a human being, is something that is very broadly shared. And not only among white Anglo-Saxon Protestants; it's a general legacy that all Americans have.

### MOVING BEYOND ETHNIC NATIONALISM

On the other hand, many Europeans think that dignity comes through the support that the state gives you through social solidarity rather than your own work. I think this values dimension is important, but you also have to be a little bit careful about associating it too closely with religion or ethnicity.

Another important aspect of American culture is our tremendous ability to associate in informal voluntary organizations. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote about this after visiting the United States. He said that in his native France you couldn't get 10 Frenchmen to work together for a common cause, and that was one of the problems with French democracy. But the United States had numerous Bible study and abolitionist and temperance groups.

If you ask where these organizations came from, the dominant answer probably would be some form of Protestant sectarianism because American Protestantism wasn't organized as a centralized state religion like the Roman Catholic Church or other state churches in Europe. It was organized on the basis of a pluralistic competition of different sects that had to appeal in a very decentralized way to get members.

I think Europeans are much more confused about these identity questions because at an official level all European governments subscribe to the basic notion that nationalism and national identity is what got them into the World War I and World War II as well as the Holocaust. The whole European project since 1945 has revolved around rebuilding European identity on a non-national basis; to transcend being German or Italian or English and, in some ways, resemble the American political identity. The goal is to have an identity that's grounded on political

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ideas—not race, ethnicity or religion—and is potentially universal and open to all people.

Yet for the last two generations, the national-level identities have not been quite politically correct. That's particularly true if you were on the losing side of World War II or had a fascist dictatorship, where people had a national identity that they wanted to run away from.

Germans typically have taught their children not to cheer for German teams, though I heard they started to come around at the 2006 World Cup tournament. Another example comes from a friend of mine who was a child in Spain during Francisco Franco's rule. She says that as a young woman she was ashamed to travel around Europe with a Spanish passport because of the bad associations linked with Spanish identity. In different ways, national identity has really not been a comfortable thing for many Europeans.

On a popular level, though, nationalism absolutely has not disappeared. Italians and French and Dutch all understand that they do have a set of cultural traditions. They're not officially written down or defined, but are embodied by things like holidays, foods and various inherited social practices that remain very much linked to ethnicity and religion.

In fact, these traditions were legally linked in Germany until the country changed its citizenship law in 2000. Before then, people had to have a German mother to be eligible for German citizenship. If you were a third-generation Turk immigrant who grew up speaking only German, you could not become a German citizen, but an ethnic German coming from somewhere in Eastern Europe could get instant citizenship without being able to speak a word of German. Even in the legal structure there was support for this ethnic understanding of national identity, and I think this one of the problems that makes it difficult to integrate Muslims today.

### **AS POPULATIONS DECLINE, IMMIGRATION IS KEY FOR SUCCESS**

I also shouldn't overlook the matter of numbers. Nobody really knows how many Muslims live in France, but it could be as much as 10 to 12 percent of the population. That's a larger percentage than the U.S. African-American

population. Meanwhile, less than 1 percent of the U.S. population is Muslim so it's a little difficult to draw generalizations about how well the United States has integrated Muslims.

Another factor is labor laws, which in Europe discourage low-skill workers from getting jobs. Many Muslim immigrants come basically for the welfare system; in Rotterdam, for example, something like half of the immigrant population is on welfare rather than having employment in the regular economy. In the United States, I think most people who immigrate, including the ones that immigrate illegally, come here because they want to work.

To wrap up, I think that first of all, in dealing with these cultural issues, there is no question that immigration and the way that you deal with culturally different minorities is one of the most crucial problems that modern liberal democracies face. I know of only one modern liberal democracy—Japan—that has tried to deal with it by simply excluding immigrants, and Japan has had a declining population for the last five years.

The Japanese workforce is getting smaller every year and that rate of decline is going to accelerate. There are entire villages where residents are 70 years and older, and there are no children being born. The total fertility rate in the greater Tokyo area has fallen to something like .98; that's the average number of children per woman per lifetime.

Europe also is experiencing a population decrease. Total fertility rates in Mediterranean Europe are around 1.2, and the situation is similar in Russia. Taking this into consideration, the idea that somehow countries can get along without infusions of people appears illogical.

It's always seemed to me that dealing with minority populations in a positive manner is crucial to countries' long-term success. And countries that can assimilate people into a dominant culture that can put them to work—and encourage them to accept the dominant cultural values—will most likely remain strong socially and economically. It's never something that happens in the first generation; it's always a multi-generational process. But that kind of democracy is the kind that in the next 20, 30 or 40 years is going to be successful. ■