# Book Review: *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, by Francis Fukuyama. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018, 218 pp.

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Francis Fukuyama, a renowned scholar of international politics, is currently a Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and Director of the Centre on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, at Stanford University. Among his books have been *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992); *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (2006); *The Origins of Political Order* (2011); and *Political Order and Political Decay* (2014).

The publisher claims that in this book the author 'offers a provocative examination of modern identity politics: its origins, its effects, and what it means for…democracy and international affairs of state'. In particular, Fukuyama looks at the rise to power of 'political outsiders' whose economic nationalism and authoritarian tendencies threaten to destabilize the entire international order. Identity politics is seen as fundamental to understanding contemporary world politics. Populist nationalists, in seeking a direct charismatic connection to 'the people' (defined in narrow identity terms), have been offering an irresistible call to their supporters whilst excluding large parts of the population as a whole. A universal recognition on

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which liberal democracy has been founded has become increasingly challenged by restrictive forms of recognition and resentment based on nation, religion, race and ethnicity, gender, resulting in an anti-immigration stance of populist politicians, concomitant with an upsurge of politicized Islam and a 'hideous emergence of white nationalism'. Fukuyama reaches the conclusion that the longstanding human struggle for recognition needs to be directed in a way that supports rather than undermines democracy; as he puts it, unless we forge a universal understanding of human dignity, we will doom ourselves to continual conflict.

Fukuyama does not think much of current populist leaders, including Putin of Russia, Erdogan of Turkey, Orban of Hungary, Kaczynski of Poland, Duterte of the Philippines, Chavez and his successor Maduro of Venezuela, and not the least Trump of the United States, who he disparagingly describes: 'His economic nationalism was likely to make things worse rather than better for his very constituencies that supported him, while his evident preference for authoritarian strongmen over democratic allies promised to destabilize the entire international order….It was hard to imagine an individual less suited to be president of the United States' (x). Moreover, Fukuyama suggests that there are signs of emergent populism in Brexit, France, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, and of nationalist rhetoric in China, India, and Japan. In the first chapter, he discusses globalization and the changing world order, characterized today by a 'global recession' and rise of authoritarianism, notably in Russia, China, and the Middle East. In fact, what he terms 'resentment at indignities' has been a powerful force in democratic countries as well. As the title of the book implies, Fukuyama is preoccupied with identity politics, represented particularly by the 'practitioners of the politics of resentment' in which a national populace 'believes that it has an identity that is not being given adequate recognition' (9). In his view, 'identity grows out of a distinction between one's inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth and dignity….The inner self is the basis of human dignity, moreover the inner sense of dignity needs recognition' (9-10).

In succeeding chapters, after summarizing modern economic theory, Fukuyama delves into wide-ranging philosophy: the early Greek distinction between *isothymia* (the demand to be respected on an equal basis by other people) and *megalothymia* (the desire to be recognized as superior), Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Hegel, Luther, Weber, Kant, Nietzche.

Fukuyama discusses the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan in Ukraine, and especially the Arab Spring, as potential democratization movements, yet wonders whether 'real-world liberal democracies never fully live up to their underlying ideals of freedom and equality, as rights are often violated' (48).

While ample attention is paid to the rise of right-wing populism, a secondary strand running through the book is the demise of the left, evidenced in the shift of left-wing political parties throughout Europe to the centre during the 1990s with acceptance of the 'logic of the market economy'(76); the problematic 'forms of identity that the left has increasingly chosen to celebrate' (90); and the 'convergence of diminishing ambitions for large-scale socioeconomic reform with the left's embrace of identity politics and multiculturalism in the final decades of the twentieth century' (113).

Fukuyama is particularly interested in the interplay between nationalism and religion, viewing 'both nationalism and Islamism – that is, political Islam -…as two sides of the same coin. Both are expressions of a hidden or suppressed group identity that seeks public recognition' (58). In the seventh chapter, which discusses this relationship, Fukuyama revisits Herder and the rise of German nationalism during the nineteenth century through De Lagarde, Gellner's theories of nationalism, and Tönnies' distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. Then he describes the problem of political Islamism in contemporary Middle East and Europe, concluding that 'both nationalism and Islamism can be seen as a species of identity politics' (73); and later (148) how cultural beliefs and practices of Muslim communities became transformed into extremist terrorism. Moreover, he mentions that the politicization of religions is a global phenomenon – including notably Islamist movements in South and Southeast Asia but also militant Buddhism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, Hinduism in India, and Judaism in Israel.

This discussion of populist nationalism and politicized religion inevitably corresponds to an incisive commentary on mass immigration into Europe, resulting challenges to multiculturalism and assimilation, shifting identities, secessionism, redefinition of the European Community, and the meaning of citizenship. Right-wing populist nationalism has responded negatively to largescale immigration (especially of Muslims) in both Europe and the U.S.; in fact Fukuyama considers this to be 'the policy issue that has raised the greatest challenges to national identity….the driving force behind the upsurge of populist nationalism' (131), represented by the Front National in France, the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, the Danish People's Party, Fidesz in Hungary, the AfD in Germany, and the Brexit movement in the U.K. – all opposed to open immigration and the EU – to which can be added President Trump's steerage of the Republican Party in the U.S. Fukuyama suggests that 'the common objective of populist politicians in both Europe and the U.S. is to "take back our country" – but what country are they trying to take back?' (133). He concludes that 'liberal democracies benefit greatly from immigration, both economically and culturally. But they also unquestionably have the right to

control their own borders…. For Europe, this implies that the EU as a whole needs to be able to control its external borders better than it does…' (175). The steadily increasing proportion of foreign-born in selected OECD countries since 1960 is provided in a table (134-5) – however most of the data end at 2015 – before most of the mass migration.

The applicability of the concept of multiculturalism to Europe will be examined in a commentary in a forthcoming issue of JEMIE; for now, suffice it to say that Fukuyama does probe into this problematic issue – he believes that, in a sense, Europeans became more multicultural with the growth of multicultural communities. Yet his comments on assimilation – perhaps reminiscent of the anachronistic American view of the 'melting pot' – seem rather misleading: 'Assimilation into a dominant culture becomes much harder as the numbers of immigrants rise relative to the native population. As immigrant communities reach a certain scale, they tend to become self-sufficient and no longer need connections to the groups outside themselves. They can overwhelm public services and strain the capacity of schools and other public institutions to care for them...Public policies that focus on the successful assimilation of foreigners might help take the wind out of the sails of the current populist upsurge both in Europe and in the U.S.' (174, 177). Does he really mean *integration*? Assimilation and integration are not the same. He writes, 'Europeans pay lip service to the need for better assimilation, but fail to follow through with an effective set of policies' (171).

Given the central theme of the book – identity – Fukuyama theorizes about shifting identities.  He explains, 'national identity begins with a shared belief in the legitimacy of the country's political system, whether that system is democratic or not' (126); yet emphasizing the need to build national identities around liberal and democratic political values, he outlines a number of reasons why an inclusive sense of national identity remains critical for the maintenance of a successful modern political order: first, physical security; second, good government; third, facilitating economic development; fourth, promoting a wide radius of trust; fifth, maintaining strong safety nets that mitigate economic inequality; and sixth, making possible liberal democracy itself (128-130). National identities have been created by four main paths: first, to transfer populations across the political boundaries of a particular country; second, to move borders to fit existing linguistic or cultural populations; third, to assimilate minority populations into the culture of an existing ethnic or linguistic group; and fourth, to reshape national identity to fit the existing characteristics of the society in question (140-141).

Yet state nationalism has been – and continues to be – challenged by ethnonationalism, which clearly Fukuyama views as problematic, as this may weaken larger (e.g. historical, imperial) countries: the Scottish independence movement within the United Kingdom, Catalan

separatism within Spain, and Russian suppression or utilization of non-Russian peoples within the USSR and successor Russia. He questions on what grounds Catalonia, for example, could legitimately separate itself from Spain, and seems to imply that ethnonationalism may seem rather parochial in this day and age. He writes that 'those one might characterize as "global cosmopolitans" argue that the very concepts of national identity and state sovereignty are outmoded and need to be replaced by broader transnational identities and institutions'. He understands that 'as human rights law has evolved, so have the obligations of states not just to their own citizens, but to immigrants and refugees as well. Some advocates have even posited a universal right to migrate'. Indeed, 'the obligation to respect universal human rights has been voluntarily undertaken by most countries around the world, and rightly so…Thus political order both at home and internationally will depend on the continuing existence of liberal democracies with the right kind of inclusive national identities' (137-139).

Thus secession movements have been a serious challenge to the EU. Fukuyama has asked: 'But whether Europe has an identity stronger than the old national identities it was supposed to supersede is not clear' (144). He has observed that 'the new Eastern European member states of the EU were even less willing to accept culturally different newcomers than the original founding countries….After 1989 they gladly threw off Communism and rushed into the EU, but many of their citizens did not embrace the positive liberal values embodied in the new Europe' (151). In fact, another EU member state – Britain – never fully accepted a European identity; Fukuyama suggests that specifically English Euroscepticism (i.e. but not necessarily Irish, Scottish, or Welsh) is rooted in a longstanding belief in English exceptionalism (152). In his view, 'national identity in Europe is today confused, to put it charitably. Proponents of the EU have not succeeded in creating a strong sense of pan-European identity that supersedes the identities of its member states' (153). Fukuyama concludes, 'Those laws of EU member states still based on *jus sanguinis* (inherent rights) need to be changed to *jus soli* (territorial rights) so as not to privilege one ethnic group over another' (167). Perhaps, 'down the road, something like a pan-European identity may someday emerge' (169).

Within shifting identities, Fukuyama addresses citizenship issues: in the new century, an intense debate over citizenship, immigration and national identity has emerged across Europe. Under *jus sanguinis*, citizenship depends on descent, whereas under *jus soli*, anyone born within a country automatically becomes a citizen. Controversially (or perhaps realistically, depending upon one's viewpoint) Fukuyama suggests that German, Dutch, Danish have always had an ethnic connotation (but less so French); moreover, being Turkish in Germany, for example, may be acceptable in terms of citizenship yet not in ethnic terms (hence the concept of *leitkultur*

(151, 169). Within this context, Fukuyama revisits the arguments of Huntington, author of the 'clash of civilizations' hypothesis.

While these may be the main topics in this wide-ranging book, Fukuyama also touches on a variety of other topics, including: the changing status of women; global poverty and psychological relationship of income to dignity; self-esteem and 'democratization of dignity'; the trend toward political correctness, particularly in universities (he suggests that political correctness refers to 'things you can't say in public without fearing withering moral opprobrium') (118); social media and the internet (which 'have facilitated the emergence of self-contained communities, walled off not by physical barriers but by belief in shared identity') (182) .

Fukuyama concludes:

> Our present world is simultaneously moving toward the opposing dystopias of hypercentralization and endless fragmentation…On the other hand, different parts of the world are seeing the breakdown of centralized institutions, the emergence of failed states, polarization, and a growing lack of consensus over common ends….Identity can be used to divide, but it can and has also been used to integrate. That in the end will be the remedy for the populist politics of the present (182-183).

### *References*

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