

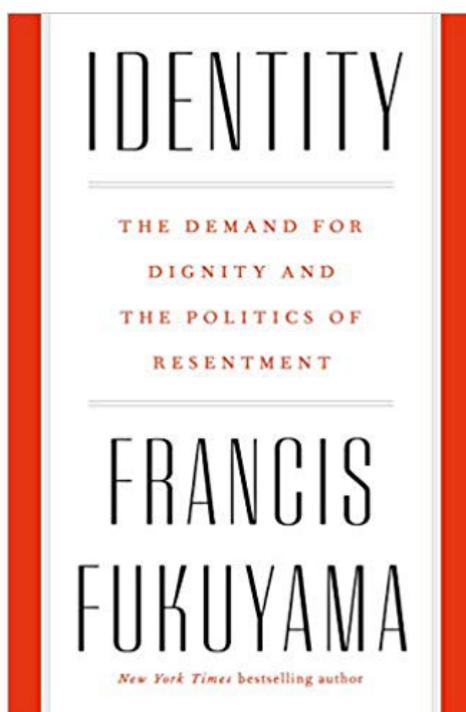
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Book review

IDENTITY. THE DEMAND FOR DIGNITY AND THE POLITICS OF RESENTMENT. Fukuyama, Francis, Identity. The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment. Main, Profile Books, 2018, €18.24, 208 pages.

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Francis Fukuyama is one of the most frequently cited political scientists of recent decades and his essay *The End of History and the Last Man*¹ was one of the most widely distributed academic publications after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the experience of real socialism. He had been one of the leading American Kremlinologists of the 1980s working in the state department during the Reagan and Bush (Sr.) administrations. His original essay, published in 1989 in *The National Interest*² magazine, was expanded three years later into an extensive and widely distributed book that projected its author's image internationally as one of the main proponents of conservative American thought. His later academic and political trajectory consolidated him in that image, increased by his support to the think-tank Project for the New American Century (PNAC), promoting US foreign policy marked by interventionism on a global scale. His subsequent shift away from these views, from the time of the second Bush (Jr.) administration, brought him back to the media debate. His departure from unilateralism in US foreign policy brought his texts and opinions back to the fore. In recent years he has attempted to qualify some of the statements in his most representative work, insisting that he referred to the end of history as a goal or objective in the Hegelian and Marxist sense.

In *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment* Fukuyama presents a number of clues to understanding today's complex international relations, as well as the prominence of nationalist and populist messages in the political arena across almost the entire planet. On a global scale, the shift towards identity politics by the main political actors makes it difficult to achieve common objectives and to reach consensus on policies favourable to all actors on an individual and collective scale. According to the author, the insistence of minority groups in vetoing collective action is one of the milestones that have characterised the development of populist political programmes in the last five years. He points to an isolated example of this trend in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's victory in the 1932 US elections and he analyses the political phenomenon that led to Donald J. Trump's victory in the primary elections of the Republican Party and later in the 2016 US presidential elections, as well as in the result of the UK referendum to leave the EU that same year.

The lack of effective and stable political institutions is one of the main causes for not «getting to Denmark», the subtle way in which Fukuyama identifies Danish institutional stability with its political, economic and social development³. In this sense, the author points to stability and democratic accountability as key components guaranteeing social advancement alongside economic advancement, although he acknowledges that the fourth wave of democratisation either never materialised or failed to develop purely democratic political systems but rather competitive au-

1 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Penguin, 1992.

2 FUKUYAMA, Francis. «The end of history?». *The National Interest*, Nº 16. 1989, pp. 3-18.

3 FUKUYAMA, Francis. *The origins of political order. From prehuman times to the French revolution*. New York: FS&G, 2011, pp.14, 431-433.

thoritarianism⁴, a model that, in this sense, could signal a global democratic recession⁵. The origin of the nationalist, populist and religious explosion that he finds evident in today's world is, according to the author, rooted in the search for dignity and recognition by individuals within the framework of the systems of which they are a component part. He affirms that democracies have problems with respecting dissent, especially when it entails confronting the situation of traditionally discriminated groups in a climate in which liberal democracy in Europe and the United States, aggravated by the economic crisis that marked the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, has fallen into disrepute. Without being inconsistent with the foregoing, he downplays the importance of the lack of tangible integration as an explanation for the crisis of radicalisation and identity of those individuals who opt for the path of nationalism or exclusionary religious belief. In this respect, the very conception of identity underlying the entire length of the work is ambivalent; it does not provide a complete and closed definition of the term and refers both to collective identities and to its more subjective aspects. The relationship between the economic crisis and the reaction in defence of one's own cultural identities in the face of external cultural and migratory influences are, in the opinion of the author, indispensable elements for understanding the shift from the material to the immaterial in the political agenda. Fukuyama apparently disregards the fact that post-material movements that transformed the political and economic messages of the left, social democracy and the most liberal political actors in Europe and America were much earlier, originating in the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s⁶. Of course, the decline of real socialism and the emergence of the so-called *Third Way* during the 1990s helped change the traditional objective by improving the material living conditions of the middle and working classes that had been defended by the democratic left since the nineteenth century, and in so doing marked the political horizons of conservative parties. These material claims were replaced by others of a post-material nature, almost exclusively focused on defending the interests of groups perceived as relegated: ethnic minorities, women, the LGTB community, etc., and in a sense undermining classic political objectives based on the improvement of workers' living standards and conditions.

It seems that for Fukuyama the thresholds of *relative frustration*⁷ to which individuals and groups are subjected are not only quantifiable in terms of economic or material aspects, but also with respect to their own instinctive urge for identity. Thus, policies of nationalist resentment link the policies of Donald J. Trump, Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orban, etc., in a framework of economic crisis as an accelerant that nonetheless

4 LEVITSKY, Steven; Way, Lucan A. *Competitive authoritarianism. Hybrid regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2010.

5 DIAMOND, Larry. «Facing up to the Democratic Recession». *Journal of Democracy*, N° 26(1). 2015, pp. 141-155.

6 VELASCO-MARTÍNEZ, Luis. «The pending utopias. A brief history of the world since 1945». *Journal of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies*, N° 6. 2015, pp. 4.

7 GURR, Ted R. *Why men rebel?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970.

provides an insufficient explanation for the rise in identity politics. Individuals' lack of rationality in decision-making and their gregariousness also has a role to play here⁸. Resentment at the lack of recognition to which collective subjects are supposed to be entitled causes those individuals who feel they are members to react angrily and legitimise violent actions or actions outside the conventional frameworks of political and social participation in democratic and pluralistic societies. The author argues that the demand for dignity is an inherent part of humanity's social being, which is also the driving force behind legitimate movements; he would identify the problem when these demands collide with the limits of democracy and its institutions, endangering the acquired rights and the stability of the system and its forecasts for future growth.

Many of the views offered by Fukuyama prove useful in understanding some of the political and social dynamics of today's world. The Messianic belief with which collective identities have resurfaced to embrace the aspirations of individuals from all over the world to live an existence that transcends them is evident, as well as the fluidity of these identities and the de facto existence of an array of identities available to individuals who aspire to their inclusion in some group. In this sense, traditional national, religious or ethnic identities have also been replaced in several instances by new types of identities hitherto unknown. The author quotes: [...] If the logic of identity politics is to divide societies into increasingly smaller and self-regarding groups, it may also be possible to shape larger and more inclusive identities. [...]⁹.

Fukuyama's work has some weak points and while they do not detract from the value of his contribution, they prompt us to pose interesting questions, such as: What are the vectors by which these collective identities of the twenty-first century are reproduced? The author himself affirms the singular role played by cultural patterns as agents disseminating national identities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, following Ernest Gellner's thesis¹⁰; and, without citing them, he accepts Eugen Weber's views on the role of the educational system as a vector of nationalisation,¹¹ even if he omits others. In the twenty-first century, are the same agents responsible for disseminating national, religious or other collective identities of whom we may speak in the present and in the future? What role do the new media, the so-called ICTs and specifically the Internet play in this process? Is there an identity market in which individuals can choose one or the other according to rational or irrational patterns? Are these identities fluid? Do they fluctuate throughout the lives of individuals or are they as immutable as those French recruits who rushed out to die for their homeland in 1914? The sheer number of questions we ask ourselves after reading the essay is a good indication of its greatness.

8 KAHNEMAN, Daniel. *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: FS&G 2011.

9 FUKUYAMA, Francis: *Identity. The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. Main: Profile Books 2018.

10 GELLNER, Ernest. *Nations and nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP 1983.

11 WEBER, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1976.

As we have mentioned elsewhere,¹² the emergence of inclusive identity spaces that respect the democratic framework, individual freedoms and rights, while simultaneously belonging to other identity references, can serve to create consensus that favours overcoming models of confrontation such as those analysed in this book. Aspiring to the development of inclusive collective identities, compatible among themselves within the framework of democratic states, is a distant but plausible goal. Essays such as *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment* help to put the spotlight on reaching this milestone; it only remains to be seen which is the best way of getting to Denmark.

¹² VELASCO-MARTÍNEZ, Luis. «Identidades colectivas en el horizonte 2050: ¿Consenso o disenso?». *Documentos de Trabajo del IEEE*, 24/2018. <http://www.ieee.es/contenido/noticias/2018/11/DIEEEINV24-2018Identidadescolectivas.html> (visto: 25/05/2019).