



Jews, Confucians, and Protestants: Cultural Capital and the End of Multiculturalism

By Lawrence E. Harrison

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Multiculturalism—the belief that no culture is better or worse than any other; it is merely different—has come to dominate Western intellectual thought and to serve as a guide to domestic and foreign policy and development aid. But what if multiculturalism itself is flawed? What if some cultures are more prone to progress than others and more successful at creating the cultural capital that encourages democratic governance, social justice for all, and the elimination of poverty? In *Jews, Confucians, and Protestants: Cultural Capital and the End of Multiculturalism*, Lawrence E. Harrison takes the politically incorrect stand that all cultures are not created equal. Analyzing the performance of 117 countries, grouped by predominant religion, Harrison argues for the superiority of those cultures that emphasize Jewish, Confucian, and Protestant values. A concluding chapter outlines ways in which cultural change may substantially transform societies within a generation.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Sailing into stiff headwinds, Harrison challenges the belief—foundational to multiculturalism—that all cultures are equally valuable. Some cultures, he argues, simply are better than others at fostering economic growth, democratic governance, and social justice. It is, he asserts, a culture of education, frugality, and intracommunity trust that makes Jews financial titans. Likewise, a culture of learning and personal moderation empowers Confucian entrepreneurs in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. And it is a culture of hard work coupled to personal responsibility that elevates Protestants to top positions in global business. Other cultures—tradition-bound Catholicism, fatalistic Islam, and irrational Voodoo—come in for censure as obstacles to progress. Likewise labeled as barriers to advancement are contemporary cultural patterns among African Americans and Latino immigrants. Clearly separating himself from conservatives, Harrison outlines a progressive agenda based on deliberate cultural engineering. Still, in trying to test this agenda, Harrison's Cultural Change Institute has encountered considerable resistance. That resistance persists in sharp debates sure to bring readers, both partisans and critics, to this book. --Bryce Christensen

Review

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Harrison vigorously defends the proposition that both human capital (e.g., educated workers) and social capital (e.g., capacity to cooperate) require the larger religious worldviews constituting cultural capital. Not all religious cultures are equally deserving of respect if measured by their score on a 25-item typology of "universal progress culture." Using league tables of national achievements regarding transparency/corruption, political and civil freedoms, income distribution, female literacy, and per capita income--reinforced by anecdotes from his own experience in economic development projects in Latin America--Harrison concludes that the three religious cultures of the book's title are markedly superior on all counts in comparison with Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. And, to demonstrate that culture matters and race does not, he uses the same typology to show the high achievements of minority religious/cultural outliers such as Basques (Catholic), Ismailis (Muslim), and Sikhs (Hindu) as well as African Americans descended from pre-Civil War freedmen or from immigrants from Jamaica. The lesson he draws for US educational, social-welfare, and immigration policy is obvious: assimilation into US national culture must supplant multiculturalism in theory and practice. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers, undergraduate students, graduate students, and research faculty (*CHOICE*)

Harrison structures his book by creating a foundation for his argument and then examining numerous

cultures by way of many different factors. The book travels widely, from the Ten Commandments to the Reformation, from Islam to Mormonism and from the Basques to the Sikhs. Throughout, the author attempts to analyze each culture's effectiveness by how it addresses human rights and social, economic and political achievement. . . .The result is a comprehensive and controversial book, guaranteed to make readers sit up and take notice, agreeing or disagreeing to the full extent of their varied and individual voices. (*Martha's Vineyard Gazette*)

Why are some cultures more successful than others? One answer was delivered a century ago by the great German sociologist Max Weber, who drew a causal connection between "the Protestant ethic" and "the spirit of capitalism." In his fascinating new book *Jews, Confucians, and Protestants: Cultural Capital and the End of Multiculturalism*, Lawrence Harrison offers a more comprehensive answer. He has examined cultures as diverse as Jews and Confucians and found that, contrary to the central precept of multiculturalism, some cultural groups have been substantially more successful than others in mastering the challenges of modernity. Separated by faith and space, Jews, Confucians, and Protestants have followed similar courses. They have invested heavily in education and human capital; they have stressed achievement over instant gratification. This book is must-reading for political leaders, development experts, philanthropists, pundits, and NGOs who want to improve the lot of humanity around the world. (Josef Joffe, publisher-editor, *Die Zeit*; Abramowitz Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University)

Lawrence Harrison has written a book of bracing intellectual courage and luminous clarity. A brilliant assault on the cardinal principles of multiculturalism. Written with both sweep and detail, the writing fluid and engaging throughout. A seminal contribution to the link between culture and human progress. (Fouad Ajami, Senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, cochair of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order)

[Harrison] lays out a convincing case, albeit politically incorrect, that will be unfairly attacked by the usual cast of characters. It is the best argument against multiculturalism and multicultural equivalence I have ever read. . . . I hope this book not only gets wide reading and acceptance among the general public, but perhaps even more important, among bureaucrats, governments, philanthropic and NGO leaders, as well as academics, so that positive actions can result from [Harrison's] efforts. (Steven Pease, author of *The Golden Age of Jewish Achievement* and co-chair of the US-Russia Foundation)

Harrison has the courage to write the truth, a dangerous virtue these days. (Thomas Sowell, Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University)

Lawrence Harrison has created a masterpiece in the tradition of Carlos Rangel, Claudio Veliz, Mario Vargas Llosa, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, Carlos Alberto Montaner and Alvaro Vargas Llosa; one can consider Lawrence Harrison as the Max Weber of the 21st Century! In just eleven chapters, he succinctly explains the differences between High & Low Cultural Capital as they relate to religion, destiny, time orientation, wealth, knowledge, ethical codes, lesser virtues, education, work and achievement, frugality, entrepreneurship, risk, competition, innovation, advancement, rule of law, radius of trust, family, association of individuals, groups, authority, elites, church-state and gender. In so doing, he effectively makes the case that some cultures are more capable of creating the cultural capital that is a catalyst for democratic governance, social justice, the elimination of poverty, and creation of wealth. This author will be the object of hate-speech by the far left because he has invalidated the self-anointed political elites' view that serve as a guide to domestic and foreign policy as well as foreign aid. Bravo Dr. Harrison! You have shattered the multicultural myth that all cultures are equal, and have provided a reasonable "way ahead" for countries that have fallen behind! (Dr. B Leland Baker)

About the Author

Lawrence E. Harrison is the author of *Undevelopment is a State of Mind* (Madison Books), *The Central Liberal Truth: How Politics Can Change a Culture and Save It from Itself* (Oxford), and coeditor, with Samuel P. Huntington of *Culture Matters—How Values Shape Human Progress* (Perseus).

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