

# Intellectual Discourse

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# *Intellectual Discourse*

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***Book Review***

Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for

Recognition. By Francis Fukuyama. London, UK:  
Profile Books, 2019, pp. 218, ISBN: 978-1-78125-981-8.  
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What Happened. By Hillary Rodham Clinton.  
New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2017.  
ISBN-10: 1501175564; ISBN-13: 978-1501175565.  
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the Middle East have made it difficult for liberal democracy to take foot. This situation perpetuates the rise of authoritarian leaders that pit citizens against one another. So, when the world declares the victory of liberal democracy, the 'world' seems to be limited to the West and the rise in identity politics has been considered perplexing. However, to the rest of the non-Western world, identity politics have always been prominent especially in post-colonial societies. This is not a fault of Fukuyama per se, but it is worth pondering.

As the name implies, *Identity* attempts to be a concise book. Fortunately, it is able to do so without compromising on the wealth of information that is included to help readers understand the phenomenon that is widely reported in the press these days. The narrative style of writing is definitely useful, especially to general readers who may or may not be familiar with research-based writings. However, there were times when the book feels like it has been patched by different anecdotes as some chapters are not equally distributed in length. Nevertheless, the argument is clear, and the author tries his best to appear non-biased in his judgment. There is no doubt that the book is calling for greater awareness by everyone that identity is a social construct and it does not have to be jealously protected. Once creedal identity takes the front seat, liberal democracy may be back on its track to lead us to a possible second end of history.

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**What Happened. By Hillary Rodham Clinton. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2017. ISBN-10: 1501175564; ISBN-13: 978-1501175565.**

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One of the most consequential American Presidential elections in recent years saw nominees Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Democrat nominee; and Donald J. Trump, the Republican nominee battle head to head for the honour to occupy the Oval Office. The 2016 Presidential campaign

was hard fought and could be categorized as one candidate running for the Presidency while espousing the best of America while the other started his run by latching onto the fears, insecurity, and the frustrations of Americans and eventually rode that fear to victory.

Clinton campaigned on many issues; from crime being at historic lows, the seventy-five months of job growth under President Obama, the fact that the Affordable Care Act helped twenty million more Americans get health insurance, and the unequalled strength of America's military. She campaigned on the energy and optimism she had seen across the country. On the other hand, where Clinton was campaigning on facts available to any voter, Trump was campaigning on the exact opposite; he screamed out during campaign rallies and debates that the American economy was tanking, the military was weak and that he was the only one who could strengthen it, that the border was weak and that a Wall was needed to stop Mexicans from entering the United States, then Muslims needed to be banned, and so on and so forth. For many people, the eventual victory of Donald Trump was a shocking event; this shocking event was even more so for Hillary Clinton who, like many Americans thought, was expected to win.

*What Happened* is Clinton's personal account of why she ran in the first place, how she ran her campaign, the people who surrounded her during her run and those who had an affect on her during her campaign, as well as her feelings after her loss. She talks about her childhood and how being a woman in male dominated fields – as a law student, then as a lawyer, and then as the Senator from New York, and then as the first woman Presidential nominee of a major American political party. She writes about her stunning loss to Donald Trump who had broken the vast majority of rules that previous candidates had followed, the twists and turns that occurred during the campaign, her reflections on mistakes she made and how she coped with those mistakes, and her feelings in regard to the interference by Russia. The book itself is divided into themes of Perseverance, Competition, Sisterhood, Idealism and Realism, Frustration, Resilience, and there is an Afterword. The themes are then divided into chapters.

The first two chapters falling under the theme of Perseverance deal with the Inauguration of Donald Trump as the immediate aftermath. Hillary's appearance with Bill Clinton, the 42<sup>nd</sup> President, along with



other previous Presidents and First Ladies, at the Inauguration of number forty-five, Donald Trump. She writes that there was a part of her that did not want to attend the inauguration, however she had “felt a responsibility to be there”. Despite her feelings towards Trump, Hillary Clinton showed up to the Inauguration since she felt responsible for showing other nations that the “peaceful transfer of power is one of our country’s most important traditions.” If she wasn’t at the Inauguration, one would only have to wonder what the countries of the world – many of which Hillary Clinton had touted the strength and traditions of American democracy when she was Secretary of State– would have thought about her. She writes her account of the inauguration with bits and pieces of humour; there was an account of her meeting the future Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and how he brought his wife over to meet her. Clinton joked that she wasn’t the Antichrist – which was what Zinke had called her in 2014 – and led to a mumbled apology of how he hadn’t meant what he said. She writes about her distress at the loss, at the thought of the concession speech she had to make, and at the thought that a man who built his campaign on dividing American people had won the Presidency. Clinton wrote about how she leaned on her husband, her daughter and her grandchildren to eventually return to some semblance of a regular routine. Clinton wrote of how, over time, she began getting calmer and stronger.

The next three Chapters covers the theme of Competition and begins with the reasons why she ran for the Presidency. Her reasoning was simple; she believed that she would have been good at the job of running the United States. She goes on to outline that she was the most experienced in government, she had made more meaningful accomplishments, and she had “ambitious but believable proposals.” She was aware that everything she and Bill Clinton had ever touched – especially the Clinton Foundation – would come under increased scrutiny. And she was right; despite three independent philanthropic watchdogs giving the Clinton Foundation top marks, the partisan attacks on the charity were heavy and numerous, and “nearly all of it was negative”. She wrote of her paid speaking engagements and how her opponents spun and twisted those talks into something that fit their agenda – that she was now in the palms of bankers and moneymen; that she was now under their control.

She continues to talk about the differences between the Clinton Foundation and the Trump Foundation; how one was a philanthropic force in the world while the latter was “little more than a personal piggy bank.” Clinton continues to talk about the reasons why she felt she should not run for the Presidency; one of the reasons being that she enjoyed being a Grandmother. In these chapters, she laments the lengths that the GOP had gone over the years to stoke the public’s fear and distrust in government and then, after having rejected several means to improve the lives of people such as through expanding Medicare, they are rewarded. From her words it is easy to infer how she feels about Trump and how he prefers humiliating others or how much he prefers that others do worse so that he doesn’t have to do anything better. She then goes into how the GOP “stoked the public’s fear and disappointments” and the impact of their willingness to “sabotage Barack Obama’s agenda” and the spread of misinformation. Clinton continues talking about how she began forming her campaign teams and the ups and downs they experienced during the campaign, as well as the beginnings of her plans to battle the Opioid crisis among other issues. In the second chapter of this theme, Clinton touches on the email controversy and how it affected the negative perception towards her. The last chapter under this theme, *A Day in the Life*, is self-explanatory; Clinton takes readers through the days of setting up her campaign, fund-raising events and how much she thought they were much more difficult than traditional campaign events, rallies and how she enjoyed them, her participation in roundtable events, her health scares that were exaggerated by opponents, the debates against the other Democratic nominees as well as the ones against Trump, until the day of the election.

The third theme in this book is *Sisterhood*, consisting of three chapters. As the title of the theme implies, these three chapters deal with what it means to be a woman, the first woman partner Arkansas’ oldest law firm, the first First Lady to be elected to public office as New York’s first woman senator, to the first woman from a major party running for the most powerful position in the United States. Clinton writes of how sexism and misogyny played a part in the campaign, news media and social media coverage, and in Trump and Republican rallies where there were shouts of “lock her up!” On the other side, she spoke of how much support she received from women’s organizations and how it is “deeply rewarding to be a woman in politics”. Clinton would go on to talk about

being a daughter, wife, mother and grandmother and how these affected her personal and professional life, and her attitude towards running for office.

The fourth theme in the book, begins by acknowledging the challenges Clinton faced being perceived as a candidate who was protecting the status Quo. In this section Clinton begins by talking about the gun epidemic and the role of the NRA in the Presidential campaign. She spoke of mass shootings and how mothers of victims would form support groups to help each other. Then there is the ongoing struggle of having NRA and gun manufacturers accept responsibility for the deaths caused by guns. In addition, she talks about the need to strengthen the current gun laws including the need for better background checks. Clinton then goes on to talk about her activism, both past and present, particularly her push for healthcare reform in the nineties.

In *Frustration* begins the recollections about the Presidential Campaign, why she lost the election, and she goes in-depth on the aftermath of that loss. She starts the chapter with one of her low points in the campaign trail; the right-wing outlets focused on her words “we’re going to put our coal miners and coal companies out of business” and took them out of context. These chapters then go on to the infamous emails and the Russian interference in the Presidential Election. Here Clinton explains her affinity for the blue-collar, working class Americans and how she understood their plight for example, Loss of jobs, reduced opportunities – even though she admitted that she hadn’t relayed her feelings during the campaign. It was something that hindered her since many people who could be categorized as blue-collar saw her as someone who didn’t understand what they were going through. According to Clinton’s own words in the book, she had many ideas on how to improve the situation of blue-collar workers and the towns and cities where they lived if she became President. She then went on to the actions of the FBI and Federal Agencies, during this time. She then went on to explain what the Trump team did as they took advantage of the situation while the Russians continued their efforts to interfere in the election. Clinton also touched on the role played by Trump team’s alleged collaboration with Wikileaks in addition to any collaboration between the latter and Russia. She even suggests four steps that could be taken to meet the threat from Russia and other unscrupulous actors and protect democracy. This section ends with election night and, from

her words, readers are able to feel her frustration and disbelief as Trump broke the so-called Blue Wall and became the President-elect before she begins the post-mortem of her campaign and why she lost.

The final chapters deal with Clinton's defeat and her reactions before discovering that she should move forward instead of dwelling more on the past. The book fulfils what she set out to do. She examines her defeat, her reactions, offers suggestions on what to do from the election onwards, and how to deal with the Trump years. She highlights how vulnerable the American electoral system is to outside interference and posits that it is very possible for outsiders such as the Russians to interfere once again in 2020. The book is an essential read if a reader desires a point of view perspective on the 2016 Presidential election in the United States of America.



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