

**Multiculturalism or  
Cultural Amnesia?  
Why America and Britain  
Must Preserve Their  
Identity for the Coming  
Experience Economy**

African Journal of Stability  
& Development  
Vol 17 No. 1, April 2025  
pp. 754-759

Uzoma Ugochukwu Nwoke, Ph.D<sup>1</sup>, Adewale Gbolagade  
Adediran<sup>2</sup> and Mojisola Amenze Ogbeide-Ihamã<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract**

This commentary examines the evolving nature of culture in the 21st century, positioning culture as a dynamic force driving soft power and the *experience* economy. It raises critical questions: Should liberal democracies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, uphold their historical cultural identities amidst increasing multiculturalism? Or does this lead to the erosion of their foundational values? The paper argues that both nations possess distinct, valuable identities rooted in their historical and political systems. While

- 
1. Department of Intelligence and Security Studies, Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria; [uzomanwoke08@gmail.com](mailto:uzomanwoke08@gmail.com); <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8660-5603>.
  2. Open and Distance Learning, Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria; [adewalegbola2015@gmail.com](mailto:adewalegbola2015@gmail.com); <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2053-0602>.
  3. Department of Languages and Literary Studies, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti; [ogbeideihamama@abuad.edu.ng](mailto:ogbeideihamama@abuad.edu.ng); <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6097-5657>

acknowledging multiculturalism's role in promoting diversity, the commentary cautions against cultural dilution when the host nation's values cease to be prioritised. The commentary proposes a managed pluralism approach, drawing lessons from nations that balance international engagement with preserving core identity, suggesting this is crucial for these democracies to maintain influence in a world that increasingly values cultural experiences over the purchase of goods and services.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, Experience Economy, America, United Kingdom, Soft Power

### **Multiculturalism vs. Cultural Nationalism**

Culture, broadly defined, is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, practices, and material traits that characterise a group, society, or civilisation (Williams, 1983). In the 21st century, culture has become more than a static identity; it is now a dynamic driver of soft power, ideological projection, and what Pine and Gilmore (1999) call the 'experience economy,' where individuals consume not just products or services, but immersive cultural experiences that shape meaning and belonging. At the crossroad of these shifts is a controversial question: Should liberal democracies, such as the United States and United Kingdom, maintain and project their historical cultural and value systems amid increasing multicultural pressures, or does multiculturalism erode and eventually undermine those systems? Contrary to the frequent assertion that America lacks a definitive culture, there is overwhelming evidence that it possesses a vibrant, evolving, and highly exportable cultural identity shaped by Enlightenment ideals, liberal democracy, market capitalism, Protestant work ethic, civil religion, and constitutionalism (Huntington, 2004; Bellah, 1967). These values have historically served as ideological scaffolds upon which modern freedoms, innovation, and cultural expressions have flourished. In the same vein, Britain's identity, which is rooted in parliamentary democracy, Common Law, the English language, and its historic monarchy, has shaped global governance models and inspired entire legal and educational systems across continents (Kumar, 2003).

However, the postmodern era, marked by mass migration, cultural relativism, and global connectivity, has sparked a fierce debate over the nature and trajectory of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism is celebrated for promoting inclusion and diversity (Kymlicka, 1995), scholars like Schlesinger (1991) and Gitlin (1995) have warned that it can devolve into cultural fragmentation or even cultural dilution when the host nation's values are no longer privileged or defended. In their critique, multiculturalism risks becoming not an expansion of shared values but a zero-sum game that gradually replaces and deconstructs the dominant culture in the name of accommodation, resulting in a form of soft cultural subjugation (Miller, 1995; Fukuyama, 2018).

This discussion necessitates a moral clarification that is often overlooked in multicultural debates: not all cultures are equally beneficial to humanity. While every culture may have intrinsic value to its people, some are repressive, anti-humanistic, and fundamentally incompatible with universal human rights (Sen, 1999; Sachedina, 2001). Cultural practices that suppress women, restrict freedom of thought, criminalise dissent, or enforce hierarchical caste systems may be normalised within certain traditions but cannot be morally equated with the liberal democratic values of the U.S. and Britain, thus, values that have fostered personal freedoms, technological innovation, humanitarian interventions, and global prosperity (Zakaria, 2003; Berlin, 1969). The world has undeniably benefitted from the cultural and ideological exports of Western liberalism, and this legacy must not be abandoned in the face of relativistic pressures.

This raises a crucial distinction between multiculturalism and cultural nationalism. Contrary to popular dichotomies, cultural nationalism does not necessarily equate to isolationism or xenophobia. Rather, it represents an affirmation of a society's historical narrative, continuity, and core values, while carefully managing foreign cultural influences (Smith, 1991). Gulf nations, particularly the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, offer compelling models of this balance. These countries have welcomed international tourism, education, finance, and labour while maintaining Arabic language policies, Islamic jurisprudence, dress codes, and traditional festivals (Davidson, 2008; Ghabra, 2010). The Gulf's strategic use of curated multiculturalism, rather than open-ended pluralism, has preserved its core identity while leveraging foreign cultures for economic and diplomatic gain.

In contrast, some in America (USA) and Britain increasingly feel alienated from or even ashamed of their cultural legacy, a phenomenon aggravated by identity politics, historical revisionism, and institutional self-censorship (Zemmour, 2022; Furedi, 2006). Cultural shame is a dangerous precursor to cultural erosion, for it undermines intergenerational transmission of values, weakens civic cohesion, and invites ideological vacuums that foreign or extremist actors may exploit (Huntington, 2004; Scruton, 2014). Historical examples abound: the decline of Roman civic values after waves of unmanaged cultural assimilation; the Persian Empire's gradual absorption of Hellenistic culture; or the erosion of indigenous North American traditions following colonisation and assimilation policies (Toynbee, 1934; Diamond, 2005).

This cultural erosion carries serious implications for global security, civil peace, and the experience economy. Cultures that offer powerful stories, rituals, and symbols can sustain societal cohesion and project influence through soft power tools like films, festivals, education, sports, and tourism (Nye, 2004; Florida, 2005). Britain's royal pageantry and Shakespearean legacy, America's Super Bowl and Hollywood, or the Gulf's camel festivals and Islamic architecture are all cultural experiences that not only entertain and educate but also serve as ideational scaffolds for projecting political and moral orders (Tomlinson, 1999; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). If these events lose their cultural moorings, they risk becoming hollow without meaning or influence, especially in a time when people value experiences rather than goods or services. Thus, America and Britain may lose in the coming experience economy.

In this context, the preservation and projection of the U.S and British culture is not simply a matter of nostalgia but a strategic imperative for global influence. Without clear cultural anchors, experiential events lose narrative power; without ideological clarity, soft power becomes incoherent. Maintaining cultural continuity, while embracing select multicultural inputs, is necessary to ensure that liberal democracies remain ideational and experiential beacons in a contested global order. As Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue, experiences are most powerful when they are authentic, and authenticity requires rootedness in culture. This commentary thus calls for a redefinition of multiculturalism, not as a surrender of core values, but as a

culturally intelligent strategy of managed pluralism; one that ensures the U.S and British cultures are not just preserved, but enhanced and projected for the benefit of the world.

### **Ethical Consideration**

From an ethical standpoint, this commentary raises some thought-provoking points about cultural identity and its preservation. While advocating for the maintenance of core cultural values in the face of multiculturalism, it implicitly navigates a sensitive territory. A key ethical consideration lies in how one defines and prioritises “core” cultural values without veering into exclusionary or discriminatory stances. The commentary touches upon the idea that not all cultures are equally beneficial for humanity, which, while a valid point for academic discussion, requires careful framing to avoid reducing or devaluing minority cultures. Ensuring that the proposed ‘managed pluralism’ respects the rights and contributions of all residents, regardless of their cultural background, is paramount. The ethical challenge is to foster a sense of shared national identity that is inclusive and forward-looking, rather than relying on uncritical adherence to historical norms or risking the marginalisation of communities.

### **References**

- Bellah, R. N. (1967). Civil religion in America. *Daedalus*, 96(1), 1–21.
- Berlin, I. (1969). *Two concepts of liberty*. Oxford University Press.
- Davidson, C. M. (2008). *Dubai: The vulnerability of success*. Columbia University Press.
- Diamond, J. (2005). *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed*. Penguin.
- Florida, R. (2005). *The flight of the creative class*. HarperBusiness.
- Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Furedi, F. (2006). *Where have all the intellectuals gone?* Continuum.
- Ghabra, S. (2010). The rise of Gulf tourism and identity. *Middle East Journal*, 64(3), 521–535.
- Gilmore, J. H., & Pine, B. J. (2007). *Authenticity: What consumers really want*. Harvard Business Press.
- Gitlin, T. (1995). *The twilight of common dreams: Why America is wracked by culture wars*. Henry Holt.

- Huntington, S. P. (2004). *Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity*. Simon & Schuster.
- Kumar, K. (2003). *The making of English national identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Miller, D. (1995). *On nationality*. Oxford University Press.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Harvard Business Press.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2011). *The experience economy: Updated edition*. Harvard Business Press.
- Sachedina, A. (2001). *The Islamic roots of democratic pluralism*. Oxford University Press.
- Schlesinger, A. M. Jr. (1991). *The disuniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. W. W. Norton.
- Scruton, R. (2014). *How to be a conservative*. Bloomsbury.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Smith, A. D. (1991). *National identity*. University of Nevada Press.
- Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. University of Chicago Press.
- Toynbee, A. J. (1934). *A study of history*. Oxford University Press.
- Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. Oxford University Press.
- Zakaria, F. (2003). *The future of freedom: Illiberal democracy at home and abroad*. W. W. Norton.
- Zemmour, E. (2022). *France has not said its last word*. Politics and Prose Press.