

Chapter 24: Culture in world affairs

- Culture defines the identity of individuals in a society. A culture is composed of the customs, norms, and genres that inform social life. Religion remains a key influence.
- Civilization is the broadest form of cultural identity, and represents a level of identity that may spread across nations and states.
- Cultural groups often define themselves by representing different cultures as alien, or as the 'Other'.
- The West has been the dominant civilization in the modern age, and all other civilizations have had to deal with its influence, whether welcome or not.
- The end of the cold war heightened the significance of cultural identity. The hegemony of the West and of its liberal-capitalism challenged the culture and social order of most societies. Globalization also fostered multicultural landscapes across the world.
- The new wave of globalization has met local resistance in some places from those seeking to preserve their cultures from unbridled change. Religious revivalism has been a global phenomenon since the 1970s.
- Religious fundamentalism has become the most important cause of domestic and international terrorism in many parts of the world.
- As the cold war came to an end, a discourse was led by Samuel Huntington which suggested that a 'Clash of Civilizations' was about to become the principal cause of international conflict.
- The impact of the West has been the principal issue facing Islamic civilization since the eighteenth century. Muslim modernizers sought to imitate the West, but the performance of the secular state disappointed many in much of the Middle East.
- A crisis of modernization exists in many Muslim societies. Poor economic performance has left large numbers of the urban population poor and frustrated.
- Islam remains a powerful influence in the Muslim world. When secular states faltered, Islam was there to fill the vacuum of leadership.
- Islam militants have embraced a cultural conflict with the West. In the 1980s, the Iranian Revolution led militant Islamists against the West. In the 1990s, the Sunni Islamists of the Al Qaeda network took up the torch.
- Islamic movements are suspicious of the global, but the pressures to be pragmatic are strong. The Iranian Revolution is a good example of how political and economic realities can force compromise on Islamists.

- Islam does not have a common voice. Muslims meet the forces of globalization in different ways. Muslim societies will continue to change in the twenty-first century.