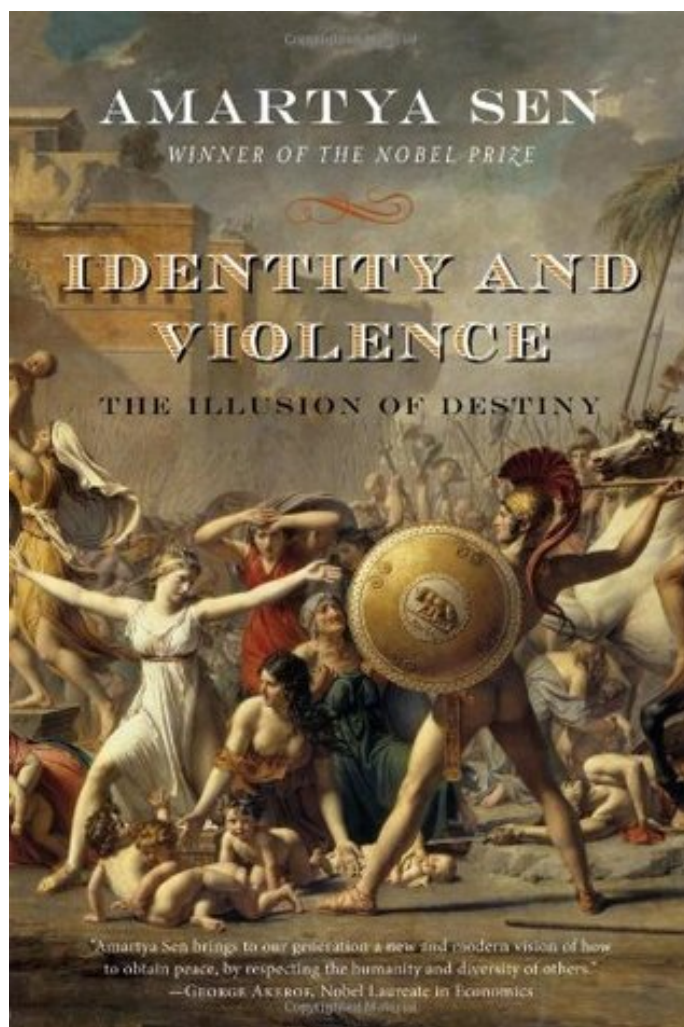


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## Amartya Sen

### Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny



Title: Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny

Author: Amartya Sen

Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 240

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## Description

In this sweeping philosophical work, Amartya Sen proposes that the murderous violence that has riven our society is driven as much by confusion as by inescapable hatred. Challenging the reductionist division of people by race, religion, and class, Sen presents an inspiring vision of a world that can be made to move toward peace as firmly as it has spiraled in recent years toward brutality and war.

## Insightful reviews

Elliot Ratzman: In this hastily written/edited book, the award-winning economist-philosopher Amartya Sen counters both the “clash of civilizations” thesis and the reductionist claims of fundamentalists and nationalists. Both extremes believe that humans have a primary identity—whether religious or nation—which determines (or should determine) the shape of civilization and one’s primary allegiances. This tendency also shows up among postcolonial critics who sometimes blame “The West” to justify their rejection of democracy, AIDS drugs, gay rights, etc. Arguing for many identities and hybrid cultures he asserts the primacy of reason and choice as universal tools for flourishing against an uncritical acceptance of isolated and unchanging traditions. Sen is most useful when discussing juicy examples of cross-cultural influences, Indian history and economics. Most of his examples, though, come from the realm of “elite culture”. With its decency and commonsense, the book is quite assignable for undergrads.

Th?y Phan: It is indeed a useful and informative book discussing Sen’s view on human identities. In his respect opposing Huntington’s view in “Clash of Civilizations”, human identities should not and cannot be boxed based solely on civilization as a basic factor because this only leads to less understanding between people, causes more violence and resistance around the world. Rather than that, one should take many other factors into account, for instance, education, choice and history in order to find the most possible resolution to remedy the situation.

Although can be seen as a useful and informative book, I found it sort of boring because the author’s point keeps being repeated over and over and its supporting ideas are not so well-organized. I expected more than that.

Khalil James: Though a bit repetitive for my liking this publication provides several important discussions regarding "resisting the miniturization of human beings", some of which include:

1. the neglected role of reasoning and choice in Identity, in particular the "substantial freedom regarding what priority to give the various identities we may simultaneously have" - a heterogeneity undermined by cultural determinists and sectarian inciters alike, with grave consequences.
2. the importance of cultural liberty as opposed to simply cultural diversity, as the pursuit of the



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