

RECOMMENDED READING

Politics, Religion and the Global Community

REVIEWED BY BOWEN H. "BUZZ" MCCOY, CRE



**America at the Crossroads:
Democracy, Power and the
Neoconservative Legacy**
*by Francis Fukuyama (2006, Yale
University Press, New Haven,
Conn., 240 pages)*

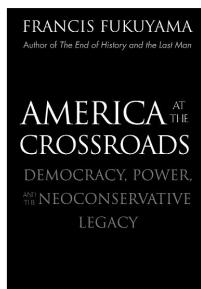
FRANCIS FUKUYAMA—the
Bernard L. Schwartz Professor of
International Political Economy

and director of the International Development Program at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies—has written widely on political and economic development. His previous books include *State-*

Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century (2004, Cornell University Press) and *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992, Simon & Schuster).

He considers himself a neoconservative and has friendships and working relationships with others who, he thought, shared his views, including former U.S. Deputy Secretary of

Defense Paul Wolfowitz, national security strategist Albert Wohlstetter, author Alan Bloom and *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol. The book, more a long essay, is based on lectures Fukuyama gave at Yale University in spring 2005. His criticism of the Iraq conflict has put him at odds with many of his former associates.



Fukuyama argues that the announcement of a broad pre-emptive doctrine and the invasion of Iraq were not obvious responses to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Most controversial was President George W. Bush's emphasis on regime change in Iraq and the assertion of U.S. exceptionalism, which gave the Bush administration the duty to take care of the terrorist problem. In addition, Fukuyama asserts that Bush and his advisors gave little thought to post-war reconstruction.

MORAL, POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES ARE KEY CONCERNs

What precisely is a neoconservative? Fukuyama specifies four common characteristics:

- A concern with democracy, human rights and the internal policies of foreign states
- A belief that U. S. power can be used for moral purposes
- A skepticism about the ability of international law and institutions to solve serious security problems
- A view that ambitious social engineering often leads to unexpected consequences and undermines its own ends

About the Columnist

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Neoconservatism can be viewed as in contrast with:

- Realists in the tradition of Henry Kissinger, who respect power and tend to downplay the internal natures of other regimes and human-rights concerns.
- Liberal internationalists, who hope to transcend power politics and move to an international order based on law and institutions.
- Jacksonian American nationalists, who tend to take a narrow security-related view of national interests, distrust multilateralism and tend toward isolationism.

Unlike realists, liberal internationalists and Jacksonians, Fukuyama describes himself as a Wilsonian neoconservative, relying more heavily on the role of multi-national organizations.

Ironically, Fukuyama indicates that neoconservatism originated from a small group of liberals, mostly Jewish and New York-based, who were converted to conservative thought by the threat of the Soviet Union. Shortly afterward, opposition to utopian social engineering entered the political sphere, led by former U.S. Sen. Daniel Moynihan, political scientist James Q. Wilson and author Charles Murray, among others. This influential group opposed policies related to state interference, including forced busing, and argued that affirmative action carried negative consequences, welfare corroded the character of the poor, and physical surroundings such as graffiti and broken windows contributed to increased crime rates.

On a larger scale, regime change, even by force, became a neoconservative policy. Yet regimes shape and are shaped by the societies underlying them. The unwritten rules by which people operate—based on religion, kinships and shared historical experience—also are part of the regime. Founding a new political order is, thus, a difficult business, especially for those who are not immersed in the habits, mores and traditions of the people for whom they are legislating.

Probably incorrectly, the models of Germany and Japan were used to predict the multi-national troop force's welcome in Iraq. What was forgotten was that in both nations the defeat and feelings of guilt for war crimes was so deep that each experienced not only a regime change, but also a deep cultural shift including a ten-

dency toward pacifism. In Iraq, to date, the regime change has done little but to release pre-existing cultural tensions.

NEOCONSERVATIVES POINT TO THE RISE OF DEMOCRACY AND FALL OF COMMUNISM

His previous book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, has been interpreted to mean that the inexorable power of modernization and democracy will cause all totalitarian regimes to eventually fall, leaving the world more like the West in general and the United States in particular.

Though Poland and other states have embraced democracy, these rapid transitions are the exception, not the rule. At one time, popular belief was that the contagious appeal of democracy and the importance of U.S. power would prompt a global conversion to democracy. The modern-day reality, however, is that neither is persuasive in all cases, and most Americans do not believe that the exceptionalism of the United States gives it the duty to govern the world.

The collapse of communism reinforced the neoconservative point of view. In a beautifully written passage, Fukuyama writes:

“But great leadership often involves putting aside self-doubt, bucking conventional wisdom and listening only to an inner voice that tells you the right things to do. That is the essence of strong character. The problem is that bad leadership can flow from the same characteristics: steely determination can become stubbornness; the willingness to flout conventional wisdom can amount to a lack of common sense; the inner voice can become delusional. The fact that one was proven unexpectedly right under a surprising set of circumstances does not necessarily mean that one will be right the next time around. It probably does mean, however, that one will be psychologically handicapped in recognizing that one is wrong in future cases.”

Fukuyama also discusses *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, by Oliver Roy, which asserts that we are not engaged in a worldwide clash of civilizations, but rather with a group of alienated and uprooted young people in Hamburg, London or Amsterdam who see

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jihad as the answer to a personal search for identity. If Roy's thesis is true, the major battlegrounds are as likely to evolve in Western Europe as in the Middle East. Many European countries will face stronger threats than the United States. Rather than field armies, counter-terrorism will become the work of intelligence agencies and police.

A failure of the neoconservatives in Iraq would no doubt lead to a return to realism, a la Kissinger, and less intervention—and perhaps even a return to isolation-

climate similar to pre-World War I years, and could spur the formation of coalitions of former enemies and current friends who are horrified at the role the U.S. has come to play in world hegemony.

No one would deny that fulfillment of President Bush's vision of a democratic, well educated, economically secure, peace-loving Middle East—of which Iraq would be the showcase—would be highly desirable.

Unfortunately, even if the situation ends positively, it likely will be messy and ambiguous.

"Francis Fukuyama here gives the most lucid and knowledgeable account of the neoconservative vision of America's place and role in world affairs, and where it has overreached disastrously. He argues effectively for an American foreign policy more aware of the limits of American power, less depended on the military, and more respectful of the interests and opinions of other countries and emerging international norms and institutions."

—Nathan Glazer, professor emeritus
Harvard University

ism. This shift would mean a demilitarization of U.S. foreign policy. Preventive war and regime change would stay in the list of options, but only as very extreme measures. The global war on terrorism overstates the scope of the problem, suggesting the United States is taking on a large part of the Arab and Muslim worlds. U.S. power often is the most effective when it is invisible, Fukuyama writes; thus, policymakers should rely more on soft power.

SUCCESS COULD STILL LEAD TO INSTABILITY

My own comments include the obvious fact that Fukuyama does not consider the possibility of neoconservative strategies succeeding in Iraq. We will pass over defining what constitutes success but, if achieved, one outcome could be a rolling series of preemptive wars and regime changes including power shifts in the so-called evil states of Iran, North Korea and Syria, among others.

In this instance, the United States' self-perceived exceptionalism could indeed be perceived as governing the world. This perception, in turn, could yield a political

It appears to me that Fukuyama's call for less military activity and more diplomacy is becoming reality, at least in part. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has traveled far more frequently than former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and perhaps more effectively. She seems to favor the soft approach, at least initially. The Pentagon, meanwhile, is beginning to realize the limits of the military and, perhaps, beginning to withdraw from the theory that it can fight two regional wars simultaneously.

Overall, Fukuyama seems to have shifted from a militaristic world-power view to a more Hegelian dialectic of gradual, sometimes destructive, evolution.¹ In Fukuyama's last two books, he argues both sides brilliantly.

America at the Crossroads gives fresh ammunition to all those opposed to U.S. military action in Iraq. For those who support a role for the power and cultural values of the United States as a part of the world order, the book presents a challenging test of the intellectual premises underlying their point of view.