

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE END OF HISTORY?

In the summer of 1989, an obscure Deputy Director at the State Department wrote an article in an obscure (to most folks anyway) journal, *The National Interest*, titled “The End of History?” The author’s name was Francis Fukuyama, and the publication of this 15 page treatise resulted in an extraordinary amount of commentary and controversy, first in the U.S. and subsequently in Western Europe, the Soviet Union, Brazil, South Africa, Japan and South Korea.

The obscure bureaucrat became a minor celebrity.

In the article, Fukuyama argued that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and more recently, communism. However, he went beyond that limited analysis, and argued that liberal democracy may constitute the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and the “final form of human government,: and, as such, constituted the “end of history. That is, while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions. This did not mean that (then) stable democracies like the United States, France, or Switzerland, were without injustice or serious social problems, but that these were problems of incomplete implementation of the twin principles of liberty and equality on which modern democracy is founded. These problems were not representative of flaws in the principles themselves but of the ability of humans to put the principles into practice.

Furthermore, Fukuyama did not contend that there would cease to be history, defined as events, or series of events. Rivalries, wars, torture, totalitarian governments, religious strife, ethnic conflict or governments other than liberal, western-style democracy (though perhaps assimilated, adapted and grafted upon an existing different culture, such as Japan or India), would continue to exist. However, he saw these conflicts, alternatives and crises as not proof that history had not ended, but rather as “bumps along the way” in the evolutionary process.

Fukuyama subsequently, in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), expanded upon, and clarified his argument, which is divided into two (long) parts. The first is empirical, and deals with the notion of History, with a capital “H”, rather than history, which is simply the happening of events. Upper case History refers to the teleological dimension of history. Again, he stated that capitalism is ultimately the only viable economic system in the modern world and that all states must ultimately adopt free market capitalism. He failed to find, however, that there was a necessary connection between free market capitalism and the emergence of democracy, and acknowledged that when a state is first moving towards capitalism, autocracy may be necessary to force the participants into overcoming the early and pain and difficulty of change. As an essential part of all this, science and technology acts as a “regulator or mechanism to explain the

directionality and coherence of history.” All human societies, regardless of their cultural or historical make-up, are inevitably drawn into a global consumer culture.

The second part of his argument results from Fukuyama not finding the first argument complete, or compelling. Therefore he developed his philosophical, theoretical, trans-historical standard for judging history. This standard he identified as “thymos”, which he defines as “desire for recognition,” though, to Plato, who Fukuyama acknowledged as the origin of this concept, it meant “spiritedness.” In Plato’s *Republic*, thymos was just one of three parts of the soul. There was also a desiring part and a reasoning part. For Fukuyama, liberal capitalist democracy is the only form of society that can fully satisfy our longings for “thymos.: Communism could not because it humiliates and suppresses thymos.”

Why, you might ask would I now, some 16 years later be interested in revisiting this article, other than that I was unable to come up with any really good topic?

Those in the Academy whose membership dates back 16 years or more, may recall that my first paper was, in fact, an attempt at analysis of Fukuyama’s article. At the time it was written, it had become apparent that the communist states in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe were unraveling, and that the Cold War was coming to an end.

Fukuyama, who had started the article a few years earlier, seemed prescient. However, events since 1989 have caused many, including Fukuyama himself, to re-examine his thesis. I obtained a degree in International Relations from UCLA, and have maintained an interest in foreign affairs and history, and not just with a ‘lower case’ h. I was interested in Fukuyama’s thesis, initially because, as a part of my undergraduate education, I studied history and politics from the perspective of the Cold War, with the discussions of the broader theoretical bases of nations, or states, being focused on communism, as implemented in the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, and U.S. capitalism. The ideas and ideal of a European Economic Community, let alone of a European Court of Justice, were just emerging and beginning to attain some legitimacy and followers. I had limited exposure to Hegel and Kojeve(whose ideas and writings formed the basis of Fukuyama’s treatise), and had given little thought to History as an evolutionary process, or in the philosophical sense.

This year, while contemplating various topics which I might present in this paper, I revisited Fukuyama’s original article, and wondered if, in light of subsequent events, and particularly after 9/11, it was now perceived as having any legitimacy, or whether, in fact, Fukuyama himself might have repudiated his prior thesis.

It was considerably easier to research and find information about Fukuyama, his writings, the writings of his supporters and detractors, now than it was when I wrote the first paper. To digress for a moment, I chose *The End of History?* for my first presentation, as a result of having read a short reference to it in *Newsweek*. Inasmuch as this occurred several months after the publication of the article itself, and in a not widely distributed journal, I had to call on one of my friends in a large Los Angeles law firm, who had an in-house librarian, to locate and obtain a copy of the article for me. Finding other writer’s articles about

Fukuyama's thesis was even more of a challenge, as a result of which I had very little benefit from others' analyses in presenting my own views. If the articles and others about it were then accessible via the Internet, I was oblivious to it. My own use of the Internet for research was not in even its incipient stages. What a difference when I started the inquiry into Fukuyama's thesis and its evolution since 1989. Now the problem was how to sort, sift, assimilate and condense all of the information into an arguably coherent paper.

As indicated in the beginning of this paper, Fukuyama's idea was both ridiculed and hailed around the world as naïve, insightful, ignorant, brilliant, reactionary, and cutting edge.

In response to his detractors, Fukuyama wrote many additional articles (and books) and gave many speeches and presentations. The massacre at Tiananmen Square, the re-emergence of nationalism, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the disintegration of Yugoslavia were some of the initial "historical" events which led many to conclude that Fukuyama got it all wrong when he declared the end of History. Fukuyama, however, did not see any of these events as undermining his thesis. Indeed, he saw them as just more lower-case history, which his article had indicated would not cease with peace and goodwill and liberal democracy everywhere thereafter. Fukuyama argued, "look around, what system competes with liberal democracy? Even totalitarian and authoritarian nations feel the need to use words like democracy and competition and rights." Systems that are confident in their staying power don't borrow concepts from other systems for public relations purposes. To Fukuyama, the issue isn't whether other systems can compete in the realm of economic output, or "doing good"; the issue was whether the people living in the other systems such as dictatorships, monarchies, or people's republics believed that their own system was legitimate.

Many other authorities in international relations in 1989 and 1990 believed that China was becoming westernized only in the sense of seeking to improve its economic position through increased productivity and profitability, and saw the massacre at Tiananmen Square as proof that there was not a historical movement towards liberal democracy. Fukuyama saw Tiananmen Square as support for his analysis. Despite the fact that the old leaders of China, wedded to their form of totalitarian governance, had begun to put into effect economic reforms to help improve economic conditions and the material aspect of Chinese life, an increase in their standard of living and the diversification of opportunities was not all that the citizens longed for and sought. To Fukuyama, the existence and public expression of what he saw as mankind's desire for recognition, despite the improvements in the economic aspects of Chinese life, was proof that there was a yearning and impetus toward something bigger, and more important than just materialism and the end of the day to day struggle to exist.

Likewise, Fukuyama saw the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the genocide of Kosovo, and the intervention by a coalition of western, liberal countries, as consistent with his view of History. He did not foretell an end to cultural, religious or ethnic strife,

but simply saw these as “blips” along the way, resulting in a detour, but not terminus of the road to the liberal democratic ideals for the Balkans.

In short, Fukuyama saw that none of these events were significant enough to indicate that he had been wrong in his conclusion that History was at its end. He still saw the end of History as the evolutionary process of humans seeking recognition not only of their own worth, but of the people, things or principles that they invest with worth. This desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of shame (when they fail to live up to their worth); anger (when others treat them as though they have less worth); and pride (when they are correctly evaluated in terms of their worth), leads them to seek liberal democracy. Borrowing from Hegel, Fukuyama concluded in *The End of History and the Last Man*, this desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of shame, anger and pride, drive the whole historical process. While desire and reason are sufficient to explain industrialization, and economic life more generally, they do not explain the striving for liberal democracy, which he concludes can only be explained by thymos, the desire for recognition. If people were nothing more than desire and reason, they would have been content to live in market-oriented authoritarian states such as Spain, South Korea or Brazil under military rule.

So far, so good. Despite all of the events which transpired in the first dozen years after his original article, Fukuyama was steadfast in his analysis and belief.

Then came 9/11 and Fukuyama, like most Americans, tried to understand the meaning of 9/11 and how the world changed as a result of it.. Fukuyama acknowledged that September 11 would seem to qualify, prima facie, as a historical event, and many others believed that it was an event that not only destroyed Fukuyama’s conclusion, but lent great authority to a competing hypothesis, exemplified by Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*. Huntington’s view of the future was that, rather than progressing toward a single global system, there would be six or seven major cultural groups which would coexist without converging and would constitute the new fracture lines of global conflict.

While Fukuyama, in *The End of History and the Last Man* had given little attention to religious or cultural differences, as giving rise to competing Historical truths. These were dismissed as part of the areas of the world still mired in history. Huntington in “*The Clash of Civilizations*” had identified the Muslim predilection toward violent conflict as the most important challenge to world peace and American power. This analysis was based upon his vision of a civilization state of nature where hatred is rife and true friendship rare. Huntington saw the problem for the West not in Islamic Fundamentalism, but in Islam, “a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture, and obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture.

When *The Clash of Civilization* was first published in 1996, a few years after *The End of History and the Last Man*, it, too, was widely discussed, and widely excoriated. Then, when the hijacked planes were flown into the World Trade Center, it appeared to many that Huntington's prediction of the future as a clash of cultures, with much strife and violence, was correct, and Fukuyama had clearly gotten it wrong. Before September 11th, Fukuyama had dismissed Islamic fundamentalism as having virtually no appeal outside of countries that were not Muslim to begin with, despite its "pretensions of being a universal religion." He did, however, see that it threatened the West only insofar as countries like France and West Germany needed to deal with difficult to assimilate immigrant populations, or when those countries clash with Islamic groups on a national or subnational level (i.e. terrorism). To him, a plausible explanation of the strength of fundamentalism is as a reaction to the powerful appeal of liberalism in its initial encounter with the Islamic world. Thus, for Fukuyama, Islamic fundamentalism was not evidence of the weakness of his thesis, it was proof that some parts of the third world, including much of Islam, remained "mired in history" and resisted the evolutionary process.

After 9/11, Fukuyama wrote several articles and gave speeches in which he addressed the significance of September 11th to his theory, noting in his article of October 5, 2001, *History Is Still Going Our Way* (opinion journal.com) that these events had led many to conclude that he was "utterly wrong." He cited as examples, George Will, who had asserted that history had returned from vacation, and Fareed Zakaria who had declared the end of the end of history. However, Fukuyama yet believed that he was right: "Modernity is a very powerful freight train that will not be derailed by recent events, however painful and unprecedented. Democracy and free markets will continue to expand over time as the dominant organizing principles for much of the world."

However, he found it worthwhile to think about the true scope of the challenge. In this same article, he noted that while Huntington thought that the institutions of modernity will work only in the West, he believed there was a broader appeal that allows them to make progress in non-Western societies. At the same time, he acknowledged that there was something about at least the fundamentalist versions of Islam, which were dominant in recent years, that makes Muslim societies resistant to modernity. Of all contemporary cultural systems, the Islamic world has the fewest democracies, with only Turkey qualifying. And it has no countries that have made the transition from Third to First World status in the manner of South Korea or Singapore.

Fukuyama went on to note that there were many non-Western people who prefer the economic and technological part of modernity, and hope to have it without accepting democratic politics or Western cultural values (as China or Singapore). Others like both the economic and political versions of modernity, but can't figure out how to make it happen, with Russia as the prime example. However, unlike the Islamic world, these countries (which constitute four-fifths of the world's population) have no insuperable cultural barriers which are likely to prevent them from getting there. Islam is the only cultural system that seems to regularly produce people like Osama bin Laden or the Taliban, who reject modernity lock, stock and barrel. If this rejection is inherent in Islam

and is representative of the larger Muslim community, then Fukuyama concedes that Huntington is right that we are in for a protracted conflict made dangerous by virtue of their technological development. Nonetheless, Fukuyama concludes that radical Islam doesn't constitute a serious alternative to Western liberal democracy, even for Muslims themselves. Political Islam has, in his view, proven much more appealing in the abstract than in reality. After a quarter century of rule by fundamentalist clerics, most Iranians, and particularly most everyone under 30, would like to live in a far more liberal society. Afghans who experienced life under the Taliban have much the same view. Even if there is a widespread hatred of Americans and everything American in the Islamic world, Fukuyama concludes that it does not translate into a viable political program for Muslim societies. Islamic fundamentalism is to Fukuyama, a series of rearguard actions by societies whose traditional existence is threatened by modernization, but time and resources are on the side of modernity.

Since the publication of *The End of History and The Last Man*, Fukuyama has been recognized as one of the leading neo-conservatives. In 1998 he, along with other neo-cons who are highly recognizable today, including Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld and John Bolton, sent a letter to President Bill Clinton urging him to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein from Iraq by adopting a much more aggressive policy than containment. At the time the letter was written, only Fukuyama and Rumsfeld had significant name-recognition. We now know the position of all of the others who signed the 1998 letter on the invasion of Iraq.

Does Fukuyama have the same position, and has Iraq changed his view of the *End of History*?

The answer is no, and no, but with qualifications.

Shortly after the U.S. forces invaded Iraq, Fukuyama maintained that while he signed the letter, he did not sign up for what happened, noting that "The letter did not say you should go ahead unilaterally, that you can do this in contempt of the views of the rest of the world. I don't think Iraq is the single most serious problem in the world and that therefore you can subordinate all of your alliances relationships and goodwill with the rest of the world to do this. It is not a good trade-off."

In light of the neo-conservative view, as articulated by Fukuyama, that Arab states are "stuck in history" it would seem that he would support regime change in Iraq by virtue of American military intervention as a way to establish an alternative model. Instead, he rejects the view that America can create democracy abroad. He notes that the U.S. has never created democracy abroad. "The people who live in a society that want it have created democracy. The U.S. can't decide it simply wants to democratize this part of the world, it has to build on internal discourse that is pushing in that direction." Immediately after the invasion, and long before the current developments in Iraq, Fukuyama saw that there were incorrect analogies to Eastern Europe. In Eastern Europe, western-style liberal democracies had developed after the fall of communism, but those forces for the creation of democracy had been in existence, and did not require

the U.S. or any other country creating them or imposing them. Even in Eastern Europe not all countries arrived at their goal at the same time or in the same way. He saw the same result not likely in Iraq, and that the U.S., by forcing the pace, is taking a very big risk by pushing in that direction. While he does not believe that we should back dictators because they are convenient to provide us oil, we ought to encourage great participation in political reform. We should maintain a level of political and practical support to civil society and human rights groups that are struggling for democracy, but ultimately we have to be patient because unless the basic impulse for democracy comes from within, it is not going to happen.

Fukuyama does not see a single global strategy that works in terms of promoting democracy, or at least more democratic institutions. He notes that sometimes it happens from the bottom up, and others from the top down, but usually to be successful it has to work both ways. There has to be an elite that wants change, though that desire can be supported and driven by popular participation, as in Chile, the Philippines and Korea where it required pressure on the top leaders to open up their systems. Pressure from civil society alone could not have caused the change. On the other hand, in the Ukraine and in Georgia, there was a big push from below that was the catalyst for change.

This is consistent with Fukuyama's thesis in his most recent book, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, published in 2004. In this book he argues that ultimately, outside players can have little impact in helping countries strengthen state institutions and more often than not, actually harm, by their political decisions, the political institutions that already exist. This analysis does not make him optimistic about the success of outside attempts to reform the countries in the Middle East.

He also recognizes that there are a lot of other components of good governance besides democratic participation. He cites Singapore as an example of a country having had non-democratic good governance. He noted that it is relatively corrupt, but focused on development, doesn't promote patronage, and is very focused on creating a state that invests in education and other genuine development goals.

Fukuyama notes further that to have democracy you have to have government. Period. You have to have a functioning state that can provide security and economic basics. It can be authoritarian and still develop, as has occurred in much of East Asia. It is over the longer term as the society grows more prosperous and there are greater social demands for participation that not having democracy becomes problematic from a development standpoint. To Fukuyama, that point is about \$6,000 per capita, as that is when the country has usually transformed itself from an agricultural, raw-materials exporting country to a largely urban, industrialized one. At that point people are less willing to tolerate authoritarian government. Not to have democracy is the basis of legitimacy in modern society. He sees this in Hong Kong today where per capital income is about \$25,000 per capita.

This analysis makes Fukuyama pessimistic about the chance of creating democracy in Iraq. The U.S. did not anticipate that the state would just collapse when Saddam fell, leaving a vacuum of sheer administrative capacity. The people who could get the water running, oil flowing, connect the phones, and provide physical security just weren't there. Fukuyama also notes that while the disappearance of the police force is a universal condition of most post-conflict situations, the Bush administration failed to anticipate that, when it should have.

He is further pessimistic about U.S. ability to build democracy in Iraq because the historical records shows that the times where a foreign power can successfully engage in state building is where the U.S. forces have stayed for at least two generations—Germany, Japan, South Korea. Where the U.S. has stayed five years or less—Haiti is a prime example—there has not been any lasting change, and the countries are often worse off because of the intervention.

For the intervention in Iraq to have had a chance of success, it had to be understood as more than just a military operation and victory. In Fukuyama's view, the U.S. should have taken its time, built a consensus among other Western democracies and worked in ways other than militarily to encourage and promote regime change. But if there was to be a military intervention that had any chance of success, the U.S. leadership would have needed to make that clear to the American people and have built a national consensus that supported not only the invasion, but being present in Iraq for a couple of generations in order to stabilize it, and hope that with stabilization would come modernity, and from modernity would grow the internal impetus for Iraq's democratization. Absent that commitment, Fukuyama predicted that Iraq would fall apart, chaos would ensue, and that it would replace Afghanistan as the primary incubator of Islamic terrorists.

Fukuyama also recognized that it often takes a commitment as a empire builder, as England was in India, to stay in the long term and build a nation. Nation building is more complex than state building which requires basically a government with agencies and capabilities. It is a state plus shared memories, culture, values language and a common sense of identity that makes a nation. Anyone can create an army or police force, but to convince people of different ethnic groups that they live in the same society and have common interests is difficult to pull off. Americans are not comfortable with staying and ruling other people, or being in it for the long haul. As a democracy, we are subject to momentary enthusiasms for undertaking projects of various sorts, but often we don't have the staying power to see them through to the end.

Fukuyama still believes “The ideal will govern the material world in the long run,” just as he did when he published his original *The End of History?* article. However, he now sees that not only is it not going to happen in the near term, but that western style liberal institutions cannot simply be imposed upon traditional societies and institutions, and that state building will become a key component of national power, a component as important as the ability to deploy traditional military force to the maintenance of world order. Western democracies, especially in Europe, are also going

to have to look internally as well, and find ways that their ethnic minorities, particularly Muslims, can develop a satisfying sense of identity. Fukuyama identified, long before the current “uprisings” in France, that many European societies didn’t integrate outsiders into their particular national fabric, and without the strong sense of identity that comes from living within a Muslim society, young Muslims are simply lost. Along comes an Osama bin Laden, who offers them participation in a larger, militant, global Islam, and you have a serious problem. Fukuyama sees European society as abetting bin Laden’s cause by holding Muslims at arm’s length while giving them an unwholesome, neglectful freedom to stew in their alienation, until some cross the line that separates the civilized from the barbaric.

Fukuyama suggests that Europeans need to abandon multiculturalism and extend tolerance to individuals, not groups, who will inevitably jockey for more and more recognition, respect and autonomy, at the expense of democratic cohesiveness. At the same time they need to do a better job at integrating immigrants. Young Muslims need jobs, careers, and to believe that one day they might be as Dutch as the Dutch or as English as the English.

While Fukuyama still believes that we have reached the End of History in the Hegelian, evolutionary, philosophical sense, in order to insure that it is not restarted again by those societies which are still stuck in history, and particularly to end terrorism, the U.S., in alliance with other liberal democracies, has to pursue a two-pronged approach. One of these is characterized by Fukuyama as the European, “soft power” approach, which includes nation-building. The other is the “hard power” approach of the U.S. Recently because of the two different approaches, there has been a de facto division of labor where the U.S. goes in and does all the fighting and the Europeans come in after to clean up and rebuild. However, this split approach only gets you so far. Fukuyama believes that the U.S. must repair its alliance relationships damaged by its unilateral hard power approach, but at the same time cannot off load all of the soft power responsibilities to Europe and Japan. In Fukuyama’s view, this requires a serious commitment to state building.

Of course, Fukuyama could have saved himself all the time and effort of creating and defending his concept of the end of history if he had been more of a historian himself.

All he needed to do was to study the works of Sir Isaac Newton, who, among other things, studied and wrote about theology, and applied his scientific and mathematical principles to it. Based upon his analysis, the world is going to end, in the apocalyptic sense, in 2060.