

America at the Crossroads

DEMOCRACY, POWER,

AND THE

NEOCONSERVATIVE

LEGACY



Francis Fukuyama

Copyright © 2006 by Francis Fukuyama.

All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Fukuyama, Francis.

America at the crossroads : democracy, power, and the neoconservative legacy /
Francis Fukuyama.

p. cm.—(The Castle lectures in ethics, politics, and economics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-300-11399-0 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-300-11399-4 (alk. paper)

1. United States—Foreign relations—2001–
 2. Conservatism—United States.
 3. United States—Military policy.
 4. Iraq War, 2003–
 5. Hegemony—United States.
 6. Democracy.
 7. International relations.
- I. Title. II. Series.

JZ1480.F85 2006

327.73—dc22 2005029370

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Parts of this book were given as the Castle Lectures in Yale's Program in Ethics, Politics, and Economics, delivered by Francis Fukuyama in 2005.

The Castle Lectures were endowed by Mr. John K. Castle. They honor his ancestor the Reverend James Pierpont, one of Yale's original founders. Given by established public figures, Castle Lectures are intended to promote reflection on the moral foundations of society and government and to enhance understanding of ethical issues facing individuals in our complex modern society.

Contents

PREFACE ix

- 1 Principles and Prudence 1
- 2 The Neoconservative Legacy 12
- 3 Threat, Risk, and Preventive War 66
- 4 American Exceptionalism and
International Legitimacy 95
- 5 Social Engineering and the Problem
of Development 114
- 6 Rethinking Institutions for World Order 155

Contents

7 A Different Kind of American Foreign Policy 181

NOTES 195

INDEX 217

Preface

The subject of this book is American foreign policy since the al-Qaida attacks of September 11, 2001. This is a personal subject for me. Having long regarded myself as a neoconservative, I thought I shared a common worldview with many other neoconservatives—including friends and acquaintances who served in the administration of George W. Bush. I worked for former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz on two occasions, first at the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and later at the State Department; he was also responsible for recruiting me to come to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies while he was dean there. I worked with his mentor Albert Wohlstetter at the latter's consulting firm, Pan Heuristics, and like him was an analyst for several years at the Rand Corporation. I was a student of Allan Bloom, himself a stu-

Preface

dent of Leo Strauss and the author of *The Closing of the American Mind*. I was a classmate of William Kristol in graduate school and wrote frequently for the two magazines founded by his father, Irving Kristol, *The National Interest* and *The Public Interest*, as well as for *Commentary* magazine.

And yet, unlike many other neoconservatives, I was never persuaded of the rationale for the Iraq war. I started out fairly hawkish on Iraq and in 1998 signed a letter sponsored by the Project for the New American Century urging the Clinton Administration to take a harder line against Baghdad after Saddam Hussein blocked the United Nations weapons inspectors. An American invasion of Iraq was not then in the cards, however, and would not be until the events of September 11, 2001. In the year immediately preceding the invasion, I was asked to participate in a study on long-term U.S. strategy toward the war on terrorism. It was at this point that I finally decided the war didn't make sense, and the study gave me an opportunity to think through many of the issues in the present book. I have spent much time since then wondering whether I had somehow changed my views in a way that disqualified me as a neoconservative or whether the neoconservative supporters of the war were misapplying common principles we all still shared.

The disjuncture between what I believed and what other neoconservatives seemed to believe was brought home to me in February 2004 when I attended the annual dinner of the American Enterprise Institute, at which the syndicated columnist Charles

Preface

Krauthammer delivered the annual Irving Kristol address entitled “Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for a Unipolar World.” This speech, given almost a year after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, treated the war as a virtually unqualified success. I could not understand why everyone around me was applauding the speech enthusiastically, given that the United States had found no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, was bogged down in a vicious insurgency, and had almost totally isolated itself from the rest of the world by following the kind of unipolar strategy advocated by Krauthammer. The following day I ran into the then-editor of *The National Interest*, John O’Sullivan, and told him that I wanted to write up a critique. He agreed on the spot, and the result was an article entitled “The Neo-Conservative Moment,” which appeared in the summer of 2004.

I have concluded that neoconservatism, as both a political symbol and a body of thought, has evolved into something that I can no longer support. As I will try to demonstrate in this book, neoconservatism was based on a set of coherent principles that during the Cold War yielded by and large sensible policies both at home and abroad. The principles, however, could be interpreted in a variety of ways, and during the 1990s they were used to justify an American foreign policy that overemphasized the use of force and led logically to the Iraq war. Neoconservatism has now become irreversibly identified with the policies of the administration of George W. Bush in its first term, and any effort to reclaim the label at this point is likely to be futile. It is much more

Preface

important to redefine American foreign policy in a way that moves beyond the Bush administration's legacy and that of its neoconservative supporters.

This book is an attempt to elucidate the neoconservative legacy, explain where in my view the Bush administration has gone wrong, and outline an alternative way for the United States to relate to the rest of the world. This has also motivated my effort to start a new journal devoted to the question of America's role in the world, *The American Interest* (www.the-american-interest.com). The position I want to stake out is not captured by any existing schools within the U.S. foreign policy debate, but it is one that I think would win support from a fairly broad spectrum of Americans. I have labeled it "realistic Wilsonianism," which is an admittedly awkward locution since both realism and Woodrow Wilson's legacy are heavily loaded concepts. If anyone can think of a better label, he or she is welcome to contact me with suggestions.

Careful readers of my original critique of Krauthammer will note that the present volume is missing a line of argument present in the earlier piece, concerning the way that certain neoconservatives had internalized a hard-line Israeli strategic doctrine and applied it, inappropriately in my view, to the situation of the United States after September 11. This is particularly true of Charles Krauthammer, and our subsequent exchanges convince me that I was right about this. His apocalyptic view of the threat from the Muslim world is wrong in my view, for reasons I lay out in Chapter 3. But this particular point of view, while true of cer-

Preface

tain individuals, cannot be attributed to neoconservatives more broadly, nor can it be laid at the doorstep of the Bush administration. There are a number of things I wish the administration had done differently with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, I do not think the circumstances for making a big push toward a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were propitious during the administration's first four years. As long as Yasser Arafat was alive, there was little chance of political reform in the Palestinian Authority or of a Palestinian interlocutor that could reach and enforce a peace agreement with Israel. The real test for the Bush administration on this and other neoconservative issues will come in its second term, after the pullout from Gaza.

The materials in this book were initially presented as the Castle Lectures, which I delivered at Yale University on April 11, 12, and 18, 2005. I would like to thank the Program in Ethics, Politics, and Economics, which hosted the lecture series, and its director, Seyla Benhabib, who initially invited me to deliver it. I am also grateful to John K. Castle, who funded the series to honor his ancestor, the Reverend James Pierpoint.

A great many people provided comments on the manuscript or else responded when it was presented publicly, including Robert Boynton, Mark Cordover, Charles Davidson, Hillel Fradkin, Adam Garfinkle, John Ikenberry, Roger Leeds, Mark Lilla, Mike Mandelbaum, Trita Parsi, Marc Plattner, Jeremy Rabkin, Stephen Sestanovich, Abram Shulsky, Tom White, and Adam

Preface

Wolfson. I would also like to thank John Lewis Gaddis and Steven Smith, who served as reviewers for Yale University Press. John Kulka, senior editor at the press, provided helpful guidance as the manuscript evolved. I have greatly benefited from numerous conversations with Stephen Hosmer, one of the wisest people I know on the subject of American policy in developing countries. A number of other people contributed ideas and discussions that were eventually incorporated into the book (whether they know it or not), including Peter Berkowitz, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Kurt Campbell, Eliot Cohen, Ivo Daalder, Mike Desch, Barbara Haig, Leon Kass, Tom Keaney, Tod Lindberg, Rob Litwak, John Mearsheimer, Nathan Tarcov, and Ken Weinstein. My wife, Laura Holmgren, was a skeptic about the war from the beginning, and I profited from many discussions with her about it. My assistant Cynthia Doroghazi helped in many different phases of this project. Carlos Hamann, Ina Hoxha, and Krystof Monasteriski served as research assistants. I am, finally, grateful to my team of resourceful literary agents at International Creative Management, Esther Newberg, Christine Bauch, Betsy Robbins, Margaret Halton, and Liz Iveson, for helping make the present volume possible.

I *Principles and Prudence*

During the first term of George W. Bush's presidency, the United States was attacked on its own soil by the radical Islamist group al-Qaida, in the single most destructive terrorist act in history. The Bush administration responded to this unprecedented event with dramatic and sweeping new policies. First, it created an entirely new federal agency, the Department of Homeland Security, and pushed through Congress the Patriot Act, designed to give domestic law enforcement greater powers to act against would-be terrorists. Second, it invaded Afghanistan, a land-locked country on the other side of the world, and deposed the Taliban regime there that had sheltered al-Qaida. Third, it announced a new strategic doctrine of preemptive action—actually, a doctrine of preventive war—that would take the fight to the enemy, rather than relying on deterrence and containment that were the staples of

Principles and Prudence

Cold War policy. And fourth, it invaded and deposed the regime of Saddam Hussein on the grounds that he had or was planning to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The first two of these initiatives were inevitable responses to the September 11 attacks, urged by members of both political parties and supported by an overwhelming majority of the American people. While some have criticized aspects of the Patriot Act as impinging excessively on individual liberties, it is hard to imagine that the nation would have continued in its lackadaisical approach to homeland security after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

The second two initiatives, however—announcement of a broad preemptive doctrine and the invasion of Iraq—were not obvious responses to September 11. Both policies could be justified on a number of grounds. What made them especially controversial, however, was the almost obsessive emphasis that the Bush administration placed on regime change in Iraq and the implicit assertion of American exceptionalism that gave Washington not just the right but the duty to take care of this problem. Various administration officials, beginning with the president himself, made clear that the United States would proceed against Saddam regardless of the views of its allies. This decision had evidently already been made by the summer of 2002, before the reentry of U.N. weapons inspectors into Iraq or formal Security Council debate.¹ Although the United States made clear that it would be happy to receive support from the Security Council, it

felt in no way constrained by what its allies or the broader international community thought. The Bush administration expected a short war and a quick and relatively painless transition to a post-Saddam Iraq. It gave little thought to the requirements for post-conflict reconstruction and was surprised to find the United States fighting a prolonged insurgency.

Neoconservative intellectuals, in their years out of power before the 2000 election, had proposed a foreign policy agenda involving concepts like regime change, benevolent hegemony, unipolarity, preemption, and American exceptionalism that came to be hallmarks of the Bush administration's foreign policy. Many neoconservatives were strong public advocates of the war and defended the shift in focus from al-Qaida to Iraq. Moreover, the Bush administration has left a relatively rich doctrinal record of its own thinking on grand strategy in the form of speeches and policy statements such as the president's state of the union and inaugural addresses, his West Point and American Enterprise Institute speeches in June 2002 and February 2003, and the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, published in September 2002. Collectively, these have been informally labeled the Bush Doctrine. These official pronouncements are consistent with what neoconservatives outside the administration were arguing; indeed, in the case of Bush's second inaugural, some outsiders provided ideas directly. Given this record, it is not surprising that many observers saw the Bush administration as being decisively shaped by neoconservatives.

Principles and Prudence

But while there is reason for associating neoconservatism with Bush's first-term policies, a central theme of this book will be that the connection is often overstated and glosses over a much more complex reality. Until memoirs are written and future historians do their work, we will not know the degree to which key figures in the administration were driven by larger ideas, as opposed to muddling through in response to fast-changing events. The administration principals most in favor of the war—Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney—were not known as neoconservatives before their tenures, and we do not at this point know the origins of their views.

More important, even if ideas were drivers of policy, the ideas held by neoconservatives were themselves complex and subject to differing interpretations. The administration's foreign policy in particular did not flow ineluctably from the views of earlier generations of people who considered themselves neoconservatives. The neoconservative legacy is complex and diverse, tracing its roots back to the early 1940s. It has generated a coherent body of ideas that informed a wide range of domestic and foreign policy choices.

Four common principles or threads ran through much of this thought up through the end of the Cold War: a concern with democracy, human rights, and more generally the internal politics of 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; and finally, a view that

Principles and Prudence

ambitious social engineering often leads to unexpected consequences and often undermines its own ends.

When they are stated in this abstract fashion, most Americans would find little to object to in these principles: Henry Kissinger and his realist disciples would not deny that democracy is important, while supporters of the United Nations will concede that organization's limitations and failings. One is thus inclined to conclude that the Bush administration's mistakes were simply errors of prudential judgment or policy implementation, rather than reflections of underlying principles.

The problem is not that simple, however, because the abstract ideas were interpreted in certain characteristic ways that might better be described as mindsets or worldviews rather than principled positions. The prudential choices that flowed from these mindsets were biased in certain consistent directions that made them, when they proved to be wrong, something more than individual errors of judgment. There were three main areas of what we might call biased judgment that led to mistakes on the part of the Bush administration in its stewardship of U.S. foreign policy in its first term.

The first was threat assessment. The administration overestimated, or perhaps more accurately mischaracterized, the threat facing the United States from radical Islamism. Although the new and ominous possibility of undeterrable terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction did indeed present itself, the administration wrongly conflated this with the threat presented

Principles and Prudence

by Iraq and with the rogue state/proliferation problem more generally. The misjudgment was based in part on the massive failure of the U.S. intelligence community to correctly assess the state of Iraq's WMD programs before the war. But the intelligence community never took nearly as alarmist a view of the terrorist/WMD threat as did the administration itself. Overestimation of this threat then justified the elevation of preventive war as the centerpiece of a new security strategy. The administration argued that September 11 had made preventive war necessary as a means of taking the fight to the enemy, but that argument made sense only if the real enemy had been correctly identified.

In addition, the Bush administration failed to anticipate the virulently negative global reaction to its exercise of "benevolent hegemony." The administration came into office with a strong ideological bias against the United Nations and other international organizations such as the International Criminal Court. Officials failed to recognize that they were pushing against a strong undertow of anti-Americanism that would be greatly exacerbated by their seemingly contemptuous brush-off of most forms of international cooperation. The emergence of a unipolar post-Cold War world had made the extent of American hegemony, as it turned out, a source of anxiety even to America's closest allies.

Finally, the Bush administration failed to anticipate the requirements for pacifying and reconstructing Iraq, and was wildly over-optimistic in its assessment of the ease with which large-scale so-

cial engineering could be accomplished not just in Iraq but in the Middle East as a whole. This could not have been a failure of underlying principle, since a consistent neoconservative theme, as noted above, had been skepticism about the prospects for social engineering. Rather, proponents of the war seem to have forgotten their own principles in the heat of their advocacy of the war.

Whatever its complex roots, neoconservatism has now become inevitably linked to concepts like preemption, regime change, unilateralism, and benevolent hegemony as put into practice by the Bush administration. Rather than attempting the feckless task of reclaiming the meaning of the term, it seems to me better to abandon the label and articulate an altogether distinct foreign policy position.

Neoconservatism is one of four different approaches to American foreign policy today. There are, in addition to neoconservatives, “realists” in the tradition of Henry Kissinger, who respect power and tend to downplay the internal nature of other regimes and human rights concerns; there are liberal internationalists who hope to transcend power politics altogether and move to an international order based on law and institutions; and there are what Walter Russell Mead labels “Jacksonian” American nationalists, who tend to take a narrow, security-related view of American national interests, distrust multilateralism, and in their more extreme manifestations tend toward nativism and isolationism.² The Iraq war was promoted by an alliance of neoconservatives

Principles and Prudence

and Jacksonian nationalists, who for different reasons accepted the logic of regime change in Baghdad. They sidelined the realists in the Republican Party like Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, who had served in George Herbert Walker Bush's administration and were skeptical about the rationale for the war.

As Operation Iraqi Freedom degenerated from a triumphant liberation to a grinding occupation and guerrilla war, the neo-conservatives found themselves on the defensive, and the realists started to gain ground. The neoconservatives regained their position after the January 30, 2005, Iraqi elections but lost it again as the insurgency continued. There will certainly be further ups and downs as the consequences of the war play themselves out that will, once again, change the relative authority of one faction over the other. The problem is that none of these positions—neoconservative, realist, Jacksonian nationalist, or liberal internationalist—properly defines the approach to the world that the United States needs to follow in the aftermath of September 11 and the invasion of Iraq. The realist and neoconservative positions in particular were defined partly in opposition to each other during the Cold War, and both are inadequate to the world that is emerging in the twenty-first century. That world is characterized by American hegemony and a global anti-American backlash, complete with inchoate forms of “soft” balancing; a shift in the locus of action away from nation-states toward non-state actors and other transnational forces; an accompanying dis-

integration of sovereignty both as a normative principle and as an empirical reality; and the emergence of a band of weak and failed states that are the source of most global problems.

In light of this emerging external environment, the United States needs to define an approach to foreign policy that is not captured by any of these existing positions. This approach begins from certain neoconservative premises: first, that U.S. policy and the international community more broadly need to concern themselves with what goes on *inside* other countries, not just their external behavior, as realists would have it; and second, that power—specifically American power—is often necessary to bring about moral purposes. It also draws on a neoconservative principle that neoconservatives seemed to have forgotten in the lead-up to the Iraq war: namely, that ambitious social engineering is very difficult and ought always to be approached with care and humility. What we need, in other words, is a more realistic Wilsonianism that better matches means to ends in dealing with other societies.

Realistic Wilsonianism differs from classical realism by taking seriously as an object of U.S. foreign policy what goes on inside states. To say that nation-building or democracy promotion is hard is not to say that it is impossible or that it should be scrupulously avoided. Indeed, weak or failed states are one of the biggest sources of global disorder today, and it is simply impossible, for reasons relating both to security and to morality, for the world's

Principles and Prudence

sole superpower to walk away from them. Neither realists nor neoconservatives have paid sufficient attention to the problem of development over the years, nor have they focused on parts of the world like Africa or Latin America where development is most problematic (except, of course, when countries in these regions became security threats).

Realistic Wilsonianism differs from neoconservatism (and Jacksonian nationalism) insofar as it takes international institutions seriously. We do not want to replace national sovereignty with unaccountable international organizations; the United Nations is not now nor will it ever become an effective, legitimate seat of global governance. On the other hand, we do not now have an adequate set of horizontal mechanisms of accountability between the vertical stovepipes we label states—adequate, that is, to match the intense economic and social interpenetration that we characterize today as globalization. The state retains a critical function that cannot be replaced by any transnational actor: it remains the only source of power that can enforce a rule of law. But for that power to be effective, it must be seen as legitimate; and durable legitimacy requires a much higher degree of institutionalization *across* nations than exists currently. A multi-institutional world that will meet these needs is gradually coming into being, but we are not there yet, and none of the existing schools of foreign policy provides adequate guidance to get us there.

This book suggests a different way for America to relate to the

Principles and Prudence

world, one that is neither neoconservative nor realist, Jacksonian nor liberal internationalist. It attempts to define a more realistic way for the United States to promote political and economic development other than through preemptive war, and opens up an agenda of multiple multilateralisms appropriate to the real, existing world of globalization.