Francis Fukuyama is the Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI), resident in FSI’s Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, effective July 2010. He comes to Stanford from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University, where he was the Bernard L. Schwartz Professor of International Political Economy and director of SAIS’ International Development program.

Dr. Fukuyama has written widely on issues relating to democratization and international political economy. His book, The End of History and the Last Man, was published by Free Press in 1992 and has appeared in over twenty foreign editions. His most recent books are America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy, and Falling Behind: Explaining the Development Gap between Latin America and the United States.

Francis Fukuyama was born on October 27, 1952. He received his B.A. from Cornell University in Classics, and his Ph.D. from Harvard in Political Science. He was a member of the Political Science Department of the RAND Corporation from 1979-1980, then again from 1983-89, and from 1995-96. In 1981-82 and in 1989 he was a member of the Policy Planning Staff of the US Department of State, the first time as a regular member specializing in Middle East affairs, and then as Deputy Director for European Political-Military Affairs. In 1981-82 he was also a member of the US delegation to the Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy. From 1996-2000 he acted as Omer L. and Nancy Hirst Professor of Public Policy at the School of Public Policy at George Mason University. He served as a member of the President’s Council on Bioethics from 2001-2004. He is married to Laura Holmgren and has three children.
What made you decide to come to Stanford?

I had been living in Washington for about 20 years. My wife and I originally met in Southern California and we wanted to come back to the state. We thought that we would do this 15 years ago. So finally this opportunity came up. Stanford is a great university and a lot of what I want to do in this part of my career is more academic than policy oriented, and it seemed like a good time to come.

Can we look forward to you teaching a class in the near future?

Yes, I am going to teach an upper level undergraduate seminar this winter quarter about political development, on which I am writing a book.

You previously mentioned that the term “neoconservative” has evolved into a label that you can no longer accept. What did it mean to be a “neoconservative” when you considered yourself one, and what has it evolved into now?

I think the real genesis of that term—I mean it goes back a long ways—was, in many ways, shaped decisively by the journal The Public Interest that was founded by Irving Kristol in the 1960s. A lot of what The Public Interest was writing about was domestic American social policy and the limits of the government’s ability to affect fundamental social outcomes. It seems to me that that type of skepticism was well grounded. And it seems strange that out of that tradition you all of the sudden got people advocating the use of military force, a very crude instrument, to bring about political change 6,000 miles away in Iraq. That is quite inconsistent with this earlier tradition that was skeptical of the ability of governments to change outcomes. This celebration and this fixation on American power strikes me as a perversion of the earlier tradition of neoconservatism.

Would you say you identify with any label?

I am still a Wilsonian in that I feel democracy is a universal value that has meaning for a lot of people around the world, and I still believe that the United States has a role in defending and promoting democracy. I just think that the means that the Bush administration used were way too militaristic. But in terms of setting an example of a decently governed democratic society, I think that’s still an important objective.

You argue that countries will inevitably reach liberal democracy and liberal markets, but China seems to have embraced half of that and not the other. What are your thoughts on China’s development?

It’s obviously a big challenge right now because China is a successful authoritarian modernizer. The long term question is whether you can have good governance without democracy, without some type of basic accountability. Everybody admires China right now because they can make decisions very rapidly, like on infrastructure or investment or these sorts of things. If you look at the way they responded to the financial crisis, they acted very decisively. People are always contrasting them to democratic India that has a lot of trouble making similar types of decisions. I think what people don’t recognize is that those decisions are made at the expense of a lot of ordinary Chinese citizens whose rights are not respected and who don’t have a lot of input. I think that in the long run that means that the government is not very responsive to the demands of its citizens. So there is a big legitimacy problem in China and even in terms of their economy, I am not convinced that China is going to look as good in a year or two years as it does right now.

Farbod Faraji of the Class of 2011 is majoring in Political Science. Farbod is a research assistant at the Hoover Institute’s Iranian Democracy Project and serves as the co-Editor-in-Chief of the Stanford Journal of International Relations. He began his undergraduate education at UC Berkeley, transferring to Stanford at the beginning of his junior year.

Mitul Bhat of the Class of 2012 is Layout Editor for the Journal and is currently pursuing a major in Economics and a secondary major in International Relations. He is particularly interested in issues of international economic development and is spending winter quarter at Stanford’s Santiago program.
As a former member of the US delegation to the Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian autonomy, you’ve had some direct experience with the Arab-Israeli conflict. What do you make of the recent attempt to bring the parties together by the Obama administration?

I think it’s something that every administration has to work at. I think right now the conditions for a real settlement are not really propitious on either side. Unfortunately, in the 20 years since I was involved in the post-Camp David shuttle diplomacy, there has been a hardening of positions on both sides. The Palestinians can’t move without Hamas, and the religious right is increasingly influential in Israel. In the meantime you’ve had a lot of settlement growth and facts on the ground that make even going back to the Taba or the deal possible under the Clinton administration not be possible anymore. I haven’t done anything in that area because I don’t see much prospect for movement.

Would you say that there is not much hope for peace?

I wouldn’t say there’s no hope, but looking at it objectively there are a lot of obstacles there now that weren’t there 10 years ago. That doesn’t mean that you couldn’t foresee circumstances where that will change, but I am not very optimistic that they will reach a settlement in the short run.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Iran is inching towards a nuclear weapon and the chorus of voices advocating for a military response is also increasing. As it seems that sanctions are not having their desired effect, what do you think is best way forward?

I don’t think that it’s going to produce a decisive result in the short run. And I think a military strike would be disastrous because all it’s going to do is slow down the program and basically blow up everything else in the region. So I don’t think that any of these are going to stop Iran from getting a bomb in the short run. The main hope that you have is that you can slow down the process enough that the basic illegitimacy of the regime is going to lead to an internal shift in politics. It’s really clear that at least half the country believes this current regime is pretty illegitimate.

Two years ago with the Green movement we saw the start of something in Iran, but since then it has petered out…

All of these interactive struggles are going to go on for a long time and the regime figured out how to get on top of the situation posed by the demonstrations. But it’s still the case that all of the children of the people in the regime are fundamentally alienated by the government. There could be an external shock or various things could happen that could reopen those issues again. I don’t think it is something you should give up hope on.

You endorsed President Obama before the election and now two years in to his Presidency, how do you evaluate his performance?

Sticking to foreign policy, I think he’s done a reasonable job. His decisions in Afghanistan and Iraq have been pretty sensible. Afghanistan is a tough one because having escalated initially, it’s going to be difficult to disengage as he said. I think that Obama is going to make that decision in the next year or so. In other respects they are moving in the right direction. Secretary Clinton has her eye on the right issues, for example I have always believed that we have been excessively preoccupied with terrorism in the Middle-East at the expense of thinking more strategically on Asia. I think that in the long run, China, though not an overt threat, will be a much more complex and difficult challenge. This business about stopping the export of these rare earths is just an illustration of some of the problems that we are going to face because the country is so big and so economically powerful that it’s going to be able to change the whole shape of the international system in a way that a bunch of Afghan tribesman are not going to be able to. So I think that we need to
strategically focus on that.

**I don't know if you have gotten a chance to read Bob Woodward's new book, Obama's Wars, but in it he makes the argument that Obama was pushed into the decision on Afghanistan by the military industrial complex. Do you believe that is accurate?**

It’s not entirely the military’s fault. He picked General McChrystal and he wanted to use McChrystal’s credibility to bolster his own credibility. He was asking for advice and they gave him the best advice that they had. It’s a difficult situation because you did have this precedent of the surge in Iraq working a lot better than anyone had expected. In my view it was worth seeing whether something comparable could happen in Afghanistan. But there are a number of ways where the two situations are quite different, though in a way you don’t know that until you’ve tried it. So I don’t think it was an unreasonable decision that he eventually came to. I think in the end the Biden alternative may be the one we end up going for, where we have a much lighter troop presence and we can actually control terrorism through predator drones and not having a heavy footprint on the ground. But that is going to have some pretty heavy costs in terms of people in Afghanistan we’ve made a commitment to.

**What do you think is the place for Turkey in the EU? There is a democracy there, as well as a market oriented economy...**

From the standpoint of the world as a whole, it would be very good if the EU took Turkey in. On the other hand I can understand the reasons why they’re not doing it and it relates to immigration. It’s already the case that immigration from Muslim countries into the EU has caused these backlash movements in all of Europe. You can say that its intolerance and racism or whatever, but it’s a fact. What people like Sarkozy and Merkel are thinking is if you let Turkey in under the current Schengen rules you’re going to have much more immigration. It’s like telling the American Congress to open our borders with Mexico. People here would go crazy if Europeans said that. That is the real issue that is up to the Europeans to try to figure out. I think the prospect of EU membership has been very important in keeping Turkey anchored with Western values, so it’s been important for its development as well.

**Something a lot of readers wanted us to ask you about was your most famous book: The End of History and the Last Man. It’s been the source of a lot of criticism, ranging the gambit from misguided to allegations of jingoism. How or why are these criticisms misguided?**

Well, there are a couple of obvious reasons. People did not understand the term the “end of history” in the Marxist-Hegelian way that I was using it. They thought it meant that stuff was going to stop happening and well, stuff is still happening, so what gives? Probably related to the jingoism charge, there is always this view held by a lot of people that I was somehow advocating a specifically American shaped and dominated world, it was the fact that outside of liberal democracy there didn’t seem to be a higher form of government to which we could aspire. I suspect that most people in the world do not want to live in an Islamic republic. I suspect that most people actually don’t want to live in China or a Chinese style dictatorship. So I still think it’s the case that democracy and a market oriented economy remain the only viable alternative for most countries.

**Is there anything else that you want to communicate to our readership?**

I’m just really delighted to be at Stanford, it is a great university. I have had great interactions so far and look forward to more in the future. 

§

---

Stanford Journal of International Relations

46 • Fall 2010