A significant portion of *Vital Signs, Vibrant Society* is devoted to the traditional causes of the Left, namely health and aged care, and education and training. Interestingly, the author does not dwell on the perceived failures of current government policies in those areas but, consistent with the overall positive and optimistic tone of the book, focuses on ideas to make the systems better, more financially sustainable and fairer. The theme is 'beyond public and private', an example being the propagation of a two-tier aged care sector, where the rich would be able to buy effectively superior conditions.

Perhaps a more contentious suggestion is the creation of Australian student equity instruments. Unlike debt financing of tertiary education under HECS, equity financing would 'fund a student's university fees and living expenses in return for an agreed share of income earned over a specified period following graduation'. With the tone being reminiscent of Tony Blair's choice revolution, school vouchers would not be out place in this narrative. However, Emerson's enthusiasm for innovative education-financing options appears inconsistent with the ALP policy of abolishing full-fee paying places for Australian undergraduate university students. Nostalgia for the monogamous relationship between the tertiary education sector and the state remains strong. Furthermore, the thought of universities becoming more directly dependent on big business and effectively accountable to the latter's shareholders via 'equity-financed' students must surely verge on sacrilege for Labor's hard-left supporters in academia. Could anyone honestly believe that any government, let alone a Labor one, would let Macquarie Bank near the sandstone?

While it is difficult to disagree with many of Emerson's ideas, some of the underlying assumptions can be troubling. Suggesting that 'has never been truer than it is today' that children are our future is cringe-worthy. Similarly, frequent references to 'the Asian century' are even more presumptuous than the alternative 'Pacific century', which at least allows for the geopolitically plausible continuation of US hegemony in the region.

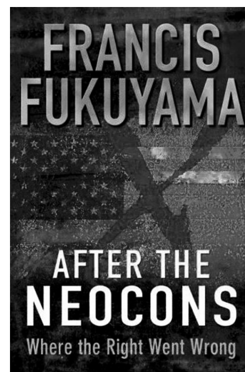
Perhaps the greatest weakness of *Vital Signs, Vibrant Society* is its relatively narrow scope. Even though the title and the first paragraph mention society, general prosperity and community wellbeing, the focus is firmly on economics. Yet economic growth occurs in a wider context and is often facilitated—or constrained—by factors that are not self-evidently relevant. While Emerson seems to be channelling Richard Florida by way of the five I's, all five roughly correspond to talent, only the first of the American academic's three T's required for sustainable socio-economic development and prosperity.

Regarding the other two—technology and tolerance—it is perhaps understandable why Emerson largely steers clear. The notions of a partly-privatised, overregulated incumbent telecommunication ex-monopoly and a state that aggressively maintains a discriminatory status quo with regards to same-sex relationships are inconsistent with the vision of Australia as a global trailblazer. This is especially so compared to countries such as Canada, the UK and even New Zealand. It also brings into doubt the country's ability and willingness to achieve Emerson's aim of successfully 'encouraging as many of our professional and creative people as possible to return to our shores'. In the mind of a City wunderkind considering applying her intellect in Martin Place, the proximity to beaches may not be enough to offset the non-existence of a true broadband internet connection and the enduring political relevance of outmoded social prejudices. Yet, a thorough discussion of such topics is constrained by both party policy and a perception that Australia is not yet ready for a re-emergence of the supposedly radical social polemic of Keating the PM.

The reader is left with the unsatisfying feeling that Emerson brainstorms a bank of ideas that could be drawn upon over a number of election cycles, yet becomes too limited by his own pragmatism to tell the nation all that it needs to hear.

Reviewed by Mal Bozic

After the Neocons: Where the Right Went Wrong
by Francis Fukuyama
Profile Books, London, 2006
192pp $35
ISBN 1861979223



Francis Fukuyama's *After the Neocons* (published in the US as *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*) is a short book, and a readable one too. It is convenient to start, as *After the Neocons* does, at Fukuyama's disagreement with his erstwhile admirer Charles Krauthammer. Krauthammer gave the 2004 Irving Kristol address at the American Enterprise Institute. Taking as his theme 'an American foreign policy for a unipolar world', Krauthammer defended Bush the Younger's policies of unilateralism and pre-emption as 'democratic realism': '[w]e will support democracy everywhere, but we will commit blood and treasure only in … places central to the larger war against the existential enemy'. By 'existential

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enemy' Krauthammer meant 'Arab-Islamic totalitarianism', the enemy that 'poses a global mortal threat to freedom' and that must be eradicated.

Fukuyama was in the audience, and was perplexed by the apparent approval with which Krauthammer's speech was received. Fukuyama contends that Krauthammer 'treated the war [in Iraq] as a virtually unqualified success'. Krauthammer vehemently denies making any such claim, labelling Fukuyama's 'Road to Damascus moment' a 'convenient fabrication' to provide '[Fukuyama] a foil' and 'the story drama'.

In fact, Krauthammer's speech did not declare victory so much as reject the idea that the American-led occupation will forever remain an imbroglio. Further, Krauthammer accuses Fukuyama of being an 'opportunistic traitor' and 'coward to boot': Fukuyama and Krauthammer both signed a September 2001 letter urging a 'determined effort' to oust Saddam Hussein by 'all necessary means', even if 'evidence does not link Iraq directly' to the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

It was Krauthammer, of course, who contributed the ecstatic topmost blurb ('bold, lucid, scandalously brilliant') for Fukuyama's 1992 masterpiece *The End of History and the Last Man*. But the fall of the Berlin Wall—conclusive proof of the inevitable ascendency of liberal democracy for Fukuyama—convinced Krauthammer and company only of the beginning of a 'holiday' from history. Most neo-conservatives, then, interpreted 9/11 as the resumption of history.

After the Neocons details the four 'dramatic and sweeping' changes to American foreign policy since 'the single most destructive terrorist act in history': (a) the creation of the Department of Homeland Security to help administer the *USA Patriot Act 2001*; (b) the invasion of Afghanistan to depose the Taliban government that sheltered al-Qa'eda; (c) the announcement of a strategy of pre-emptive action (in fact, a doctrine of preventive war) that eschewed deterrence and containment; and (d) the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq on the grounds that the Ba'athist regime had, or was planning to acquire, weapons of mass destruction. The first two initiatives were, in Fukuyama's words, 'inevitable responses to the September 11 attacks', supported by 'members of both political parties' and an 'overwhelming majority' of the American people. The second two, however, were 'not obvious', and so command Fukuyama's attention.

Like so many critics before him, Fukuyama seeks to distribute blame for the dystopian landscape of post-'liberation' Iraq among the neo-conservatives. ('The real culprits', for Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times*, 'are the neo-con ideologues'—'die hard hawks' who 'hijacked US foreign policy after 9/11'. Maureen Dowd, with her usual literary flair, laments the 'Attack of the Wolfman', a pun on the surname of former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.) But whereas 'much of [the] literature' on neo-conservatism is 'factually wrong', animated by 'ill will' (and, perhaps, anti-Semitism), and a 'deliberate distortion' of the 'record of both the Bush administration and its supporters', Fukuyama aims to provide a measured and nuanced account of the persuasion and, by necessary implication, where it went wrong.

Fukuyama traces the origins of neo-conservatism to the 'anti-Communist left' at City College in the 1930s and 40s and to the conservative philosophers Leo Strauss, Allan Bloom, and Albert Wohlstetter at the University of Chicago in later years. (Interestingly, the term 'neo-conservative dates only to 1973: the socialist Michael Harrington coined the appellation for despised colleagues who supported Richard Nixon.) From these disparate origins, the neo-conservatives eventually generated a 'coherent set of ideas, arguments and conclusions from experience' which, taken together, defined their impulse in foreign affairs during the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century. Fukuyama argues that neo-conservatism was founded on four principles: (a) the belief that the internal character of regimes matters; (b) confidence that American power can and should be used for moral purposes; (c) distrust of ambitious social engineering projects; and (d) scepticism about the effectiveness of international law and institutions to achieve either security or justice.

Fukuyama's narrative posits the four tenets of neo-conservative thought with an engaging combination of succinctness and flair. Although this is perhaps unsurprising, recalling that neo-conservative speechwriters drafted Bush the Younger's vintage Gladstonian rhetoric—'no justice without freedom' in 'every nation and culture', and all of Ronald Reagan's best lines about 'evil' empires before that. If liberal democracies tend to 'respect the basic human rights of their citizens' and are 'less externally aggressive than dictatorships', why not 'reach inside states' and 'shape their basic institutions'? If it is 'imperative' to 'liberate people from tyranny' and 'promote democracy around the world', why indeed should the United States be bound by the utterances of nations that lack 'democratic legitimacy'?

However, Fukuyama explains, two neo-conservative principles 'collide' when applied to foreign policy: apprehension about the dangers of social engineering 'should have induced caution in expectations for the kind of political transformation that would be possible in the Middle East'. The

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ongoing 'vicious counterinsurgency war' in Iraq, then, is gruesome tragedy borne of neo-conservative hubris. In response, Fukuyama proposes 'realistic Wilsonianism': Wilsonian in that Fukuyama wants to retain the spirit of liberal internationalism that informs the neo-conservative critique of foreign-policy realism, but realistic in that Fukuyama recognises the limits to military power, and the necessity of multilateral co-operation and engagement.

Though superficially compelling, Fukuyama's analysis is ultimately inadequate. *After the Neocons* is historically unaware and epistemologically limited (ironically so, given the title of the first chapter—'Principles and Prudence'—is derived from Burke's aphorism 'history is a preceptor of prudence, not principles'). The charge that American adventurism in Iraq is troublingly illiberal is nothing new: even the puppets in Matt Stone and Trey Parker's *Team America* know that 'freedom isn't free'. Nor is the charge insurmountable. Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, and the Victorian imperialists they inspired, made their peace with the *prima facie* irony of forcing civilisation upon the unwilling savage: today's savage was tomorrow's civilised (as today's civilised was yesterday's savage). But for a brief examination of Bismarck's Germany, Fukuyama altogether avoids the non-American past. Comment on the parallels with the British administration of Iraq, 1920–1934, or the failed American endeavour in Vietnam, 1961–1973 is conspicuous for its absence. Comparisons may be 'odious' and analogies 'tricky', but, as the political scientist Owen Harries has observed, they are nevertheless 'indispensable'.

Similarly, 'realistic Wilsonianism' is an unsatisfying compromise. Whereas Louis Menand of *The New Yorker* summarized Fukuyama's 'general idea' as 'let's continue to try to shape the world, but let's not be so stupid about it', Victor Davis Hanson's less charitable *précis*, 'I was for my easy removal of Saddam, but not for your bungled and costly postwar reconstruction', is perhaps more on point. Fukuyama's programme is not so much a departure from neo-conservative themes as an adjustment to accommodate the American experience of Iraq. The Hegelian paradigm—inevitable progress through thesis-antithesis-synthesis—constrains and thereby condemns *After the Neocons*, as it did *The End of History and the Last Man*, and, indeed, Marx and Hegel. The dialectic, of course, is an arbitrary and unnatural form. Fukuyama would do well to heed the warning of the English historian A.J.P. Taylor: the inevitable rarely happens in real life.

Reviewed by Anthony Lepere

Political Parties in Transition?
Edited by Ian Marsh
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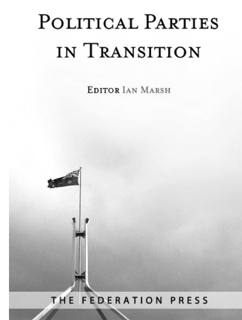
240pp $49.95
ISBN 1862875936

Do the major Australian political parties run a cartel? That is the question *Political Parties in Transition?* seeks to answer. It is inspired by the European analysis of Richard Katz and Peter Mair, who argue that declining memberships and weakening electoral loyalties lead established political parties to sustain their position through the state. Regulation and public campaign funding prop up old parties, while denying opportunities and resources to actual and potential rivals. No longer beholden to a social base, cartel parties can collude in policies not supported by the electorate. The various contributors to this essay collection examine the empirical evidence for and against applying Katz and Mair's theory to Australia.



It's certainly the case, as chapters by Dean Jaensch and Gary Johns make clear, that membership of the major political parties has shrunk significantly over the last few decades. Though reliable figures are rare, by 2003 Liberal membership was probably under a quarter of its peak level, with Labor losses even greater. To a lesser extent the percentage of Australians identifying with one of the two major parties has also dropped (though Liberal identification has grown since the late 1990s). Supporters who are not members don't finance political parties, providing parties with a motive to seek state sponsorship.

Consistent with the cartel thesis, political parties do now receive state campaign funding ($42 million for the 2004 federal election), as well as diverting parliamentary and when in power government resources into

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