



US will be forced to soften: Fukuyama

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THE US can no longer assume it has hegemony over world affairs and will have to change its approach dramatically to emphasise soft power, diplomacy and regional security co-operation, according to American scholar Francis Fukuyama.

Best known for his 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* about the triumph of liberal democracy following the Cold War, he said in an interview with *The Australian* the US was at an important inflection point.

“It is not American decline so much as the rise of India, China and the Gulf as other important sources of power,” he said.

“The US, despite its predominant position, is not going to be able to restructure the world as it chooses. Intervening militarily to stop (weapons) proliferation or deal with terrorism has been pretty widely discredited and pretty widely seen as counter-productive.”

Professor of international political economy at Johns Hopkins University in the US, he was

a neo-conservative close to members of the Bush administration but is now a self-declared apostate and fierce critic of the Iraq war. He is in Australia as a guest of the University of Sydney’s US Studies Centre and will deliver a public lecture tomorrow night on US foreign policy after the Bush administration. On Thursday, he goes to Canberra for meetings with Kevin Rudd, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith and Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon.

He sees a future in which the US exercises influence through soft power such as education and training, advice, leading by example and financial assistance. As well, a more imaginative multilateralism was required.

“You want an east Asia in which China has a stake in a growing system of rules in anticipation of a period when it is going to be relatively much more powerful,” he said.

There should be a bigger role for regional security organisations. “If we took NATO more seriously so we had to get approval for certain kinds of interventions, we would not have

made the mistakes that we got into in Iraq, because the majority of NATO countries were opposed,” he said. “But we would have had support for going into Afghanistan.”

However, this would require a new decision-making process for NATO, replacing consensus with some form of weighted voting that could be based on a country’s contribution of forces.

Beyond the current impasse on North Korea, the framework of the six-party talks could be turned into a permanent security organisation for northeast Asia, involving China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the US.

On Iraq, Professor Fukuyama said the situation looked better now than at any stage since the invasion in 2003. “As long as the US is willing to maintain approximately 130,000 troops in Iraq, there is no way the US will lose or the Iraqi Government will be destabilised,” he said.

His guess was that US troops would be withdrawn in the next four years, almost regardless of who became president.

The question was whether

democracy would survive in the absence of US troops. While the Iraqi army had been reasonably successful in controlling militia, tremendous internal tensions remained in Iraqi society.

Even if the end result was positive, it had involved a huge waste of resources. “We have invested so far five years’ worth of effort, 30,000 casualties, a trillion dollars in overt expenses and probably another trillion in delayed expenses,” he said.

“Politically, it was counter-productive: it produced more terrorism and more nuclear proliferation than it stopped.”

Professor Fukuyama said his end-of-history argument was a thesis about modernisation producing liberal democracy and a market economy.

Of the three challenges the thesis faced, Islamism that rejected modernisation was not a viable alternative and the authoritarian version of modernisation taking place in Russia also had many weaknesses.



Apostate: Former neo-con turned Iraq war critic Francis Fukuyama, in Sydney yesterday, says Washington will have to change its power role

Picture: Renee Nowytagar