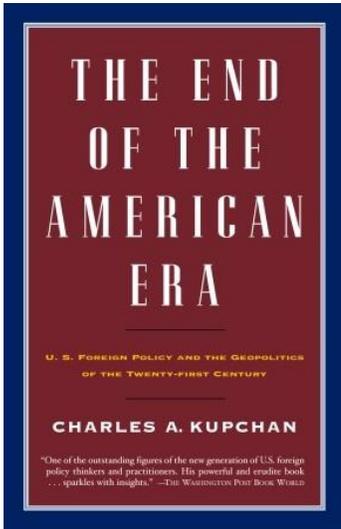


# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

58 East 68th Street, New York, New York 10065  
tel 212.434.9400 fax 212.434.9800 www.cfr.org



## Teaching Notes

*The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*

By **Charles A. Kupchan**

Senior Fellow and Director of Europe Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

Vintage Books

November 2003

\$15.95 paperback

416 pages

ISBN 978-0-37572-659-0

*The End of the American Era* addresses the broad strategic challenges facing the United States in this new century. It weaves together historical narrative, academic debate, and discussion of contemporary developments in world affairs to paint a compelling and provocative picture of the emerging nature of global politics. The book would be appropriate in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses, including the following:

- Introduction to World Politics
- U.S. Foreign Policy
- International Security
- European Affairs and Transatlantic Relations
- Upper Level Courses in International Relations

## **Courses on Introduction to World Politics**

The book is written in a very accessible style and is therefore appropriate for survey courses. It also contains useful overviews of seminal historical periods, including the rise and decline of the Roman empire, Britain's imperial grand strategy, early American foreign policy, the Great Depression and its impact on Germany and Japan, and World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. One of the central themes is that global power is becoming more diffuse as Europe, China, India and others rise, necessitating that the United States prepare for a more multipolar world.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What forces lie behind the rise and decline of great powers over time?
2. What are the key elements of grand strategy? How can great powers go about keeping their political, economic, and military commitments in equilibrium?
3. What lessons can the United States draw from the experiences of other great powers in managing global affairs?
4. Where are the geopolitical dividing lines of the twenty-first century most likely to fall? What can the United States do to prevent conflict from emerging along these fault lines?
5. How can the United States most effectively manage the transition from unipolarity to a world of multiple centers of power?

## **Courses on U.S. Foreign Policy**

The central focus of the book is U.S. foreign policy, past, present, and future. The early chapters lay out the policy challenges facing the United States. The book then draws on U.S. history to explore the political and ideological foundations of U.S. foreign policy, putting contemporary issues in a broader context. The concluding chapters offer concrete policy recommendations for the future.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are principal domestic influences on U.S. foreign policy? What role do ideology, political culture, and partisan politics play in shaping America's role in the world?
2. How can the United States most effectively address the threat posed by international terrorism? To what degree should this threat be the centerpiece of U.S. grand strategy?
3. How should the United States go about integrating rising powers such as China into the international community?
4. What can be done to jump-start economic development and political liberalization in the developing world?

## **Courses on International Security**

The book addresses the seminal security issues of the day, including: U.S. grand strategy, the impact of September 11 and international terrorism on foreign affairs, the consequences and lessons of the Iraq War, and the role of international institutions in promoting security cooperation.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are the long-term consequences of the Iraq war of 2003? Has the United States demonstrated its unprecedented primacy or weakened its global influence by eroding its international legitimacy?
2. How effective is military force in achieving desired political outcomes? Should military force be used to help promote the spread of democracy?
3. In light of America's military primacy, are other countries more likely to balance against or bandwagon with American power? What attributes of American behavior might affect how others respond to U.S. power?
4. Is great power war obsolete or only in abeyance? What can the United States do to make sure that great power rivalry does not return?
5. What are the most effective military and non-military instruments for combating international terrorism?

## **Courses on European Affairs and Transatlantic Relations**

The book places considerable focus on the continuing integration of Europe, examining the evolution of the European Union (EU) and its impact on transatlantic relations. By examining the trajectory of the EU from a historical and comparative perspective, the analysis suggests that U.S. policymakers underestimate the geopolitical consequences of European integration.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are the sources of recent discord across the Atlantic and what policy initiatives would help renew the Atlantic Alliance?
2. What forces have been driving European integration? Is the widening and deepening of the EU likely to continue, or is the enterprise reaching its limits?
3. Are the EU's growing geopolitical ambition and its gradual steps toward a more unified and capable foreign policy likely to improve or worsen its relations with the United States?
4. What are the long-term implications of the Iraq war for European integration and transatlantic relations?
5. Will the divide between "old" Europe and "new" Europe that emerged over the Iraq war weaken the union over the long run?

## Upper Level Courses in International Relations

Although written in an accessible style, the book takes on theoretical debates within the field of international relations, making it appropriate for upper level courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. In analyzing contending visions of the emerging geopolitical landscape, the volume studies in detail the writings of John Mearsheimer, Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington, Paul Kennedy, and others.

### Discussion Questions

1. Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis shares much common ground with democratic peace theorists. What are the main theoretical challenges to the claim that democracies will not go to war with each other? Even if the world were populated only by democratic states, would not nationalism still drive competitive dynamics?
2. Are the geopolitical effects of globalization positive, negative, or indeterminate? What impact is globalization having on: Global prosperity? Income inequalities? Democratic accountability? Political stability in emerging economies?
3. What impact is the rise of the digital age having on the practice of democracy? Is the transition from the industrial era to the digital era likely to have important effects on international security?
4. Does the rise of Islamic extremism suggest that Huntington's notion of "a clash of civilizations" is in the offing? If the United States and China are headed toward geopolitical rivalry, will it be because of incompatible civilizations or traditional power politics? How can such rivalry be averted?