

POSTMODERN CRITIQUE OF LIBERAL HEGEMONY: AGAINST THE DISCOURSE OF FINALITY

Pulatov Anvar

Doctoral Researcher at the National University of Uzbekistan,
(Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

Abstract: This article analyzes ideological and political ideas that have become a significant turning point in the social and cultural life of the modern and postmodern world. In addition, the paradigms of the “end of ideologies” and the “end of history” in the postmodern era are analytically discussed. The world is moving toward a post-industrial, information-based, and biotechnology-driven global capitalism, and the article explores the scientific and philosophical aspects of these processes.

Key words: Postmodernism, modernism, liberalism, ideology, end of history, discourse, paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized world, as capitalism undergoes profound socio-economic, scientific, and technological transformations, paradigm shifts are also occurring in the fields of science, art, and culture in general. By the late twentieth century, intense debates emerged regarding the significance of the postmodern turn. While some philosophers evaluated postmodern discourse and culture as superior to the increasingly outdated forms of modernity, others criticized postmodern theory and cultural production as signs of decline and regression. In the realm of science, the postmodern turn signifies a departure from the mechanistic and positivist worldview of modern science. At the same time, it rejects the Enlightenment’s optimism,

positivism, faith in reason, and its emphasis on transcultural values and human nature. Postmodernists typically reject theoretical fundamentalism and transcendental subjectivity, mechanistic and positivist approaches in science, and the modernist ideals of novelty and originality in art. Based on the view that modern theory and politics have become reductionist, illusory, and excessively arrogant, many postmodern theorists and philosophers have advanced various competing forms of political ideologies.

As in postmodern theory, there is no single “postmodern political ideology.” On the contrary, there exist contradictory positions arising from the complexity of social transformations and diverse postmodern theoretical perspectives. However, postmodern forms of politics are not merely theoretical constructs but also real political tendencies manifesting in public life. In an era where new technologies are transforming all spheres of life, where culture plays an increasingly significant role from the economy to personal identity, and where new syntheses of global capitalist economies are emerging, politics is also acquiring new forms and meanings. In general terms, the project of modern politics was oriented toward defining and realizing universal goals such as freedom, equality, and justice in order to transform institutional structures of domination. Rooted in the Enlightenment project, modern politics sought to critically evaluate all existing forms of power and institutions based on the criteria of reason. It presupposed the existence of a democratic public sphere in which individuals and social groups could deliberate on political issues and actively participate in public affairs. The modern political project aimed to define fundamental human rights, the common good, and universal values, as well as to establish institutional guarantees for democratic rights, debate, and consensus.

At the dawn of the modern world, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity were proclaimed during the French Revolution, advocating for the protection of universal human rights. Karl Marx, who sought to extend these universal ideals

beyond the limits of bourgeois class relations, advanced the slogan “Workers of the world, unite!” and called for international solidarity aimed at overthrowing bourgeois forms of property. In the United States, and later in Africa, Asia, and the broader non-Western world, national liberation movements emerged against colonialism. These movements sought to bring the promises of modern democracy and freedom to oppressed regions. However, the promises of modernity and modern politics were rarely fulfilled. Workers were exploited by greedy capital throughout the modern era; women only gained full democratic rights in the early twentieth century and continued to suffer under patriarchal domination; people of color were systematically discriminated against by racism; and developing countries remained under the domination of imperialist powers. Despite wars, poverty, famine, economic crises, and various forms of oppression, modern politics maintained an optimistic spirit. It often held an almost religious, teleological belief in the eventual realization of history’s progressive logic. Enlightenment faith in the future inspired both liberalism and Marxism. Thus, modern politics was shaped by strong normative values and utopian visions of universal freedom, equality, and harmony. In the postmodern era, however, politics began to take shape with the emergence of numerous new political groups and struggles in the 1960s. Its development was strongly influenced by social movements in France, the United States, and other regions, as well as by emerging postmodern theories.

METHODOLOGIES

In the postmodern world, by the mid-twentieth century, mutually contradictory political and ideological paradigms had begun to emerge. According to the radically apolitical perspective of Jean Baudrillard, we have been left at the end of history: the masses have sunk into inertia and indifference, while media simulations and technology have triumphed over human agency [1]. Similarly, the idea of the “end of history” proposed by Francis Fukuyama seemed to affirm that humanity had reached

a highly satisfactory and stable political condition [2]. However, this article analyzes why Fukuyama's thesis has not been realized. According to Michel Foucault, systemic global transformation in politics is to be rejected in favor of localized transformations aimed at enhancing individual freedom and progressive change [3]. Jean-François Lyotard, drawing on postmodernism's critique of essentialism, reductionism, and fundamentalism, argued that Enlightenment values and socialist politics should be reconfigured on the basis of contingency and pluralism [4]. According to Gilles Deleuze, postmodern politics politicizes all spheres of social and personal life, much like capital and the state themselves [5]. Modern and Marxist approaches often ignored or rejected such domains as political fields. In postmodern politics, however, every sphere of social life becomes subject to questioning and turns into a site of contestation. Consequently, the number of arenas of struggle increases, and within a pluralistic framework, power becomes more vulnerable to challenge. Overall, the ideas and conceptual frameworks of J. Baudrillard, F. Fukuyama, M. Foucault, J.-F. Lyotard, and G. Deleuze have served as key methodological sources in the preparation of this article.

In developing this study, a комплекс use of several philosophical and analytical methods has been employed. As a general theoretical foundation, the dialectical method was applied to analyze the contradictory relationships between modernism and postmodernism, power and resistance, identity and deconstruction. The genealogical method was used to reveal how power is constituted through institutions and how the subject emerges as a social construct. Furthermore, the deconstructive method played a crucial role in uncovering the critical stance of postmodern thought toward universal truth, stable identity, and metanarratives. Through this approach, the internal contradictions of dominant ideological and cultural constructions were exposed. In examining the influence of media, advertising, the internet, and consumer culture on human consciousness, the method of discursive analysis was employed.

This method enabled an analysis of contemporary culture as a mechanism for the production of power and identity. Additionally, the comparative method was used to identify the differences between modern and postmodern political-philosophical approaches, as well as to examine their theoretical foundations and social consequences. Through this method, the distinctions between the rational and centralized political model of modernism and the pluralistic and fragmented character of postmodernism were elucidated.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Today, as social reproduction increasingly takes place at the level of culture and everyday life, issues of subjectivity, ideology, culture, aesthetics, and utopian thinking have acquired renewed significance. Postmodern models of politics seek to redefine the very concept of politics by drawing on transformations in society, technology, the economy, and everyday life. In 1960, Daniel Bell advanced the discourse of the “end of ideology,” arguing that in developed countries ideological consensus had been achieved and that economic growth had replaced political conflict, rendering ideologies obsolete [6]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the crisis of real socialism, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the discourse that liberalism constituted the sole and dominant paradigm rapidly gained prominence. This process was closely linked to neoliberal policies introduced after the economic crises of the 1970s. Undoubtedly, one of the most influential contributions in this direction was the “end of history” thesis proposed by Francis Fukuyama in the 1990s [7]. This study is grounded in the need to reassess such finality theses particularly those based on the assumption that liberalism has no viable alternative in the aftermath of the 2007–2008 global financial crisis. The concept of the “end of history” does not imply the cessation of time or historical processes. Rather, in political terms, it signifies the culmination of human development at a certain level of social, political, and economic maturity. In such a state, the existing system is considered optimal, and

therefore the search for alternatives is deemed unnecessary. Proponents of this view argue that human development has largely reached its endpoint, and that major political transformations, revolutions, and structural changes have become obsolete. In the twentieth century, the most significant expressions of such finality discourses were the “end of ideology” and the “end of history.” However, even today, ideologies continue to exist and exert influence, albeit not in absolute terms. Regardless of whether societies are labeled as developed, developing, or underdeveloped, ideologies remain an integral part of human life across all regions of the world. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the discourse of the “end of history” emerged as another form of finality. According to this perspective, once liberal democracy triumphed in the ideological struggle, it would continue as the most stable and unrivaled system. Development and progress were seen as having reached their highest point within liberal democracy. According to Slavoj Žižek, Fukuyama’s “end of history” thesis suffered serious blows due to two major events centered in the United States: the events of September 11, 2001 undermined the idea of a liberal-democratic political utopia, while the 2008 financial crisis destabilized its economic foundations. The 2008 crisis intensified debates over the inevitability of state intervention [8]. As a result, the paradigms developed by John Maynard Keynes regained prominence, and efforts were made to overcome the crisis through expanded fiscal and monetary policies [9].

Consequently, the belief—initiated with the “end of ideology” and reinforced by the “end of history” that the liberal-democratic system represents the final stage of human development has increasingly come under question. This is because the system itself appears to possess a structural tendency to generate recurring crises. Among these two discourses of finality, the “end of history” is considered more decisive, as it is more closely aligned with the contemporary era. Both discourses have extended beyond their original historical contexts, with the former still being

defended in neoliberal circles today. Fukuyama himself has repeatedly insisted that his thesis cannot be dismissed. For this reason, in certain circles, the neoliberal system is interpreted as a genuinely final system. This study first analyzes these theories of “finality” and then argues why liberal democracy cannot be regarded as the ultimate stage of humanity’s political or economic development. The eschatological belief in the unchallenged triumph of liberal democracy was most explicitly articulated in Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 concept of *The End of History and the Last Man*. However, it is evident that Daniel Bell’s earlier thesis of the “end of ideology” in the mid-twentieth century laid the groundwork for this perspective. In this respect, the discourse of the “end of ideology” is significant in highlighting the gradual transformation of liberalism into the dominant global paradigm. In fact, even before twentieth-century thinkers, philosophers such as Karl Marx and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had reflected on ideas related to the end of history and ideology. Neither Marx nor Hegel believed that progress would continue indefinitely. Both held that once a form of society corresponding to humanity’s deepest needs is achieved, development would reach its culmination. In other words, both thinkers argued that once such a society emerges, fundamental social problems would be resolved, and no major transformations would occur in the development of core principles and institutions.

The discourse of “finality,” which largely took shape within the philosophy of history in the nineteenth century, developed particularly along liberal lines after the Second World War. Drawing inspiration from various sources, Daniel Bell advanced the thesis of the “end of ideology” within the context of the Cold War. Fukuyama regarded liberal democracy as the endpoint of humanity’s ideological evolution and the highest form of human governance. According to him, unlike previous systems of governance, liberal democracy is free from fundamental internal contradictions and therefore represents the end of history. In Fukuyama’s view, liberal democracy is the

system that best satisfies the three aspects of the human soul described by Plato: reason, desire, and the desire for recognition (thymos). Although no system can fully satisfy human beings, the best system is the one that maximizes the fulfillment of these three dimensions. Thus, the impossibility of achieving a higher form of human satisfaction beyond liberal democracy is, for Fukuyama, evidence that history has reached its endpoint. In our view, however, a major flaw in Fukuyama's thesis lies in its excessive reliance on comparisons with strong authoritarian states. While liberalism has never promised absolute equality, a system presented as the "end of history" should not produce such widespread poverty and recurrent crises as observed today. Fukuyama himself later acknowledged the problems within liberal democracies. In his work *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, he argues that liberalism has transformed into neoliberalism, significantly exacerbating economic inequality. This transformation has generated global financial crises that harm ordinary people more than wealthy elites, and he attributes inequality and recurring crises not to liberalism itself but specifically to neoliberalism [10].

Therefore, Fukuyama maintains that the solution lies not in rejecting liberalism altogether but in regulating it. Recognizing the erosion and corruption within the existing system, he describes the situation as follows: after a generation of neoliberal policies, by the 2010s global income reached historically unprecedented levels, yet inequality within countries increased sharply [11]. In many countries, a small class of oligarchs and multibillionaires emerged, capable of converting their economic resources into political power by influencing lobbyists and media. Globalization enabled them to shift wealth to low-tax jurisdictions, depriving states of revenue and making regulation increasingly difficult. If economic freedom, the freedom to buy, sell, and invest is beneficial, it does not follow that removing all constraints is even better. If personal autonomy is a source of human satisfaction, it does not mean that unlimited freedom and the constant breaking of all constraints will make individuals

happier. Sometimes satisfaction arises precisely through the acceptance of limits. Therefore, restoring a sense of moderation at both the individual and collective levels is key to the revival and even the survival of liberalism. From these arguments, it becomes clear that Fukuyama identifies the desire for limitless growth and wealth accumulation as the primary driver behind the transition from liberalism to neoliberalism. In the contemporary era, from a substantive perspective, unregulated free trade without sufficient state intervention risks transforming liberalism into an undesirable extreme form. However, he does not clearly specify the appropriate extent of state intervention.

CONCLUSION

In our view, Fukuyama's primary error lies in his insufficient recognition of the deep interconnection between liberalism and neoliberalism. The economic and political dimensions of liberalism are intrinsically linked; therefore, it is not possible to accept its political principles while rejecting its economic foundations. The economic basis of neoliberalism, as the contemporary form of liberalism, is capitalism.

Liberal democracy cannot be regarded as the final stage of human history. It generates crises, exacerbates inequality, and fails to eliminate poverty. For this reason, the discourses of the "end of ideology" and the "end of history" are not adequate for understanding the contemporary world. Likewise, it is problematic to present liberal democracy as the ultimate ideal system by contrasting it with fascism or totalitarianism, since liberalism itself produces crises of representation, legitimacy, production, and distribution. As long as wars, crises, and poverty persist in the world, the existing system cannot be considered the ultimate destination of humanity. The global financial crisis of 2008 once again demonstrated that neoliberalism does not represent the end of human history. Although Francis Fukuyama later acknowledged the crises and inequalities generated by neoliberalism, the fundamental problem, in

our view, remains unresolved: the attempt to separate liberalism from neoliberalism, the assumption that the existing system has no alternative, and the continued defense of the idea of finality. History, however, continues.

REFERENCES AND USED LITERATURE

1. Jean Baudrillard—From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond, Stanford University Press 1989.41-pp.
 2. Francis Fukuyama — The End of History and the Last Man. New York: Free Press, 1992.210-pp.
 3. Michel Foucault — Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.169-pp.
 4. Jean-François Lyotard — The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.133-pp.
 5. Gilles Deleuze — Difference and Repetition. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968.68-pp.
 6. Daniel Bell — The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. New York: Basic Books, 1973.54-pp.
 7. Slavoj Žižek — The Sublime Object of Ideology. London: Verso, 1989.131-pp.
 8. John Maynard Keynes — The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money. London: Macmillan, 1936.32-pp.
 9. Francis Fukuyama The End of History and the Last Man. New York: Free Press, 1992.60-pp.
 10. Francis Fukuyama Political Order and Political Decay. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. 87-pp.
- Francis Fukuyama Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.120-pp