

Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era* (New York: Knopf, 2002), xv, 375.

This book is a remarkable analysis of the existing position of the United States of America in the world. Author's effort to evaluate the US position in historical perspective is worth praising. He has used the past as a guide and a means of analysis for the present situation, and has evaluated the current status of the US in the world as the primary focus of his book. Charles A. Kupchan is teaching at the Georgetown University as a Professor of International Relation, and is a Senior Fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations. He has also served in the National Security Council during Clinton administration.

He begins his book by highlighting the weaknesses of major contemporary theories on the new framework of world politics as conceived by Paul Kennedy, John Mearsheimer, and Frances Fukuyama. Kupchan gives his counter argument to these thinkers that the end of the Cold War was not a victory of the US but, in fact, the beginning of the downfall of her global hegemony. The author delineates various schools of thought that agree, though by different perspectives, on one point that American supremacy is falling apart. For example, Charles Krauthammer, a commentator from conservative background, has stated that the US should get maximum advantage out of its short-lived geopolitical dominance because it will soon end.

The author goes on to speculate on who will replace the US? In contemporary world, threats to the US hegemony do not come from the Muslim world only; fast emerging China and even the European Union also pose challenge to the US position of power. However, the author excludes European Union from the list of contenders. Notwithstanding European Union's emergence as an economic giant, on real grounds, it neither fully qualify for replacing the US nor does it desire so. Author is of the view that European Union may replace the US on economic front, but it does not have the first rank army to take the US position. He suggests that the US

should form a *grand stagey* for a shift from unipolar to the multipolar world order.

For the author, the end of American era is not only about the end of American supremacy in world politics but also about the end of industrial capitalism, nation state, and the end of republican democracy. In last chapter, he articulates that history has a cyclical and evolutionary nature, which began with nomadic society and has traveled to agrarian society, industrial society, and finally concluded with digital era. Moreover, opening of the digital era pronounced the decline of industrial era. Where industrial era had brought governance, republican democracy, and means of production; the digital era brought the element of stress in the American democracy, the decline of traditional family, insecurity, less civic activities, and economic inequality. All these factors brought country's political system where it stands today. According to the author, the information era and the digital era are the only causes of the decline of the American democracy. As Joel Kotkin believes, "the rise in the digital economy is repealing the economic and social geography of contemporary America."

Several factors can be identified as contributing to American decline: US intervention in other states, involvement in the War on Terror, economic decline, increasing debt ratio, and higher distrust of citizens towards public institutions, are some of them. To blame digital era only is not appropriate. Moreover, American universities are producing, engineers, scientists, and technologists, far more than the historians, policy makers, and strategists; therefore, the lack of trained policy makers and strategists may become one of the causes of American decline.

However, one must agree with Kupchan on the point that US hegemony is short-lived like earlier superpowers and would crumble down with the passage of time; however, the author has not given any time frame for this to happen.

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