

The second role of the RSL, that Ruxton increasingly personified, was that of being the 'Mr Fix It'. As Ruxton accumulated power, observers noted, he exhibited a more domineering and autocratic style. He justified this as necessary in the endless battle in trying to cut the best deal with government departments. Ruxton poured vast amounts of time and energy into fighting the fights that his own military service might not have offered. He and RSL members, however, were faithfully served by a large number of staff who developed great expertise in perusing every possible type of claim. Blair notes that while the 'Boss' gave a vast energy sixteen to eighteen hours a day to the cause, he could be brutal whenever displeased.

The gadfly Ruxton excites the most powerful public responses. He was too easily tempted to supply the media with his views on a huge range of social, political and defence-related issues. Ruxton claimed that he was an unchanged authentic voice of the ordinary Australian. In part, this was always true, but he failed to understand

that the media's 'Mr dial-me-a-quote' gadfly character too often did little good for the interests of ex-servicemen and women.

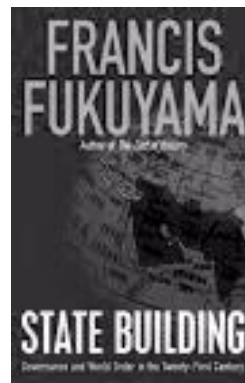
He deluded himself into believing that what he thought on any issue was the mandated voice of the members of the RSL. His comments on broader defence matters rarely, if ever, promoted the real needs of the ADF. Ruxton too often provided only a little comic relief in debates on serious matters, such as the size of the armed forces, the role of women in the defence force and Australia's relations with countries across the region. A more thoughtful and better-informed RSL leader might have given powerful support to the critique of defence policy. As an advocate for benefits, Ruxton was as Kennett noted 'a little man with a very big heart and a very big mouth ... he has used both very effectively'. Blair's account provides a detailed, warts and all account of Bruce Ruxton. ♦

*Anne Blair, 'Ruxton: A Biography', Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2004, paperback, 208pp., RRP \$29.95.*

## State-Building Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First Century

**Francis Fukuyama**

**Reviewed by Dr Malcolm Kennedy**



Francis Fukuyama is one of the United States' original and creative thinkers. The excellence of his thought, in part, is attested by the fact that his work provokes storms of criticism from both the political left and right.

State-building involves, Fukuyama stresses, 'the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of existing ones'. This activity is the most important challenge facing the world, '... because weak or failed states are the source of many of the world's most serious problems, from poverty to AIDS, to drugs to terrorism'.

The seriousness of these issues is highlighted every day by the media. Television dramatically reveals the horror of war, poverty, terror and crime. Even the media's deliberate use of the shocking to win ratings cannot hide the division of the world into a zone of wealth, civil, peaceful and well-governed states, and a zone in which people do not enjoy decent standards of living, freedom or government.

*State Building* is, in my view, a very important book, which has crucial messages for the complex problems

we face across the globe. Some will not see Fukuyama's ideas, as adequate solutions; however, he has given focus to a set of critical issues and any answers that work more effectively need to be tried as a matter of urgency.

The book is divided into a framework of the complexity of 'stateness'; a discussion of the causes of state weakness and the difficulties of solving this problem; and a discussion of the international dimensions of state weakness. In each part, Fukuyama highlights things that can be done to solve the problem of state weakness and failure.

Fukuyama notes the World Bank's assessment that over half the world's nations are in crisis. Their social, political and economic systems range from critically failed to faltering and problem-wracked. The failed states are unable, or deliberately fail, to provide an acceptable standard of existence for their people. By contrast, the countries to which the poor and the persecuted seek to flee are those based on liberal democratic governments with largely free and open capitalist economic systems.

Australia and New Zealand benefited enormously

from the reforms in government economic policies over the last three decades. Unfortunately, in our immediate neighbourhood we have states, moving to toward being failed states.

Fukuyama explains these two processes. He gives emphasis to the fact that the successful states are those in which there is 'limited scope of state functions' combined with 'strong institutional effectiveness'. Those slipping into failure are states that have weak state institutions, and which attempt 'an ambitious range of [state] activities'.

Often failing states are those receiving large amounts of foreign aid funds. In Africa, Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific the weakness of the state's institutions has led to the formation of kleptocracies. These are states in which the ruling clique steals aid funds and exports local wealth to 'safe investment locations' in the developed world. This exacerbates existing problems and reinforces the trend toward collapse and poverty.

The excited cry by the Left, during the last sixty years, to abolish the nation state in favour of some form of world government is systematically and empirically demolished by Fukuyama. Indeed, he provides a rigorous case, which shows that rather than the institution of the nation state causing poverty, tyranny and war; it is the leadership of failing states that causes these blights.

There have been various forms of state legitimacy in the past; however, today people around the world are increasingly aware that only liberal democracy can guarantee genuine freedom and prosperity. Fukuyama notes that the legitimacy of democracy creates state institutions that are transparent, and efficient, in the service of their citizens. The key to overcoming the trend toward greater numbers of failed states, and the associated backlash of terrorism, is the strengthening of states.

It is clear that the weakening of states across the globe has not led to any form of world peace and global governance. The UN has been incapable of preventing conflict and war, and it has been slow and weak in its peacekeeping operations. The withering of the state has not been 'a prelude to utopia but to disaster'.

The crucial task, as Fukuyama stresses, is to learn how to build states and assist them in becoming successful for the betterment of all their citizens. He notes the vital role of the state—only states are able to aggregate and purposefully deploy legitimate power; this power is essential to enforce the domestic rule of law; and

states are the key actors to preserve world order internationally.

Those who seek to weaken states must explain why this has resulted in the gap being filled by '... a motley collection of multinational corporations, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, crime syndicates, terrorist groups ...' The task, which all successful states must contribute to, is learning how to assist in state building and the creation of liberal democratic institutions. Our region presents this problem in unambiguous terms. This book is rich in theory and profound practical ideas that may not suit every reader's tastes, however, anyone concerned about finding new solutions to the fundamental problems of our age will find this is a book to read and reread. ♦

*Francis Fukuyama, 'State Building Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First Century', Profile Books, London, 2004, Hardback, 194pp., RRP \$45.00.*

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