THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN

Francis Fukuyama

FREE PRESS
NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY

FREE PRESS
A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

First Free Press trade paperback edition 2006

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Manufactured in the United States of America

13 15 17 19 20 18 16 14

The Library of Congress has catalogued the hardcover edition as follows:
Fukuyama, Francis.
The end of history and the last man / Francis Fukuyama
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. History—Philosophy. 2. World politics—1945–. I. Title.
D16.8F85. 1992 91-29677
901—dc20 CIP

ISBN-13: 978-0-02-910975-5
ISBN-10: 0-02-910975-2
ISBN-13: 978-0-7432-8455-4 (Pbk)
ISBN-10: 0-7432-8455-0 (Pbk)

To Julia and David

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The "End of History" would never have existed, either as an article or as this present book, without the invitation to deliver a lecture by that title during the 1988–89 academic year, extended by Professors Nathan Tarcov and Allan Bloom of the John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy at the University of Chicago. Both have been long-time teachers and friends from whom I have learned an enormous amount over the years—starting with, but by no means limited to, political philosophy. That original lecture became a well-known article due, in no small measure, to the efforts of Owen Harries, editor of the journal *The National Interest,* and to the work of that journal's small staff. Erwin Glikes of the Free Press and Andrew Franklin of Hamish Hamilton provided crucial encouragement and advice in moving from the article to the book, and in the editing of the final manuscript.

The present volume has profited enormously from conversations and readings by any number of friends and colleagues. Most important of these has been Abram Shulsky, who will find many of his ideas and insights recorded here. I would like to pay special thanks to Irving Kristol, David Epstein, Alvin Bernstein, Henry Higuera, Yoshihisa Komori, Yoshio Fukuyama, and George Holmgren, all of whom took the time to read and comment on the manuscript. In addition, I would like to thank the many people—some of them known to me and many others not—who commented usefully on various aspects of the present thesis as it was presented in a variety of seminars and lectures in this country and abroad.

James Thomson, president of the RAND Corporation, was kind enough to provide me office space while drafting this book. Gary and Linda Armstrong took time out from writing their dissertations to help me in the collection of research materials, and provided valuable advice on a number of topics in the course of writing. Rosalie Fonoroff helped in the proofreading. In lieu of conventional thanks to a typist for helping to prepare the manuscript, I should perhaps acknowledge the work of the designers of the Intel 80386 microprocessor.

Last but most important, it was my wife, Laura, who encouraged me to write both the original article and the present book, and who has stood by me through all of the subsequent criticism and controversy. She has been a careful reader of the manuscript, and has contributed in innumerable ways to its final form and content. My daughter Julia and my son David, the latter of whom chose to be born as the book was being written, helped too, simply by being there.

BY WAY OF AN INTRODUCTION

The distant origins of the present volume lie in an article entitled "The End of History?" which I wrote for the journal *The National Interest* in the summer of 1989.[1] In it, I argued that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism. More than that, however, I argued that liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government," and as such constituted the "end of history." That is, while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions. This was not to say that today's stable democracies, like the United States, France, or Switzerland, were not without injustice or serious social problems. But these problems were ones of incomplete implementation of the twin principles of liberty and equality on which modern democracy is founded, rather than of flaws in the principles themselves. While some present-day countries might fail to achieve stable liberal democracy, and others might lapse back into other, more primitive forms of rule like theocracy or military dictatorship, the *ideal* of liberal democracy could not be improved on.

The original article excited an extraordinary amount of commentary and controversy, first in the United States, and then in a series of countries as different as England, France, Italy, the Soviet Union, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, and South Korea. Criticism took every conceivable form, some of it based on simple misunderstanding of my original intent, and others penetrating more perceptively to the core of my argument.[2] Many people were confused in the first instance by my use of the word "history." Understanding history in a conventional sense as the occurrence of events, people pointed to the fall of the Berlin Wall,

the Chinese communist crackdown in Tiananmen Square, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as evidence that "history was continuing," and that I was *ipso facto* proven wrong.

And yet what I suggested had come to an end was not the occurrence of events, even large and grave events, but History: that is, history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times. This understanding of History was most closely associated with the great German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. It was made part of our daily intellectual atmosphere by Karl Marx, who borrowed this concept of History from Hegel, and is implicit in our use of words like "primitive" or "advanced," "traditional" or "modern," when referring to different types of human societies. For both of these thinkers, there was a coherent development of human societies from simple tribal ones based on slavery and subsistence agriculture, through various theocracies, monarchies, and feudal aristocracies, up through modern liberal democracy and technologically driven capitalism. This evolutionary process was neither random nor unintelligible, even if it did not proceed in a straight line, and even if it was possible to question whether man was happier or better off as a result of historical "progress."

Both Hegel and Marx believed that the evolution of human societies was not open-ended, but would end when mankind had achieved a form of society that satisfied its deepest and most fundamental longings. Both thinkers thus posited an "end of history": for Hegel this was the liberal state, while for Marx it was a communist society. This did not mean that the natural cycle of birth, life, and death would end, that important events would no longer happen, or that newspapers reporting them would cease to be published. It meant, rather, that there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all of the really big questions had been settled.

The present book is not a restatement of my original article, nor is it an effort to continue the discussion with that article's many critics and commentators. Least of all is it an account of the end of the Cold War, or any other pressing topic in contemporary politics. While this book is informed by recent world events, its subject returns to a very old question: Whether, at the end of the twentieth century, it makes sense for us once again to speak of a coherent and directional History of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy? The an-

swer I arrive at is yes, for two separate reasons. One has to do with economics, and the other has to do with what is termed the "struggle for recognition."

It is of course not sufficient to appeal to the authority of Hegel, Marx, or any of their contemporary followers to establish the validity of a directional History. In the century and a half since they wrote, their intellectual legacy has been relentlessly assaulted from all directions. The most profound thinkers of the twentieth century have directly attacked the idea that history is a coherent or intelligible process; indeed, they have denied the possibility that any aspect of human life is philosophically intelligible. We in the West have become thoroughly pessimistic with regard to the possibility of overall progress in democratic institutions. This profound pessimism is not accidental, but born of the truly terrible political events of the first half of the twentieth century—two destructive world wars, the rise of totalitarian ideologies, and the turning of science against man in the form of nuclear weapons and environmental damage. The life experiences of the victims of this past century's political violence—from the survivors of Hitlerism and Stalinism to the victims of Pol Pot—would deny that there has been such a thing as historical progress. Indeed, we have become so accustomed by now to expect that the future will contain bad news with respect to the health and security of decent, liberal, democratic political practices that we have problems recognizing good news when it comes.

And yet, good news has come. The most remarkable development of the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the revelation of enormous weaknesses at the core of the world's seemingly strong dictatorships, whether they be of the military-authoritarian Right, or the communist-totalitarian Left. From Latin America to Eastern Europe, from the Soviet Union to the Middle East and Asia, strong governments have been failing over the last two decades. And while they have not given way in all cases to stable liberal democracies, liberal democracy remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe. In addition, liberal principles in economics—the "free market"—have spread, and have succeeded in producing unprecedented levels of material prosperity, both in industrially developed countries and in countries that had been, at the close of World War II, part of the impoverished Third World. A liberal revolution in economic thinking has sometimes

preceded, sometimes followed, the move toward political freedom around the globe.

All of these developments, so much at odds with the terrible history of the first half of the century when totalitarian governments of the Right and Left were on the march, suggest the need to look again at the question of whether there is some deeper connecting thread underlying them, or whether they are merely accidental instances of good luck. By raising once again the question of whether there is such a thing as a Universal History of mankind, I am resuming a discussion that was begun in the early nineteenth century, but more or less abandoned in our time because of the enormity of events that mankind has experienced since then. While drawing on the ideas of philosophers like Kant and Hegel who have addressed this question before, I hope that the arguments presented here will stand on their own.

This volume immodestly presents not one but *two* separate efforts to outline such a Universal History. After establishing in Part I why we need to raise once again the possibility of Universal History, I propose an initial answer in Part II by attempting to use modern natural science as a regulator or mechanism to explain the directionality and coherence of History. Modern natural science is a useful starting point because it is the only important social activity that by common consensus is both cumulative and directional, even if its ultimate impact on human happiness is ambiguous. The progressive conquest of nature made possible with the development of the scientific method in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has proceeded according to certain definite rules laid down not by man, but by nature and nature's laws.

The unfolding of modern natural science has had a uniform effect on all societies that have experienced it, for two reasons. In the first place, technology confers decisive military advantages on those countries that possess it, and given the continuing possibility of war in the international system of states, no state that values its independence can ignore the need for defensive modernization. Second, modern natural science establishes a uniform horizon of economic production possibilities. Technology makes possible the limitless accumulation of wealth, and thus the satisfaction of an ever-expanding set of human desires. This process guarantees an increasing homogenization of all human societies, regardless of their historical origins or cultural inheritances. All countries undergoing economic modernization must increasingly resemble

one another: they must unify nationally on the basis of a centralized state, urbanize, replace traditional forms of social organization like tribe, sect, and family with economically rational ones based on function and efficiency, and provide for the universal education of their citizens. Such societies have become increasingly linked with one another through global markets and the spread of a universal consumer culture. Moreover, the logic of modern natural science would seem to dictate a universal evolution in the direction of capitalism. The experiences of the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries indicate that while highly centralized economies are sufficient to reach the level of industrialization represented by Europe in the 1950s, they are woefully inadequate in creating what have been termed complex "post-industrial" economies in which information and technological innovation play a much larger role.

But while the historical mechanism represented by modern natural science is sufficient to explain a great deal about the character of historical change and the growing uniformity of modern societies, it is not sufficient to account for the phenomenon of democracy. There is no question but that the world's most developed countries are also its most successful democracies. But while modern natural science guides us to the gates of the Promised Land of liberal democracy, it does not deliver us to the Promised Land itself, for there is no economically necessary reason why advanced industrialization should produce political liberty. Stable democracy has at times emerged in pre-industrial societies, as it did in the United States in 1776. On the other hand, there are many historical and contemporary examples of technologically advanced capitalism coexisting with political authoritarianism, from Meiji Japan and Bismarckian Germany to present-day Singapore and Thailand. In many cases, authoritarian states are capable of producing rates of economic growth unachievable in democratic societies.

Our first effort to establish the basis for a directional history is thus only partly successful. What we have called the "logic of modern natural science" is in effect an economic interpretation of historical change, but one which (unlike its Marxist variant) leads to capitalism rather than socialism as its final result. The logic of modern science can explain a great deal about our world: why we residents of developed democracies are office workers rather than peasants eking out a living on the land, why we are members of

labor unions or professional organizations rather than tribes or clans, why we obey the authority of a bureaucratic superior rather than a priest, why we are literate and speak a common national language.

But economic interpretations of history are incomplete and unsatisfying, because man is not simply an economic animal. In particular, such interpretations cannot really explain why we are democrats, that is, proponents of the principle of popular sovereignty and the guarantee of basic rights under a rule of law. It is for this reason that the book turns to a second, parallel account of the historical process in Part III, an account that seeks to recover the whole of man and not just his economic side. To do this, we return to Hegel and Hegel's non-materialist account of History, based on the "struggle for recognition."

According to Hegel, human beings like animals have natural needs and desires for objects outside themselves such as food, drink, shelter, and above all the preservation of their own bodies. Man differs fundamentally from the animals, however, because in addition he desires the desire of other men, that is, he wants to be "recognized." In particular, he wants to be recognized as a *human being,* that is, as a being with a certain worth or dignity. This worth in the first instance is related to his willingness to risk his life in a struggle over pure prestige. For only man is able to overcome his most basic animal instincts—chief among them his instinct for self-preservation—for the sake of higher, abstract principles and goals. According to Hegel, the desire for recognition initially drives two primordial combatants to seek to make the other "recognize" their humanness by staking their lives in a mortal battle. When the natural fear of death leads one combatant to submit, the relationship of master and slave is born. The stakes in this bloody battle at the beginning of history are not food, shelter, or security, but pure prestige. And precisely because the goal of the battle is not determined by biology, Hegel sees in it the first glimmer of human freedom.

The desire for recognition may at first appear to be an unfamiliar concept, but it is as old as the tradition of Western political philosophy, and constitutes a thoroughly familiar part of the human personality. It was first described by Plato in the *Republic,* when he noted that there were three parts to the soul, a desiring part, a reasoning part, and a part that he called *thymos,* or "spiritedness." Much of human behavior can be explained as a com-

bination of the first two parts, desire and reason: desire induces men to seek things outside themselves, while reason or calculation shows them the best way to get them. But in addition, human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The propensity to invest the self with a certain value, and to demand recognition for that value, is what in today's popular language we would call "self-esteem." The propensity to feel self-esteem arises out of the part of the soul called *thymos*. It is like an innate human sense of justice. People believe that they have a certain worth, and when other people treat them as though they are worth less than that, they experience the emotion of *anger*. Conversely, when people fail to live up to their own sense of worth, they feel *shame*, and when they are evaluated correctly in proportion to their worth, they feel *pride*. The desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of anger, shame, and pride, are parts of the human personality critical to political life. According to Hegel, they are what drives the whole historical process.

By Hegel's account, the desire to be recognized as a human being with dignity drove man at the beginning of history into a bloody battle to the death for prestige. The outcome of this battle was a division of human society into a class of masters, who were willing to risk their lives, and a class of slaves, who gave in to their natural fear of death. But the relationship of lordship and bondage, which took a wide variety of forms in all of the unequal, aristocratic societies that have characterized the greater part of human history, failed ultimately to satisfy the desire for recognition of either the masters or the slaves. The slave, of course, was not acknowledged as a human being in any way whatsoever. But the recognition enjoyed by the master was deficient as well, because he was not recognized by other masters, but slaves whose humanity was as yet incomplete. Dissatisfaction with the flawed recognition available in aristocratic societies constituted a "contradiction" that engendered further stages of history.

Hegel believed that the "contradiction" inherent in the relationship of lordship and bondage was finally overcome as a result of the French and, one would have to add, American revolutions. These democratic revolutions abolished the distinction between master and slave by making the former slaves their own masters and by establishing the principles of popular sovereignty and the rule of law. The inherently unequal recognition of masters and

slaves is replaced by universal and reciprocal recognition, where every citizen recognizes the dignity and humanity of every other citizen, and where that dignity is recognized in turn by the state through the granting of *rights*.

This Hegelian understanding of the meaning of contemporary liberal democracy differs in a significant way from the Anglo-Saxon understanding that was the theoretical basis of liberalism in countries like Britain and the United States. In that tradition, the prideful quest for recognition was to be subordinated to enlightened self-interest—desire combined with reason—and particularly the desire for self-preservation of the body. While Hobbes, Locke, and the American Founding Fathers like Jefferson and Madison believed that rights to a large extent existed as a means of preserving a private sphere where men can enrich themselves and satisfy the desiring parts of their souls,[3] Hegel saw rights as ends in themselves, because what truly satisfies human beings is not so much material prosperity as recognition of their status and dignity. With the American and French revolutions, Hegel asserted that history comes to an end because the longing that had driven the historical process—the struggle for recognition—has now been satisfied in a society characterized by universal and reciprocal recognition. No other arrangement of human social institutions is better able to satisfy this longing, and hence no further progressive historical change is possible.

The desire for recognition, then, can provide the missing link between liberal economics and liberal politics that was missing from the economic account of History in Part II. Desire and reason are together sufficient to explain the process of industrialization, and a large part of economic life more generally. But they cannot explain the striving for liberal democracy, which ultimately arises out of *thymos*, the part of the soul that demands recognition. The social changes that accompany advanced industrialization, in particular universal education, appear to liberate a certain demand for recognition that did not exist among poorer and less educated people. As standards of living increase, as populations become more cosmopolitan and better educated, and as society as a whole achieves a greater equality of condition, people begin to demand not simply more wealth but recognition of their status. If people were nothing more than desire and reason, they would be content to live in market-oriented authoritarian states like Franco's Spain, or a South Korea or Brazil under military rule. But

they also have a thymotic pride in their own self-worth, and this leads them to demand democratic governments that treat them like adults rather than children, recognizing their autonomy as free individuals. Communism is being superseded by liberal democracy in our time because of the realization that the former provides a gravely defective form of recognition.

An understanding of the importance of the desire for recognition as the motor of history allows us to reinterpret many phenomena that are otherwise seemingly familiar to us, such as culture, religion, work, nationalism, and war. Part IV is an attempt to do precisely this, and to project into the future some of the different ways that the desire for recognition will be manifest. A religious believer, for example, seeks recognition for his particular gods or sacred practices, while a nationalist demands recognition for his particular linguistic, cultural, or ethnic group. Both of these forms of recognition are less rational than the universal recognition of the liberal state, because they are based on arbitrary distinctions between sacred and profane, or between human social groups. For this reason, religion, nationalism, and a people's complex of ethical habits and customs (more broadly "culture") have traditionally been interpreted as obstacles to the establishment of successful democratic political institutions and free-market economies.

But the truth is considerably more complicated, for the success of liberal politics and liberal economics frequently rests on irrational forms of recognition that liberalism was supposed to overcome. For democracy to work, citizens need to develop an irrational pride in their own democratic institutions, and must also develop what Tocqueville called the "art of associating," which rests on prideful attachment to small communities. These communities are frequently based on religion, ethnicity, or other forms of recognition that fall short of the universal recognition on which the liberal state is based. The same is true for liberal economics. Labor has traditionally been understood in the Western liberal economic tradition as an essentially unpleasant activity undertaken for the sake of the satisfaction of human desires and the relief of human pain. But in certain cultures with a strong work ethic, such as that of the Protestant entrepreneurs who created European capitalism, or of the elites who modernized Japan after the Meiji restoration, work was also undertaken for the sake of recognition. To this day, the work ethic in many

Asian countries is sustained not so much by material incentives, as by the recognition provided for work by overlapping social groups, from the family to the nation, on which these societies are based. This suggests that liberal economics succeeds not simply on the basis of liberal principles, but requires irrational forms of *thymos* as well.

The struggle for recognition provides us with insight into the nature of international politics. The desire for recognition that led to the original bloody battle for prestige between two individual combatants leads logically to imperialism and world empire. The relationship of lordship and bondage on a domestic level is naturally replicated on the level of states, where nations as a whole seek recognition and enter into bloody battles for supremacy. Nationalism, a modern yet not-fully-rational form of recognition, has been the vehicle for the struggle for recognition over the past hundred years, and the source of this century's most intense conflicts. This is the world of "power politics," described by such foreign policy "realists" as Henry Kissinger.

But if war is fundamentally driven by the desire for recognition, it stands to reason that the liberal revolution which abolishes the relationship of lordship and bondage by making former slaves their own masters should have a similar effect on the relationship between states. Liberal democracy replaces the irrational desire to be recognized as greater than others with a rational desire to be recognized as equal. A world made up of liberal democracies, then, should have much less incentive for war, since all nations would reciprocally recognize one another's legitimacy. And indeed, there is substantial empirical evidence from the past couple of hundred years that liberal democracies do not behave imperialistically toward one another, even if they are perfectly capable of going to war with states that are not democracies and do not share their fundamental values. Nationalism is currently on the rise in regions like Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union where peoples have long been denied their national identities, and yet within the world's oldest and most secure nationalities, nationalism is undergoing a process of change. The demand for national recognition in Western Europe has been domesticated and made compatible with universal recognition, much like religion three or four centuries before.

The fifth and final part of this book addresses the question of the "end of history," and the creature who emerges at the end, the

"last man." In the course of the original debate over the *National Interest* article, many people assumed that the possibility of the end of history revolved around the question of whether there were viable alternatives to liberal democracy visible in the world today. There was a great deal of controversy over such questions as whether communism was truly dead, whether religion or ultranationalism might make a comeback, and the like. But the deeper and more profound question concerns the goodness of liberal democracy itself, and not only whether it will succeed against its present-day rivals. Assuming that liberal democracy is, for the moment, safe from external enemies, could we assume that successful democratic societies could remain that way indefinitely? Or is liberal democracy prey to serious internal contradictions, contradictions so serious that they will eventually undermine it as a political system? There is no doubt that contemporary democracies face any number of serious problems, from drugs, homelessness, and crime to environmental damage and the frivolity of consumerism. But these problems are not obviously insoluble on the basis of liberal principles, nor so serious that they would necessarily lead to the collapse of society as a whole, as communism collapsed in the 1980s.

Writing in the twentieth century, Hegel's great interpreter, Alexandre Kojève, asserted intransigently that history had ended because what he called the "universal and homogeneous state"—what we can understand as liberal democracy—definitely solved the question of recognition by replacing the relationship of lordship and bondage with universal and equal recognition. What man had been seeking throughout the course of history—what had driven the prior "stages of history"—was recognition. In the modern world, he finally found it, and was "completely satisfied." This claim was made seriously by Kojève, and it deserves to be taken seriously by us. For it is possible to understand *the* problem of politics over the millennia of human history as the effort to solve the problem of recognition. Recognition is the central problem of politics because it is the origin of tyranny, imperialism, and the desire to dominate. But while it has a dark side, it cannot simply be abolished from political life, because it is simultaneously the psychological ground for political virtues like courage, public-spiritedness, and justice. All political communities must make use of the desire for recognition, while at the same time protecting themselves from its destructive effects. If contemporary constitu-

tional government has indeed found a formula whereby all are recognized in a way that nonetheless avoids the emergence of tyranny, then it would indeed have a special claim to stability and longevity among the regimes that have emerged on earth.

But is the recognition available to citizens of contemporary liberal democracies "completely satisfying?" The long-term future of liberal democracy, and the alternatives to it that may one day arise, depend above all on the answer to this question. In Part V we sketch two broad responses, from the Left and the Right, respectively. The Left would say that universal recognition in liberal democracy is necessarily incomplete because capitalism creates economic inequality and requires a division of labor that *ipso facto* implies unequal recognition. In this respect, a nation's absolute level of prosperity provides no solution, because there will continue to be those who are relatively poor and therefore invisible as human beings to their fellow citizens. Liberal democracy, in other words, continues to recognize equal people unequally.

The second, and in my view more powerful, criticism of universal recognition comes from the Right that was profoundly concerned with the leveling effects of the French Revolution's commitment to human equality. This Right found its most brilliant spokesman in the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose views were in some respects anticipated by that great observer of democratic societies, Alexis de Tocqueville. Nietzsche believed that modern democracy represented not the self-mastery of former slaves, but the unconditional victory of the slave and a kind of slavish morality. The typical citizen of a liberal democracy was a "last man" who, schooled by the founders of modern liberalism, gave up prideful belief in his or her own superior worth in favor of comfortable self-preservation. Liberal democracy produced "men without chests," composed of desire and reason but lacking *thymos,* clever at finding new ways to satisfy a host of petty wants through the calculation of long-term self-interest. The last man had no desire to be recognized as greater than others, and without such desire no excellence or achievement was possible. Content with his happiness and unable to feel any sense of shame for being unable to rise above those wants, the last man ceased to be human.

Following Nietzsche's line of thought, we are compelled to ask the following questions: Is not the man who is completely satisfied by nothing more than universal and equal recognition something

less than a full human being, indeed, an object of contempt, a "last man" with neither striving nor aspiration? Is there not a side of the human personality that deliberately seeks out struggle, danger, risk, and daring, and will this side not remain unfulfilled by the "peace and prosperity" of contemporary liberal democracy? Does not the satisfaction of certain human beings depend on recognition that is inherently unequal? Indeed, does not the desire for unequal recognition constitute the basis of a livable life, not just for bygone aristocratic societies, but also in modern liberal democracies? Will not their future survival depend, to some extent, on the degree to which their citizens seek to be recognized not just as equal, but as superior to others? And might not the fear of becoming contemptible "last men" not lead men to assert themselves in new and unforeseen ways, even to the point of becoming once again bestial "first men" engaged in bloody prestige battles, this time with modern weapons?

This books seeks to address these questions. They arise naturally once we ask whether there is such a thing as progress, and whether we can construct a coherent and directional Universal History of mankind. Totalitarianisms of the Right and Left have kept us too busy to consider the latter question seriously for the better part of this century. But the fading of these totalitarianisms, as the century comes to an end, invites us to raise this old question one more time.

Part I

AN OLD QUESTION ASKED ANEW

I

Our Pessimism

As decent and sober a thinker as Immanuel Kant could still seriously believe that war served the purposes of Providence. After Hiroshima, all war is known to be at best a necessary evil. As saintly a theologian as St. Thomas Aquinas could in all seriousness argue that tyrants serve providential ends, for if it were not for tyrants there would be no opportunity for martyrdom. After Auschwitz, anyone using this argument would be guilty of blasphemy. . . . After these dread events, occurring in the heart of the modern, enlightened, technological world, can one still believe in the God who is necessary Progress any more than in the God who manifests His Power in the form of super-intending Providence?

—*Emile Fackenheim,* God's Presence in History[1]

The twentieth century, it is safe to say, has made all of us into deep historical pessimists.

As individuals, we can of course be optimistic concerning our personal prospects for health and happiness. By long-standing tradition, Americans as a people are said to be continually hopeful about the future. But when we come to larger questions, such as whether there has been or will be progress in history, the verdict is decidedly different. The soberest and most thoughtful minds of this century have seen no reason to think that the world is moving toward what we in the West consider decent and humane political institutions—that is, liberal democracy. Our deepest thinkers have concluded that there is no such thing as History—that is, a meaningful order to the broad sweep of human events. Our own experience has taught us, seemingly, that the future is more likely than not to contain new and unimagined evils, from fanatical

dictatorships and bloody genocides to the banalization of life through modern consumerism, and that unprecedented disasters await us from nuclear winter to global warming.

The pessimism of the twentieth century stands in sharp contrast to the optimism of the previous one. Though Europe began the nineteenth century convulsed by war and revolution, it was by and large a century of peace and unprecedented increases in material well-being. There were two broad grounds for optimism. The first was the belief that modern science would improve human life by conquering disease and poverty. Nature, long man's adversary, would be mastered by modern technology and made to serve the end of human happiness. Second, free democratic governments would continue to spread to more and more countries around the world. The "Spirit of 1776," or the ideals of the French Revolution, would vanquish the world's tyrants, autocrats, and superstitious priests. Blind obedience to authority would be replaced by rational self-government, in which all men, free and equal, would have to obey no masters but themselves. In light of the broad movement of civilization, even bloody wars like those of Napoleon could be interpreted by philosophers as socially progressive in their results, because they fostered the spread of republican government. A number of theories, some serious and the others less so, were put forward to explain how human history constituted a coherent whole, whose twists and turns could be understood as leading to the good things of the modern era. In 1880 a certain Robert Mackenzie was able to write:

> Human history is a record of progress—a record of accumulating knowledge and increasing wisdom, of continual advancement from a lower to a higher platform of intelligence and well-being. Each generation passes on to the next the treasures which it inherited, beneficially modified by its own experience, enlarged by the fruits of all the victories which itself has gained. . . . The growth of man's well-being, rescued from the mischievous tampering of self-willed princes, is left now to the beneficent regulation of great providential laws.[2]

Under the heading of "torture," the famous eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* published in 1910–11 explained that "the whole subject is one of only historical interest as far as Europe is concerned."[3] On the very eve of World War I, the jour-

nalist Norman Angell published his book *The Great Illusion,* in which he argued that free trade had rendered territorial aggrandizement obsolete, and that war had become economically irrational.[4]

The extreme pessimism of our own century is due at least in part to the cruelty with which these earlier expectations were shattered. The First World War was a critical event in the undermining of Europe's self-confidence. The war of course brought down the old political order represented by the German, Austrian, and Russian monarchies, but its deeper impact was psychological. Four years of indescribably horrible trench warfare, in which tens of thousands died in a single day over a few yards of devastated territory, was, in the words of Paul Fussell, "a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated public consciousness for a century," reversing "the idea of Progress."[5] The virtues of loyalty, hard work, perseverance, and patriotism were brought to bear in the systematic and pointless slaughter of other men, thereby discrediting the entire bourgeois world which had created these values.[6] As Paul, the young soldier hero of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front,* explains, "For us lads of eighteen [our teachers at school] ought to have been mediators and guides to the world of maturity, the world of work, of duty, of culture, of progress—to the future. . . . But the first death we saw shattered this belief." In words echoed by young Americans during the Vietnam War, he concluded that "our generation was more to be trusted than theirs."[7] The notion that the industrial progress of Europe could be turned to war without moral redemption or meaning led to bitter denunciations of all attempts to find larger patterns or meaning in history. Thus, the renowned British historian H. A. L. Fisher could write in 1934 that "Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave."[8]

The First World War was, as it turned out, only a foretaste of the new forms of evil that were soon to emerge. If modern science made possible weapons of unprecedented destructiveness like the machine gun and the bomber, modern politics created a state of unprecedented power, for which a new word, *totalitarianism,* had to be coined. Backed by efficient police power, mass political parties, and radical ideologies that sought to control all aspects of

human life, this new type of state embarked on a project no less ambitious than world domination. The genocides perpetrated by the totalitarian regimes of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia were without precedent in human history, and in many respects were made possible by modernity itself.[9] There have of course been many bloody tyrannies before the twentieth century, but Hitler and Stalin put both modern technology and modern political organization in the service of evil. It had previously been beyond the technical ability of "traditional" tyrannies to contemplate something so ambitious as the elimination of an entire *class* of people like the Jews of Europe or the kulaks in the Soviet Union. Yet this was precisely the task made possible by the technical and social advances of the previous century. The wars unleashed by these totalitarian ideologies were also of a new sort, involving the mass destruction of civilian populations and economic resources—hence the term, "total war." To defend themselves from this threat, liberal democracies were led to adopt military strategies like the bombing of Dresden or Hiroshima that in earlier ages would have been called genocidal.

Nineteenth-century theories of progress associated human evil with a backward state of social development. While Stalinism did arise in a backward, semi-European country known for its despotic government, the Holocaust emerged in a country with the most advanced industrial economy and one of the most cultured and well-educated populations in Europe. If such events could happen in Germany, why then could they not happen in any other advanced country? And if economic development, education, and culture were not a guarantee against a phenomenon like nazism, what was the point of historical progress?[10]

The experience of the twentieth century made highly problematic the claims of progress on the basis of science and technology. For the ability of technology to better human life is critically dependent on a parallel moral progress in man. Without the latter, the power of technology will simply be turned to evil purposes, and mankind will be *worse* off than it was previously. The total wars of the twentieth century would not have been possible without the basic advances of the Industrial Revolution: iron, steel, the internal combustion engine, and the airplane. And since Hiroshima, mankind has lived under the shadow of the most terrible technological advance of all, that of nuclear weapons. The fantastic economic growth made possible by modern science had a

dark side, for it has led to severe environmental damage to many parts of the planet, and raised the possibility of an eventual global ecological catastrophe. It is frequently asserted that global information technology and instant communications have promoted democratic ideals, as in the case of CNN's worldwide broadcasting of the occupation of Tienanmen Square in 1989, or of the revolutions in Eastern Europe later that year. But communications technology itself is value-neutral. Ayatollah Khomeini's reactionary ideas were imported into Iran prior to the 1978 revolution on cassette tape recorders that the Shah's economic modernization of the country had made widely available. If television and instant global communications had existed in the 1930s, they would have been used to great effect by Nazi propagandists like Leni Riefenstahl and Joseph Goebbels to promote fascist rather than democratic ideas.

The traumatic events of the twentieth century formed the backdrop to a profound intellectual crisis as well. It is possible to speak of historical progress only if one knows where mankind is going. Most nineteenth-century Europeans thought that progress meant progress toward democracy. But for most of this century, there has been no consensus on this question. Liberal democracy was challenged by two major rival ideologies—fascism and communism—which offered radically different visions of a good society. People in the West themselves came to question whether liberal democracy was in fact a general aspiration of all mankind, and whether their earlier confidence that it was did not reflect a narrow ethnocentrism on their part. As Europeans were forced to confront the non-European world, first as colonial masters, then as patrons during the Cold War and theoretical equals in a world of sovereign nation states, they came to question the universality of their own ideals. The suicidal self-destructiveness of the European state system in two world wars gave lie to the notion of superior Western rationality, while the distinction between civilized and barbarian that was instinctive to Europeans in the nineteenth century was much harder to make after the Nazi death camps. Instead of human history leading in a single direction, there seemed to be as many goals as there were peoples or civilizations, with liberal democracy having no particular privilege among them.

In our own time, one of the clearest manifestations of our pessimism was the almost universal belief in the permanence of a

vigorous, communist-totalitarian alternative to Western liberal democracy. When he was secretary of state in the 1970s, Henry Kissinger warned his countrymen that "today, for the first time in our history, we face the stark reality that the [communist] challenge is *unending*. . . . We must learn to conduct foreign policy as other nations have had to conduct it for so many centuries—without escape and without respite. . . . *This condition will not go away.*"[11] According to Kissinger, it was utopian to try to reform the fundamental political and social structures of hostile powers like the USSR. Political maturity meant acceptance of the world as it was and not the way we wanted it to be, which meant coming to terms with Brezhnev's Soviet Union. And while the conflict between communism and democracy could be moderated, it and the possibility of apocalyptic war could never be overcome completely.

Kissinger's view was by no means unique. Virtually everyone professionally engaged in the study of politics and foreign policy believed in the permanence of communism; its worldwide collapse in the late 1980s was therefore almost totally unanticipated. This failure was not simply a matter of ideological dogma interfering with a "dispassionate" view of events. It affected people across the political spectrum, right, left, and center, journalists as well as scholars, and politicians both East and West.[12] The roots of a blindness so pervasive were much more profound than mere partisanship, and lay in the extraordinary historical pessimism engendered by the events of this century.

As recently as 1983, Jean-François Revel declared that "democracy may, after all, turn out to have been a historical accident, a brief parenthesis that is closing before our eyes . . ."[13] The Right, of course, had never believed that communism had achieved any degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the populations it controlled, and saw quite clearly the economic failings of socialist societies. But much of the Right believed that a "failed society" like the Soviet Union had nonetheless found the key to power through the invention of Leninist totalitarianism, by which a small band of "bureaucrat-dictators" could bring to bear the power of modern organization and technology and rule over large populations more or less indefinitely. Totalitarianism had succeeded not just in intimidating subject populations, but in forcing them to internalize the values of their communist masters. This was one of the distinctions that Jeanne Kirkpatrick, in a famous 1979 article, drew between traditional authoritarian regimes of the Right and

radical totalitarianisms of the Left. While the former "leave in place existing allocations of wealth, power, status" and "worship traditional gods and observe traditional taboos," radical totalitarianisms of the Left seek to "claim jurisdiction over the whole of the society" and violate "internalized values and habits." A totalitarian state, in contrast to a merely authoritarian one, was able to control its underlying society so ruthlessly that it was fundamentally invulnerable to change or reform: thus "the history of this century provides no grounds for expecting that radical totalitarian regimes will transform themselves."[14]

Underlying this belief in the dynamism of totalitarian states was a profound lack of confidence in democracy. This lack of confidence was manifested in Kirkpatrick's view that few of the currently non-democratic countries in the Third World would be able to democratize successfully (the possibility of a communist regime democratizing being discounted entirely), and in Revel's belief that the strong and established democracies of Europe and North America lacked the inner conviction to defend themselves. Citing the numerous economic, social, and cultural requirements for successful democratization, Kirkpatrick criticized as typically American the idea that it was possible to democratize governments anytime and anywhere. The idea that there could be a democratic center in the Third World was a trap and an illusion; experience taught us that the world was divided between authoritarianisms of the Right and totalitarianisms of the Left. Revel, for his part, repeated in a much more extreme form the criticism originally made by Tocqueville that democracies have great difficulties sustaining serious and long-term foreign policies.[15] They are hamstrung by their very democratic nature: by the plurality of the voices, the self-doubt and self-criticism that characterize democratic debate. Hence, "As things stand, relatively minor causes of discontent corrode, disturb, unsettle, paralyze, the democracies faster and more deeply than horrendous famine and constant poverty do the Communist regimes, whose subject peoples have no real rights or means of redressing their wrongs. Societies of which permanent criticism is an integral feature are the only livable ones, but they are also the most fragile."[16]

The Left came to a similar conclusion by a different route. By the 1980s, most "progressives" in Europe and America no longer believed that Soviet communism represented their future, as did many such thinkers through the end of World War II. Yet there

persisted a belief on the Left in the legitimacy of Marxism-Leninism for *other* people, a legitimacy which usually increased in proportion to geographical and cultural distance. Thus, while Soviet-style communism was not necessarily a realistic choice for people in the United States or Britain, it was held to be an authentic alternative for the Russians, with their traditions of autocracy and central control, not to mention the Chinese, who allegedly turned to it to overcome a legacy of foreign domination, backwardness, and humiliation. The same was said to be true for the Cubans and Nicaraguans, who had been victimized by American imperialism, and for the Vietnamese, for whom communism was regarded as a virtual national tradition. Many on the Left shared the view that a radical socialist regime in the Third World could legitimate itself, even in the absence of free elections and open discussion, by engaging in land reform, providing free health care, and raising literacy levels. Given these views, it is not surprising that there were few people on the Left who predicted revolutionary instability in the Soviet bloc or in China.

Indeed, the belief in the legitimacy and permanence of communism took on a number of bizarre forms in the waning days of the Cold War. One prominent student of the Soviet Union maintained that the Soviet system had, under Brezhnev, achieved what he called "institutional pluralism," and that "the Soviet leadership almost seems to have made the Soviet Union closer to the spirit of the pluralist model of American political science than is the United States. . . ."[17] Soviet society, pre-Gorbachev, was "not inert and passive but participatory in almost all sense of the term," with a greater proportion of Soviet citizens "participating" in politics than in the United States.[18] The same kind of thinking characterized some scholarship on Eastern Europe, where, despite the obviously imposed nature of communism, many scholars saw a tremendous social stability. One specialist asserted in 1987 that "if we were now to compare [the states of Eastern Europe] to many countries in the world—for example to a number of Latin American cases—they would seem to be epitomes of stability," and criticized the traditional image of "an 'illegitimate' party . . . counterpoised against a necessarily hostile and unbelieving populace."[19]

While some of these views simply represented projection of the recent past into the future, many of them rested on a judgment concerning the *legitimacy* of communism in the East. That is,

for all of the undeniable problems of their societies, communist rulers had worked out a "social contract" with their peoples, of the sort satirized in the Soviet saying that "they pretend to pay us and we pretend to work."[20] These regimes were neither productive nor dynamic, but were said to govern with a certain degree of consent from their populations because they provided security and stability.[21] As the political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote in 1968:

> The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union have different forms of government, but in all three systems the government governs. Each country is a political community with an overwhelming consensus among the people on the legitimacy of the political system. In each country the citizens and their leaders share a vision of the public interest of the society and of the traditions and principles upon which the political community is based.[22]

Huntington had no particular sympathy for communism, but believed that the weight of evidence forced us to conclude that it had managed to earn a degree of popular approval over the years.

The pessimism of the present with regard to the possibility of progress in history was born out of two separate but parallel crises: the crisis of twentieth-century politics, and the intellectual crisis of Western rationalism. The former killed tens of millions of people and forced hundreds of millions to live under new and more brutal forms of slavery; the latter left liberal democracy without the intellectual resources with which to defend itself. The two were interrelated and cannot be understood separately from one another. On the one hand, the lack of intellectual consensus made the wars and revolutions of this century more ideological and therefore more extreme than they would otherwise have been. The Russian and Chinese revolutions and the Nazi conquests during the Second World War saw the return, in a magnified form, of the kind of brutality that characterized the religious wars of the sixteenth century, for what was at stake was not just territory and resources, but the value systems and ways of life of entire populations. On the other hand, the violence of those ideologically driven conflicts and their terrible outcomes had a devastating effect on the self-confidence of liberal democracies, whose isolation in a world of totalitarian and authoritarian

regimes led to serious doubts about the universality of liberal notions of right.

And yet, despite the powerful reasons for pessimism given us by our experience in the first half of this century, events in its second half have been pointing in a very different and unexpected direction. As we reach the 1990s, the world as a whole has not revealed new evils, but has gotten *better* in certain distinct ways. Chief among the surprises that have occurred in the recent past was the totally unexpected collapse of communism throughout much of the world in the late 1980s. But this development, striking as it was, was only part of a larger pattern of events that had been taking shape since World War II. Authoritarian dictatorships of all kinds, both on the Right and on the Left, have been collapsing.[23] In some cases, the collapse has led to the establishment of prosperous and stable liberal democracies. In others, authoritarianism has been followed by instability, or by yet another form of dictatorship. But whether successful democracy eventually emerged, authoritarians of all stripes have been undergoing a severe crisis in virtually every part of the globe. If the early twentieth century's major political innovation was the invention of the strong states of totalitarian Germany or Russia, then the past few decades have revealed a tremendous weakness at their core. And this weakness, so massive and unexpected, suggests that the pessimistic lessons about history that our century supposedly taught us need to be rethought from the beginning.

2

The Weakness of Strong States I

The current crisis of authoritarianism did not begin with Gorbachev's *perestroika* or the fall of the Berlin Wall. It started over one and a half decades earlier, with the fall of a series of right-wing authoritarian governments in Southern Europe. In 1974 the Caetano regime in Portugal was ousted in an army coup. After a period of instability verging on civil war, the socialist Mario Soares was elected prime minister in April 1976, and the country has seen peaceful democratic rule ever since. The colonels who had been ruling Greece since 1967 were ousted also in 1974, giving way to the popularly elected Karamanlis regime. And in 1975, General Francisco Franco died in Spain, paving the way for a remarkably peaceful transition to democracy two years later. In addition, the Turkish military took over the country in September 1980 as a result of the terrorism engulfing its society, but returned the country to civilian rule by 1983. Since then, all of these countries have held regular, free, multi-party elections.

The transformation that occurred in Southern Europe in less than a decade was remarkable. These countries had earlier been seen as the black sheep of Europe, condemned by their religious and authoritarian traditions to reside outside the mainstream of democratic Western European development. And yet by the 1980s each country had made a successful transition to functioning and stable democracy, so stable in fact that (with the possible exception of Turkey) the people living in them could hardly imagine the situation being otherwise.

A similar set of democratic transitions took place in Latin

America in the 1980s. This began in 1980 with the restoration of a democratically elected government in Peru after twelve years of military rule. The 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War precipitated the downfall of the military junta in Argentina, and the rise of the democratically elected Alfonsin government. The Argentine transition was quickly followed by others throughout Latin America, with military regimes stepping down in Uruguay and Brazil in 1983 and 1984, respectively. By the end of the decade the dictatorships of Stroessner in Paraguay and Pinochet in Chile had given way to popularly elected governments, and in early 1990 even Nicaragua's Sandinista government had fallen to a coalition led by Violetta Chamorro in a free election. Many observers felt less confident about the permanence of the new Latin American democracies than they did about those in Southern Europe. Democracies have come and gone in this region, and virtually all of the new democracies were in a state of acute economic crisis whose most visible manifestation was the debt crisis. Countries like Peru and Colombia, moreover, faced severe internal challenge from insurgency and drugs. Nonetheless, these new democracies proved remarkably resilient, as if their earlier experience of authoritarianism had inoculated them against too easy a return to military rule. The fact remained that, from a low point in the early 1970s when only a handful of Latin American countries were democratic, by the beginning of the 1990s Cuba and Guyana were the only countries in the Western Hemisphere not permitting reasonably free elections.

There were comparable developments in East Asia. In 1986 the Marcos dictatorship was overthrown in the Philippines, and replaced by President Corazon Aquino who was brought into office on a tide of popular support. The following year, General Chun stepped down in South Korea and permitted the election of Roh Tae Woo as president. While the Taiwanese political system was not reformed in such a dramatic way, there was considerable democratic ferment below the surface after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in January 1988. With the passing of much of the old guard in the ruling Guomindang party, there has been growing participation by other sectors of Taiwanese society in the Nationalist Parliament, including many native Taiwanese. And finally, the authoritarian government of Burma has been rocked by pro-democracy ferment.

In February 1990, the Afrikaner-dominated government of

F. W. de Klerk in South Africa announced the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the African National Congress and the South African Communist party. He thereby inaugurated a period of negotiations on a transition to power sharing between blacks and whites, and eventual majority rule.

In retrospect, we have had difficulty perceiving the depths of the crisis in which dictatorships found themselves due to a mistaken belief in the ability of authoritarian systems to perpetuate themselves, or more broadly, in the viability of strong states. The state in a liberal democracy is by definition weak: preservation of a sphere of individual rights means a sharp delimitation of its power. Authoritarian regimes on the Right and Left, by contrast, have sought to use the power of the state to encroach on the private sphere and to control it for various purposes—whether to build military strength, to promote an egalitarian social order, or to bring about rapid economic growth. What was lost in the realm of individual liberty was to be regained at the level of national purpose.

The critical weakness that eventually toppled these strong states was in the last analysis a failure of legitimacy—that is, a crisis on the level of ideas. Legitimacy is not justice or right in an absolute sense; it is a relative concept that exists in people's subjective perceptions. All regimes capable of effective action must be based on some principle of legitimacy.[1] There is no such thing as a dictator who rules purely "by force," as is commonly said, for instance, of Hitler. A tyrant can rule his children, old men, or perhaps his wife by force, if he is physically stronger than they are, but he is not likely to be able to rule more than two or three people in this fashion and certainly not a nation of millions.[2] When we say that a dictator like Hitler ruled "by force," what we mean is that Hitler's supporters, including the Nazi Party, the Gestapo, and the Wehrmacht, were able to physically intimidate the larger population. But what made these supporters loyal to Hitler? Certainly not his ability to intimidate them physically: ultimately it rested upon their belief in his legitimate authority. Security apparatuses can themselves be controlled by intimidation, but at *some* point in the system, the dictator must have loyal subordinates who believe in his legitimate authority. Similarly for the most lowly and corrupt mafia chieftain: he would not be a *capo* if his "family" did not accept, on some grounds, his "legitimacy." As Socrates explains in Plato's *Republic,* even among a band of

robbers there must be some principle of justice that permits them to divide their spoils. Legitimacy is thus crucial to even the most unjust and bloody-minded dictatorship.

It is clearly not the case that a regime needs to establish legitimate authority for the greater part of its population in order to survive. There are numerous contemporary examples of minority dictatorships that are actively hated by large parts of their populations, but have succeeded in staying in power for decades. Such is the case of the *Alawi*-dominated regime in Syria, or Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist faction in Iraq. It goes without saying that Latin America's various military juntas and oligarchies have ruled without broad popular support. A lack of legitimacy among the population as a whole does not spell a crisis of legitimacy for the regime unless it begins to infect the elites tied to the regime itself, and particularly those that hold the monopoly of coercive power, such as the ruling party, the armed forces, and the police. When we speak of a crisis of legitimacy in an authoritarian system, then, we speak of a crisis within those elites whose cohesion is essential for the regime to act effectively.

A dictator's legitimacy can spring from a variety of sources: from personal loyalty on the part of a pampered army, to an elaborate ideology that justifies his right to rule. In this century, the most important systematic attempt to establish a coherent, right-wing, non-democratic, non-egalitarian principle of legitimacy was fascism. Fascism was not a "universal" doctrine like liberalism or communism, insofar as it denied the existence of a common humanity or equality of human rights. Fascist ultranationalism maintained that the ultimate source of legitimacy was race or nation, specifically, the right of "master races" like the Germans to rule other people. Power and will were extolled over reason or equality, and were considered titles to rule in themselves. Nazism's assertion of German racial superiority had to be actively proven through conflict with other cultures. War was therefore a normal rather than a pathological condition.

Fascism was not around long enough to suffer an internal crisis of legitimacy, but was defeated by force of arms. Hitler and his remaining followers went to their deaths in their Berlin bunker believing to the last in the rightness of the Nazi cause and in Hitler's legitimate authority. The appeal of fascism was undermined in most people's eyes retrospectively, as a consequence of that defeat.[3] That is, Hitler had based his claim to legitimacy on

the promise of world domination; what the Germans got instead was horrifying devastation and occupation by supposedly inferior races. Fascism was highly appealing not only to Germans but to many people around the world when it was mainly a matter of torchlight parades and bloodless victories, but made much less sense when its inherent militarism was carried to its logical conclusion. Fascism suffered, one might say, from an internal contradiction: its very emphasis on militarism and war led it inevitably into a self-destructive conflict with the international system. As a result, it has not been a serious ideological competitor to liberal democracy since the end of the Second World War.

Of course, we could ask how legitimate fascism would be today if Hitler had not been defeated. But fascism's internal contradiction went deeper than the likelihood that it would be defeated militarily by the international system. If Hitler had emerged victorious, fascism would nonetheless have lost its inner *raison d'être* in the peace of a universal empire where German nationhood could no longer be asserted through war and conquest.

After Hitler's defeat, what remained as an alternative to liberal democracy on the Right was a group of persistent but in the end unsystematic military dictatorships. Most of these regimes had no grander vision than the preservation of a traditional social order, and their chief weakness was the lack of a plausible long-term basis of legitimacy. None was able to formulate, as Hitler did, a coherent doctrine of nation that could justify perpetual authoritarian rule. All of them had to accept the *principle* of democracy and popular sovereignty, and argue that for various reasons their countries were not ready for democracy, either because of a threat from communism, terrorism, or the economic mismanagement of the previous democratic regime. Each had to justify itself as transitional, pending the ultimate return of democracy.[4]

The weakness implied by the lack of a coherent source of legitimacy did not, however, spell the quick or inevitable collapse of right-wing authoritarian governments. Democratic regimes in Latin America and Southern Europe had serious weaknesses as well, in terms of their ability to deal with a variety of serious social and economic problems.[5] Few had been able to generate rapid economic growth, and many were plagued by terrorism. But the lack of legitimacy became a crucial source of weakness for right-wing authoritarianism when, as was almost always inevitably the case, these regimes faced a crisis or failure in some area of policy.

Legitimate regimes have a fund of goodwill that excuses them from short-term mistakes, even serious ones, and failure can be expiated by the removal of a prime minister or cabinet. In illegitimate regimes, on the other hand, failure frequently precipitates an overturning of the regime itself.

An example of this was Portugal. The dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar and his successor, Marcello Caetano, had a superficial stability that prompted some observers to describe the Portuguese people as "passive, fatalistic and endlessly melancholy."[6] Just like the Germans and the Japanese before them, the Portuguese people proved wrong those outside Western observers who earlier deemed them unready for democracy. The Caetano dictatorship collapsed in April 1974 when its own military turned against it and formed the *Movimento das Forcas Armadas* (MFA).[7] Their immediate motive was Portugal's deepening and unwinnable colonial war in Africa, which consumed a quarter of the Portuguese budget and the energies of a large part of the Portuguese military. The transition to democracy was not a smooth one because the MFA was by no means uniformly suffused with democratic ideas. A significant part of the officer corps was influenced by the strict Stalinist Portuguese Communist party of Álvaro Cunhal. But in contrast to the 1930s, the center and democratic right proved unexpectedly resilient: after a stormy period of political and social turmoil, Mario Soares' moderate Socialist party won a plurality of votes in April 1976. This occurred to no small degree as a result of assistance from outside organizations, ranging from the German Social Democratic party to the American CIA. But outside help would have proved feckless had Portugal not possessed a surprisingly strong civil society—political parties, unions, the Church—which were able to mobilize and control broad popular support for democracy. The allure of modern West European consumer civilization also played a role; in the words of one observer, "Workers . . . [who] might have marched in demonstrations and chanted slogans of Socialist revolution . . . spent their money on the clothes, appliances, and artifacts of West European consumer societies to whose standard of living they aspired."[8]

The Spanish transition to democracy the following year was perhaps the purest recent case of the failure of authoritarian legitimacy. General Francisco Franco was, in many ways, the last exponent of the nineteenth-century European conservatism that

based itself on throne and altar, the same conservatism that went down to defeat in the French Revolution. But Catholic consciousness in Spain was in the process of changing dramatically from the 1930s: the church as a whole had liberalized after Vatican II in the 1960s, and important parts of Spanish Catholicism adopted the Christian democracy of Western Europe. Not only did the Spanish church discover that there was no necessary conflict between Christianity and democracy, it increasingly took on the role of human rights advocate and critic of the Francoist dictatorship.[9] This new consciousness was reflected in the *Opus Dei* movement of Catholic lay technocrats, many of whom entered the administration after 1957 and had been intimately involved with the subsequent economic liberalization. Thus, when Franco died in November 1975, important parts of his regime were prepared to accept the legitimacy of a series of negotiated "pacts" that peacefully dissolved all important Francoist institutions, legalized an opposition that included the Spanish Communist party, and permitted elections for a constituent assembly that would write a fully democratic constitution. This could not have happened if important elements of the old regime (most importantly, King Juan Carlos) had not believed that Francoism was an anachronism in a democratic Europe, a Europe that Spain had come to resemble increasingly on a social and economic plane.[10] The last Francoist Cortes did a remarkable thing: it overwhelmingly passed a law in November 1976 that in effect constituted its own suicide by stipulating that the next Cortes be democratically elected. As in Portugal, the Spanish population as a whole provided the ultimate ground for democracy by supporting a democratic center, first by giving strong support to the December 1976 referendum approving democratic elections, and then by calmly voting Suarez's center-right party into office in June 1977.[11]

In the cases of the Greek and Argentine turns to democracy in 1974 and 1983, respectively, the military in both countries was not forcibly ousted from power. They gave way to civilian authority instead through inner divisions within their ranks, reflecting a loss of belief in their right to rule. As in Portugal, external failure was the proximate cause. The Greek colonels who came to power in 1967 had never sought legitimation on grounds other than democracy, arguing only that they were preparing the way for the restoration of a "healthy" and "regenerated" political system.[12] The military regime was thus vulnerable when it discredited itself

by supporting a Greek Cypriot bid for unity with the mainland, leading to the occupation of Cyprus by Turkey and the possibility of full-scale war.[13] The major aim of the military junta that took over power in Argentina from President Isabella Perón in 1976 was to rid Argentine society of terrorism; it accomplished this in a brutal war and thereby undercut its chief *raison d'être*. The military junta's decision to invade the Falklands/Malvinas was subsequently sufficient to discredit it by provoking an unnecessary war which it could not subsequently win.[14]

In other cases, strong military governments proved ineffective in dealing with the economic and social problems that had delegitimized their democratic predecessors. The Peruvian military turned over power to a civilian government in 1980 in the face of a rapidly accelerating economic crisis, in which the government of General Francisco Morales Bermudez found it could not cope with a series of strikes and intractable social problems.[15] The Brazilian military presided over a period of remarkable economic growth from 1968 to 1973, but in the face of a world oil crisis and slowdown, Brazil's military rulers found they had no particular gift for economic management. By the time the last military president, João Figueiredo, stepped down in favor of an elected civilian president, many in the military were relieved, and even ashamed of the mistakes they had made.[16] The Uruguayan military initially took power to wage a "dirty war" against the Tupemaros insurgency in 1973–74. Uruguay had a relatively strong democratic tradition, however, which is perhaps what persuaded the Uruguayan military to put the institutionalization of its rule to the test through a plebiscite in 1980. It lost, and by 1983 had voluntarily stepped aside.[17]

Architects of the apartheid system in South Africa, like former Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd, denied the liberal premise of universal human equality, and believed that there was a natural division and hierarchy between mankind's races.[18] Apartheid was an effort to permit the industrial development of South Africa based on the use of black labor, while at the same time seeking to reverse and prevent the urbanization of South Africa's blacks that is the natural concomitant of any process of industrialization. Such an effort at social engineering was both monumental in its ambition and, in retrospect, monumentally foolish in its ultimate aim: by 1981, almost eighteen million blacks were arrested under the so-called "pass-laws" for the crime of wanting to live near their

places of employment. The impossibility of defying the laws of modern economics had, by the late 1980s, led to a revolution in Afrikaner thinking that caused F. W. de Klerk, well before he became state president, to assert that "the economy demands the permanent presence of millions of blacks in urban areas" and that "it does not help to bluff ourselves about this."[19] The apartheid system's loss of legitimacy among whites was thus ultimately based on its ineffectiveness, and has led to an acceptance on the part of a majority of Afrikaners of a new system of power sharing with blacks.[20]

While recognizing the real differences that exist between these cases, there was a remarkable consistency in the democratic transitions in Southern Europe, Latin America, and South Africa. Apart from Somoza in Nicaragua, there was not one single instance in which the old regime was forced from power through violent upheaval or revolution.[21] What permitted regime change was the *voluntary* decision on the part of at least certain members of the old regime to give up power in favor of a democratically elected government. While this willing retreat from power was always provoked by some immediate crisis, it was ultimately made possible by a growing belief that democracy was the only legitimate source of authority in the modern world. Once they accomplished the limited aims they set for themselves—eliminating terrorism, restoring social order, ending economic chaos, and so forth—authoritarians of the Right in Latin America and Europe found themselves unable to justify their continuation in power, and lost confidence in themselves. It is difficult to kill people in the name of throne and altar if the king himself seeks to be no more than the titular monarch of a democratic country, or if the Church is in the forefront of the struggle for human rights. So much, then, for that bit of conventional wisdom that maintains that "nobody gives up power voluntarily."

It goes without saying that many of the old authoritarians were not converted to democracy overnight, and that they were frequently victims of their own incompetence and miscalculation. Neither General Pinochet in Chile nor the Sandinistas in Nicaragua expected to lose the elections to which they submitted themselves. But the fact is that even the most die-hard dictators believed they had to endow themselves with at least a patina of democratic legitimacy by staging an election. And in many cases, the relinquishing of power by strong men in uniform was done at

considerable personal risk, since they thereby lost their chief protection against the vengeance of those whom they had mistreated.

It is perhaps not surprising that right-wing authoritarians were swept from power by the idea of democracy. The power of most strong states on the Right was actually relatively limited when it came to the economy or society as a whole. Their leaders represented traditional social groups who were becoming increasingly marginal to their societies, and the generals and colonels who ruled were generally bereft of ideas and intellect. But what about those communist totalitarian powers of the Left? Had they not redefined the very meaning of the term "strong state," and discovered a formula for self-perpetuating power?