No alternatives
The end of ideology in the 1950s and the post-political world of the 1990s

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Abstract
In the 1950s, scholars in Europe and the United States announced the end of political ideology in the West. With the rise of affluent welfare states, they argued, ideological movements which sought to overthrow prevailing liberal democracy would disappear. While these arguments were questioned in the 1960s, similar ideas were presented after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Scholars now claimed that the end of the Cold War meant the end of mankind’s “ideological development,” that globalization would undermine the left/right distinction and that politics would be shaped by cultural affiliations rather than ideological alignments.

The purpose of No alternatives is to compare the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s with some of the post-Cold War theories launched at the time of, or in the years following, the fall of the Berlin Wall. Juxtaposing monographs, essays and papers between 1950 and 2000, the dissertation focuses on three aspects of these theories. First, it analyzes their concepts of history, demonstrating that they tended to portray the existing society as an order which had resolved the conflicts and antagonisms of earlier history. Second, the investigation scrutinizes the processes of post-politicization at work in these theories, showing how they sought to transcend, contain or externalize social conflict, and at times dismiss politics altogether. Third, it demonstrates how the theories can be understood as legitimizing or mobilizing narratives which aimed to defend Western liberal democracy and to rally its citizens against internal threats and external enemies. As the title of the dissertation implies, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s sought to highlight the historical or political impossibility of any alternatives to the present society.

Keywords: intellectual history, political theory, philosophy of history, ideology, end of ideology, post-politics, modernization theory, Cold War, anticommunism, 1950s, 1990s.

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Daniel Strand
Introduction

Those who are satisfied with the existing order of things are only too likely to set up the chance situation of the moment as absolute and eternal in order to have something stable to hold on to and to minimize the hazardousness of life.¹

Karl Mannheim, 1929

Things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. […] What is at a given moment considered as the “natural” order—jointly with the “common sense” which accompanies it—is the result of sedimented practices; it is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity exterior to the practices that bring it into being.²

Chantal Mouffe, 2005

In the summer of 1989, less than six months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, a fifteen-page text called “The End of History?” appeared in the American journal The National Interest. Written by Francis Fukuyama, an unknown foreign policy director at the US State Department, the essay instantly gained attention in political circles around Washington. Echoing Voltaire’s Dr. Pangloss, Fukuyama claimed that contemporary Western society should be considered as the best of all possible worlds, and that no essentially different—and better—social order could be imagined. “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history,” Fukuyama wrote, “but the end of history as such: that is, […] the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.” As liberal democracy would come to encompass every corner of the world, humanity would enter an era free from partisanship and conflicts. Such an age, Fukuyama stressed, would not merely mark the end of history, but also “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution”.³ If the twentieth century had descended into “a paroxysm of ideological violence,” the post-historical world would instead be characterized by a universal consensus on the supremacy of liberal democracy and capitalism.⁴

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.
Bold and provocative as Fukuyama’s quasi-Hegelian philosophy of history might have been, the theory of the end of ideology was not new. In the decade following the Second World War, a number of scholars and intellectuals in the United States and Western Europe claimed that the rise of affluent welfare states guided by Keynesian political economy would make political ideologies superfluous. If increasing productivity and a progressive redistribution of wealth could prevent socio-economic inequalities, they argued, political doctrines which sought to overthrow liberal democracy and create a different society would no longer have any popular appeal. As American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset wrote in 1960, “the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems.”

While both Fukuyama and Lipset announced the end of political ideology, their theories were conceived in very different historical contexts. If Fukuyama’s essay was written in a situation where the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union seemed to put an end to communism and make the United States the definitive winner of the Cold War, the end of ideology theories of the 1950s were launched at a time when Soviet expansionism, Third World decolonization and recurring proxy conflicts between the two superpowers made the future radically unclear. If Fukuyama’s “The End of History?” might be described as an example of what has been called “Cold War Triumphalism,” the 1950s’ end of ideology discussion can rather be seen as a component in an ongoing intellectual warfare between the United States and the Soviets.

While a serious examination of the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the ideas which I will call the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s must take such historical differences into account, one can also observe similarities between them. As will be argued in this dissertation, these theories served to legitimize the political system of liberal democracy and the economic system of capitalism. While the theories of the 1950s and 1990s must not be dismissed as conservative propaganda—as we will see, many who launched them considered themselves to be progressives or left-wing—they can all, in one way or another, be seen as calls for preserving the foundation of the prevailing society in the West and rejecting visions of a different social order. Although few of these theories entailed such explicit historical teleologies as Fukuyama’s, and many who presented them in fact expressed the strongest objections to historical determinism, they nevertheless sought to minimize the space for political dissent and visions of social transformation. As we will see,

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the statement that ideology has ended or that the left/right distinction has become superfluous has tended to dovetail with the claim that there are no alternatives to the existing society.

Purpose and research questions

The main purpose of this dissertation is to compare the end of ideology discussion in the 1950s with a number of seemingly similar theories which were launched at the time of, or in the years following, the fall of the Berlin Wall. If “the end of ideology” was a recurring theme among American and European social scientists throughout the 1950s, ideas of the decline of ideologies, the end of the left/right distinction, and the disappearance of political alternatives were again brought to the fore of Western political discourse in the 1990s. As the first scholarly study to juxtapose these theories and analyze them side by side, this dissertation provides further knowledge and understanding of political ideas which became prominent and influential during two quite different historical periods. By historicizing these theories, the dissertation shows how they were conceived against the backdrop of particular events, problems and intellectual currents. And by drawing analytically on thinkers like Chantal Mouffe and Wendy Brown, it tests the usefulness and applicability of a set of concepts from contemporary political theory as tools for empirical analysis of historical sources.

The investigation focuses on three aspects of these theories. First, it historicizes and compares the quite cohesive end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the quite disparate post-Cold War theories of the 1990s. Second, it analyzes the concepts of history which, most often implicitly, underpin these theories. Third, it scrutinizes the theories’ diverse positions on questions of social transformation and political agency.

Consequently, the questions to be answered are: First, what are the essential similarities and points of intersection between the theories of the 1990s and those of the 1950s? What, on the other hand, are the major differences and divergences between them? Second, how can the concepts of history in these theories be understood, and what do the theories have to say about the course, unfolding and dynamics of historical development? Third, in what different ways do they conceptualize politics in terms of conflict, consensus, partisanship and reconciliation? Fourth, how did the theories studied in this dissertation relate to the prevailing political and economic systems of the society in which they were conceived?
Theoretical perspectives

In order to answer these questions, the analysis will be guided by three theoretical concepts. With **concept of history**, I refer to an idea of history as a singular and cohesive process. With **post-politicization**, I refer to processes which seek to transcend, contain, dismiss or externalize what political philosopher Chantal Mouffe calls the antagonistic dimension of the political. With **legitimizing narratives** and **mobilizing narratives**, I refer to different forms of discursive justifications of the status quo or of a particular social development.

Concept of history

In his classic work *Metahistory* from 1973, historical theorist Hayden White has suggested that all political ideologies of Western modernity have entailed a particular idea of history and its processes. Drawing on the work of Karl Mannheim, White argues that different political ideologies—like liberalism, conservatism, socialism and anarchism—have had different positions regarding the desirability of changing or maintaining the prevailing society, as well as different opinions about the pace of and the means for achieving social change. Moreover, White notes, political ideologies have represented different “time orientations” in the sense that they have considered society’s ideal form to be located in the golden age of the past, in the immediate present, or in a more or less distant future.7

A premise of this dissertation is that White’s idea that all ideologies entail a particular idea of history can be applied to political theory in general. To be more precise, all theories which set out to explain socio-political development through the course of time have to consider this in relation to human temporality, and hence to history. In order to get a grip on the historical assumptions embedded in the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s, my examination seeks to scrutinize their concepts of history. According to historical theorist Magnus Hermansson Adler, a concept of history “describes an idea of how history changes, of the forces which direct the development, and if there is any meaning in the course of history.”8 A concept of history in this sense involves what philosopher Peter Osborne calls “historical temporalization,” that is, “a distinctive way of temporalizing ‘history’ […] through which the three dimensions of phenomenological or lived

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time (past, present and future) are linked together within the dynamic and eccentric unity of a single historical view." Osborne further suggests that historical temporalizations entail different orientations towards practice—that is, approaches to how and in what ways society should be changed.

The comments by Hermansson Adler and Osborne helps to specify how concept of history comes into play in this dissertation. With concept of history, I refer to a conceptualization of history as a singular and cohesive process of time (which evolves through the dimensions of past, present and future), including tacit or explicit assumptions about the dynamics, directions and potential telos of this process. While such a way of conceiving “history” can appear to be self-evident, it might be stressed that it is actually based on a distinctive historical consciousness which emerged in conjunction with European modernity. As intellectual historian Reinhart Koselleck has argued, it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that the idea of history as a single process, existing “in and for itself in the absence of an associated subject or object,” became established.\(^9\) History did thereby become, as Koselleck puts it, a “collective singular” which collected the sum of what had previously been seen as a multitude of separately existing histories. A concept of history, as defined here, is therefore based on a modern historical consciousness in the sense that “history” is understood as a singular and consistent process, which in turn can be abstractly conceptualized.

An analysis of a particular concept of history requires investigating at least three sets of questions. First, it must examine assumptions about the dynamics or processes of historical change over time. Is history seen as the outcome of deliberate action pursued by more or less autonomous human subjects, or is it rather understood in terms of the successive unfolding of “laws” or “forces” which advance independently of human subjectivity? In the latter case, are such laws or forces connected to any specific historical “subjects”—whether in the form of classes, nations, institutions, ideas and so on—which are supposed to propel the historical evolution? Finally, is the structural determination of history and the human making of it related in a more dialectical way—that is to say, is individual agency determined by objective historical forces or structures, which nonetheless can be transformed and altered by actions taken by individuals?

Second, the analysis has to examine assumptions about possible directions of history. Is the historical process, as in traditional progressivist concepts of history, seen as a development which evolves towards social orders which, for whatever reasons, are considered to be superior to previous periods? Is history conceived of as a process of decay or decline in which humanity descends to

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ever “lower” phases? Is it circular, in the sense that historical processes are supposed to recur in more or less frequent intervals? In all these cases, is the movement of history—whether it is ascending, descending, or circular—described in terms of particular “stages” through which it proceeds? Alternatively, as postmodern critiques of modernity’s “grand narratives” have it, is history regarded as not having any particular direction whatsoever?

Third, and closely related to the questions just mentioned, the analysis has to make clear whether the concept of history entails any form of historical telos. It must, in other words, clarify whether the historical process is seen as a trajectory which inexorably proceeds towards a definitive end-point. In this case, in which the concept of history can be said to be teleological, the analysis has to address two further questions. First, it should clarify how the historical telos is constituted in terms of a particular socio-political order. Second, it should examine in what exact way this social order brings to a halt whatever mechanisms, forces or dynamics that have hitherto pushed history forward.

Post-politicization

As we will see, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s suggested that human antagonism and social conflict had been, or were to be, replaced by harmony and consensus. The perceived decline of political ideologies or the disappearance of the distinction between “left” and “right” reflected the evaporation or reduction of large-scale controversies between different groups. To designate the idea of a social order which has transcended conflicts about the basic principles of society, I will use the term post-political vision. If such a vision can be described as a kind of normative ideal, the different processes by which this order is established and sustained can be called post-politicization. Before clarifying what is meant by these terms, it should be stressed that I use them as analytical labels to categorize ideas or theories of a society where consensus and concord have eliminated conflict and antagonism. This is said in relation to scholars who have employed the term post-politics to characterize what they perceive to be a de facto condition in contemporary democracies—that is, shifts in actually existing political institutions.¹¹

During the past fifteen years, critical theorists have used the term post-politics or the post-political to conceptualize an alleged attenuation of the conflictual dimension in the political institutions of Western liberal democracies. This analysis is based on the assumption that politics have traditionally been played out as conflict, and more precisely as potentially irreconcilable disagreements about the values and direction of society. Such conflicts used to materialize through competition between parties with different programs of social change. However, theorists hold that there has been a shift towards bipartisan collaboration, bloc-transcending agreements, and a broad consensus on fundamental principles of governance. As programmatic visions of social transformation are replaced by an administration of the existing order of things, and heterodox theories of the political economy surrender to a consensus on the management of socio-economic affairs, social inequalities cease to be regarded as structurally caused by the system itself. Instead, they are seen as particular “problems” which can be solved by dialogic procedures or technical adjustments within the existing system. In his 1999 book The Ticklish Subject, philosopher Slavoj Žižek sums this up in terms of post-politics:

In post-politics, the conflict of global ideological visions embodied in different parties which compete for power is replaced by the collaboration of enlightened technocrats (economists, public opinion specialists…) and liberal multiculturalists; via the process of negotiation of interests, a compromise is reached in the guise of a more or less universal consensus. Post-politics thus emphasizes the need to leave old ideological divisions behind and confront new issues, armed with the necessary expert knowledge and free deliberation that takes people’s concrete needs and demands into account.\(^\text{12}\)

In this “post-ideological universe,” where grand political projects are replaced by pragmatic adjustments within the existing order, Žižek claims, the possibility of transforming the existing framework of socio-political relations is circumscribed.\(^\text{13}\) In a society where all major conflicts are said to have been resolved in favor of a more or less universal consensus, social injustices are not

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\(^{12}\) Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, p. 198.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 200. In his writings about post-politics, Žižek draws on French philosopher Jacques Rancière’s discussion on “post-democracy.” According to Rancière, “politics” is the name of a practice where a collective which has been excluded from the current political order gives itself a name (like “demos” or “proletariat”), and thereby demands recognition as a political subject. Rancière identifies the first historical example of this practice in the city-state of Athens, where *demos*—the group of people who had no right to the public sphere—required being recognized as political actors in spite of the fact that the prevailing social order denied them this right. Political practice therefore always takes shape as conflicts about political subjectivity, and these conflicts lead to a destabilization of the current order of things. However, Rancière argues that contemporary Western society is “post-democratic” in the sense that the

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seen as being desirable—or even possible—to change by political action. As political scientists Mekonnen Tesfahuney and Magnus Dahlstedt have argued, “[p]ost-politics is a process where certain fields/issues which have earlier been regarded as political are removed from the political. This successive movement away from the political is rendered in terms of ‘development,’ as though society moves from one, lower, stage to another, higher.”

With this account of post-politics as a vision of a superior social order which has transcended the antagonisms of the past, we begin to approach the way it comes into play in the theories which will be analyzed in this dissertation. To specify this, however, a clearer definition of “politics” and its relation to society in a broader sense is needed. In her 2005 *On the Political*, political philosopher Chantal Mouffe provides such a perspective by basing her critique of post-political visions on the distinction between “politics” and “the political.” With politics, Mouffe refers to “the manifold practices of conventional politics,” that is, the manifestation of politics at a particular time in the form of parties, parliaments, negotiations, referenda and the like. Politics is thereby understood as the actually existing institutions and practices through which a social order is sustained and human coexistence is organized over time. With “the political,” on the other hand, Mouffe refers to a more abstract phenomenon, namely the underlying social dynamics of power and conflict which can become the actual matter of institutionalized politics. More specifically, the political is “the dimension of antagonism which [is] constitutive of human societies.” By this, Mouffe means that human life, due to its sheer diversity, gives rise to contradictory interests which cannot be reconciled through compromise or rational consensus. Drawing on Carl Schmitt, she suggests that the political can be understood as a register of conflicts and disagreements which are expressed as oppositions between a “we” and a “they.” Every formation of collective political identity, she maintains, presupposes the existence of a dif-
fert collective—a “they”—by which the “we” can be distinguished. The dimension of the political is therefore by definition one of conflicting, and ultimately irreconcilable, positions.

The antagonistic dimension of the political has several normative implications for politics. Although Mouffe argues that it “is not in our power to eliminate conflicts and escape our human freedom,” we can nevertheless “create the practices, discourses and institutions” through which these conflicts are allowed to be played out as conflicts, but in a regulated and non-violent way. Political conflicts can be effectively dealt with within parliamentary institutions, on the condition that such institutions recognize that dealing with conflicts means choosing between different alternatives rather than achieving a rational consensus that satisfies everybody. “Properly political questions,” Mouffe claims, “always involve decisions which require us to make a choice between conflicting alternatives.” Rather than suppress or exclude opposing visions, the goal of institutionalized politics—including the one practiced in parliamentary democracies—should be to channel antagonisms into controlled, yet openly adversarial, debates.

Mouffe’s distinction between politics and the political offers a possibility to define a post-political vision as it will be used in this dissertation. The most essential feature of a post-political vision is that it does not recognize the political—that is, conflicts—as the necessary foundation for politics. Instead, to use the words of geographer Erik Swyngedouw, it regards politics as “something one can do without making decisions that divide and separate”. According to post-political visions, the use of social science, technology, dialogue, tolerance, and the universalization of human rights enable politics to eliminate conflict. Since the ultimate goal of post-politics is to reach a rational consensus on the foundational values and principles of society, everything which might cause rifts in the polity—whether rivaling doctrines, political affects, or oppositional labels like left and right—is regarded as obstacles. Conversely, indications of a decline of strong sentiments or radical claims in institutionalized politics—“the end of ideology”—are taken as evidence of a de facto disappearance of a world of antagonism. While a perspective like Mouffe’s interprets the alleged end of ideology as the deliberate suppression of the conflictual dimension of human life (“the political”) from institutionalized politics—a process which forces conflicts to be played out as ethnic, cultural or moral rather than political—the post-political vision interprets it as an objective expression of the emergence of an empirically existing social order based on harmony and consensus.

If the ideal of a post-political vision is to reach consensus and transcend the antagonistic dimension of the political, the processes of post-politicization

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17 Mouffe, On the Political, p 130.
18 Ibid., p. 10.
19 Swyngedouw, “Impossible ‘Sustainability’ and the Postpolitical Condition,” p. 25.
by which such an order is established involve various kinds of discursive efforts to deal with the conflicts which spring from the political. As Žižek and philosopher Jacques Rancière have argued in different texts, such processes can take a number of different forms. Post-politicization can seek to transcend conflict altogether in favor of a communitarian and organic society in which all social groups act according to a fixed hierarchical order underpinned by incontestable values or principles. It can contain disagreement by turning it into an institutionalized process of “deliberation” or “bargaining” between specific actors who have been authorized as legitimate by the prevailing political system. It can dismiss politics altogether as a powerless practice incapable of transforming the “true” essence—like the forces of production or technological structures—which is claimed to be what de facto determines social institutions and relations. Or it can externalize conflict by transferring it from within the political community to a space between “us” and our common “enemy,” where it is played out as a militarized and static antagonism which cannot be resolved on any common grounds.20

The important point here is that post-politicization always engenders different attempts to cope with the political—by transcending, containing, dismissing or externalizing it—and that such attempts do not necessarily involve a virtual exclusion of conflicts as such. A process of post-politicization can affirm conflict if it is presented as an antagonism which exists outside a supposedly homogenous community like “our people,” “our country” or “our civilization.” Alternatively, it can accept minor disagreements and different opinions as long as these do not put the economic system or the established political institutions at any kind of risk. If “bargaining” and “negotiation” are presented as legitimate ways of pursuing politics, the parts involved in these activities must not make any claims which challenge the basic structure of the economy or the prevailing political institutions.

Legitimizing and mobilizing narratives

Thus far, the theoretical discussion has not been concerned with the relation between ideas—like a concept of history or a post-political vision—and the actually existing society in which such ideas are conceived. The remainder of this section will address this question by introducing the concept of legitimizing and mobilizing narratives.

Depending on their position towards an actually existing society, post-political visions can have different kinds of effects. For those who claim that a post-political order has de facto materialized in the prevailing social order—a

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20 While these processes roughly correspond to what Rancière and Žižek call the figures of “archipolitics,” “parapolitics,” “metapolitics” and “ultrapolitics,” my usage of them in the forthcoming analysis is based on my own interpretation. For the original discussion, see Rancière, Disagreement, p. 61-93; Žižek, “Carl Schmitt in the Age of Post-Politics,” p. 27-36.
notion which is apparent in announcements of “the end of history” or among those who explicitly describe the current state of things in terms of post-politics—such a vision can be deployed to legitimate existing social relations and institutions. For those who discern the post-political as tendencies and indications which exist in the current society and which should be actively reinforced and promoted, a post-political vision can be used to mobilize the community against groups and doctrines which challenge these tendencies and obstruct development towards post-politics. For those who distance themselves from the current society and project their visions onto a more or less distant future, a post-political vision can be used to highlight the flaws of the present and call for a profound transformation of the status quo. If the first position sees the post-political as something already-realized and the second take it to be not-yet-fully-realized, the last position conceives of the post-political as something to-be-realized. As we will see, the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s and the post-Cold War thinkers of the 1990s belonged to the first two of these categories. By emphasizing the decline of conflict in Western liberal democracies and highlighting tendencies towards consensus and the disappearance of partisanship, their theories came to serve as legitimizing narratives.

To specify what I mean by this, I will draw on the work of political scientist Wendy Brown. In her 2001 Politics Out of History, Brown argues that Western modernity and its political formations—particularly liberal democracy—have been underpinned by a number of “narratives” which have provided them with ontological and epistemological foundations. While Brown underlines that “stories constitutive of modernity are many, complex, and vary significantly by time and place,” she discerns two narratives which she holds to have been particularly important for modernity’s conception of the political as well as historical temporality.21 First, a teleological and progressivist concept of history in which humanity is placed in the center of a linear movement from a supposedly unenlightened, non-egalitarian, violent and primitive social order towards an increasingly rational, harmonic, peaceful and free society. Elaborated in different variations by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century and the philosophers of history of the nineteenth, this theme depicts Europe as the vanguard of historical progress, while other parts of the world lag behind. Western modernity, Brown argues, has been underpinned by “a forthrightly progressive story” promising the ultimate emancipation of humanity—whether framed in terms of the perpetual peace between nations (Kant), the universal spirit coming to terms with itself (Hegel), or the rise of a community of freely associated producers (Marx).22 Second, Brown argues, modernity has been underpinned by a “fiction” of the autonomous individual subject, on the one hand, and the sovereign nation-state, on the other. While

22 Ibid., p. 7.
the individual has been conceived of as an independent subject capable of ra-
tional action and personally accountable for his or her deeds, the nation-state
has been seen as a sovereign entity capable of managing its affairs and defending
its interests. Brown claims that the idea of the autonomous subject has
been particularly important for liberalism, for which the universalization of
legal and political rights has been seen as the main road to human freedom.
“From the French Revolution onward,” she writes, “the liberty promised by
liberal doctrine has essentially been defined through rights, and the expansion
of the quantity and purview of rights is equated with the expansion of free-
dom. The presumably universal reach of rights in liberal constitutional orders
has also implied historically that a quantitative increase in rights generates a
quantitative increase in equality.”

As the title Politics Out of History indicates, however, Brown’s hypothesis
is that the last decades have undermined the founding narratives of modernity.
A series of social developments during the last quarter of the twentieth cen-
tury—the globalization of capitalism, the rise of supranational or non-govern-
mental actors in the realm of politics and economics, the collapse of the Soviet
Union and the end of the bipolar world order, the war in former Yugoslavia,
global migration flows and the prevalence of ethnic conflicts, and intensified
processes of surveillance—have undermined the credibility of historical pro-
gress, cast doubts on the notion of the nation-state’s sovereignty and the in-
dividual’s autonomy, and challenged the idea of universal human rights and
values. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Brown claims, we are
cought in a “profound political disorientation” where historical progress and
the autonomous state and subject can no longer be taken for granted. Thrown out of history, politics cease to be able to legitimize itself with reference
to its traditional narratives. The same goes for liberalism—“the signal political formation” of modernity—which loses its power to justify its political program
by the traditional claim of creating a world of freedom and equality through
the expansion of democratic and human rights. But what is liberalism as a
political practice, Brown asks, without the notions of the autonomous subject
and state? What is liberalism without a progressivist historical temporality?
She continues:

If the legitimacy of liberal democracy depends on certain narratives and foun-
dational presuppositions, including progress, rights, and sovereignty, what
happens when these narratives and assumptions are challenged, or indeed
simply exposed in their legitimating function? What kinds of political cultures
are produced by this destabilization of founding narratives and signal terms?

23 Brown, Politics Out of History, p. 11-12.
24 Ibid., p. 3.
25 Ibid., p. 6.
26 Ibid., p. 14. (Italics added.)
While my analysis is not concerned with these questions per se, Brown’s discussion of the founding narratives of Western modernity and liberal democracy provides an interesting perspective on the political role that the theories analyzed in this dissertation came to play. If the assumption of Politics Out of History is that contemporary politics have lost their ties to history—or to a dominant liberal historiography—we will see that many of the end of ideology theories of the 1950s and the post-Cold War ones of the 1990s created such ties by rendering the existing political order as the natural outcome of forces or dynamics inherent in history. Drawing on Brown, I will refer to them as legitimizing narratives. By this, I mean that the function of these theories is to highlight the rationality of existing liberal democracy by representing it in terms of a post-political order which has transcended, or is about to transcend, earlier phases of human antagonism. As understood here, however, a legitimizing narrative does not only celebrate and hail a particular society. By the same token, it also excludes alternative orders—both de facto existing alternatives and ideas or theories of alternatives. By presenting its object of legitimation as a result of forces inherent in the historical process, a legitimizing narrative rejects possibilities of transcending this order as unrealistic and unnatural.

This way of defining a legitimizing narrative can be said to resemble Karl Marx’s critique of how the classical political economists naturalized bourgeois society and its social relations. Instead of seeing this society as the contingent outcome of historical power struggles and a particular class’s successful quest for dominance—an approach which would admit the possibility of social change—the economists sought to present it as a reflection of a natural order exterior to the political practices that had brought it into being. In The Poverty of Philosophy, Marx wrote:

The economists have a singular manner of proceeding. There are for them only two kinds of institutions, those of art and those of nature. Feudal institutions are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. […] In saying that existing conditions—the conditions of bourgeois production—are natural, the economists give it to be understood that these are the relations in which wealth is created and the productive forces are developed conformably to the laws of nature. Thus these relations themselves natural laws, independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. Thus there has been history, but there is no longer any. There has been history, since there have been feudal institutions, and in these feudal institutions were found conditions of production entirely different to those of bourgeois society, which the economists wish to have accepted as being natural and therefore eternal.27

A similar point can be made regarding the legitimizing narratives in the theories studied in this dissertation. Even though the past might have been characterized by antagonisms and contradictions, humanity has now entered, or is about to enter, an order where a rational organization of the present makes conflicts about the directions of society irrational. In this kind of narrative, the future ceases to be a projection space for visions of a transformed world and instead becomes a more or less perpetuated version of the present. There are, to put this differently, no alternatives to the present.

While we will see several examples of such ideas on the pages below, some of the legitimizing narratives discussed in this dissertation are constructed in a somewhat different way. Although they also support existing social relations and institutions, they do not legitimize them by revealing their alleged connection to deeper historical forces and dynamics. And although they draw attention to post-political tendencies and characteristics in society—political ideologies are declining, the left/right distinction is getting obsolete, the terms capitalism and socialism have become devoid of meaning and so on—they nonetheless identify different kinds of dangers which threaten to prevent such tendencies. On the one hand, they warn against external enemies who might destroy “our” society from the outside. On the other, they detect groups and doctrines which might undermine it from within. As calls for stronger popular unity and concrete action against these threats and enemies, these legitimizing narratives have a strongly mobilizing quality.

The attention to different threats to the prevailing order reflects the fact that these mobilizing narratives cling to a quite different concept of history than the merely legitimizing ones. While the legitimizing narratives tend to be underpinned by progressivist or teleological concepts of history which describe the rise of the post-political order as the natural result of forces or dynamics inherent in the historical process—or even as a historical necessity—the mobilizing narratives are inclined to emphasize history’s open-ended character. More alert to the contingent character of human history, they refrain from naturalizing existing social relations and institutions or reducing them to outcomes of deeper historical forces or developments. While mobilizing narratives sometimes claim that there are “no alternatives” to the present since alternative developments would mean a complete human devastation, this lack of alternatives is not a matter of a historical impossibility so much as a political impossibility. To put it differently, it is not that the prevailing society cannot be changed, but that it should not be changed.

The statement that there are no alternatives to the present—an idea which is present in both kinds of legitimizing narratives discussed here—seems to resonate well with “an age,” to borrow Fredric Jameson’s formulation, “that has forgotten how to think historically”. If modernity, as Reinhart Koselleck
once argued, was characterized by the feeling of an ever-widening gap between the experience of the past and the expectations for the future, the prevailing sense of temporality in the Western world rather seems to be marked by a suspicion of the possibility of social transformation. But, as Mouffe puts it, “[e]very order is the temporary and precarious articulation of contingent practices.” Instead of taking the decline of a transformative imagination as proof of a world beyond antagonism, my intention is to scrutinize how intellectuals and academics have actively bolstered the disbelief in the future’s emancipatory potential.

Methodology

When studying any kind of intellectual history, the relation between a particular text (or other kinds of meaning-producing objects) and the more comprehensive historical context poses a persistent problem. The adequate way to approach my material, it seems to me, is to posit text and context in a dialectical relation to each other, thereby demonstrating how the wider historical context informs the production of the text, while the text itself is able to affect history by triggering social action. The method I have employed is based on a close reading of a number of significant texts, while also paying attention to how different historical contexts frame and shape both the problems that these texts deal with, and the answers they provide. “Understanding how problems are constituted historically,” intellectual historian Howard Brick writes, “and understanding the answers intellectuals propose, requires locating the inquiry at the point of intersection between historical events and the intellectual apparatus contemporaries inherit and construct anew under the given conditions of their experience as they approach the task of rational reflection.” In my case, a dialectical approach to the history of ideas is oriented towards the productive tensions between books, essays and papers, on the one hand, and cultural debates, social institutionalization and political events, on the other.

While my reading of the end of ideology discussion and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s is a critical one, the aim is not to demonstrate their empirical deficiency or inadequacy. The intention is rather to show how, against the backdrop of particular historical events and currents, they provided intellectual weapons which could be used in the ongoing struggle over the creation of the postwar world order. To grasp them as such, my analysis has been guided by the theoretical concepts presented above. First, I have attempted to discern and outline the concepts of history which are displayed in

29 Koselleck, Futures past, p. 263-270.
30 Mouffe, On the Political, p. 18.
these theories. Since these are usually implicit rather than explicitly stated, the clarification of them has been based on efforts to detect and explain the significance of terms and ideas which indicate a historical process or movement. Hence my attention to concepts like modernity, modernization and globalization—terms which tend to be used without further consideration of their historical implications, but nonetheless contain crucial assumptions about the dynamics, course and direction of history. Second, I have tried to outline the different forms of post-politicization at work in these theories. To discern these, I have focused on what the theories of the 1950s and 1990s have to say about questions of conflict, consensus, partisanship and collaboration. More precisely, the analysis of post-politicization requires tracing and scrutinizing discursive attempts to transcend, contain, dismiss or externalize the antagonistic dimension of the political. Such attempts include appeals for organizing human life through social science, technology, economic exchange, entrepreneurship, civility and dialogue—practices which are said to be non-partisan and capable of transcending the disrupting character of political quarrels. Third, I have sought to examine how the theories can be understood as legitimizing or mobilizing narratives. Regarding the legitimizing narratives, this does not merely include detecting statements which claim that there are “no alternatives” to the prevailing society, or that resistance and opposition to it are irrational or unrealistic. More importantly, it means discerning the underlying arguments which naturalize and reify existing social relations and institutions by describing them as caused by factors or processes which are external to, and independent of, concrete power struggles between different groups. Hence the attention to efforts to represent the current society as the result of “human nature,” “modernization” or “common sense” rather than the outcome of activities and practices which are historically contingent, and thereby changeable. Regarding the mobilizing narratives, on the other hand, the analysis means detecting lines of argument which mobilize people against whatever threats which are said to subvert or obstruct tendencies towards a stable and harmonious society. Such threats can both be external, as in the threat from Soviet communism, and internal, as in the threat from neutralists seeking a nonaligned position between the United States and the Soviet Union.

While all the theorists studied in this dissertation were engaged in politics, they were also academic scholars. This means that many of them—and this is particularly the case with the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s—tended to see their theories as scientific models rather than political programs, as non-partisan analyses rather than normative imperatives. This point of view must not be overlooked, since it provided them with an epistemological position from which they, as scholars trained in social science, could denounce what they called ideologies without being ideologists themselves. Their refutation of ideologies, they thought, was a scientific product beyond the realm of conflicting opinions and political partisanship.
In spite of such an assumption, it is my contention that the end of ideology theories of the 1950s and the post–Cold War theories of the 1990s, although often produced in an academic setting, must be approached as texts with normative implications about historical development and political practice. This dissertation can be seen as a critique of the idea of an autonomous social scientist who, thanks to a formalized methodology, is capable of producing truths regardless of his or her social conditions. My investigation sets off from the methodological assumption that all production of knowledge—whether or not produced in an academic context—is ultimately determined by the interests and intentions which spring from the author’s situatedness in a particular socio-historical setting. In relation to the material analyzed on the pages below, the purpose of a critical analysis understood in this sense is to penetrate beneath the scientific surface of the end of ideology theories—that is, their allegedly sociological research on the decline of political conflict, the rise of a social consensus, the popular indifference to large-scale political doctrines and so on—and analyze these theories’ role in a wider hegemonic struggle over the creation of the postwar world order.

Regarding my own position as an investigating and writing subject, I will restrict myself to two remarks which should nonetheless be seen as essential to my approach. First, this dissertation is written in what Hayden White has called an “ironic mode” in the sense that it is aware of its own historicity and the situated character of its representation. Without pretending to present an exhaustive account of myself as an investigating subject, I think that the writing of this historical investigation has been guided by one basic assumption, namely that history cannot come to an end and that humanity cannot reach an equilibrium in which the antagonistic dimension of the political is transcended. In this sense, the usage of “post-politics” as an analytical tool also involves a normative dimension. Second, I believe that a critical perspective per se should be understood as a normative position. By interrogating narratives which aspire to naturalize historically contingent social orders, a critical perspective opens up and facilitates new political imaginations and ways of thinking about the organization of human life. Seen in this way, this study is an example of what Wendy Brown has called “untimely critique,” that is, a re-reading of texts which, by destabilizing the conceptions which the present

33 White, Metahistory, p. 36–38.
holds for granted, “insists on alternative possibilities and perspectives in a seemingly closed political and epistemological universe.”

Selection of sources

Regarding the selection of sources, it should be stressed that this dissertation does not analyze all theories from the Second World War onwards which can somehow be seen as theories about the end of ideology. As pointed out by Seymour Martin Lipset, a number of texts deal with related themes while not usually being regarded as “end of ideology” theories. Neither do I purport to cover all resembling ideas which were presented during the 1990s.

My selection of sources has been guided by two criteria. First, I have chosen to study theories which are clearly attached to the phrase “the end of ideology” or explicitly concerned with the disappearance of political distinctions like left/right and socialism/capitalism. What unites the theorists analyzed in this dissertation is their attention to what they perceive to be the increasing irrelevance of political ideologies or discursive dichotomies which were thought to have shaped Western politics from the early nineteenth century onwards. Although they offer different explanations and interpretations of this perceived phenomenon, they all hold that politics in contemporary states is no longer characterized by ideological clashes between partisan groups representing different political doctrines. Second, I have chosen to focus on works of scholars and intellectuals who in one sense or another identify with Western liberal democracy. In spite of the sometimes quite significant differences between them, these theorists share a basic allegiance to the values and procedures of the liberal democratic system. While it might be possible to find thinkers who express similar ideas while also being critical of liberal democratic values and principles, those analyzed in this dissertation are ultimately convinced that Western liberal democracy is a highly desirable form of government.

With these criteria, I have chosen to study a number of important academic monographs, journalistic essays and conference papers published by American and European social scientists and intellectuals between 1950 and 2000. Regarding the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, I have focused on a handful of writers and scholars who were active in, or had connections to, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF)—an organization whose activities from 1950 onwards provided an institutional setting for the launching and development of the end of ideology theory. The investigation of the 1950s also

includes an assessment of American historian H. Stuart Hughes, who, while not being affiliated to the CCF, discussed the end of political ideology in terms very similar to those at the organization’s 1950 conference in Berlin. Regarding the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s, I have not focused on any cohesive “discussion” or “debate,” but on the work of three social scientists whose respective writings on the end of political ideologies or the decline of the left/right distinction became important points of reference in Western political discourse at the end of the twentieth century. Although these scholars did not share any common institutional or political grounds, their writings converged on one basic assumption, namely that the end of the Cold War had put an end to the fierce ideological conflicts of the twentieth century.


Previous research

This is the first academic study to critically analyze the end of ideology discussion after the Second World War in relation to a number of similar theories launched in the 1990s. While a number of scholars have remarked on the connections between the postwar end of ideologists and theorists of the 1990s, such comments have been brief and often quite sweeping. To take one example, political scientist Lyman Tower Sargent claims in *Contemporary Political Ideologies* that a “redevelopment of the end of ideology theory [of the 1950s] greeted the publication in 1989 of ‘Have We Reached the End of History?’ by Francis Fukuyama.” In a similar vein, Chantal Mouffe argues that the perspective of scholars like Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck in the mid-1990s “finds its sociological bearings in a picture of the world first elaborated by a variety of theorists who in the early 1960s announced the coming of a ‘post-industrial society’ and celebrated ‘the end of ideology’.” In spite of such statements, a comprehensive comparison between the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and similar theories in the 1990s remains to be made. Juxtaposing a number of monographs, essays and conference papers which have not been read side by side before, this dissertation seeks to illuminate the concepts of history, processes of post-politicization and legitimizing narratives in the theories of the two periods.

Much scholarship has been concerned with some of the different subfields which are brought to the fore in the investigation. On the pages below, I will situate my study in relation to previous research which has either examined the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, investigated individual actors of

38 Mouffe, *On the Political*, p. 35.
the 1950s in relation to the larger end of ideology discussion, or analyzed theorists of the 1990s in terms of post-politics. To begin with the first of these groups, a few studies have surveyed the end of ideology discussion which took place during the 1950s. Most often written from a critical perspective, these works have tended to relate the discussion to the early phases of the Cold War and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. In his 1979 *The End of Ideology and American Social Thought*, historian Job L. Dittberner traces American theories about the end of ideology back to the publication and reception of Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* in the United States during the 1930s. He then goes on to offer detailed analyses of the ideas presented by Edward Shils, Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset between 1955 and 1960. If Dittberner’s work is almost entirely concerned with the United States, a more inclusive, although not as detailed, account is offered in Howard Brick’s essay “The End of Ideology Thesis” from 2013. After discussing what he identifies as end of ideology forerunners, Brick distinguishes between “the main stem of the end of ideology thesis”—by which he designates the essentially optimistic discussion pursued by CCF intellectuals during the 1950s—and theorists around the Frankfurt School expressing a left-wing pessimism about declining possibilities of radical critique. Focusing on the former group, Brick reviews the arguments of Koestler, Shils, Aron, Bell and Lipset between 1950 and 1960. The essay ends with a discussion about the legacy of the end of ideology theory, with a particular focus on Fukuyama’s *The End of History* and British historian Tony Judt’s 2010 *Ill Fares the Land*. While Brick argues that Fukuyama’s Hegelianism and advocacy of free markets separates *The End of History* from the discussion of the 1950s, he claims that Judt’s critique of totalizing doctrines and his calls for a new sense of moral community and a progressive political project can be seen as a “recent exposition of an end of ideology perspective”.

Apart from these studies, political scientist Giles Scott-Smith’s *The Politics of Apolitical Culture* is also concerned with the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. An interesting study of American efforts to promote Atlanticism

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42 Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and post-war American hegemony* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002). Scott-Smith has also published an essay based on the last chapter of *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, in which he discusses the Milan conference and sums up the end of ideology theories launched by CCF scholars like Aron, Bell, Shils and Lipset. Unlike most researchers, Scott-Smith also acknowledges the contribution of Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingsten, whose articles from 1952 will be discussed below. See Giles Scott-Smith, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom,
and establish a cultural hegemony in Europe during the Cold War's early phases, Scott-Smith's book is particularly focused on the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its activities in the first half of the 1950s. This leads him to the organization's conference in Milan and the of ideology discussion, which he describes as a way for the CCF to unite European intellectuals in a front against the Soviet Union. Since *The Politics of Apolitical Culture* is primarily concerned with the historical development of the CCF, however, the book does not offer any detailed analysis of the end of ideology theories themselves. Something similar can be said about sociologist Benjamin S. Kleinberg's 1973 dissertation *American Society in the Post-Industrial Age*, which is only partly connected to the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. While the book includes two chapters on "the thesis of the 'end of ideology,'" Kleinberg merely draws on the 1960 writings by Lipset and Bell. Rather than investigating the end of ideology discussion as such, he takes Bell's and Lipset's ideas as a point of departure for analyzing theories about postindustrialism and technocratic governance presented by American scholars in the 1970s.

Although my own investigation of the 1950s draws on the historical and intellectual contextualization made by Dittberner, Brick and Scott-Smith, my investigation casts new light on the discussion by scrutinizing the concepts of history, the processes of post-politicization and the legitimizing and mobilizing narratives which appear in the end of ideology theories during this decade. Moreover, it takes a broader transatlantic grip on the discussion by including European intellectuals like Arthur Koestler, Herbert Tingsten and Raymond Aron—theorists who have tended to be overlooked or only briefly accounted for. Finally, it casts new light on the discussion by highlighting similarities and differences to the later theories of Francis Fukuyama, Anthony Giddens and Samuel Huntington. While a brief discussion of the end of ideology discussion's repercussions after the Cold War has been offered in Brick's aforementioned essay, my perspective on the end of ideology legacy is quite different from the one presented there. To begin with, while I think that Brick is correct in remarking that the telos of Fukuyama’s philosophy of history—the globalized free market economy—stands in sharp contrast to the welfare state...

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42 Apart from the studies of Dittberner, Brick, Scott-Smith and Kleinberg, two additional books should be mentioned. First, historian Russell Jacoby opens his *The End of Utopia* with an essay on the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, and relates it to what he perceives to be a decline of utopian visions in the 1990s. Second, political scientist David McLellan's *Ideology*—a book which offers a great introduction to the historical development of the concept of ideology—has a brief section on the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. See Jacoby, "The End of the End of the End of Ideology"; David McLellan, *Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 50-55.
advocated by the postwar end of ideology theorists, I do not agree with him that Fukuyama’s Kojèveian Hegelianism makes the latter’s perspective “light-years apart from the end of ideology thesis” of the 1950s, as Brick puts it. As will be clear below, one of the arguments of this dissertation is that Fukuyama amplifies teleological tendencies which were latent already in the 1950s—not least by aligning himself with the same modernization theories which underpinned many of the postwar end of ideology theories. Furthermore, whereas Brick focuses on Fukuyama and Judt, the investigation below is based on a comparison between the discussion of the 1950s and Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington. Although these scholars cannot effortlessly be described as “end of ideology theorists,” their writings (which include announcing the decline or exhaustion of ideologies) contain lines of argument and rhetorical figures which make them worth analyzing along with postwar theorists like Bell, Aron and Lipset.

Second, some scholarly works have studied individual actors of the 1950s in relation to the larger end of ideology discussion. As the theorist to become most closely associated with the phrase “the end of ideology,” Daniel Bell has been the subject matter of two intellectual biographies of this kind. Howard Brick’s 1986 Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism offers an in-depth study of Bell’s intellectual formation, from his early years as a journalist via sociological studies up to the publication of The End of Ideology in 1960. Brick shows how Bell’s political trajectory was marked by a turn from a belief in the historical inevitability of socialism towards a reconciliation with American society. However, Brick maintains that The End of Ideology should not be seen as a simple defense of the status quo, but that the book also reveals Bell’s genuine frustration over the lack of critical thought in American postwar culture. Bell’s involvement in the end of ideology discussion has been studied from a somewhat different perspective in historian Nathan Liebowitz’s 1985 dissertation Daniel Bell and the Agony of Modern Liberalism. If Brick stresses that his investigation does not seek “to debunk the end-of-ideology doctrine as but another ‘ideology,’” Liebowitz explicitly asks whether Bell’s theories of postindustrial society in the 1970s were normative and “ideological” rather than scientific. This leads him to an investigation of Bell’s life and writings from the early 1940s to the 1970s. While Liebowitz reads The End of Ideology as an epilogue to the political radicalism of Bell’s early life, he also claims that the book can be seen as a call for the creation of a new political philosophy for the postwar welfare state. If Bell saw the welfare state as a “broker state” where interest-groups bargained under the supervision of a democratic government, Liebowitz argues, his writings after The End of Ideology sought to construct a

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46 Brick, Daniel Bell.
philosophical framework for how to pursue a process of planning, negotiating and redistribution.

Two studies have also examined Herbert Tingsten in terms which are relevant for my investigation. In his 2008 dissertation *Segrarnas historia*, intellectual historian Andrus Ers provides an analysis of Tingsten’s speeches and writings from the dawn of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1950s. Against the conventional image of the Swedish publicist as a critic of metaphysics and historical teleologies, Ers demonstrates that Tingsten constructed his own philosophy of history in which “the West” figured as a historical subject which successfully implemented the ideals of the Enlightenment through the establishment of supposedly conflict-free liberal democracies. Ers argues that this concept of history reaches a climax in the essays by Tingsten which are included in my own analysis, namely his 1952 articles on the rise of the “successful democracy” [den lyckade demokratin]. Highlighting Tingsten’s tacit Hegelianism, Ers concludes by comparing Tingsten with Fukuyama, suggesting that both thinkers subscribed to a teleological concept of history where the end of ideology also marked an end point of history as such. Another study which addresses Tingsten’s contribution to the end of ideology discussion in more direct terms is intellectual historian Bernt Skovdahl’s 1992 dissertation *Tingsten, totalitarismen och ideologierna*. Concerned with Tingsten’s critique of ideologies and totalitarianism in the 1930s and 1940s, Skovdahl ends the book with a section commenting on the affinities between Tingsten’s 1952 essays and the end of ideology theories presented by Aron, Shils, Bell and Lipset a few years later. Remarking on Tingsten’s connection to the Congress for Cultural Freedom and his personal affiliation to American scholars like Lipset, Skovdahl maintains that Tingsten began thinking along end of ideology lines as early as the 1930s.

While my dissertation is a thematic study which primarily focuses on ideas of the end of ideology rather than on the specific theorists who express them, the biographies above have provided important points of reference. In the case of Bell, I have followed the main lines of Brick and Liebowitz by showing how Bell’s contribution to the discussion of the 1950s was made against the background of his personal process of de-radicalization. In contrast to their


studies, however, my investigation is more directly concerned with the concept of history which underlies Bell's ideas of the end of ideology. This assessment includes scrutinizing a text not analyzed by Brick and Liebowitz, namely Bell's publication *Marxism–Leninism. A Doctrine on the Defensive.* As I will argue, this text appears to be quite important when trying to comprehend Bell's end of ideology theory in relation to themes of modernization and industrialization. Regarding Tingsten, my reading of his 1952 essays has been quite strongly influenced by Ers’s analysis in *Segrarnas historia.* Unlike Ers and Skovdahl, however, my dissertation offers a more detailed account of how Tingsten’s ideas of the successful democracy resonated with similar ideas presented in Europe and the United States around the same time. If their writings largely analyze Tingsten in a Swedish setting, I approach him as a theorist contributing to an ongoing international discussion about the end of political ideologies and revolutionary sentiments.

Third, if all of the above works are somehow concerned with the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, there is less literature which has approached the post–Cold War theorists of the 1990s—that is, Francis Fukuyama, Anthony Giddens and Samuel Huntington—in terms that are relevant to my examination. The most important studies from my perspective are those which have analyzed these theorists in terms of post-politics. The clearest example is Mouffe’s *On the Political,* which applies the concept of post-politics to Anthony Giddens’s works *Beyond Left and Right* and *The Third Way* from 1994 and 1998. Highlighting Giddens’s consensualist approach and his efforts to suppress conflict from institutionalized politics, Mouffe argues that the ideas of dialogic democracy and the Third Way should be understood as post-political endeavors which preclude the possibility of social transformation. Another scholar to discuss Giddens’s writings in terms of post-politics is Erik Swyngedouw, who suggests that the former’s calls for dialogue and “active trust” not only fail to grasp how political issues are generated by asymmetrical power relations, but also overlook how such issues involve groups with conflicting interests and demands. If Mouffe’s and Swyngedouw’s applications of post-politics to contemporary political theorists are quite theoretically informed, others have used the concept in a more fleeting way. In his 2002 *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!,* for instance, Slavoj Žižek claims that Fukuyama’s and Samuel Huntington’s ideas of the increasing importance of “irrational” conflicts between religious and ethnic groups rather than conflicts stemming from political differences can be seen as a reflection of “our age of ‘post-politics’, when politics proper is progressively replaced by expert social administration.” As the quote indicates, however, Žižek is less interested in employing

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50 Mouffe, *On the Political,* p. 48-54.
the term post-politics as an analytical label for Fukuyama’s and Huntington’s theories than as a description for a de facto condition in contemporary societies. Another scholar who has used the concept without elaborating it is sociologist Glyn Daly, who argues that Fukuyama’s (as well as Daniel Bell’s) equation of capitalism and human destiny represents an idea that “we live in a post-political age in which the overwhelming emphasis is (or should be) on pragmatism.” Finally, Mekonnen Tesfahuney and Magnus Dahlstedt argue briefly in the introduction to their volume Den bästa av världar that Fukuyama’s notion of the end of history and Giddens’s idea of the disappearance of the left/right distinction are examples of post-political ideas in the sense that they do not recognize any alternatives to the prevailing social order.

Since the concept of post-politics is crucial for my analysis—not least as a way of highlighting common themes in the quite heterogeneous theories presented by Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington—it is clear that my investigation is indebted to the work of Mouffe and Swyngedouw. But while my theoretical perspective draws on their writings and efforts to use the term post-politics as an analytical category, it also seeks to further the discussion. By scrutinizing what I call post-politicization—the discursive processes through which conflicts are transcended, contained, dismissed or externalized—my investigation pays attention to the various strategies which present social life as an order of consensus and harmony. Rather than applying the quite uniform term post-politics to the theorists under analysis, the exploration of post-politicization demonstrates the different procedures and methods they employ.

Dissertation outline

This dissertation chronologically follows the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s. Before beginning the empirical investigation, however, I briefly discuss the relation between these theories and American postwar modernization theory. While modernization theory as such is not a topic of investigation in this dissertation, the connection between the end of ideology discussion and ideas of modernization, development and industrialization plays quite an important role for my analysis. Chapter 1 therefore outlines the emergence and institutionalization of modernization theory, with a particular focus on the teleological concept of history represented by scholars involved in this research field. The chapter concludes with a section which highlights a number of common themes of modernization theory and the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s.

54 Tesfahuney & Dahlstedt, “Inledning,” p. 11-12.
The next eight chapters form the first part of the dissertation’s empirical investigation, which focuses on the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. In Chapter 2, I situate this discussion in relation to the postwar critique of “totalitarianism,” the establishment of the welfare state, and the cultural Cold War. In Chapter 3, I report from the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s rally in Berlin in 1950 and analyze Arthur Koestler’s and Sidney Hook’s ideas of a decline of the left/right distinction. This chapter also looks into essays written by H. Stuart Hughes and Herbert Tingsten between 1951 and 1952. In Chapter 4, I move on to the CCF’s 1955 conference in Milan, where “the end of ideology” was discussed by several scholars and intellectuals. Chapters 5–8 assess different variations on the end of ideology theme as presented in a number of monographs and essays published by Raymond Aron, Edward Shils, Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset between 1955 and 1965. Chapter 9 concludes the first part of the empirical study by summarizing the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and outlining the concepts of history and processes of post-politicization which were expressed in it.

The second part of the empirical investigation analyzes post-Cold War theories presented between 1989 and 2000. In Chapter 10, I begin by situating the ideas of Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington and Anthony Giddens in relation to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the neoliberal turn, and the period’s intense discussions about “globalization.” Chapters 11–13 scrutinize Fukuyama’s ideas about the end of history, Huntington’s theories of the clash of civilizations, and Giddens’s arguments about reflexive modernization and the Third Way. Chapter 14 provides a brief summary of these theories, with a particular focus on their concepts of history as well as post-political claims.

The dissertation ends with a concluding chapter which provides a comparison between the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s. The conclusion also includes a discussion of the concepts of history, processes of post-politicization and legitimizing/mobilizing narratives in the analyzed works.
1. We have always been modern. Teleological visions in the postwar West

In short, the decline-of-ideology writers seem to believe that “they” are becoming more and more like “us.”

Joseph LaPalombara, 1966

“[H]aving recently freed ourselves from ideological radicalism,” American sociologist and end of ideology theorist Edward Shils wrote in the fall of 1955, “we must not be affronted to see it among our Asiatic and African friends who learned it in our own universities in the West.” Shils’s distinction between the post-ideological West and the ideologically informed radicals of Third World countries was not coincidental. As will become clear, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s was based on a more or less explicit separation between the West and the postcolonial world. Whereas the industrialized and democratic countries in Europe and North America were thought to have overcome earlier stages of controversy between different political doctrines, the political life of non- or semi-industrialized states in Asia and Africa were still characterized by conflicts between rivaling ideologies.

However, many end of ideology theorists were confident that “underdeveloped” countries in the postcolonial world would develop according to the Western model and thereby become post-ideological themselves. In 1955, French philosopher Raymond Aron described Western-style economic progress as “almost unanimously accepted as an imperative” and asserted that the conflict between tradition and progress was “bound to end in favour of the West.” American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset ended his book Political

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3 In order to keep the analytical terminology apart from the empirical sources, I have refrained from employing the concept of ideology in any theoretical or analytical sense. Yet the terms “ideology” and “ideological” sometimes appear in my own formulations. In these cases, they are simply employed as a noun for political doctrines—like liberalism, socialism and conservatism—or as an adjective in the sense of being influenced or guided by such doctrines.
Man from 1960 by suggesting that his analysis of contemporary post-ideological American society could “contribute to the [current] political battle in Asia and Africa,” just like Alexis de Tocqueville’s writings on the nineteenth-century United States had intended to help European populations in their struggle against absolutism.\(^5\) Thirty years after Lipset, Francis Fukuyama followed suit by arguing that what he called “the post-historical world” of the West should assist less developed countries in their journey towards the end of history. In this way, many end of ideology theorists believed that the allegedly post-ideological society of the West provided less developed countries in other parts of the world with an image of their future.

As will be shown in this chapter, such ideas did not emerge in an intellectual vacuum. On the one hand, they echoed colonial narratives which legitimized nineteenth-century imperialism by asserting that it was Europe’s historical mission to push “primitive” peoples of Asia and Africa forward by spreading civilization, human rights and democracy. On the other, they had affinities with American postwar modernization theory. Concerned with questions about development and socio-economic progress in “underdeveloped” countries in the postcolonial world, modernization theorists would develop a teleological concept of history based on a sharp distinction between “traditional” and “modern” societies.

The aim of this chapter is to situate the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s within a wider cultural discourse on development and modernization. While several of the postwar end of idealogists were directly involved in the formation and establishment of modernization theory during the postwar decades, the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s can be said to have responded to similar issues about modernity, development and historical progress. Even though scholars like Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington did not necessarily come up with the same answers, their writings were concerned with themes which had long been the subject matter of American modernization theory.

A brief history of modernization theory

A child of the Cold War, modernization theory took form in American academia during the second half of the 1950s.\(^6\) As a research field involving econo-

\(^{5}\) Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 456.
\(^{6}\) My account of modernization theory in this chapter mainly draws on Nils Gilman’s 2003 *Mandarins of the Future* and Michael E. Latham’s 2011 *The Right Kind of Revolution*. However, a number of other studies have also investigated postwar modernization theory and its influence on American foreign policy during the Cold War. See David C. Engerman, “To
omists, sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists, it might be described as an interdisciplinary effort to outline the structures of economic, social and cultural development over time. In brief, modernization theory stated that all countries would develop according to a general historical pattern which gradually transformed “traditional” and poor countries into the kind of “modern” and industrialized democracies which already existed in Europe and North America. If recently independent nations in the Third World were considered to be traditional societies, the modern country par excellence was the contemporary United States. Modernization theorists argued that the United States—itself a decolonized country—could be seen as the world’s “first new nation,” which after an initial struggle for independence had achieved modernity.\(^7\) Characterized by the basic traits of modernity such as secularism, individualism, urbanization, industrialization, social mobility, material affluence, democracy, legal institutions and educational and scientific apparatuses, this ideal type of the United States served as a model of social development for the allegedly traditional societies in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Although modernization theory was conceived in an academic setting, it would play a highly important role in American foreign policy during the Cold War. Its representatives not only provided policy makers with a blueprint for development programs and political action in Third World countries, but also enjoyed official positions in government administrations. Two years before his death, John F. Kennedy demonstrated his commitment to the imperatives of modernization theory by designating the 1960s as the “decade of development.”\(^8\)

Historians such as Nils Gilman and Michael E. Latham have argued that modernization theory served as an important element in American efforts to contain communist sympathies in formerly colonized countries outside Europe and North America. “As the only non-Communist theory promoting a

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\(^7\) The theory of the United States as the world’s first “new” nation was launched in 1963 by end of ideology theorist Seymour Martin Lipset. See Seymour Martin Lipset, The First New Nation. The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

radical rethinking of development on the basis of a totalizing reconstruction of the postwar geopolitical and geoeconomic social order,” Gilman writes, “modernization theory dovetailed with the interests of the foundations in promoting the moral and material interests of the United States in the emergent postwar world order.” If the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 meant that “the main front of the cold war was swinging from Europe to the postcolonial regions,” as Gilman puts it, another reason for countering communist currents in the Third World was that the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union seemed to offer decolonized countries an alternative model for economic growth. Having neutralized the risks of political radicalism and turmoil in postwar Europe by launching the Marshall Plan in 1947, the American government needed a similar program for poor countries in the non-West. As an allegedly scientific model of development based on free trade, capitalism and democratization rather than a state-controlled planned economy, modernization theory was presented as the rational and peaceful alternative to communism. Since it also entailed a concept of history as the inherent movement towards the contemporary Western welfare state, Latham has argued that it constituted a “compelling narrative” with “an integrated plotline of rapid, universal, linear advance promising nothing less than an acceleration of history.”

In a similar vein, Gilman claims that modernization theory “imagined the end point of historical development as an idealized (and already achieved) version of the contemporary United States”.

In Mandarins of the Future, Gilman relates modernization theory to three intellectual currents of the American postwar period. First, it overlapped with contemporary discussions about the nature of democracy. Gilman argues that modernization theory was underpinned by a quite narrow definition of democracy which dismissed ideas of active popular participation as the basis for democratic politics. Influenced by Joseph Schumpeter’s 1942 Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy, modernization theorists like Gabriel A. Almond, Walt Whitman Rostow and Edward Shils argued that democracy did not necessarily involve active popular participation in politics, but rather a continuous power struggle between different elites. Since modern politics were too complex for the man on the street, they argued, decision-making should ultimately be in the hands of experts, professional politicians and scientists. Unlike the one-party system of the Soviet Union, however, Western democracy was based on pluralism, which meant that power was not earmarked for a single social group. A modern pluralistic democracy like the United States, it was

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10 Ibid., p. 44.
11 Latham, The Right Kind of Revolution, p. 158.
12 Gilman, Mandarins of the Future, p. 66.
claimed, efficiently safeguarded political life against the kind of affective, passionate and populist forms of politics which characterized traditional societies or states going through the early phases of industrialization. When modernization theorists advocated further democratization in the Third World, they did not necessarily call for wider popular participation in politics. Rather, Gilman writes, they insisted “that the goal of politics in the postcolonial world was to ‘catch up’ with the advanced state of American political culture.”

Second, Gilman argues that modernization theory shared assumptions with the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. Indeed, he even claims that “the end of ideology hypothesis emerged directly and specifically out of comparative reflections upon the differences between the ‘industrial’ and ‘underdeveloped’ worlds.” While such a statement might be somewhat exaggerated, it is true that several of the American theorists who announced the end of ideologies explicitly contrasted the ostensibly post-ideological West with recently independent countries where ideological conflict was still commonplace. As we will see, many of them also considered the end of ideology to be a fundamental aspect of Western modernity: through the establishment of a pluralist liberal democracy and increasing material affluence, political ideologies which called for social transformation would disappear. As Lipset let it be understood when he explained that “the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved,” this was primarily a phenomenon of contemporary Western society. In recently independent countries without the affluence and democratic institutions of North America and Europe, clashing ideologies and radicalism were still essential features of politics. In the epilogue to his 1960 *The End of Ideology*, Daniel Bell stressed that “the rising states of Asia and Africa are fashioning new ideologies with a different appeal for their own people.” As the title of Bell’s epilogue indicated, he merely considered “The End of Ideology in the West.”

If the modernization process that the Western countries had experienced was universal, and if the United States’ successful transition from independence to modernity was a historical prototype for all “new nations,” however, political ideologies would eventually decline all over the world. “Looking back from the standpoint of a newly-achieved moderation,” Shils wrote in 1958, “Western intellectuals view the ideological politics of Asia and Africa […] as a sort of measles which afflicts a people in its childhood, but to which adults

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13 Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, p. 56. For Gilman’s discussion about the relation between modernization theory and the elitist conception of democracy, see ibid., p. 47-56.
14 Ibid., p. 59. For a longer discussion about the relation between modernization theory and the end of ideology thesis, see ibid., p. 56-62.
are practically immune.” To demand moderation from politicians in underdeveloped countries, Lipset wrote in a similar vein, “is to forget that many Western unions, socialist parties, and intellectuals were similarly ‘irresponsible and demagogic’ in the early stages of their development.” In other words, the persistence of ideologies depended on a society’s level of modernization. As underdeveloped countries caught up with the West and became modern, they would no longer suffer from the childhood diseases of disrupting political ideologies.

Third, Gilman argues that modernization theory was attached to a particular way of rendering the history of the United States in terms of consensus and harmony. He refers to historian John Higham, who in the late 1950s criticized how American historiography tended to depict the country’s past as a more or less smooth, harmonious and non-dialectical development. Published between 1955 and 1958, Richard Hofstadter’s *The Age of Reform*, Daniel J. Boorstin’s *The Americans* and Louis Hartz’s *The Liberal Tradition in America* all described the history of the United States as the emergence of an affluent society without class conflicts or serious political disputes, and where instances of political dissent should be understood as symptoms of individual psychological disorder. According to Higham, these historians sought to prove “the enduring uniformities of American life, the stability of institutions, the persistence of a national character.” Gilman argues that such “consensus history” provided modernization theory with a useful prototype of successful development. If it was true that the United States had attained its affluence without any serious social turmoil, less developed countries could learn from its experiences. As historian David M. Potter asserted in his 1954 book *People of Plenty*, the United States was “qualified to show other countries the path that may lead them to a plenty like our own.” While criticizing the idea of imposing American democracy on faraway countries, Potter suggested that the United States should focus on assisting underdeveloped nations in creating the necessary economic conditions for a democratic system. Like most modernization theorists, he believed that a stable democracy could only exist in a materially abundant society, and, conversely, that social unrest stemmed from

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21 For Gilman’s discussion on modernization theory and consensus history, see *Mandarins of the Future*, p. 62-68.
economic inequalities. “[D]emocracy is the foremost by far of the many advantages which our economic affluence has bought for us,” Potter explained. “To say this, of course, is also to say that, when we propose world-wide adoption of democracy, our problem is not merely to inspire a belief in it but to encourage conditions conducive to it.”

For modernization theory, then, the task was to demonstrate how development in postcolonial countries could be conducted in accordance with American imperatives. Confident that the interests of the United States dovetailed with the rest of the world’s, scholars would even describe this project in terms of a historical mission. “From its origins the United States […] felt within itself—and was felt by the world to have—a larger mission,” economist Walt Rostow explained in 1960. He continued: “The transcendent quality which has long suffused American life and which still gives it a special worth […] is the conviction that the adventure of America has a meaning and relevance for the world as a whole.” In a similar vein, a delegate at a 1954 conference on international development explained that the United States “must offer a framework within which the nations of Asia and Africa can develop economically as free societies. […] We must be missionaries.” If President Truman’s so-called Point Four program from 1949 configured the political framework of this mission, modernization theory outlined the intellectual foundation.

The institutionalization of modernization theory

While the notion of modernity as an increasingly complex, abstract and bureaucratic organization of society can be traced back to an older German sociological tradition—particularly Ferdinand Tönnies’s distinction between traditional Gemeinschaft and modern Gesellschaft as well as Max Weber’s account of modernity as an escalating process of rationalization—the most important influence for modernization theory was American sociologist Talcott Parsons. As the head of Harvard’s Department of Social Relations at the end of the 1940s, Parsons assembled a number of social scientists from different disciplines in order to elaborate a general theory of society as an integrated system of cultural norms, political values and economic structures. In his 1951 *Toward a General Theory of Action*, co-authored with Edward Shils and other scholars, Parsons described society as a cohesive system which provided indi-

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iduals with specific social roles that guaranteed the maintenance of the community. Well-functioning societies, he held, were based on a common set of values which efficiently integrated its members and created stability and conformity.

In one of the essays of *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Parsons and Shils argued that human behavior in all societies was based on different sets of norms and values which they called “pattern variables.” If individual action in one kind of society was characterized by affectivity and indulgence, a self-centred approach to the world, non-alterable ways of relating to objects, and consideration of things on the basis of their attributes, another kind of society required rational self-discipline, responsibility towards collectives, flexible ways of relating to objects, and consideration of things based on their actual performance. For Parsons and Shils, these sets of patterns represented two different forms of socio-cultural orders. While Parsons did not use the labels “traditional” and “modern” to describe them, it was clear that the pattern variables could be read as having historical implications. If the former pattern seemed to epitomize what modernization theorists would describe as an “underdeveloped” country, the latter resembled the ideal type of a “modern” society.

Strongly influenced by Max Weber, Parsons considered rationalization to be the most striking feature of Western modernity. If Weber had described modernity in melancholic or ambivalent terms of iron cages and the disenchantment of the world, however, Parsons had a more optimistic approach towards modernity. He considered what Weber had described as an increasing differentiation of society to be a prerequisite for the advancement of human freedom. Rejecting the idea that economic structures constituted the basis for human action and historical change, he also adopted Weber’s critique of Marx. For Parsons and later modernization theorists, modernization was not a simple neologism for economic growth but also a psychological and cultural phenomenon. The values of the “Judeo-Christian tradition,” Parsons held, had been highly important for spurring industrial development in the West. Parsons’s student Robert N. Bellah followed suit by describing modernity “as a spiritual phenomenon or a kind of mentality.” Claiming that successful modernization required a reconfiguration of “the traditional patterns of meaning and motivation” in society, Bellah argued that the Protestant Reformation,

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Enlightenment philosophy and nineteenth-century liberalism had been milestones in the rise of a modern mentality. Implicit in these ideas, and certainly essential for subsequent modernization theorists, was the idea that “underdeveloped” countries had to embrace Western values to become modern.

From the mid-1950s, students of Parsons began to develop his theories in a more explicitly international and geopolitical context. Concerned with questions of historical change in foreign countries, these scholars sought to grasp modernization as a diachronic process. A particularly important institution was the Committee on Comparative Politics (CCP), an interdisciplinary network of scientists from Princeton, Yale and Harvard. Set up in 1954 and chaired by political scientist Gabriel Almond, the CCP aspired to extend the research field of comparative politics to a postcolonial context. During the upcoming years, scholars affiliated with the committee would publish several works which examined the structures of economic modernization in foreign countries. To name a few, sociologist Daniel Lerner published *The Passing of Traditional Society* in 1958, Almond *The Politics of Developing Areas* in 1960, and historian Cyril Black *Dynamics of Modernization* in 1966. The overall argument of these works was that modernization should be seen as a universal phenomenon which occurred in a similar way in all countries, regardless of their histories or social structures. If properly implemented, modernization would lead towards the kind of highly industrialized economy and liberal democracy which already existed in Western countries.

The historical determinism of modernization theory was arguably most apparent in the work of MIT economist Walt Whitman Rostow. In his 1960 book *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Rostow presented a historical model which purported to describe a universal model of economic development. According to Rostow, all nations had to go through five successive stages of growth, starting as “traditional societies,” subsequently entering a “take-off” period and eventually ending up in the final “age of high mass-consumption” where the countries of the West were currently located. Presenting his ideas as “an alternative to Karl Marx’s theory of modern history,” Rostow claimed that history was propelled by technological development rather than class struggle. While all countries would eventually develop according to the stage model and become modern, Western countries could accelerate the process by spreading technology and social science to traditional societies in the Third World.

Rostow can also be seen as the strongest adherent of what Gilman calls “the central leitmotif of modernization theory,” namely the idea of a historical convergence between the West, the communist countries and the postcolonial

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According to this argument, modernization would make all countries increasingly similar, regardless of their historical, social, economic or cultural backgrounds. Quoting Walt Whitman, Rostow and Max F. Millikan ended their 1957 book *A Proposal. Key to an Effective Foreign Policy* with the following lines: “All peoples of the globe together sail, sail the same voyage, / Are bound to the same destination.” In a similar vein, CCP researcher Robert E. Ward explained in 1963 that the concept of political modernization defined not only “the essential features of the political developments which have occurred in all so-called advanced societies” but also “the pattern toward which politically underdeveloped societies are now evolving.” Since such advanced societies were equated with the liberal democracies of the West, achieving modernity was the same as becoming Western. This was not only the case for underdeveloped nations in Africa and Asia, but also for the Soviet states. As modernization theorist Alex Inkeles argued, the Soviet Union was, after all, a thoroughly industrialized society which had structural similarities with the economic system of the United States. Similar ideas were advanced by Talcott Parsons, who argued that the basic function of communism in the Soviet Union was to legitimize rapid industrialization, and that this ideology would eventually be replaced by empirical social science. In this way, scholars assumed that the historical development of the Soviet Union could be comprehended through the framework of modernization theory. As Rostow wrote in *The Stages of Economic Growth*, there were no “reasons to believe the Russian experience will transcend familiar limits.” Rather than challenging the capitalist form of modernity, communism was actually a way of achieving it:

Communism takes its place [...] beside the regime of the Meiji Restoration in Japan, and Ataturk’s Turkey, for example, as one peculiarly inhumane form

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32 Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, p. 101. It should be noted that sociologist Karl Mannheim, who is rarely mentioned in the literature on modernization theory, in fact considered similar ideas as early as the late 1930s. In the introduction to the English edition of his book *Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus*, translated by Edward Shils and published in 1940, Mannheim argued that the Soviet Union and the Western democracies were in a process of adjusting themselves to each other. “Owing to regulation and state intervention in the democracies, the alterations made in Russian communism, the silent exclusion of capitalist influence in several vital economic spheres in Germany, a great many tendencies in these states, with their widely different outlooks, are beginning to converge,” Mannheim wrote, suggesting that there were “deeper forces” at work which would transform all modern industrial societies in a similar way. Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society In an Age of Reconstruction. Studies in Modern Social Structure*, trans. Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1940 [1935]), p. 13.


35 For Parsons’s convergency theory, see Engerman, “To Moscow and Back,” p. 59, 54-56.

of political organization capable of launching and sustaining the growth process in societies where the preconditions period did not yield a substantial and enterprising commercial middle class and an adequate political consensus among the leaders of the society. It is a kind of a disease which can befall a transitional society if it fails to organize effectively those elements within it which are prepared to get on with the job of modernization.37

For the modernization theorists, Rostow’s diagnosis could explain the appeal of communism in the Third World. Intellectuals in poor countries, Edward Shils argued the same year as The Stages of Economic Growth was published, “have been humiliated by their sense of the backwardness of their country. They have learned how gradually the advancement of the Western countries has moved, and they have heard of the speedy progress of the Soviet Union from a backward country to the status of one of the most powerful industrial nations in the world.”38 From such a perspective, the turn to communism was basically a way of achieving modernity. When this job was completed, communism would no longer pose a threat to the Free World. As industrialization proceeded and erased cultural and political differences, all countries would converge on the model of Western mass-consumption society. Although rarely stated explicitly, the postwar theories of modernization perceived the democratic welfare state of the West as the telos of history.

Critique and renaissance

As pointed out above, modernization theory became an important component in American foreign policy during the Cold War. Between 1961 and 1969, Rostow served as National Security Advisor in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.39 The discourse of modernization played an essential role for numerous development programs in the Third World, from birth control programs in India to agricultural development in Mexico. Advocates of state-directed social engineering, American policy makers believed that science and technology would trigger economic development, decrease overpopulation and promote industrialization.40 Modernization theory was also used for legitimizing military action in countries like Nicaragua and Vietnam. As Gil-

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37 Rostow. The Stages of Economic Growth, p. 164.
39 For Rostow’s involvement in the Kennedy administration and his influence on Kennedy’s policies, see Mark H. Haefele, “Walt Rostow’s Stages of Economic Growth. Ideas and Action,” in Engerman et al. (eds.), Staging Growth.
man observes, Rostow would not merely play an important role in the organization of the Vietnam War, but also justify it by referring to his studies on economic development.\textsuperscript{41}

By the late 1960s, however, growing domestic opposition to the Vietnam war as well as uncertainties about the outcome of American development programs abroad unleashed a wave of critique against modernization theory. If some opponents questioned the validity of the dichotomy between modernity and tradition, others denounced the whole project as an unsuccessful attempt to understand faraway cultures by universalizing Western values and institutions.\textsuperscript{42} From the left, adherents of the so-called dependency theory accused modernization theorists of their indifference to the effects of colonialism and their failure to see how imperialism had put poor countries in a state of persistent economic exploitation. From the right, critics questioned the advantages of spending public resources on distant countries which, according to their view, would not be able to develop anyway.\textsuperscript{43} Arguably the most unsentimental of the conservative critics, political scientist Samuel Huntington published a series of books from the 1960s and onwards in which he attacked the foundations of modernization theory. In his 1968 book \textit{Political Order in Changing Societies}, Huntington insisted that the United States should focus on achieving political order in the Third World rather than triggering economic growth. Questioning all progressivist notions of gradual development, he rejected the idea of imposing democracy on Third World countries and actively promoted military dictatorships for stabilizing social turmoil.\textsuperscript{44} In the 1970s, modernization theory was attacked from yet another perspective by neoliberal economists who argued that the American government should seek to create free markets instead of redistributing public resources. Influenced by the monetarism of Milton Friedman, these thinkers maintained that growth in underdeveloped areas could not be fuelled by governmental planning or Keynesian political economy but by deregulating markets and enabling free trade.\textsuperscript{45} In his 1972 \textit{Dissent on Development}, for example, British economist Peter Thomas Bauer renounced the premises of modernization theory by claiming that poor countries could not achieve economic growth by engaging in central state planning or accepting financial aid from the West. Rather than

\textsuperscript{41} Gilman, \textit{Mandarins of the Future}, p. 249.


\textsuperscript{43} For a more detailed discussion on the left-wing and conservative critique of modernization theory, see Gilman, \textit{Mandarins of the Future}, p. 225-240.

\textsuperscript{44} For a longer discussion on Huntington’s critique of modernization theory, see ibid., p. 228-234.

\textsuperscript{45} For an overview of neoliberal critique of modernization theory, see Latham, \textit{The Right Kind of Revolution}, p. 158, 175-182.
relying on the government or foreign states, the crucial task for Third World peoples was to adopt entrepreneurial and market-friendly attitudes.

Despite this critique, the themes of modernization theory would persist in American political discourse. With the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of the bipolar world order, the idea of “globalization” gained prominence in Western social science. Arguably “the most fashionable word of the 1990s,” as two commentators put it in 1994, globalization was described as a process through which economic forces broke down national borders and integrated all countries into a single system of market capitalism. While the discourse of globalization did not simply represent a new version of modernization theory, there were certainly common themes. As historian Frederick Cooper has argued in a comparison of the two concepts:

For all its emphasis on the newness of the last quarter century, the current interest in the concept of globalization recalls a similar infatuation in the 1950s and 1960s: modernization. Both are “-ization” words, emphasizing a process, not necessarily fully realized but ongoing and probably inevitable. Both name the process by its supposed endpoint. Both were inspired by a clearly valid and compelling observation: that change is rapid and pervasive. And both depend for their evocative power on a sense that change is not a series of disparate elements but their movement in a common direction. […] Most important, modernization, like globalization, appears in this theory as a process that just happens, something self-propelled.47

As the concept of globalization came to the fore in social scientific discourse, scholars began to argue that the historical convergence predicted in the 1950s would, after all, materialize. In the spring of 1990, prominent modernization theorist Lucian W. Pye claimed that the “crisis of authoritarianism” caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union proved the old assumptions of modernization theory right. “Where we went wrong in the 1950s and 1960s,” Pye wrote, “was in grossly underestimating the magnitude these factors of change would acquire in the decades ahead”.48 Since all the “key factors” behind the current geopolitical changes had already been identified in the 1950s, Pye now expected a global democratic revolution in which technological problem solving would replace grand political programs. “[W]hereas modernization can expand the potential for human growth, it also places limits on the free play of ideology,” he wrote. “In country after country ideological politics has had to yield to pragmatic decision making.”49 In a similar manner, political scientist

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49 Ibid., p. 12.
Howard J. Wiarda argued that the democratic turn of the Soviet Union required a reconsideration of the “developmentalist approach” and suggested that Almond, Rostow and Lipset may “have been correct in the long run.”

The most ambitious effort to breathe life into modernization theory was Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man*. Hailing modernization theory as the “last significant Universal History to be written in the twentieth century,” Fukuyama claimed that its teleological conception of history was empirically correct. Developing the arguments of his essay “The End of History?” from 1989, he maintained that all countries by historical necessity would develop according to the Western model. The affluent, egalitarian and liberal democratic states of North America and Western Europe, in which political ideologies had become superfluous, marked the end point of history. While Fukuyama asserted that all countries would eventually reach this destination, Western states could hasten the development of nations still “stuck in history.”

Unlike traditional modernization theory, however, Fukuyama did not advocate social engineering or the establishment of welfare institutions but suggested that a global extension of the free market economy would generate wealth, peace and political freedom. Although this updated version of modernization theory was challenged by notorious critic Samuel Huntington in his *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* from 1996, the neoliberal variation of the modernization theme would find its way into American foreign policy. If underdeveloped and non-aligned countries in Asia and Africa were once seen as vulnerable to communist subversion, it was now, towards the end of the twentieth century, the “failed states” of the Middle East which should be saved from the burdens of tradition. The “War on Terror” launched by President Bush in 2001 was frequently legitimized by the need to modernize Iraq and Afghanistan. As Latham observes in *The Right Kind of Revolution*:

[T]he central assumptions of modernization survived the close of the Cold War and continued to exert a strong pull on U.S. approaches to the postcolonial world. In its revised, neoliberal framework, modernization still provided a compelling narrative, reassuring Americans that the ongoing project of development would ultimately lead the world to converge on liberal, capitalist democracy, and suggesting that the United States could direct and accelerate that universal process.

52 Ibid., p. 276.
54 Ibid., p. 214.
While Fukuyama—the scholar who epitomized modernization theory in its neoliberal guise—would eventually withdraw from his earlier convictions, the rhetoric of modernization remained strong.  

Colonial teleologies

From the heyday of the postwar welfare state to the globalization of the 1990s, modernization theory supplied Western policy makers and the larger public with a concept of history which stated that all countries would develop along Western lines. Since the underdeveloped countries were lagging behind, it was the West’s mission to assist them in modernizing as smoothly as possible.

As pointed out above, such ideas mirror older colonial narratives about the cultural superiority of the West. As Frederick Cooper has argued, European imperialism was often legitimized by "transformative or static versions of a modernity argument: that bringing the backward into the modern world justified colonization, or that Europe’s essential modernizing capacity compared to Africa’s inherent backwardness justified long-term rule over Africa." In his classic book *Time and the Other*, anthropologist Johannes Fabian has drawn attention to the affinities between contemporary concepts of modernization and more outmoded terms like “evolution” and “civilization.” According to Fabian, European nineteenth-century anthropologists contributed to the justification of the colonial enterprise by presenting post-Darwinian theories which depicted history as an evolutionary process consisting of successive “stages.” Elaborating a temporal scheme in which all societies and cultures—past as well as present—could be placed on different points along a line of universal evolution, these scholars sustained the prevailing notion of Europe as the “hub of history.” As Stuart Hall has pointed out, such a Eurocentric concept of history can be traced back to Enlightenment philosophy, in which the idea of a progressive, universal history was coupled with the figure of Europe as the bearer of modernity. “In Enlightenment discourse, the West was the model, the prototype and the measure of social progress,” Hall writes. “It

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56 Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 115.


58 Ibid.
was western progress, civilization, rationality and development that were celebrated.\textsuperscript{59} From this perspective, history was seen as mankind’s movement towards the highest stage of (Western) civilization.

In her work on French colonialism in Indochina during the late nineteenth century, archaeologist Anna Källén uses the term “progressive development” to describe this concept of history. Progressive development, Källén writes:

\begin{quote}
(can be explained simply as the idea that there is a single direction of development for all humans, and that all humans on earth (dead and living) can be arranged along a line of physical and intellectual development from one point of human origin to \textit{a telos}, the moving frontline of all human evolution. This idea was key to the French colonial project in Indochina. It was a crucial component in the rhetoric of paternalistic benevolence, and it helped translate acts of invasion and oppression to a language of humanism and liberalism.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

This kind of evolutionism, Källén writes, represented an epistemology which perceived objects, humans and animal as “expressions of a moment along an underlying invisible upward movement from origin to fully developed mature form.”\textsuperscript{61} In terms of human life, this meant that cultures in different parts of the world could be seen as existing in different periods of history, from the so-called primitive societies of Africa and Asia to the civilized countries of Europe. To put it in Fabian’s words, this was a “\textit{denial of coevalness}”: those colonized by European countries lived in a historical time which Europe had already passed.\textsuperscript{62} According to the patriarchal logic of this concept of history, the colonized nations could be described as being “young” or “adolescent.” Thanks to colonialism’s dispersal of Enlightenment values, however, they would eventually catch up with the West and achieve maturity, freedom and civilization. Thus, as Källén puts it, the “coloniser’s past is the primitive native’s present, and the coloniser’s present is the future of the primitive native.”\textsuperscript{63}

The notion of nineteenth-century Europe as the vanguard of history can be discerned not only in rhetorical figures of “civilizing missions” or “the white man’s burden” but also in imperatives like King Leopold’s 1876 statement that it was “a crusade worthy of this century of progress” to “open to civilisation the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated”.\textsuperscript{64} In social science and philosophy, it was not only expressed by conservative or racist thinkers

\textsuperscript{60} Anna Källén, \textit{Stones Standing. Archaeology, Colonialism, and Ecotourism in Northern Laos} (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015), p. 47.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 49.
\textsuperscript{62} Fabian, \textit{Time and the Other}, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{63} Källén, \textit{Stones Standing}, p. 50.
such as Arthur de Gobineau or Theodor Waitz but also by philosophers on the other side of the political spectrum. In an oft-quoted passage in the preface to *Capital*, Karl Marx claimed that the “country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.” If England was the typical expression of mature capitalism, as Marx thought, the economic laws of bourgeois society would push all countries towards this system and put an end to “the passive survival of archaic and outmoded modes of production”.

In the opening of *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill made clear that the doctrine of individual freedom did not include children and backward societies “in which the race itself may be considered in its nonage.” However, as immature segments of humanity eventually advanced to a higher stage of civilization—“a period long since reached in all nations with whom we need here concern ourselves”—despotism would no longer be a legitimate form of government. Until then, Mill wrote in *Considerations on Representative Government*, colonial rule might play a progressive role by teaching non-European peoples a course in civilization.

A century later, the same idea would appear in a slightly modified form in the modernization theorists’ ideas of the American welfare state as the destination of all underdeveloped countries. “Parsons, Rostow, and their colleagues employed a logic strikingly similar to that driving Enlightenment and evolutionary models of social change,” Latham observes in his *Modernization as Ideology*. “Modernization theory resonated with previous combinations of missionary vision and imperial control.” Indeed, when modernization theorist Karl Deutsch declared in 1961 that the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America might accomplish political development towards Western standards “almost in the manner of a *jump*, omitting as impractical some of the historic stages of transition,” or when his colleague Robert C. Wood argued that backward countries could envision their destiny by investigating “the conditions of life in today’s so-called ‘advanced’ societies and then project the immediate future,” they reproduced the colonial *leitmotif* of a temporal divide between the West and the rest of the world. This also explains why some advocates

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of modernization theory openly celebrated the virtues of colonialism. In a paper written for the American senate in 1960, for instance, the Center for International Studies explained:

[H]owever colonial policy might vary, colonialism nevertheless had one first and universal direct effect. It set the static traditional societies in motion, so to speak, moving them into transitional status. That is, they lost the cohesion and integrity of the traditional system, but by no means did they attain the full status of modern societies.70

In other words, colonialism was an unfinished project. Although European imperialism might have been a violent affair, modernization theorists like the CIS considered it to be a progressive force which had emancipated the traditional societies from the shackles of tradition and created the necessary cultural prerequisites for modernity.

Modernization theory and the end of ideology discussion

Launched in a similar historical and intellectual context, modernization theory and the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s share several theoretical assumptions. As we will see, the end of ideologists reflected modernization theory to varying degrees: while some of them explicitly subscribed to its central ideas, others had a more ambivalent or vague position towards them. On a general level, one can discern five points where these two discussions intersect.

First, modernization theorists and end of ideologists both actualized the idea of a historical convergence between capitalism, communism and “underdeveloped” countries of the Third World. The Soviet system was seen as a deviated form of Western modernity rather than an alternative to European and North American society. As the Soviet state matured economically, the argument went, communism would gradually lose its function and give way to a democratic organization of society. Third World countries, on the other hand, were expected to gradually “catch up” with Western nations and begin to resemble them. As political scientist Joseph LaPalombara aptly pointed out in the epigraph to this chapter, the end of ideology proponents—and, one might add, the modernization theorists too—believed “that ‘they’ are becoming more and more like ‘us’.”71


Second, both end of ideology theorists and modernization scholars tended to see ideological radicalism, and particularly Marxism, as a form of social pathology or irrational outburst rather than a political doctrine reflecting socio-economic conflicts. Instead of acknowledging the material base of Marxism, this ideology was perceived to be an expression of individuals afflicted with anxiety or psychological issues. In a Western context, ideological radicalism was dismissed as a symptom of alienation among disenchanted intellectuals. In the underdeveloped countries, radicalism was seen either as an expression of individual aversion towards Western style modernization or as a social phenomenon which would vanish as these countries matured and modernized. In both cases, adherence to radical politics was ultimately considered to be a social anomaly which would gradually decline as countries became modern.

Third, modernization theorists and end of ideologicalists both clung to the concept of democracy and the desirability of a further democratization of the world. Nevertheless, they subscribed to a rather constrained definition where democracy basically meant the constitutional right for individuals to participate in public elections which included at least two political parties. While this “pluralistic” concept of democracy allowed different opinions on how to pursue politics on a technical level, political actors were not expected to question the foundations of the prevailing system. Since modern politics involved the management of complex technological issues, democracy could not be conducted through the direct participation of the public. As employed in the end of ideology discussion and in modernization theory, then, democracy denoted an ideal type of the representative liberal democracies of the United States and Western Europe. As American philosopher and end of ideology adherent Sidney Hook explained in 1955, “free societies […] are the societies of Western Europe and America […] in which institutions exist that rest directly or indirectly upon the freely given consent of the majority of the adult population.”

Fourth, both discourses were based on an epistemological distinction between science and ideology. Disciples of Weber and Parsons, modernization theorists and end of ideology adherents considered social science to be an objective body of knowledge without political implications—even though it may, and should, be applied in politics. Ideologies, on the other hand, were seen as subjective and irrational doctrines which might appeal to the sentiments of particular social groups but lacked the objectivity of social science. In this opposition between science and ideology, modernization theorists and end of ideology proponents advocated scientifically informed politics which could represent the interests of society in its totality.

Fifth, the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s also tended towards a concept of history in which contemporary Western society was seen as a kind of

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telos towards which all countries were proceeding. While different countries may be located at different stages of history—some “underdeveloped” or “backward”, others “advanced” or “modern”—the historical process of modernization would eventually make them resemble the nations of North America and Europe. Perceiving the West to be the vanguard of history, they reproduced an idea which had been firmly entrenched in the political imagination of colonial Europe.

If the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s reflected many of the assumptions of modernization theory, the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s did not have a uniform relation towards it. As we will see, Fukuyama, Huntington and Giddens took sharply different positions on questions of modernity, development and historical evolution. While Fukuyama openly endorsed modernization theory and sought to bend its teleological concept of history for his own purposes, Huntington staunchly dismissed the idea of a universal historical movement towards Western liberal democracy. In his efforts to outline the consequences of “reflexive modernization” while also highlighting the darker sides engendered by modernity, Giddens can be said to stand somewhere in between Fukuyama and Huntington. Their different opinions about modernization and their diverging concepts of history reflect the fact that they did not take part in a cohesive “discussion” or “debate,” which the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s certainly did. It is high time for us to turn to this discussion.
Part I.
The successful welfare state
2. The end of ideology discussion in the 1950s

Politics is now boring. The only issues are whether the metal workers should get a nickel more an hour, the price of milk should be raised, or old-age pensions extended.¹

Swedish newspaper editor, 1960

[O]pinion in the United States almost unanimously accepts the present system. No alternative is apparent either to the intellectual or to the man in the street, and, in effect, there is none.²

Raymond Aron, 1955

For the cold war was and is a war, fought with ideas instead of bombs.³

Thomas W. Braden, 1967

Many young people today (of the type “readers-consumers of Fukuyama” or of the type “Fukuyama” himself) probably no longer sufficiently realize it: the eschatological themes of the “end of history,” of the “end of Marxism, of the “end of philosophy, of the “ends of man, of the “last man” and so forth were, in the ’50s, that is, forty years ago, our daily bread.⁴

Jacques Derrida, 1993

At the beginning of the 1950s, theories proclaiming the end of political ideologies gained prominence in Western political thought. Although these theories differed slightly depending on writer and context, a similar line of argument was expressed. The grand political doctrines which had influenced Western politics during the first half of the twentieth century were now, after the Second World War, losing their importance in the liberal democracies of Europe and North America. Challenged by the rise of Keynesian welfare

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¹ Editor of a Swedish newspaper quoted in Lipset, Political Man. 442. Since Lipset refers to his friend Herbert Tingsten on the same page, the latter is most likely to be the source of this quote.
³ Thomas W. Braden, “I’m glad the CIA is ‘immoral’,” The Saturday Evening Post (May 20, 1967). In this article, former CIA officer Braden reveals that the organization covertly financed a number of anticommmunist groups and projects—including the Congress for Cultural Freedom—in Europe during the 1950s.
states which were capable of preventing social inequalities by wielding an increased productivity of material goods, political ideologies which called for transformations of society would no longer have any popular appeal. At the beginning of the 1950s, the recession of the immediate postwar years had turned into a remarkable economic boom with high employment, relative affluence, and extraordinary possibilities for consumption. These developments, it was assumed, had led to a substantial decrease in social or economic conflicts and created a widespread satisfaction with liberal democracy and its institutions. Those antidemocratic mass movements which had taken advantage of the economic misery in Europe during the interwar period would not be able to mobilize people surrounded by refrigerators and television sets rather than soup kitchens and food stamps.

Unlike the post-Cold War theories which were launched after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the discussion in the 1950s can be seen as a more or less cohesive debate tied to a particular number of theorists in a fairly circumscribed intellectual setting. But what was the intellectual and historical background to this debate? What social, political and economic currents did it reflect? Before taking a closer look at the end of ideology theories, I will briefly consider these questions by discussing the historical conception of the term ideology, the postwar equation of ideology and totalitarianism, the Keynesian consensus, and the cultural Cold War.

A brief history of ideology: Destutt de Tracy, Marx and Mannheim

According to historian David McLellan, the critical discussion of political ideologies in postwar American and Western European sociology seems to echo the “scientific” study of ideas undertaken by French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy in the wake of the French Revolution. A progressive Enlightenment philosopher at the recently opened Institut de France, Destutt de Tracy sought to establish a science des idées which would examine the emergence and social function of ideas from a strictly empirical point of view. The name of this new discipline, de Tracy suggested in 1796, should be “ideology.” With a scientist’s neutrality, and with no religious or metaphysical prejudices, les idéologues should seek to collect a body of knowledge on human ideas in order to create an epistemological foundation for the other moral and political sciences.

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According to McLellan, a similar approach can be discerned among the scholars who announced the end of ideology in the 1950s; their theories also postulated the possibility of an empirical and objective examination of ideas through a consistent separation of facts and values. As Giles Scott-Smith has argued, scholars who proclaimed the end of ideology wanted to “replace the faith of ideological responses with a dispassionate empirical method that could look at each issue on its own merits.”7 In other words, the end of ideology theorists assumed the possibility of a non-ideological position which allowed them to study and criticize political doctrines without being ideologists themselves.

While such a notion seems to resemble Destutt de Tracy’s approach, there is an obvious difference between his science des idées and the social scientists of the 1950s. If the former had defined ideology as the academic study of ideas and the name of the first science, the latter were deeply skeptical of the term itself. “[A]ssociated intellectually with irrationality and politically with the concept of totalitarianism,” McLellan notes, ideology had by the mid-twentieth century taken on a strongly negative connotation.8 In its country of origin, it had already become a fallen word in the early nineteenth century, when Napoleon accused les idéologues at Institut de France of being insurgents and conspirators. “We must lay the blame for the ills that our fair France has suffered on ideology,” Napoleon claimed after the defeat by the Russians in 1812, “that shadowy metaphysics which subtly searches for first causes on which to base the legislation of peoples, rather than making use of laws known to the human heart and of the lessons of history.”9

From an intellectual-historical perspective, however, it was Marxism that deprived ideology of its scientific connotations. While Marx and Engels never elaborated any comprehensive theory of ideology, their writings would nonetheless be vital for the development of the concept. In the 1845-1846 manuscript which was to be known as The German Ideology, they argued that ideology was a set of ideas or norms which were presented as universally valid although they actually expressed the historical interests of particular social classes. “[E]ach new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society,” Marx and Engels wrote.10 Rejecting the idealism of Hegelian philosophy, they argued that all thought was determined by men’s socio-economic being. “The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material

7 Scott-Smith, The Politics of Apolitical Culture, p. 142.
9 Napoleon quoted in Kennedy, “Ideology,” p. 360. For a further discussion on Napoleon’s polemics against de Tracy and the ideologists, see Rehmann, Theories of Ideology, p. 18-19; Kennedy, “Ideology,” p. 358-360.
activity and the material intercourse of men,” they wrote. “If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.”11 By representing a falsified view of the world where the aspirations of particular social classes were rendered universal, ideology distorted reality and blocked ways of experiencing the world accurately. While Marx never used the term in his own writings, Engels would later describe this as “false consciousness”:

Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought he derives both its form and its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors.12

For the oppressed classes to break free from the distortions of ideology, Engels argued at the end of the 1880s, they had to become conscious of the material conditions which determined their social being as well as their thought. That scenario, he explained, would in effect mean the end of ideology.13

The Marxist concept of ideology was developed by Hungarian-German sociologist Karl Mannheim, whose theories would have a profound significance for the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. Published at the peak of the Weimar Republic’s political antagonisms, and translated into English in 1936 by Edward Shils and his teacher Louis Wirth, Mannheim’s 1929 Ideology and Utopia took its point of departure in Marx’s idea of political thought as bound to the socio-historical position of different groups. According to Mannheim, all political ideas—including those produced by social science—could be traced back to conflicting interests and class struggles. While it was impossible to transcend what Mannheim would later call the “existential determination of knowledge” [Seinsverbundenheit des Wissens], he hoped that the

13 In Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy from 1886, Engels presented a Marxist version of the end of ideology theory (which was probably the first historical elaboration of the theme). If human beings were to become conscious of the material conditions which undergird their thinking, Engels argued, this would signify “the end of all ideology” [der ganzen Ideologie am Ende]. For the false consciousness of ideology to disappear, men would have to stop regarding ideas as isolated from their physical lives and instead see them as determined by material conditions. See Friedrich Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1946 [1886]), p. 65.
dawning sociology of knowledge could unmask the unconscious factors behind human thought by highlighting the connections between intellectual positions and certain forms of lived experience.\textsuperscript{14}

Mannheim’s discussion was centered on the twin concepts of ideology and utopia. Ideology reflected how “ruling groups […] in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination.”\textsuperscript{15} Ideology was a kind of \textit{Weltanschauung} in which segments of reality were overlooked or distorted in order to preserve the existing society. While this definition resembled the Marxist concept of ideology, Mannheim dismissed the idea of a “true” consciousness which could transcend the falsifications of ideology. Since all knowledge was socio-historically situated, no perspective could be objectively valid. Utopia, on the other hand, was defined as a “type of [intellectual] orientation which transcends reality and which at the same time breaks the bonds of the existing order”.\textsuperscript{16} If ideology was a set of “unreal” ideas which were never \textit{de facto} realized, utopia was a set of ideas that, while also unreal in relation to existing society, had an actual transforming effect upon this order.

Mannheim historicized the utopian mentality by tracing it back to the Reformation and the Chiliasm of the Anabaptists. With Thomas Müntzer’s radical theology and the German peasants’ uprising, wishes for change were, for the first time, projected onto the material world. With its peculiar blending of hostility towards the existing order and a profound sense of presentness, the temporality of Chiliasm dovetailed with the new political phenomenon of revolution. “Longings which up to that time had been either unattached to a specific goal or concentrated upon other-worldly objectives suddenly took on a mundane complexion,” Mannheim wrote.\textsuperscript{17} As this “spiritualization of politics” [\textit{Vergeistigung der Politik}] politicized wishes which had hitherto been

\textsuperscript{14} Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia}, p. 267. In one of the more controversial sections of \textit{Ideology and Utopia}, Mannheim suggested that the appropriate group to undertake such a task would be a “socially unattached intelligentsia” [\textit{freischwebende Intelligenz}] of academics and intellectuals. Because of their consistent self-reflection, Mannheim argued, the “relatively classless stratum” of the intelligentsia could transcend political partisanship, synthesize conflicting perspectives and reach a more comprehensive understanding of society. Mannheim’s confidence in the possibilities of such an intelligentsia was strongly criticized, not least by American social scientists who questioned the alleged social detachment of intellectuals as well as the very desirability of totalizing syntheses of knowledge. “There was,” as intellectual historian Job Dittberner summarizes the discussion, “almost universal rejection, on intellectual and practical grounds, of Mannheim’s suggestion of the intellectuals as a grand solution either to intellectual or political problems.” See Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia}, p. 155; Dittberner, \textit{The End of Ideology}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{15} Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia}, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 192.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 212.
confined to the religious realm, the door was opened for subsequent utopian mentalities in the form of liberalism, conservatism and socialism. 

In the last chapter of *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim argued that ideology and utopianism were now in a process of decline. As liberals and socialists had gained political power, they had jettisoned utopian ideals, adjusted to the order of everyday life and taken a conservative stance towards social change. Although fringes of the Marxist movement kept subversive utopianism alive, the institutions of parliamentary democracy seemed to foster a pragmatic and technical approach to politics. Science went through a similar development, turning from totalizing philosophical systems to experimental problem-solving in the form of empirical sociology. Politics were reduced to allegedly ahistorical economics, and a functionalistic “matter-of-factness” [*Sachlichkeit*] began permeating culture and aesthetics. All these changes, Mannheim argued, corresponded to a changing sense of historical temporality in the West. A static sense of time encompassing both past and future replaced the progressive or dialectical concepts of history in older utopian thought.

Mannheim was deeply ambivalent about this development. On the one hand, he celebrated “the transformation of utopianism into science” and “the destruction of the deluding ideologies” as steps towards the rational mastery of human life. If the decline of ideology meant the unveiling of the hidden motives behind human action, this was fully in line with the aspirations of his sociology of knowledge. At the same time, Mannheim stressed that the disappearance of utopianism risked alienating man from himself and stripping humanity of its strivings for a better world. In the closing paragraph of the American edition of *Ideology and Utopia*, he expressed these concerns in dark strokes which resembled both George Lukács and Max Weber:

> Whereas the decline of ideology represents a crisis only for certain strata, and the objectivity which comes from the unmasking of ideologies always takes the form of self-clarification for society as a whole, the complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action would mean that human nature and human development would take on a totally new character. The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would be faced then with the greatest paradox imaginable, namely that man, who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without any ideals, becomes a mere creature of impulses.

Although *Ideology and Utopia* came under fire in both Europe and the United States, the book would have a profound significance for the end of ideology.

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19 Ibid., p. 262-263.
discussion of the 1950s. Not only did it introduce the concept of ideology to social scientists in the United States; it also set the terms of the debate by designating Marxism as an ideology, highlighting the historical importance of Chiliasm, and elaborating a theory of the decline of ideology and utopia.

It must nevertheless be pointed out that the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s departed from Mannheim in two important respects. First, whereas _Ideology and Utopia_ was based on the distinction between ideology and utopia, they did not separate these two terms. If Mannheim had defined ideology as an inherently conservative set of ideas which aimed to preserve the current social order, the end of ideologists used the term to designate subversive doctrines with the intention of overthrowing society. An ideology was a rigid system of political imperatives which was, on the one hand, used to pursue totalizing interpretations of history, and, on the other, to facilitate the creation of a new society in accordance with the alleged forces of history. While this definition resembled what Mannheim had called utopia, the end of ideology theorists were not concerned with Mannheim’s basic criterion for utopia, namely the question of the _de facto_ realization of utopian ideas. Their use of the term ideology was, in other words, a conflation of Mannheim’s two concepts.

Second, whereas Mannheim was ambivalent about what he perceived to be the decline of ideology and utopianism, the end of ideology theorists applauded it. Ideology, they argued, offered simplified and distorted perceptions of reality which threatened to slide into fanaticism. After the rise of communist and fascist states in Europe, the political purges of Mussolini and Stalin and the crimes committed by Nazi Germany, ideology was perceived not only to be synonymous with irrationalism and violence but also bound to the political phenomenon of totalitarianism.

Ideology and the postwar critique of totalitarianism

If the discovery of “totalitarianism” in the years before the Second World War can be seen as the “seed-bed of the end of ideology thesis,” as Howard Brick has argued, the connection between political ideologies and totalitarian movements was brought to the fore in two influential books published in the wake of the war. In 1945, Austrian philosopher Karl Popper released _The Open Society and Its Enemies_, an exhaustive historical examination tracing the intellectual roots of twentieth-century totalitarianism. According to Popper, the antidemocratic movements of the interwar period were linked to a longstanding historical-philosophical tradition stretching back to Plato via Hegel and

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Marx. Throughout the centuries, he argued, totalitarian movements had tried to materialize their political programs with “historicist” (i.e. deterministic and totalizing) concepts of history in which humanity was seen as proceeding along an inevitable historical trajectory propelled by forces beyond the scope of human action. Ascribing the real subjectivity of history to collective entities like nations, classes or ideas, historicist philosophies regarded the individual “as a pawn, as a rather insignificant instrument in the general development of mankind”.\footnote{Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1 (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1947 [1945]), p. 5-6.} Renowned for his work scientific methodology, the fiercely anti-Hegelian Popper condemned the irrational utopianism which, he claimed, characterized all historicism:

> This irrational attitude which springs from an intoxication with dreams of a beautiful world is what I call Romanticism. It may seek its heavenly city in the past or in the future; it may preach “back to nature” or “forward to a world of love and beauty”; but its appeal is always to our emotions rather than to reason. Even with the best intentions of realizing heaven on earth it only succeeds in realizing hell—that hell which man alone prepares for his fellows.\footnote{Ibid., p. 147-148.}

While Popper rarely used the term ideology in *The Open Society*, his argument about the connection between totalitarianism and historicism would lay the foundation for later theories which stressed the affinity between totalitarian politics and historical metanarratives in the guise of ideologies. This theme was elaborated in German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt’s 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Contrary to Popper, Arendt argued that the totalitarian mass movements of the twentieth century should be understood as an entirely new phenomenon of Western politics. Unlike historical forms of tyranny and dictatorship, twentieth-century totalitarianism was characterized by systematic state terror, complete eradication of political opposition and a radical politicization of all spheres of society. Moreover, Arendt argued, totalitarianism was featured by the employment of political ideology. By using ideologies as the foundation for their propaganda, totalitarian regimes were able not only to meet the masses’ desire for clarity and consistence in a seemingly chaotic and unpredictable world but also to provide them with a compelling narrative about the driving forces, trajectory and destiny of history. If ideologies’ “claim to total validity is taken literally,” Arendt wrote, “they become the nuclei of logical systems in which, as in the systems of paranoiacs, everything follows comprehensibly and even compulsorily once the first premise is accepted. The insanity of such systems lies not only in their first premise but in the very logicality with which they are constructed.”\footnote{Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1951), p. 431-432.} By offering an “escape
from reality into fiction,” ideologies jettisoned the existential openness of life for an empirically unquestionable scheme of explanation.25

Arendt developed her analysis in the 1953 essay “Ideology and Terror.” Describing ideology as “a very recent phenomenon” in Western political life, whose full potential was not discovered before Hitler and Stalin, she suggested that ideologies were used by totalitarian regimes to formulate a system whereby the entire historical process could be explained as the logical unfolding of a particular “idea,” such as the historical struggle of classes or the natural superiority of the white race.26 According to Arendt, ideologies “always assume that one idea is sufficient to explain everything in the development from the premise, and that no experience can teach anything because everything is comprehended in this consistent process of logical deduction.”27 In this way, all historical events could be integrated in a grand metahistorical narrative inexorably proceeding towards a predetermined telos. Terror and repression could be justified with reference to the logical development of history, and those objecting to this alleged progress could be dismissed as struggling with history’s windmills. For Arendt, then, ideologies were essentially a form of hyperbolized logic:

An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history to which the “idea” is applied; the result of this application is not a body of statements about something that is, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change. The ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same “law” as the logical exposition of its “idea.” Ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future—because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.28

Like Arendt, the end of ideology theorists saw political ideologies as deterministic philosophies of history which falsely purported to possess the secrets of the past and the future, thereby claiming the ability to guide humanity in accordance with eternal historical laws. Like Popper, they regarded such approaches as irrational and metaphysical assaults on the autonomous individual. And like the Marxist tradition which they otherwise criticized, they perceived ideology to be a contortion of reality—whether this reality was described in terms of “science,” “common sense,” or “rational judgement” rather

26 Hannah Arendt, “Ideology and Terror. A Novel Form of Government,” Review of Politics 15:3 (July, 1953), p. 315. The chapter “Ideology and Terror” which appears in the second and later editions of The Origins of Totalitarianism is a slightly revised version of this text.
27 Ibid., p. 317.
28 Ibid., p. 316.
than the social relations of production. As historian Neil Jumonville summarizes their approach, ideology "was utopian rather than practical, passionately committed to an ideal rather than rationally analytical, and promoted an absolute vision that embodied total solutions rather than tentative hypotheses. [---] Because larger political visions and passionate social movements were assumed to have led in Europe to fascism on the right and totalitarianism on the left, it was thought dangerous to deal any longer in these volatile commodities."

**The welfare state and the Keynesian consensus**

Instead of these totalitarian and deterministic political ideologies, the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s advocated what they considered to be moderate and pragmatic approaches to politics. Adherents of empirical sociology, they refuted the “blueprints” of ideologies and suggested that social science, expert knowledge and small-scale reform were more adequate ways of pursuing politics in modern societies. A similar approach had been outlined by Popper, who challenged the anti-democratic movements’ calls for radical upheaval by advocating “piecemeal social engineering” based on empirical research. Epitomizing Popper’s scientific ideal, piecemeal social engineering was described as an experiment-based method exercised within strictly demarcated situations where interventions could be carried out without irrevocable consequences. Committed to the teachings of social science and skeptical of extensive political reform, the social engineer only considered political institutions in terms of their efficiency and practical function.

Echoing Popper’s arguments, the end of ideology theorists called for the replacement of grand ideological programs with scientifically informed politics and hoped that a sociology in the Weberian tradition would offer decision-makers the practical knowledge which was needed for improving society. “[B]y acting in accordance with the teachings of social science,” Raymond

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31 Popper, *The Open Society*, vol. 1, p. 138-140. For a discussion on the similarities between Popper’s political ideas and scientific ideals, see Skovdahl, *Tingsten*, p. 308-309.
Aron wrote in 1955, “our intellectuals could achieve the only political universality which is accessible in our time.” Since governments knew that science “provides knowledge and techniques necessary for the welfare and strength of society,” Edward Shils argued in a similar vein, scientists had “become politicians.” Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingsten took the idea one step further by equating modern politics with “a kind of applied statistics.”

In more concrete terms, such ideals entailed the advocacy of small-scale and allegedly scientifically informed government intervention in the realm of economics. Virtually all end of ideology theorists of the 1950s regarded the American New Deal-policies of the 1930s, and postwar European social democracy—programs that sought to adjust social inequalities through compromises between capital and labor—as the ideal way of governing advanced industrial societies. While such reforms would increase equality and prevent the concentration of political and economic power, they did not challenge the system as such—the state’s function was, in historian Alan Brinkley’s terms, “to compensate for capitalism’s inevitable flaws and omissions without interfering very much with its internal workings.”

This position seemed to reflect the general political development in Europe during the late 1940s and early 1950s, where the economic recovery of the war-ravaged nations rested on a firm belief in governmental planning and Keynesian political economy. Almost all European countries which received American aid during the postwar years initiated comprehensive public reforms to avoid the underproduction and mass unemployment of the interwar period. “[T]he real choice which faces the democracies today is not between 100% State ownership and 100% laissez faire; but between a little more or a little less State intervention,” British Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell explained in 1955. “Those who advocate more intervention do so not because of any love of controls for their own sake but chiefly because they regard it as necessary to achieve some valuable social objective, such as full employment, higher productivity, a fairer distribution of income and wealth, and more generally to correct what they regard as the weaknesses or evils of a free economy.” In a similar vein, Walt Rostow ensured that “the sluggish and timid policies of the 1920’s and 1930’s […] will no longer be tolerated in Western societies,” since “the Keynesian revolution” had offered governments effective techniques for preventing economic downturns.

By the beginning of the 1950s, old laissez

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faire ideals seemed obsolete; cooperation between the state, business leaders and labor unions was not the road to serfdom, but a way of taming the market forces and creating economic growth. As American journalist John Chamberlain explained by the beginning of the Second World War:

Western planners [...] have developed a technique [...] of limited, or partial, planning. This technique does not require dictatorial control of the means and materials of production, for it begins by research and ends in the consulting chamber, with all claims—the claims of management, the claims of labor, the claims of ownership—represented in a final compromise. The planners are not the bosses nor are they rubber-stamps for bosses; they merely act as advisers.

The politics of planning went along with another buzzword of the postwar period, namely productivity. The emphasis on increased productivity was persistent, not least among American scholars and policy makers conducting the Marshall Aid and outlining U.S. foreign policy. Carefully planned economic production would not only create material affluence throughout society, but also alleviate political antagonisms. “Productivity is a vitally needed lubricant to reduce class and group frictions,” American economist Theodore Yntema explained in 1947. “As long as we can get more by increasing the size of the pie there is not nearly so much temptation to try to get a bigger slice at the expense of others. [...] If it weren’t for possibilities of increased productivity the struggle between capital and labour would be more severe and dangerous than it is.” A decade later, John Kenneth Galbraith argued that economics had “now narrowed down to a preoccupation with productivity and production,” and that production had “become the indispensable remedy for the discomforts, anxieties, and privations associated with economic insecurity.” Increasing productivity would thus have important political implications: if the socio-economic cleavages of the 1930s could be contained through greater af-


40 For a discussion on productivity as they key concept in Western postwar economy, see the chapter “The politics of productivity” in Maier, In search of stability.

41 Theodore Yntema quoted in Maier, In search of stability, p. 65.

fluence, antidemocratic movements which strived to overthrow liberal democracy would lose their material basis. “As economic growth has become a permanent condition in capitalist, democratic societies, it has proved possible to distribute the fruits of modernization so as to avoid the bloody class conflicts on which Marx counted,” two American scientists explained in 1961.43

Most end of ideology theorists agreed. Increasing affluence, they argued, would reduce social conflicts and make political ideologies redundant. While doctrines like Marxism might persist in decolonized countries in the Third World, they had no role to play in affluent welfare states of the West. If it was true that the problems of the industrial revolution had been solved, as Lipset put it in 1960, there was no need for wider social change. As David McLellan puts it:

On this view, the “Age of Ideology” was past. It belonged to the specific period of industrialization which, following the breakdown of traditional societies, had given rise to much intellectual ferment among rival groups. Nazism, and more particularly Communism, were nineteenth century hangovers with no relevance to advanced post-industrial societies, where technical problems with technical solutions were to the fore. Ironically, the term which Marx and his followers had done so much to popularize was now used as a weapon against Marxism.44

The cultural Cold War and the Congress for Cultural Freedom

Despite the vagueness of the term “ideology,” it was, as McLellan acknowledges, especially Marxism that was supposed to be in decline. “Since totalitarian politics became associated, in the post-war decades, with the Soviet Union, which was held to be Marxism in practice, the end of the ideology thesis often amounted to a thesis about the end of Marxism [...] and its irrelevance to advanced industrial societies,” he writes.45 In a similar vein, Scott-Smith argues that the theory proclaimed the end of class-based political ideals.46 If Germany’s defeat in 1945 seemed to have put a definite end to Nazism, and postwar fascism was too marginalized to pose a threat to liberal democracy, conservatism and liberalism were generally not discussed as ideologies at all.47

45 Ibid., p. 54.
46 Scott-Smith, The Politics of Apolitical Culture, p. 140. Dittberner claims that the end of ideology theory implied the decline of communism, socialism and liberalism, but he emphasizes that anticommunism was at its very core. See Dittberner, The End of Ideology, p. 127.
47 The end of ideology theorists of the 1950s rarely described liberalism and conservatism as ideologies. In his 1951 article on the end of political ideology, H. Stuart Hughes was almost
Marxism, on the other hand, seemed to be the ideology *par excellence:* a deterministic philosophy of history in whose name totalitarian regimes claimed legitimacy and justified transgressions against liberal democratic rights. This was particularly the case with Stalinism, which was perceived to be Marxism’s most threatening political manifestation. Looking back at the discussion, Daniel Bell remembered:

The over-riding element in terms of understanding the end-of-ideology […] is most obvious of all and really has to be taken as the central point, namely, after World War II the feeling arose that the major enemy before society was Stalinism. [---] [T]he main threat, particularly to intellectuals from the cultural point of view, was the fact that Stalinism had taken over Eastern Europe.48

The paradox was that the decline of Marxism was announced at a time when the doctrine—or its incarnation in the form of communism—seemed to become a global phenomenon. By the beginning of the 1950s, communist regimes ruled the Soviet Union as well as a number of Eastern European countries, and Moscow-allied parties played important roles in France, Italy and Greece. As the main front of the Cold War moved from Europe to Asia, it became clear that communism also fueled anticolonial movements in large parts of the Third World. According to historian Odd Arne Westad, Soviet communism “put itself forward as an alternative modernity; a way poor and downtrodden peoples could challenge their conditions *without* replicating the

exclusively concerned with the decline of communism and socialism. Whereas Hughes described liberalism as a “political philosophy” rather than an ideology, conservatism was described as being connected to “the negation of ideology” which was currently underway in Europe. For Raymond Aron, who made clear that his 1955 *The Opium of the Intellectuals* was arguing “neither with fascists nor with reactionaries but with the Left,” the end of ideology simply meant the end of Marxism. In Edward Shils’s writings on the topic between 1955 and 1957, ideology was largely synonymous with Marxism and Fascism—Shils never referred to conservatism and liberalism in terms of ideologies.

There are, however, exceptions. While Daniel Bell avoided referring to liberalism and conservatism as ideologies in his 1960 book *The End of Ideology,* he still took the end of ideology to signify an emerging political consensus where socialism, classic conservatism, and *laissez-faire* liberalism were merged into a common belief in governmental planning and Keynesianism. In his 1960 monograph *Political Man,* Seymour Martin Lipset did not only depart from the previous discussion by explicitly designating liberalism and conservatism as ideologies, but also by using the term for a variety of political doctrines ranging from socialism, communism, fascism and racism to Peronism, regionalism and Americanism. Like Bell, Lipset considered the end of ideology to be the end of revolutionary Marxism and the simultaneous decline of traditional conservatism and liberalism. See H. Stuart Hughes, “The End of Political Ideology,” *Measure* 2 (Spring, 1951), p. 152, 151; Aron, “The End of Ideology and the Renaissance of Ideas,” p. 145.

48 Daniel Bell quoted in the chapter “Appendix III. Interview with Daniel Bell, May 1972” in Dittberner, *The End of Ideology,* p. 335.
American model.”49 As discussed in the previous chapter, communism pro-
vided recently decolonized countries in Asia and Africa with a model for in-
dustrialization and modernization which challenged the interests of Western
democracies—and the United States in particular.

In other words, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s emerged at a
time marked by increasing geopolitical conflicts over the formation of the
postwar world order. By declaring the irrelevance of Marxism and promoting
welfare state liberal democracy, the theory not only legitimized the ongoing
social democratic project in Europe but also offered an anticommunist and
pro-Western position in contemporary decolonization struggles in the Third
World. Launched and developed by a number of predominantly American
scholars around the organization the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the end
of ideology theory was a product of what has been called the cultural Cold
War.50 If the government of the United States had sought to contain Euro-
pean communism economically through the Marshall Plan, and to strengthen
the political affiliations between Western Europe and North America by the
creation of NATO, efforts were also made to fight communism on a cultural
level. After the founding of the CIA in 1947, the American government in-
directly undertook many cultural projects aiming to reinforce anti-Soviet po-
sitions and strengthen sympathies towards the United States in Western Eu-
rope. Such activities, which included distributing literature, art and music, as
well as setting up public meeting-spaces throughout the continent, dovetailed

49 Odd Arne Westad, The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our
50 The cultural Cold War and the CIA’s involvement in anticommunist cultural projects in
Europe during the late 1940s and 1950s have been covered in many studies. Regarding the
Congress for Cultural Freedom, two works especially deserve to be mentioned. Apart from
Giles Scott-Smith’s already discussed The Politics of Apolitical Culture, journalist Frances
Stonor Saunders’s Who Paid the Piper? from 1999 offers a well-researched and carefully writ-
ten account of the establishment and early activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, as
well as discussions about the organization’s central actors. See Scott-Smith, The Politics of
Apolitical Culture; Frances Stonor Saunders, Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural
Cold War (London: Granta Books, 1999). For other works concerned with different aspects of
the cultural Cold War, see, for instance, Patrick Iber, Neither Peace nor Freedom. The Cultural
Cold War in Latin America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Kristin Roth-
Ey, Moscow Prime Time. How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural
Cold War (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2011); Tuong Vu, “Cold War Studies
and the Cultural Cold War in Asia,” in Tuong Vu & Wasana Wongsurawat (eds.), Dynamics
of the Cold War in Asia. Ideology, Identity, and Culture (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009);
Helen Laville & Hugh Willford (eds.), The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War.
The State–Private Network (Abingdon, Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2006); Giles Scott-
Smith & Hans Krabbendam (eds.), The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945–1960
(London: Frank Cass, 2003); Christopher Lasch, “The Cultural Cold War. A Short History
of the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” in The Agony of the American Left (New York: Vintage
with the CIA’s assumption that the Cold War was a conflict fought with ideas rather than bombs.\footnote{For ideas instead of bombs, see the epigraphs to this chapter.}

Described as a “show window of the West behind the Iron Curtain,” the occupied city of Berlin was seen as a particularly important place to locate such activities.\footnote{Herbert Luthy, “Berlin. The Unhaunted City,” \textit{Encounter} 2:2 (February, 1954), p. 37.} In 1947, the first Amerika-Haus opened in Berlin to provide Germans with West-friendly literature, movies, art exhibitions and panels on contemporary American culture. The following year, the CIA helped launch \textit{Der Monat}, a magazine which gave German intellectuals a forum for American literature, essays and reviews.\footnote{\textit{Der Monat} was financed by means from the CIA, Ford Foundation and the Marshall Plan. In a preparatory document addressed to the U.S. Military Governor’s Office in Berlin, Lasky stressed the importance of resisting political forces in Berlin who discredited American foreign policy, as well as demonstrating the richness and progressiveness of American culture and philosophy. See Stonor Saunders, \textit{Who Paid the Piper?}, p. 28-30; Scott-Smith, \textit{The Politics of Apolitical Culture}, p. 91-92.} Edited by journalist and militant anticommunist Melvin J. Lasky, the magazine made a particularly important contribution by publishing a German translation of \textit{The God that Failed}, an anthology where ex-Marxists expressed their loyalties towards the West.\footnote{Originally published in 1949, \textit{The God that Failed} was promoted as a book where “six famous men tell how they changed their minds about Communism”. Editor Richard Crossman argued that former communists were the best ones to lead the struggle for liberal democracy. “[N]o one who has not wrestled with Communism as a philosophy, and Communists as political opponents can really understand the values of Western Democracy,” Crossman wrote in the book’s preface. “The Devil once lived in Heaven, and those who have not met him are unlikely to recognize an angel when they see one.” See Richard Crossman, “Introduction,” in Richard Crossman (ed.), \textit{The God that Failed} (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 11.} As literature historian Andreas Huyssen has argued, such activities had a deep impact on a German generation coming of age in the ashes of the Third Reich:

\begin{quote}
The events at Germany’s Amerikahäuser, the American Forces Network’s music programmes, sponsored jazz concerts, Hollywood cinema […], and such journals as \textit{Der Monat}, were crucial to the democratisation of the country. American cultural imports, which during the Vietnam War came to be denounced as coca-colonisation, enabled the postwar generation to break the spell of cultural nationalism and to challenge the European contempt for American popular culture then still dominant in schools, universities and the media. It allowed postwar Germans to turn from the \textit{Volkslied} to the blues, from the yodel to bebop, from the waltz to rock’n’roll, but also from Rilke to Whitman, Stifter to Faulkner, and later to Kerouac, Baldwin and Ginsberg.\footnote{Andreas Huyssen, “Degeneration Gap,” \textit{London Review of Books} 26:19 (October, 2004), p. 32.}
\end{quote}

With the foundation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950, cultural anticommunism was institutionalized. Through a collaboration between a group of German ex-communists, \textit{Der Monat}’s editor and West Berlin Mayor
Ernst Reuter, a four-day rally with over a hundred anticommunist scholars, politicians, writers and intellectuals from Europe and the United States was arranged in West Berlin in June 1950. Secretly funded by the CIA, the event was given the neutral name “the Congress for Cultural Freedom.” By mobilizing a Euro-Atlantic intelligentsia in opposition to the Soviet Union and setting up a forum for non-communist intellectuals, the hope behind the CCF was to undermine pro-Soviet and neutralist sentiments in Western Europe.


It is not a coincidence that the end of ideology theory was launched by scholars and intellectuals affiliated to the Congress for Cultural Freedom organization. Rooted in explicit anticommunism, the theory was a highly usable component in the cultural Cold War. While the ideas which will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters were often formulated in strictly theoretical or sociological terms, the 1950s’ discussion of the end of ideology must be understood in relation to the Cold War’s tensions between the East and the West, Soviet planned economy and Keynesianism, communism and capitalism. Although many who announced the end of ideology were once political radicals, they had now, to put it in historian Christopher Lasch’s words, associated “themselves with the war-making and propaganda machinery of the state.”58 As Howard Brick expresses it in a more diplomatic vein, the end of ideology “concerned the passage of a certain segment of the American intelligentsia from a posture of radical opposition to American society toward an accommodation with its standing institutions and prevailing social relations.”59 While the end of ideology theorists did not unreservedly celebrate

57 Scott-Smith, The Politics of Apolitical Culture, p. 102.
59 Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 7–8.
capitalism and liberal democracy, they did, in the last instance, support it. As American critic Dwight Macdonald declared in 1952:

I choose the West—the US and its allies—and reject the East—the Soviet Union and its ally, China, and its colonial provinces, the nations of Eastern Europe. By “choosing” I mean that I support the political, economic, and military struggle of the West against the East. I support it critically […] but in general I do choose, I support Western policies.60

3. The Berlin rally and its aftermath

On the morning of June 25, 1950, North Korean President Kim Il-Sung ordered his army to transgress the 38th parallel which divided Soviet-supported North Korea from United States-controlled South Korea. Backed by the United States and the United Nations, South Korean President Syngman Rhee launched an immediate counteroffensive. The mounting postwar tensions between the two global superpowers had finally exploded into the Cold War's first armed proxy-conflict.

The same day as Il-Sung’s army entered South Korea, the two hundred delegates at the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s rally began arriving in Berlin. As the news hit them the following morning, the meeting was given a dramatic atmosphere. The “freedom” that the delegates had come to Berlin to defend now really seemed to be under attack, and some even speculated that the Red Army was about to arrest them.¹

For those who had criticized what they perceived to be hypocritical Soviet peace campaigns during the late 1940s, the suspicions were confirmed. “I suppose [the communists] will explain the advance into South Korea as an attempt to bring about peace,” American philosopher Sidney Hook sardonically pointed out at the first day of the rally.² Taking advantage of the vibrant tension that framed the meeting, Berlin’s socialist Mayor Ernst Reuter used his opening address to proclaim a moment of silence to commemorate those who had died in the struggle for freedom.

Before looking into the rally, a few words should be said about the founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. In the summer of 1949, German ex-communists Franz Borkenau and Ruth Fischer met with Der Monat’s editor Melvin Lasky to discuss the possibility of arranging an anti-Soviet rally in Berlin. The plan was, as Fischer explained, to organize a “gathering of all ex-Communists, plus a good representative group of anti-Stalinist American, English, and European intellectuals”.³ Through the Berlin-based CIA-officer Michael Josselson, the idea was forwarded to the American intelligence service, which agreed to finance the project if too explicit anticommunism was

¹ See Hook, Out of Step, p. 433.
toned down in favor of a broader focus on culture and science. In the winter of 1950, the CIA secretly contributed 50,000 dollars, while Josselson, Lasky and Reuter began inviting scholars, politicians and philosophers to the meeting. Under the name “the Congress for Cultural Freedom,” echoing the ostensible neutrality of Soviet peace organizations of the late 1940s, a four-day event would be held in West Berlin in June 1950. The participants invited constituted a motley assemblage of ex-Marxists from both sides of the Atlantic, as well as American journalists and scholars and European politicians who had rallied for Western European federalism. Among the guests invited—virtually all of whom were open anticommunists—were some widely acclaimed philosophers like John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Benedetto Croce and Karl Jaspers.

As Sidney Hook later pointed out, Berlin seemed to be the ideal place for an anticommunist gathering. “[T]he barbed wire and loaded rifles that divided West Berlin and East Berlin were a dramatic object lesson on the differences between a free and totalitarian society,” he recalled in his memoirs. The tensions between East and West and the events in Korea had a palpable impact on the panels and seminars which were arranged during the four days. In his speech at the meeting, American writer James Burnham denounced pacifist and neutralist currents in Europe as communist propaganda, and defended the production of nuclear weapons which, in his view, safeguarded Western freedom from totalitarianism.

Author Arthur Koestler called the situation a “vital emergency” and argued that it required everybody to take a stand for or

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4 Some of the most prominent participants in Berlin, like Arthur Koestler, Sidney Hook, Ernst Reuter, James Burnham, Ignazio Silone and Franz Borkenau, were ex-communists who had now turned against their old convictions. In a critical report of the meeting, British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper described it as an alliance between fanatic ex-communists and German nationalists, and argued that their militant anticommunism was as demagogic and dogmatic as the totalitarianism which they opposed. Claiming that “Cultural Freedom” was nowhere,” Trevor-Roper argued that a solution to the problems posed by the meeting could not be provided by people trapped in rigid doctrinarism. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Ex-Communist v. Communist,” The Manchester Guardian (July 10, 1950). For another discussion of anti-Soviet sentiments at the meeting, see James Farrell, “Congress Comments,” commentary on the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin 1950 (IACF/CCF Papers, University of Chicago Library, Series III, Box 1, Folder 10).

5 For the most detailed overview of the founding of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, see Warner, “Origins of the Congress for Cultural Freedom.” Already by 1949, a handful of American anticommunist intellectuals founded Americans for Intellectual Freedom/Committee for Cultural Freedom in order to protest against and infiltrate the Soviet Union’s “peace conferences” in New York and Paris. Several of the participants in these gatherings would play important roles for the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s meeting in Berlin the next year. See Dittberner, The End of Ideology, p. 106-110; Stonor Saunders: Who Paid the Piper?, p. 45-56.

6 Hook, Out of Step, p. 433.

7 James Burnham, “Rhetoric and Peace,” paper at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin 1950 (IACF/CCF Papers, University of Chicago Library, Series III, Box 1, Folder 5).
against the Soviet Union. Europeans who advocated a neutral position, Koestler argued, were irresponsible and unrealistic.\(^8\)

However, while most participants in Berlin considered communism to be a mounting threat to Western society, others claimed that political labels were becoming increasingly irrelevant. In his paper “The false Dilemma,” Koestler argued that dichotomies like right and left and socialism and capitalism had become “virtually empty of meaning.” If the term left had once represented progressive and liberal groups, it had by the mid-twentieth century lost all semantic precision. By the beginning of the 1950s, Koestler noted, social liberals, social democrats and revolutionary communists all claimed to belong to the left. The term socialism, he continued, was marked by a similar vagueness. Soviet council socialism, German National Socialism, and British democratic socialism had little, if anything, in common. Moreover, countries like Great Britain and the Soviet Union had abandoned the socialist cornerstone of internationalism—Soviet by claiming each country’s national sovereignty and implementing a nation-centered communism, Britain’s Labour regime by refusing to participate in the process of Western European unification.

Most importantly, Koestler argued, no self-proclaimed socialist country had created an actual alternative to capitalism. Since nationalization of corporations and industries meant state ownership rather than popular control over the means of production, socialist societies were unable to end economic exploitation and class stratification. “In Russia, where the Trade Unions have ceased to be an instrument of the working class and become an instrument for the coercion of the working class, the theoretical owners of the factories and of the land have less influence over its management and work under worse conditions than their comrades in any western country,” Koestler claimed. “On the other hand, trust managers, factory directors and ‘proletarian millionaires’ […] form a privileged class just as much and more than in Capitalist countries.”\(^9\) In this way, Koestler stressed, capitalist countries were actually more socialist than their socialist neighbors.

Koestler ended “The false Dilemma” by pointing out that political conflicts between left and right had become irrelevant and that European politics had to break free from these “false alternatives.” In the future, he claimed, clashes between socialism and capitalism would appear as obsolete as the religious wars of the seventeenth century. The increasing political tension in Europe, which Koestler had earlier described in terms of an emergency, could simply not be comprehended in ideological terms. As the mounting conflict between

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\(^8\) Arthur Koestler, “Two methods of action,” paper at the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin 1950 (IACF/CCF Papers, University of Chicago Library, Series III, Box 1, Folder 4).

democracy and totalitarianism would come to overshadow old ideological distinctions, the concepts of left and right would lose their meaning:

While the majority of Europeans is still hypnotised by the anachronistic battlecries of Left and Right, Capitalism and Socialism, history has moved on to a new alternative, a new conflict which cuts across the old lines of division. The real content of this conflict can be summed up in one phrase: total tyranny against relative freedom.¹⁰

The pressure on humanity exerted by the conflict between tyranny and freedom, Koestler concluded, might give rise to a “new spiritual awareness [...] of the full meaning of freedom.” The days of the “economic man” whose consciousness was framed in terms of left and right or socialism and capitalism were over.¹¹

While Koestler’s idea of a declining importance of political doctrines caused quite a heated debate in the discussion which followed his speech, some participants seemed to agree with him.¹² In his paper, Sidney Hook followed Koestler by arguing that terms like left and right no longer had any substance. Setting out to defend cultural and scientific “freedom,” Hook maintained that totalitarian movements were trying to appropriate the concept of freedom for their political programs, particularly by forcing scientists and intellectuals to give up their scientific independence. Condemning these infringements on scientific autonomy, Hook stressed that freedom could never be achieved through political programs or ideological principles, but only by the implementation of a “rational research method” [vernunftgemäßen Forschungsmethode] based on free thought and the unconditional acceptance of controversial theories and diverging opinions. The existence of terms like right, left or socialism in the political discourse of a country did not guarantee that the rulers desired or granted freedom for their subjects. The only valid criterion for freedom, Hook argued, was the promotion of a free and unrestricted exchange of opinion. “For the sake of accuracy,” he concluded, “terms like left, right, and centre should be eradicated” from the political discourse of modern countries.¹³

¹⁰ Koestler, “The false Dilemma.”
¹¹ Ibid.
H. Stuart Hughes and the preparation for war

While Koestler and Hook did not literally announce “the end of ideology,” their speeches in Berlin can be seen as the starting point for the discussion among scholars and intellectuals affiliated to the Congress for Cultural Freedom. If the very term “the end of ideology” had been used in Western political debate as early as 1946, when Albert Camus argued that the French socialist party’s potential abandonment of Marxism might cause *la fin des idéologies*, it was not until the Berlin meeting that the idea of a declining importance of ideologies was related to the Cold War and the escalating conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

This geo-political setting would also inform the first exhaustive discussion of the topic, namely American historian H. Stuart Hughes’s 1951 essay “The End of Political Ideology.” Based on a journey through Western Europe in the summer of 1950, Hughes’s article sought to analyze the political sentiments among European intellectuals after the Second World War. Like the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s meeting in Berlin, his trip coincided with the outbreak of the Korean War—an event which Hughes perceived to be a game-changer for European politics. As a large-scale war between Western countries and the Soviet Union seemed more or less inevitable, he explained, formerly neutralist French, German and British intellectuals now had to reconsider their political loyalties. With the exception of die-hard communists, Hughes argued, Europeans could see the future neither in terms “of dignified

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14 Writing in his newspaper *Combat*, Camus argued that the French socialist party had to choose between embracing Marxism—and thereby accept violence as a legitimate political method—or rejecting the doctrine altogether. If the socialists chose the latter, Camus wrote, it would “demonstrate that this era marks the end of ideologies, that is, absolute utopias which destroy themselves […] by the price they end up costing.” Albert Camus, “Le socialisme mystifié,” *Combat* (November 21, 1946). (“S’ils admettent le second, ils démontreront que ce temps marque la fin des idéologies, c’est-à-dire des utopies absolues qui se détruisent elles-mêmes […] par le prix qu’elles finissent par coûter.”)

15 In his article, Hughes referred to British intellectual historian Isaiah Berlin, whose 1950 essay “Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century” had some similarities with his own discussion about the end of political ideology. In his essay, Berlin argued that a sharp discontinuity occurred in Western political thought at the turn of the twentieth century. If the political movements of the nineteenth century were heirs of the Enlightenment and thereby underpinned by a critical approach and an optimistic belief in the future, their twentieth-century equivalents had turned towards irrational doctrines and dogmatic belief in totalizing political systems. Unlike a theorist like Popper, Berlin’s critique was directed not only at fascism and communism. Even in Western democracies, he claimed, free and critical thinking was being circumscribed by large-scale economic systems, technical administration and a desire for social consensus. Berlin did not, however, conclude that this meant “the end of ideology.” On the contrary, he separated the witch-hunt on critical ideas from “the great ideological wars of our time.” Such wars, he explained, were ultimately the consequence of people’s blind belief in large-scale political solutions. See Isaiah Berlin, “Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century,” *Foreign Affairs* 28:3 (April, 1950).
neutrality nor of more or less difficult collaboration but of a firing squad or a line of deportees starting off on the long journey to Siberia.”

This dystopian prophecy was of course marked by the mounting Red Scare in the postwar United States. Confident that a Soviet invasion of Europe was more or less directly imminent, Hughes thought that it might be “far worse” than the Nazi occupation a decade earlier. Overshadowing all historical antagonisms between the Western European countries, the threat from the Soviet Union would sooner or later trigger a broad European alliance against the common external enemy. This mobilization would, in turn, make internal political differences irrelevant. The European, Hughes wrote:

confronts a future in which his life will be dominated by the necessities of war preparation. And he sees that in such a situation the ideological differences—the issues dividing capitalist and partly socialist states—that now characterize the Western coalition may cease to be of much practical importance. Pressed by the same necessities, these states will doubtless begin to resemble each other, however much they may ostensibly cling to their original ideological allegiances […] In a few years it may be difficult to distinguish the semi-socialism of London from the ultracapitalism of Bonn.

Ideological differences were blurred not only between different countries but also within countries themselves. In France, Hughes reported, all parties now converged on a non-partisan “Gaullism without de Gaulle.” In West Germany, the upper and working classes united in “a common cult of hard work,” and in Italy, technocracy and expert rule were again on the agenda.

The disappearance of ideological alternatives was most threatening for the political left. Communism had lost its appeal, and parliamentary socialism—particularly in the form of the British Labour party—had been forced to postpone further transformations of capitalism. As a matter of fact, the very idea of equality was becoming obsolete. “A skeptical generation has lost its confidence in the reality or even perhaps in the desirability of social equality,” Hughes wrote, adding that the “whole notion [of equality] is beginning to be dismissed as a sentimental catchword of outdated ideologists.” Since no political program which openly proposed a reduction of the traditional Western freedoms would stand a chance in the present political atmosphere,” large-scale transformations of society seemed totally implausible.

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16 Hughes, “The End of Political Ideology,” p. 147. Hughes’s rejection of a neutral position between the United States and the Soviet Union echoes James Burnham’s speech at the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s Berlin meeting, where the latter claimed that European neutralism would lead to “slavery.” According to Burnham, there was “no room left for the existence of a Third Force between freedom and slavery.” See Burnham, “Rhetoric and Peace.”
19 Ibid., p. 149.
20 Ibid., p. 154, p. 151.
While the radical left had been eradicated from politics, Europeans were also increasingly indifferent to liberal democracy. Whereas the belief in individual freedom—a notion which Hughes perceived to be essential for modern democracy—had been strengthened by the threat from communism, there was no longer any confidence in the people or the popular majority as the subject of democracy. The ideals of liberal democracy were exhausted, and the permanent state of mobilization after Korea had paved the way for a new kind of fascism. Hughes reported that he had met conservatives who argued that Europe needed a new kind of fascism “shorn of its exaggerated and harmful racist associations”. Unlike the “barbarous and alien” doctrine of Soviet communism, he claimed, fascism was a part of the “European tradition” and infused Westerners with a “certain air of familiarity.”

In sum, the left had been marginalized, liberal democracy had lost its appeal, and elitism had become entrenched in the popular imagination. Hughes concluded that the old ideologies of Western Europe would dissolve and melt into a neo-conservative and anti-utopian Realism with the only purpose of protecting “Western freedom”:

This is what, in concrete terms, the “end of political ideology” means. It represents a substantial victory for the skeptical political theorists of the early twentieth century, for men like Pareto and Mosca, over a tradition of faith in ideas and in reason at least two hundred years old. It means the triumph of the political concepts associated with force and irrational sentiment, the necessarily elitist organization of society, and the basically illusory character of social reform—and with it the discrediting of politics as reason in action, the virtue of majorities, and progress as a social faith.

The end of political ideology does, in other words, mark a regression to the irrationalism and elitism of the early twentieth century, and thus a kind of negation of the progressivism and rationalism which characterized post-Enlightenment European politics. From Hughes’s perspective, this is a non-ideological approach to politics. It is significant that he perceives the triumph of Italian fascism to be the starting point for the decline of political ideologies in Europe—like the “Western freedoms,” fascist ideals are beyond the realm of ideologies.

To put it somewhat differently, Hughes’s essay makes a distinction between ideological communism on the one hand and non-ideological fascism and “Western freedoms”—that is, respect for individual freedom—on the other. Hughes’s claim that European communists are the only ones who still care

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22 Ibid., p. 148.
23 Ibid., p. 155.
24 Ibid., p. 150.
about ideologies seems to reveal the fact that the term is more or less ear-
marked for them. Those political programs which aspire to maintain the
status quo, on the other hand, are not ideological. With this negation of the
Marxist concept of ideology, Hughes provides a theoretical framework for the
subsequent end of ideology discussion: while political programs which seek to
transform the current order are designated as ideological, those which aim at
sustaining it are not. Apart from its fierce anticommunism, “The End of Po-
litical Ideology” also anticipates the later discussion by emphasizing the in-
creasing similarities between capitalist and socialist countries, and stressing
the implosion of the distinction between left and right.

Moreover, Hughes opens up for later end of ideology theorists by express-
ing a post-political vision in which conflict has given way to consensus. Over-
shadowed by the threat from Soviet communism, all internal disagreements
and differences in Europe are fading away. What should be noted, however,
is that conflict has not simply disappeared. In “The End of Political Ideology,”
conflict is externalized from within the countries of Europe to a space beyond
the continent, where it is played out as a militarized and potentially cataclys-
mic antagonism between Europe as a whole and the Soviet Union. If Hughes’s
essay provides a picture of postwar Europe as an order of post-political stasis,
this order hinges upon the seemingly irresolvable clash between Western free-
don and Soviet totalitarianism.

On this last point, we must conclude that Hughes’s diagnosis differs from
later end of ideologists who celebrate post-ideological society as the best of
worlds and as the triumph of enlightened modernity. In his essay, the end of
ideology is a dystopian state where the post-political consensus breeds vio-
lence, militarism and elitism. By discerning “a drift toward authoritarian con-
solidation and a suppression of vibrant dissent,” Howard Brick notes, Hughes
even approximates the pessimism of left-wing theorists around the Frankfurt
School. While I agree with Brick on the contrast between Hughes’s gloom-
iness and the optimism of end of ideology theorists around the Congress for
Cultural Freedom, however, I do not think that Hughes can be clearly distin-
guished from the latter group. Despite “The End of Political Ideology’s” lack
of complacency, Hughes’s refutation of Marxism, his dedication to liberal de-
mocracy and his defense of “Western freedoms” against the transgressions of
ideologies proves an affiliation with the discussion among CCF intellectuals.

27 In his essay, Hughes describes the CCF meeting in Berlin as an “eloquent expression” of
the European population’s devotion to freedom. Observing that “old political divisions were
forgotten,” he emphasizes that the participants at the meeting had reached “an impressive
unity in pledging themselves to a common resistance against the threat of tyranny.” See
Hughes, “The End of Political Ideology,” p. 156.
Herbert Tingsten and the successful democracy

When the end of ideology was announced in the neutral and social democratic country of Sweden, the tone was considerably more cheerful. In a series of articles published in Sweden’s largest newspaper Dagens Nyheter in the summer of 1952—two years after Hughes’s journey through Europe—editor-in-chief and political scientist Herbert Tingsten elaborated on what he called “the successful democracy.” A well-known critic of the metaphysical tradition in nineteenth-century philosophy of history and twentieth-century totalitarianism, Tingsten considered himself to be a protector of what he called “the ideas of 1789.”

While Tingsten had argued as early as the 1930s that ideologies were about to lose their importance in the liberal democracies of the West, the articles in Dagens Nyheter constituted his first effort to formulate these ideas as a more cohesive argument. Tingsten’s point of departure was that the contemporary

28 For discussions on Tingsten’s critique of metaphysics and his defense of Enlightenment ideals, see Skovdahl, Tingsten; Ers, Segrarnas historia.
29 In the preface to his 1939 De konservativa idéerna, Tingsten argued that his examination of the roots of conservatism was only of limited interest for understanding politics in contemporary Sweden. “In the frictionless democracy,” he wrote, “the elaborated political outlook is put in the background, and appears as an almost forgotten armament which one hopes will not have to be used. Swedish conservatism is not influenced by Burke, Treitschke or Maurras, as little as Swedish socialism is influenced by Marx, or Swedish liberalism by Bentham and Spencer.” See Herbert Tingsten, De konservativa idéerna (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag, 1939), p. 8. (“I den friktionslösh arbetsande demokratien står den utformade politiska åskådningen i bakgrunden, den ter sig här som en halvt bortglömd stridsrustning, som man hoppas slippa använda. Svensk konservatism karakteriseras icke genom Burke, Treitschke eller Maurras, lika litet som svensk socialism av Marx eller svensk liberalism av Bentham och Spencer.”)

The notion of the declining importance of ideologies recurred in a speech by Tingsten to the students at Stockholm University College in October 1940. Here, Tingsten argued that a “general community of values” [allmän värdegemenskap] on individual freedom, historical progress, human reason, free speech, cultural tolerance and democracy emerged in Western countries after the French and American revolutions. Described by Tingsten as a “democratic ideology,” this consensus meant that political parties could only carry through their programs with a considerable amount of compromise and moderation. Swedish social democracy, for instance, had "retreated from its former positions on one point after another, due to the standpoint that no reform has any real value [...] as long as it is not also accepted by groups which are critical and initially hesitant, but which eventually can become persuaded." Swedish society, Tingsten continued, constituted one of the prime examples of a democracy in which a free political unity between different groups had created an environment of consent and social relaxation. If Sweden was still permeated by the old community of values, however, the rise of totalitarianism and the outbreak of the Second World War mean that the political consensus in the West was being dissolved. Communism and fascism, Tingsten argued, had undermined the previously dominant belief in individual freedom and human reason. Delivered in the midst of the war, Tingsten’s speech was characterized by an apparent uncertainty about the future, and the confident tone of his later writings on the end of ideology was notably absent. See Herbert Tingsten, “1789-1940. En idéhistorisk återblick,” in Idékritik (Stockholm: Albert Bonnies Förlag, 1941), p. 238-239. (“Vi ha ett exempel av betydelse i vårt eget land,
welfare state decreased the space for ideological struggles and controversies about political principles. As liberal democracies in Europe and America had established institutions and practices which could moderate social conflicts, politics in Western countries had become a matter of adjustments and modifications within the prevailing order. This meant the rise of a “successful democracy” characterized by a lack of serious conflict between different groups.

According to Tingsten, the godfathers of democracy had been motivated by a vision of democratic society as a “gigantic people’s college which produces eager, skilled, intensively debating, and yet tolerant, idealists.” This dream, which Tingsten traced back to thinkers like Rousseau and Jefferson, partly came true by the beginning of the twentieth century, when the young democracies of Europe were torn apart by intense conflicts about how to organize society. In Sweden, this had been a period of heated controversies about the future of the monarchy, prohibition of alcohol, military service, and the government’s right to plan the economy.

Fifty years later, the situation was completely different. As politics had become more or less exclusively concerned with economic issues within the framework of the welfare state, there was no longer any space for intense debates or ideological conflicts. Through “common sense,” Tingsten argued, “extremes and follies” like Nazism, communism and other “metaphysical ideas” had been discarded. “Controversial issues about principles,” he wrote, “are almost entirely out of sight. In economic questions, the struggle between different outlooks has largely been replaced by struggles about concrete and technical details.” Instead of rivaling visions of social transformation, a non-partisan consensus on economic and social principles had emerged. While this tendency was particularly apparent in Sweden, with its alleged lack of ethnic, religious, linguistic or serious economic differences, a similar trend could be discerned all over the West:

In most contemporary democracies, there is a rough measure of agreement on the following propositions: Higher productivity, not redistribution, is the central means of achieving prosperity for all social groups. Full equality is not possible or even desirable, but further leveling […] is worth achieving. The lot for certain social groups who lag behind should be improved, but at the same time it is reckoned that the different groups generally have the right to

där vi kunna se, hur den svenska socialdemokratin på punkt efter punkt har vikit tillbaka från sina tidigare linjer just ur den synpunkten, att i själva verket ingen reform är av verkligt värde, […] om den inte godtas även av grupper, som ställa sig kritiska, som från början äro tvivsamma men så småningom kunna övertygas.”


31 Ibid. (“De principiella stridsfrågorna vid sidan av ekonomin har blivit nästan helt undanskymda. I de ekonomiska frågorna har striden mellan åskådningar till stor del förbytts i strider kring konkreta och tekniska detaljer.”)
As a mixture of conservative, liberal and social democratic elements, Tingsten noted, this program meant an unconscious compromise between formerly rivaling parties. As all groups in society came to embrace this consensus, one could discern “a development from politics to administration, from principles to techniques.” The role of government would become so technical that the political process would be transformed into “a kind of applied statistics.”

To put this in my own terms, Tingsten describes the coming of a post-political order in the guise of technocracy. With the rise of a more or less universal consensus on the organization of social and economic relations, struggles between different political perspectives have been replaced by a scientifically informed administration of the prevailing society. In Tingsten’s writings on the successful democracy, the conflicts which spring from the political are transcended. If society used to be characterized by intense controversies about the future of different social institutions, all such issues are now settled. As politics give way to applied statistics, what remains is to come up with efficient techniques and methods of administrating society in accordance with the consensus which all groups share with each other.

In Tingsten’s articles, it was clear that this process meant the rise of a more rational social order. Contrasting the “metaphysical ideas” of Nazism and communism to the “common sense” of contemporary society, Tingsten let it be understood that the successful democracy dovetailed with the ideas of 1789. If Hughes had taken the decline of political doctrines to be a reaction against
post-Enlightenment rationalism and progressivism, Tingsten, on the contrary, seemed to regard it as a triumph of Enlightenment values. As reason and scientific knowledge began shaping decision-making, he admitted, political debate would become as dull as wage negotiations. However, this was a desirable and inevitable development. “Given the prevailing values in all free countries,” Tingsten wrote, “there is no better regime.”

He greeted the successful democracy with open arms:

[W]e cannot wish for vitality at the cost of stability. We do not envy those fragile democracies, like France and Italy, where a strong Catholic church and a strong communism stoke and fuel the debate; we are happy to lack the race problems which inspire conservative prejudices and a glowing idealism in the United States.

Although Tingsten did not specify which social groups that were included in this “we,” it seems that the pronoun represented the Swedish population in its entirety. At the same time, it also reflected Tingsten’s own position. In the last article of the series, he concluded that the “depolitization” of the successful democracy meant that individual citizens would cease to be engaged in politics. “While such an engagement is a prerequisite for democracy’s longevity,” he wrote, “it must ultimately be underlined that the main goal of democracy is to increase the individual’s freedom, independence, and capability for what can be called meaningful private activity.”

With this conclusion, Tingsten seemed to accentuate the underlying message of his articles on the successful democracy. When all major social problems have been solved, decision-making might as well become the task of enlightened experts and professional politicians rather than of common people. If such a technocratic imperative was fully in line with the 1950s’ confidence in governmental planning and social engineering, it could also be said to reflect the essentials of a quite specific political doctrine. In spite of Tingsten’s rhetoric of common sense and applied statistics—terms which imply that the successful democracy is located at a level above political controversies—his articles can also be seen as an effort to naturalize a set of liberal democratic values, such as individual freedom, private property, social equality and gov-

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34 Tingsten, “Den lyckade demokratin.” (“Någon bättre politisk regim, utifrån i alla fria länder härskande värderingar, finns inte.”)
35 Herbert Tingsten, “En stabil och vital demokrati,” Dagens Nyheter (July 31, 1952). (“[V]i kan inte önska oss vitalitet på stabilitetens bekostnad. Vi avundas inte de bräckliga demokratierna, såsom Frankrike och Italien, där en stark katolsk kyrka och en stark kommunism ger eld och hets åt debatten; vi är glada över att sakna de rasproblem som i USA inspirerar konservativa fördomar och en kämpande idealism.”)
36 Ibid. (“Även om detta engagemang är en förutsättning för demokratinens reella bestånd, bör det till slut understyckas att demokratins huvudmål är en ökning av den enskildes frihet, självständighet och förmåga av vad man kan kalla meningsfull privat verksamhet.”)
ernmental redistribution, as universal and detached from the interests of specific social groups. In this sense, Tingsten provides his readers with a legitimizing narrative in which postwar liberal democracy, rather than being a historically contingent outcome of struggles between different groups, is described as a rational social order permeated by a universally shared consensus on the means and ends of human life. Since the successful democracy takes the interests of all social groups into account, there is no reason for anybody to oppose it.

While it took a number of years before Tingsten began to describe these ideas as “the end of ideology,” his 1952 articles would with hindsight be perceived as quite influential for the later discussion in the 1950s. Tingsten corresponded with several scholars around the Congress for Cultural Freedom—not least Seymour Martin Lipset, who is mentioned at the beginning of his 1952 articles—and planned to attend the organization’s conference in Milan in 1955. Before the conference, he translated his *Dagens Nyheter* articles into the essay “Stability and vitality in Swedish Democracy,” published in the spring issue of *Political Quarterly.*

Koestler’s, Hughes’s and Tingsten’s concepts of history

As seen in this chapter, the declining importance of political ideologies was discussed by several theorists during the first years of the 1950s. Strongly affected by the outbreak of the Korean War, Arthur Koestler and H. Stuart Hughes claim to discern a shift from conflicts between different ideological positions to a new and threatening antagonism which, since it is said to con-
cern more existential questions about freedom and oppression, cannot be ad-
dressed in the old terms of left and right or socialism and capitalism. In the
case of Tingsten, by contrast, the end of ideological politics represents a de-
sirable social development. Rather than being formulated in terms of a “vital
emergency” or an eternal preparation for war, the declining importance of po-
litical doctrines is supposed to reflect the transcendence of the antagonistic
dimension of the political. The post-politicization at work in Tingsten’s artic-
les corresponds to a situation where social conflicts have attenuated and all
groups have converged on a set of common values and purposes.

Regarding the concept of history in these theories, it should be stressed
that Koestler and Hughes do not consider the end of ideology to be the end
of all social conflicts. On the contrary, the increasing irrelevance of political
doctrines is supposed to depend on the emergence of a much more fundamen-
tal antagonism—the one between “tyranny” and “freedom.” The fact that
terms like left and right have lost their significance, and that the struggle be-
tween communism and capitalism has turned out to be a pseudo-conflict, does
not signify the arrival of a post-political paradise of harmony and consensus,
but the emergence of a new conflict fought in new trenches. As the Cold War
will intensify, however, all internal conflicts in Western Europe are bound to
disappear. The threat from the Soviet Union thwarts all political disagree-
ments and triggers a homogenous consensus in which all energies are redi-
rected towards the common external enemy. In Koestler’s and Hughes’s writ-
ings, conflict is externalized from within European countries to a space beyond
the continent where it is played out as a static and militarized clash between
Western freedom and Soviet totalitarianism. By highlighting the potentially
disastrous threat from Soviet communism and simultaneously calling for co-
hesion and unity against the enemy which looms outside Europe’s borders,
they provide their readers with what I have previously called a mobilizing nar-
rative.

In the case of Tingsten’s concept of history, the decline of political doc-
trines signifies the coming of a harmonious post-political order. If Western
countries were once plagued by disruptive conflicts about political principles,
they are now becoming successful democracies characterized by economic
equality and social consent. As all citizens converge on a more or less univer-
sally shared consensus on the basic principles of governance, partisan politics
are replaced by a post-political administration of the prevailing order. De-
scribing this process in terms of “common sense,” “applied statistics” and
“techniques,” Tingsten sees the rise of the successful democracy as a historical
movement towards a more rational society where the antagonistic dimension
of the political has been transcended. While he does not present any explicit
historical telos for this movement, he makes clear that the primary goal of de-
mocracy is the achievement of a society where the individual’s private activity
is separated from the state’s social engineering. The embryo of such an order
exists in the successful democracy and its class-transcending consensus. By emphasizing the rationality of this society—“there is,” as he puts it, “no better regime”—Tingsten provides a strong legitimizing narrative which emphasizes the superiority of the contemporary Western welfare state.

There is, to conclude, quite a sharp break between Koestler’s and Hughes’s arguments in 1950-1951 and Tingsten’s articles from the year after. Whereas the former represent a considerably gloomy concept of history—and this is particularly the case with Hughes and his idea of a regression to a quasi-fascist and militaristic order devoid of political nuances—Tingsten expresses an optimistic vision of the future where the successful democracy has eliminated the conflicts which used to divide society and instead generated social harmony and consensus. Whereas Koestler and Hughes predict an increasingly homogenous Europe where the imminent threat from Soviet communism enforces a non-partisan Realism, Tingsten looks forward to a post-political society governed by technocratic measures, social engineering and a rational organization of human life.
4. The Milan Conference 1955

Tingsten’s optimistic account of the declining importance of political doctrines was fully in line with the discussions at the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s conference The Future of Freedom which was arranged in Milan in the fall of 1955.¹ Convening over 150 social scientists, philosophers, politicians and authors from all over the world, this meeting launched the end of ideology theory in a wider intellectual setting. Apart from Sidney Hook, who could be seen as one of its pioneers, the conference was attended by four scholars who would soon appear as the theory’s front figures: French philosopher Raymond

¹ Through continuous funding from the CIA as well as American foundations, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was reorganized after the Berlin rally into a permanent organization with headquarters in Paris. By the time of the Berlin meeting, an executive committee was appointed, and in 1951, Russian-American composer Nicolas Nabokov was elected General Secretary of the Congress. Besides Nabokov, the organization was unofficially administered by CIA agent Michael Josselson. The militant and harsh anticommunism of the Berlin meeting was gradually moderated, and controversial persons like Melvin Lasky, Arthur Koestler and James Burnham withdrew in favor of respected European intellectuals like Bertrand Russell and Raymond Aron. Instead of explicit political rallies, the Congress began focusing on arranging cultural meetings and academic convents where researchers and intellectuals from the United States and Europe could come together in an anti-Soviet front. On Nabokov’s initiative, an art and music festival was arranged in Paris in the spring of 1952. Besides over a hundred classical concerts and a number of panels on literature, the festival included an art exhibition featuring work of painters like Matisse, Chagal and Kandinsky. By inviting exiled Soviet artists and arranging Shostakovich and Prokofiev concerts which had been banned in the Eastern bloc, Nabokov’s intention with the festival was to present the West—and the CCF in particular—as the protector of modern culture. In 1953, the organization arranged the Hamburg conference “Science and freedom,” where a hundred scientists and philosophers (including nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer, logician Ernst Nagel and philosopher Max Horkheimer) discussed the importance of a scientific community free from political interference. Besides these major events, the Congress also founded a number of journals in order to counteract neutralist and anti-American currents in European cultural debate. The CCF’s funding of these journals, as well as the Congress’s other activities, was later confirmed by key figures. According to Giles Scott-Smith, the total financial aid from the CIA extended two million dollars. Writer and politician Peter Coleman notes that the CCF was also active outside of Europe by founding national committees in Japan and India, and arranging anticomunist conferences in cities like Bombay (1951), Rangoon (1955) and Tokyo (1956). See the chapter “The search for consensus 1950-2” in Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*; Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy. The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), p. 146-153. See also the chapters “Cette Fête Américaine” and “Magazine ‘X’” in Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*. 

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Aron and American sociologists Edward Shils, Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniel Bell. As a member of the conference's steering committee, Aron seems to have been particularly important for the focus on the decline of political doctrines. In the “Statement of Purpose” which was sent out in advance to all delegates, the conference was described as an opportunity to “rethink our conventional political ideas in the light of recent history” and “distinguish between real problems and pseudo-problems, actual alternatives and specious ones.”

The statement encouraged the participants to consider a question which resembled Arthur Koestler's speech in Berlin five years before:

> The vocabulary of politics, like the realities it reflects, is in a state of transition. What remains of the venerable and simple antitheses: “capitalism vs. the state,” “progress vs. economic planning,” “the individual vs. the state,” “progress vs. reaction,” “left vs. right,” “freedom vs. authority”? Traditional institutions, once assumed to be inevitable obstacles to the advancement of liberty, have on various occasions proved to be liberty's ultimate safeguard. And where scientific concepts once served to combat religious fanaticism, they are now often used to buttress a political fanaticism that is no less dogmatic.

Physicist and science theorist Michael Polanyi, who along with Aron, Hook and Nicolas Nabokov formed the conference's steering committee, was also interested in these questions. In an interview in the summer of 1955, Polanyi explained that he wanted to do away with what he conceived to be a political hysteria “mainly of anti-capitalists who base their self-respect on their resentment of a society to which they no longer seriously envisage any radical alternative; but partly also from excited anti-Socialists who still keep confusing public life by their hypochondriac fears.”

The “Statement of Purpose” and Polanyi's comments indicate that the situation in 1955 was quite different from Berlin five years earlier. In Berlin, anticommunism had been expressed in a hostile, almost militant form. In Milan, on the other hand, it was so axiomatic that there was no reason to dwell on it. If the main purpose of the Berlin rally had been to mobilize Western intellectuals in a front against Stalinism and to call for military action against what was perceived to be the threat from the East, the intention in Milan was rather to approach communism in terms of a socio-economic phenomenon which could be analytically compared with the welfare systems of Western

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3 Ibid.

Europe. And whereas the end of ideology theory at the onset of the 1950s had been an effort to downplay the importance of all political conflicts which were not directly connected to the struggle against the Soviet Union, it was used in Milan to stress the irrelevance of all political visions which refused to accept the credo that the fundamental problems of the industrial revolution had been solved. While communism was undeniably its main target, the 1955 version of the end of ideology theory could, at least to some extent, be posed against other political doctrines which questioned the contemporary welfare state. It was, for instance, employed against the strongly anti-Keynesian laissez-faire ideals endorsed by Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek in his 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom*.

If communism was no longer considered to be an immediate danger, this was not only due to Stalin’s death in 1953 or to the fact that Korea, unlike what had been claimed in Berlin, did not explode into a global war. Another factor was the unexpected economic boom in the West during the first part of the 1950s. As noted above, the “economic miracle” in Western Europe and the United States was undergirded by a solid belief in a mixed economy and parliamentary democracy. Describing the 1950s as a “great era for the stabilized growth capitalism of the West,” economic historian Charles S. Maier asserts that the American public thought that a society of material affluence could be created through engineering rather than politics. Such an approach was probably commonplace even among governments in Western Europe. As British Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell put it in his speech at the Milan conference:

> [A]lthough business turn-downs from time to time are not only probable but certain, there is every reason to expect that they will in the end be no more than shallow recessions. The reason for confidence here is partly that there are now some automatic stabilizing influences which are likely to check the cumulative moment of declin[ing] income […] and partly that governments are better informed, better equipped and under much greater pressure from public opinion to take effective action against a depression. A “Keynesian” revolution has really taken place in the last 25 years […]

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5 Comparing the meetings in Berlin and Milan, Scott-Smith argues that the former was a “call to arms” in order to mobilize the Western intelligentsia against Stalinism, whereas the Milan conference lacked confrontational rhetoric and instead treated Soviet communism as something to be examined scientifically as a socio-economic phenomenon. This shift in tone and rhetoric is also reflected in the CCF’s publication *The Soviet Economy*, a volume which presented the Milan meeting’s recurring discussion about economic development in the Eastern bloc. See Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture*, p. 147; Raymond Aron et al., *The Soviet Economy, A Discussion* (London: Congress for Cultural Freedom/Martin Secker & Warburg, 1956).


7 Maier, *In search of stability*, p. 148, 130.

By the mid-1950s, then, the theory of the declining importance of ideologies seemed to correspond to an actual state of affairs in Western liberal democracies, where the postwar economy was gradually being stabilized, the threat from the Soviet Union seemed to attenuate, and governments could achieve prosperity by employing technical measures rather than grand ideological programs. If the theory's proponents tended to see it as reflecting a matter of fact, however, it also had a strongly normative feature. Virtually everyone who proclaimed the end of ideology in the years around 1955 also perceived it to be a desirable social phenomenon. Several commentators—including some of those who themselves contributed to the discussion—have stressed the theory's tension between objective statement and imperative prescription. To put it in my terms, the theory had a normative function by providing the liberal democracies of the West with narratives which sanctioned their political and economic systems.

A letter from Milan

When American sociologist Edward Shils summarized the Milan conference in the November 1955 issue of the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s British journal Encounter, he called the article “Letter from Milan. The End of Ideology?”. “Almost every paper was in one way or another a critique of doctrinarism, of fanaticism, of ideological possession,” Shils reported. “Almost every paper at least expressed the author’s idea of mankind cultivating and improving its own garden, secure against obsessional visions and phantasies, and free from the harassment of ideologists and zealots.” The transgressions of totalitarianism had been revealed, and Marxism seemed to have lost its appeal among both workers and intellectuals. According to Shils, this gave Milan an ambience of optimism and confidence, far from the fear which had surrounded the Berlin rally five years before. Depicting the conference as a “post-victory ball,” he claimed that no participant felt the need to justify themselves

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9 For instance, Sidney Hook later claimed that the discussions of the end of ideology at the Milan conference “expressed rather a hope than an actual state of affairs.” In a similar vein, Dittberner emphasizes the tension between the descriptive and normative by pointing out that the theory as formulated in Milan “purported to describe an actual situation: ‘successful’ governments were not following the formulas of traditional political doctrines. And because those traditional political doctrines were considered bankrupt, the conference prescribed a flexible, pragmatic approach to political and economic problems.” Sociologist Chaim I. Waxman also notes that the end of ideology theory, in spite of referring to an “actual situation; namely the absence of ideological politics in modern industrial society” also encapsulated “a positive value—judgment about this reality”. See Hook, Out of Step, p. 447; Dittberner, The End of Ideology, p. 127; Chaim I. Waxman, “Introduction,” in Chaim I. Waxman (ed.), The End of Ideology Debate (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969 [1968]), p. 5.

intellectually towards the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{11} “Have the Communists come to appear so preposterous to our Western intellectuals that it is no longer conceivable that they could be effectively subversive?,” Shils wondered. “Is it now thought that there is no longer any danger of the working classes in the advanced Western countries falling for their propaganda?”\textsuperscript{12} If some delegates opposed the conference’s leaning towards a complacent celebration of the present state of things—Hannah Arendt, for instance, thought that the discussions were “deadly tedious” and that “everybody spoke in clichés”—Shils made no secret of appreciating it.\textsuperscript{13}

The controversies in Milan, Shils reported, were not about the desirability of a diminishing ideological foundation for politics, since the only participant to question this was Friedrich Hayek.\textsuperscript{14} Instead, the disagreements concerned the relation between the West and the decolonized countries of Africa and Asia. According to Shils, there were different opinions on whether economic growth was a precondition for political stability and the subsequent decline of political doctrines. Whereas the European and American delegates considered political rights to be more important than economic development, several of the twenty-five participants from non-Western countries claimed that freedoms and rights in the political realm ultimately hinged on a country’s rate of economic growth. Indian journalist E.P.W. da Costa, for instance, argued that increasing wealth was the best safeguard against totalitarian and anti-democratic movements.\textsuperscript{15} In a similar vein, Japanese economist Takeyasu Kimura held that underprivileged people in poor countries simply did not care about democracy or “freedom” as long as their material needs were unfulfilled. Questioning the Western delegates’ self-imposed ambitions of paving the way for Third World countries, Kimura argued that a “rich nation cannot properly understand the psychology of a poor nation.”\textsuperscript{16}

Besides this controversy, Shils observed that there had also been diverging opinions about whether political doctrines—particularly nationalism—could have a progressive function in recently independent countries. If Western scholars tended to see nationalism as an anachronistic ideological disturbance, many delegates from the rest of the world considered it to be a crucial part of

\textsuperscript{11} Shils, “Letter from Milan,” p. 54.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 56.
\textsuperscript{14} See Friedrich Hayek, “Challenge to a Free Society,” in \textit{The Future of Freedom}.
the decolonization process. For instance, Ghanaian sociologist and future Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia defended nationalism as a progressive force for African independency movements and explained that the rise of nationalism in Africa and elsewhere was the result of a Western colonialist discourse based on terms like freedom and civil rights.

Shils was not alone in observing the tensions between the Western participants and those from Africa and Asia. “[T]he difference between the Western delegates and those of Asia was striking,” Dwight Macdonald reported after returning from Milan. “In a word, the Western delegates came to Milan to discuss freedom as an abstract philosophical principle [...] while the Asian delegates came to find out what ‘freedom’ really means to people with white skins.” These contradictions, which made the idea of the declining importance of ideologies seem to be situated in a specifically Western context, raised some confusion among the American and European organizers. As Giles Scott-Smith suggests, the conference might in fact have been the first time that Western intellectuals were confronted by a kind of postcolonial critique raised by non-Westerners. Whether or not this is the case, it is important to stress that the European and American participants’ recurrent call for decolonized countries to focus their political struggles on establishing “free” democratic institutions rather than attaining economic growth must be grasped as an attempt to undermine communist allegiances in the former colonies. Five months before Milan, Indonesia had hosted the so-called Bandung Conference, where twenty-nine states from Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia assembled to discuss economic and cultural collaboration beyond American or Soviet control. From this perspective, the Milan conference—which was the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s first major intercontinental event—can be understood as an effort to reinforce the Euro-American position in an unclear postcolonial future.

20 In his concluding remarks in Milan, Michael Polanyi admitted that his presupposition before the conference had been that “the decisive problems of our age were those raised in Europe by Europeans.” Nonetheless, the discussions at the meeting had made him realize that “our European conflicts could be seen as a fragment, rather than as a whole of the contemporary scene.” Michael Polanyi quoted in Shils, “Letter from Milan,” p. 58.
22 “The Westerners had […] disavowed any sympathy for the idea that liberty rests on an economic basis,” Shils reported in his article. “Not only were they anti-Marxist but they were opposed to the same line of thought when it emanated from the extreme liberals, who insisted that political liberty depended on a free market economy.” Shils, “Letter from Milan,” p. 55. See also Hook, “The Challenge to Freedom,” p. 28-30; The Soviet Economy, p. 100-101; Dittberner, The End of Ideology, p. 126.
another destiny,” as historian Vijay Prashad writes about Bandung, the CCF’s attempt to include Third World intellectuals in its struggle for liberal democracy might be understood as a way of forging new bonds between former colonizers and colonized. Already in February 1955, two months before the Bandung meeting, the Congress had arranged a conference in Burma with over forty delegates from ten Asian countries. The ambitions of countering neutralism and furthering the West’s interests in its former colonies were also apparent at the Milan conference, where Raymond Aron concluded his opening address by insisting that the “West has to begin by getting rid of its inferiority complex,” and where the European and American delegates remained largely silent on questions of imperialism or ongoing wars in countries like Vietnam and Algeria. Their devotion to the concept of human freedom was, one can assume, not easily reconciled with acknowledgments of European colonialism.

From a Western point of view, however, the end of ideology theory seemed to provide a way of merging the histories of colonizers and colonized into a single cohesive narrative. In the conclusion of “Letter from Milan,” Shils offered the outlines of such a narrative. Once again, he emphasized that the


24 Coleman describes this event as “an unsuccessful attempt to preempt” the Bandung conference, and goes on to claim that the Western participants at the Milan meeting found it important to counter the potential threat from what he calls the “Bandung generation.” See Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy*, p. 111, 152, caption to photo on unnumbered page after p. 144. For further discussions about Bandung, see Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, p. 31-50; Christopher J. Lee, “Between a Moment and an Era. The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung,” in Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a World after Empire. The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010).

25 Aron, “Nations and Ideologies,” p. 21. The Milan conference’s relative lack of concern with historical power relations between Europe and the colonized world did at times result in quite remarkable conclusions. In his paper on strategies for economic progress in poor countries, Indian economist G. D. Parikh began by pointing out that the terms “underdeveloped” or “backward” countries seemed to imply that Western countries were the standard by which such underdevelopment could be measured. However, Parikh did not elaborate on this implicit Eurocentrism. When discussing the differences between rich and poor countries, he argued that such inequalities were due to different degrees of knowledge and technical skills. Turning the global economic discrepancies into a question of the distribution of knowledge, Parikh did not only ignore the consequences of long-standing Western colonialism; he also suggested that poverty among “people of underdeveloped countries” was to be counteracted by “an attack against their ideas and outlook which tend to keep them poor.” In spite of such conclusions, however, it should be noticed that some conference participants, like Stuart Hampshire, A.K. Busia and Hugh Gaitskell, paid some attention to colonialism and its effects on contemporary geopolitics. See G. D. Parikh, “Economic Progress of Under-Developed Countries and the Rivalry between Democratic and Totalitarian Methods,” in *The Future of Freedom*, p. 302-310; Stuart Hampshire, “Freedom and Its Defence,” in *The Future of Freedom*, p. 262-265; Busia, “The Influence of Colonialism”; Gaitskell, “The Economic Challenge to Freedom,” p. 253-254.
European and North American liberal democracies were about to release themselves from “ideological radicalism” after decades of totalitarian experiences. “We no longer,” he wrote, “feel the need for a comprehensive explicit system of beliefs.”26 This “we,” by which Shils addressed all Western intellectuals, now faced the task of replacing the utopian dreams of outdated political doctrines with a moderate and pragmatic approach to politics. At the same time, Shils stressed that ideologies could still have a function in non-Western societies where social conflicts were not yet settled:

[H]aving recently freed ourselves from ideological radicalism, we must not be affronted to see it among our Asiatic and African friends who learned it in our own universities in the West; still ourselves penetrated by strong national identifications, we must not be repelled by the greater national sensitivities of the members of nations which have only recently become states.27

Thus, the soon-to-be post-ideological “we” of the West should not be confounded by the ideological others of the Third World. While the modernized and stable welfare states of America and Europe had reached a stage where political ideologies had become superfluous, recently independent countries were lagging behind. Calling for a wider acceptance of these circumstances, Shils concluded his essay with a quote from Michael Polanyi stating that the “new nations” of Africa and Asia should be seen as “our partners in the shaping of man’s destiny on this planet.”28 Even if the Third World had not yet emancipated itself from ideologies, the former colonizers and colonized should acknowledge that they approached a future which they would create together. Polanyi’s statement could of course be seen as an implicit reference to the Bandung meeting: the future would not be made without the West’s consent.

Although Shils did not develop his thoughts on the relation between the industrialized West and the poor periphery, he nonetheless seemed to sketch the outlines of an end of ideology theory which entailed a particular concept of history. In essence, Shils suggested that the modernized and industrialized Western democracies could be seen as being ahead of the decolonized countries which, due to their economic difficulties and absence of liberal democratic institutions, were still plagued by ideological conflicts. In this way, Shils’s version of the end of ideology suggested that different countries were located in different historical times. Echoing the colonial narratives discussed in Chapter 1, his thoughts might be seen as an embryonic version of the concept of history which would be expressed more clearly during the coming years: if the decline of political doctrines like Marxism and fascism depended...

27 Ibid., p. 57-58.
28 Michael Polanyi quoted in ibid., p. 58.
on socio-economic stability, poor and non-industrialized states outside Europe and North America might “still” be in the grip of ideologies, whereas the industrialized and democratic “we” of the West had managed to break free from them.

The end of ideology in Milan

While Shils’s essay and other personal recollections state that the end of ideology theory was a recurring theme in Milan, few delegates explicitly brought it up in their speeches.29 The very term “the end of ideology” did in fact not appear in any paper—it seems to have been coined by Shils himself after the conference.30

Some Milan participants did, however, present ideas which resembled what would soon come to be understood as the end of ideology. For instance, Raymond Aron’s lengthy paper “Nations and Ideologies” was an effort to demonstrate that political ideologies were declining in industrialized Western democracies. Echoing Tingsten’s articles from 1952, Aron argued that political debate in the West was now being confined to minor arguments about the best ways of conducting a Keynesian political economy. The success of European welfare states and the Soviet Union’s failure to provide an alternative to capitalism had discredited communism, and aside from a handful of French intellectuals led by Jean-Paul Sartre and his “interminable essays about the Proletariat,” no one believed in Marxism anymore.31 In the United States, Aron continued, “[n]o alternative [to the present system] is apparent, either to the intellectual or to the man in the street, and, in effect, there is none.”32 With rising affluence among all social groups, a broad consensus on the supremacy of Keynesianism had swept away all serious political disputes in Western countries. German and British workers had become “reasonable and empirical,” thus refusing to be deceived by “messianic” and metaphysical Marxism.33

Like Koestler five years earlier, Aron stressed that the Soviet Union had failed to create a communist society. With its rigid social hierarchy, concentration of power, exploitation of labor and state-directed violence, the country could actually be described at the least egalitarian society of all modern states. Rather than seeing communism as an impending danger, Aron expected a gradual convergence between the Soviet system and Western democracies—a

30 It should be noted that Hughes’s 1951 essay proclaimed the end of “political ideology,” not ideology per se.
32 Ibid., p. 13.
33 Ibid., p. 9, 10.
scenario in which current ideological distinctions would become completely obsolete.34

According to Aron, however, the situation was different in postcolonial countries. Here, political ideologies—a term which he seemed to use as a mere euphemism for communism—might have some time ahead. Assuming that the Western process of industrialization and modernization was a universal goal for all countries, Aron claimed that recently independent states in Asia and Africa had to choose between the Soviet and Euro-American models of modernization. “Since progress in the social-economic sphere is almost unanimously accepted as an imperative,” he argued, “the real choice is between reforms and revolution; and this is easily translated into European terms as Socialism and Communism.”35 From Aron’s perspective, it seemed implausible that developing countries would reject modernization altogether:

In the Far East […] the controversy is between tradition and progress, which means between the West and the Chinese, or Japanese, or Indian culture; and on the social-economic plane this controversy is bound to end in favour of the West, for all nations aspire to the wealth and power derived from machines and technical prowess.36

By taking the universal value of Western modernization for granted, Aron seemed to represent a linear and Eurocentric concept of history in which the Western democracies, with their affluence and non-ideological approach to politics, had proceeded further than the rest of the world. If not simply the vanguard of history, the Western welfare state could be conceived of as a historical prototype towards which Asian and African countries navigated in their journey to material wealth and political freedom. Such a concept of history had obvious consequences for Aron’s discussion of the end of ideologies. Without making it explicit, he seemed to suggest that the current ideological struggles in Third World countries could be understood as a transitory phenomenon. If these countries modernized according to the Western model, as Aron had predicted, they would eventually reach a stage where ideological

34 A similar idea of convergence was expressed by Italian scholar Libero Lenti, who argued in his conference paper that the Soviet system reproduced the same economic structures as capitalist countries—including centralization of capital, exploitation of labor and hierarchical business organizations. Referring to “the universal truth of economic laws,” Lento envisaged a gradual “rapprochement” between the communist and capitalist systems. Such a convergency theory was further elaborated by French economist Bertrand de Jouvenel, who set out to prove the fundamental similarities between capitalism and communism. Like Lento, de Jouvenel claimed that “the so-called ‘Communist’ system in Soviet Russia” sustained the same structures of economic exploitation and capital accumulation as Western societies. See Libero Lenti, “Convergencies and Divergencies of Individual & Collective Economics,” in The Future of Freedom, p. 92, 91; Bertrand de Jouvenel, “Some Fundamental Similarities Between the Soviet and Capitalist Economic Systems,” in The Future of Freedom, p. 112.
36 Ibid., p. 17.
categories became meaningless. And if the communist system gradually converged with capitalism, there was no alternative to the existing Western order.

The second paper to denounce the importance of ideologies expressed a somewhat less deterministic concept of history. In “The Challenge to Freedom,” Sidney Hook argued that ideology—a concept which was not defined, but seemed to denote cohesive political doctrines—would disappear as countries established a “peaceful method of adjudicating” social conflicts. In the “free societies” of Western Europe and America, where power was exercised through democratic institutions, there was no longer any need for ideologies. “What unifies free societies is not a common ideology [...] but a commonly accepted method of legally and peacefully resolving conflicts of interests,” Hook wrote. “If all the nations of the world were freely to accept a common method of settling the issues which divide them, their ideological differences [...] would have only a peripheral effect, if any, on the political shape of things.” Consequently, categories like capitalism and socialism were no longer relevant in Western liberal democratic states.

Having earmarked the concept of freedom for the parliamentary democracies of Europe and North America, Hook went on to criticize two widespread ideas. First, he questioned the notion that a society’s economic structure determined its political system. The idea that the economic progress of the Soviet Union would eventually transform the country into a democracy was misleading, Hook held, since all evidence pointed towards a further concentration of power in the communist party. By the same token, the idea that poor countries would become democratic as their economies improved was false. The opinion among Western intellectuals that “[f]reedom can wait upon the distribution of refrigerators and television sets” overlooked the fact that democratic institutions had never emerged as a consequence of capital accumulation and industrialization. Such misconceptions, Hook argued, rested on a tacit historical materialism which considered a society’s political system to be a reflection of its economic base.

From this, Hook went on to criticize the idea that formerly colonized populations were not yet “prepared” to achieve freedom in its Western sense. This assumption, he argued, was essentially a new version of the white man’s burden theme. There was no reason to believe that peoples of Asia, including those living under communism, were “indifferent to the elementary rights of a free society”. Instead, Hooked claimed that people all over the world desired the democratic institutions and political rights which existed in Western countries:

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 28.
40 Ibid., p. 30.
There is no special “gene” for freedom possessed by Americans and Europeans but lacking in other peoples. One does not have to embrace the Rousseauistic nonsense about compelling men to be free to recognize that the practices of freedom tend to be contagious. […] We are living in an age in which different historical periods are being telescoped, and free institutions may develop more rapidly in economically backward countries than was the case in the countries of their origin.41

If Aron had discerned a universal desire for Western technology and industrialization, Hook highlighted the universal yearning for Western freedom. Although this kind of freedom was currently attached to a few states in Western Europe and America, its scope was apparently global. In his depiction of the current world as a “telescoping” of distinct historical periods, Hook also seemed to portray history as a single process which all nations in the world followed. While different countries were located at different points—Western nations had achieved freedom and jettisoned irrational ideologies, “backward” countries were lagging behind—they all evolved along the same historical path. If the foundations of democratic institutions in Europe and America did not contradict the traditions of non-Western countries, it seemed plausible to expect a global spread of Western democracy.

Whereas Aron seemed to take this historical development for granted and remained uninterested in discussing strategies for poor countries, Hook seemed slightly less confident. The free nations, he suggested, had to help the rest of the world to take a leap in the right direction. “The more industrially advanced free nations of the world must […] shoulder the responsibility of aiding underdeveloped countries combat poverty, famine and disease,” he stated, “not only to help preserve peace but to show that economic progress can be achieved at less human cost under free institutions than under Communist or Fascist dictatorships.”42 Hook thus called for deliberate action to trigger the development towards freedom. Whether he saw the historical evolution towards post-ideological Western democracy as a historical necessity remains an open question. His call for anticommunist intervention in the Third World reveals his paper’s tension between, on the one hand, the depiction of history as a more or less continuous process of different “periods” in which the “free nations” of the West had advanced further than the poor countries, and, on the other, as an unforeseeable process requiring resolute political action.

Apart from Aron’s and Hook’s papers, it is worth noting that few of the American sociologists who would get involved in the end of ideology discussion elaborated on the theme in their conference contributions. While thoroughly examining the end of ideology in “Letter from Milan,” Shils’s own paper was concerned with the tensions between liberalism and traditionalist

42 Ibid., p. 32.
approaches to politics. Seymour Martin Lipset focused on what he perceived to be a tendency among the working class to embrace conservatism. Daniel Bell, however, briefly touched upon the theme. In his paper “The Ambiguities of the Mass Society,” Bell wrote:

[I]n the advanced industrial countries, principally in the United States, Britain and northwestern Europe, where national income has been rising, where the expectations that the masses will share equitably in that rise, are relatively fulfilled, and where social mobility has expanded, the strength of the extremist political appeals has been weak. It may be [...] that in newly awakened societies, as in the former colonial countries of Asia, the impatient expectations of key strata may far outstrip the realistic possibilities of the society to expand, and a turn to Communism may be accelerated.

In this passage, Bell approached the ideas which had been discussed by Aron and Hook. Unlike them, however, he did not expand on the topic, and instead spent his paper reviewing different theories of contemporary mass society. With the exception of Hughes's 1951 essay, the phrase “the end of ideology” had obviously not reached the United States in the fall of 1955. At this time, it was Raymond Aron who had elaborated the theory in the most consistent way. Several months before the conference in Milan, Aron had published his *L’Opium des intellectuels*, a book whose concluding chapter was called “Fin de l’âge idéologique?”. We will now turn to this work.

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45 Daniel Bell, “The ambiguities of the mass society (and the complexities of American life),” paper at the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s conference The Future of Freedom in Milan 1955 (IACF/CCF Papers, University of Chicago Library, Series III, Box 8, Folder 5).
By the time *L’Opium des intellectuels* (or *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, as it was to be called in the English translation) was published in 1955, Raymond Aron was already a prominent figure in French intellectual life. Apart from being a well-known academic, who would soon enter the chair of sociology at the Sorbonne, he was also an influential journalist and columnist for the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*. At a time when the Parisian intelligentsia tended to celebrate communism and follow Jean-Paul Sartre in his existentialist readings of Marx, Aron represented a quite different political line.

According to historian Tony Judt, Aron was “the only prominent French thinker of his generation who had taken a consistent liberal stand against all the totalitarian temptations of the age”.¹ Defending parliamentary democracy and questioning what he perceived to be ideological dogmatism among French intellectuals, Aron held that dichotomies like capitalism versus socialism or private property versus public ownership had lost their ability to describe the fundamental characteristics of industrial societies in the postwar period. Rather than constituting a genuine alternative to capitalist society, he thought, communism should be understood as a violent and ruthless method of triggering industrialization and securing economic development. Deeply pessimistic about the prospects of the Soviet Union, Aron supported Atlanticism and promoted a closer political alliance between the United States and Western Europe. As his long-time friend Henry A. Kissinger described him, he was “deeply committed to liberty, to Western culture, and to democratic ideals.”² In the words of his colleague Edward Shils, he was “the most persistent, the most severe, and the most learned critic of Marxism and of the socialist—or more precisely Communist—order of society”.³ According to Shils, Aron was “too much an heir of the Enlightenment to think about transcendental realities”—hence his disregard for political visions outside the framework of liberal democracy.³

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Born in 1905 in a Jewish family from Paris, Aron got his primary education from the city’s Lycée Condorcet, where he was introduced to philosophy. As the highest ranked student in the applications, he was admitted to the École Normale Supérieure and entered the school in 1924. The subsequent friendship with fellow students Jean-Paul Sartre and Paul Nizan introduced Aron not only to intense debates about philosophy and literature, but also to political leftism. In 1925, he joined the youth section of Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière, a socialist party which had earlier taken part in the left-wing coalition Cartel de Gauches. “I imposed membership on myself as a contribution to the cause [...] of amelioration of the unfortunate classes,” Aron later explained. “A Jewish intellectual of good will who chooses the career of letters, estranged from his fellows who remain in textiles or banking, can hardly do anything but will himself, feel himself, to be on the left.”

Writing a diploma thesis on Kant, Aron took the agrégation in philosophy from École Normale in 1928. After obtaining a post as a teaching assistant in French at the University of Cologne, he moved to Germany in 1930. During his time in Cologne and Berlin, he undertook serious studies of German philosophy and social science, from the economic critique of Marx and the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger to, perhaps most importantly, the sociology of Max Weber. Staying in Germany until 1933, Aron personally witnessed the final disintegration of the Weimar Republic. While he claimed that he did not experience any anti-Semitism, the testimony of Hitler’s Machtübernahme would play a highly important role for his later critique of what he called totalitarianism. Recalling his years in Germany, Aron remembered that “National Socialism had taught me the power of irrational forces; Max Weber had taught me the responsibility of each individual”.

Upon his return from Germany, Aron wrote his first book, La Sociologie allemande contemporaine, whose publication in 1936 introduced the French audience to German sociology from Ferdinand Tönnies to Max Weber. The book included a harsh review of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, described by Aron as a mélange of pragmatism, historicism and relativism which “teaches us nothing about the most important problems of the human sciences, the theory of understanding, historical causality, and methods of verification in fields where an appeal to experience is impossible.” While Aron gave Mannheim some credit for having radicalized the Marxist critique of ideology by demonstrating that Marxism was an ideology itself, Mannheim

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4 In his memoirs, Aron spends several pages discussing his friendship at École Normale with Sartre and Nizan, but does not mention any connection to contemporary student Simone de Beauvoir.
5 Aron, Memoirs, p. 34.
6 Ibid., p. 53
was accused of having retreated to a historical relativism without any epistemological criteria for distinguishing between truth and falsity. In opposition to the pitfalls of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, Aron argued that ideas and theories must be verified with reference to their logical consistency and empirical validity. At the same time, he stressed the impossibility of an authentic or immediate apprehension of historical reality. “Man, who is neither animal nor god, and who conceives real objects and values, can only interpret the world in terms of the meaning he attributes to his own existence,” he wrote. From this, Aron presented his own definition of ideology:

[I]deology refers, in fact, to the eternal gulf between history as it is and our knowledge of it, between the historical process as a whole and our limited view of it, but it also transfers the uncertainties of self-consciousness into the social field. Ideology is for a class what self-justification or the resentment arising from an inferiority complex is for an individual. Thus, from the point of view of logic, ideology can only have a psychological significance so long as a metaphysic or a philosophical anthropology has not been able to establish a transcendent truth in the place of the anarchy of desires and preferences. Ideology will continue to have as many meanings as there are doctrines, so long as man is dominated by a historical process of which he believes himself to be the subject but of whose end he is ignorant.

Ideology was, in other words, the inevitable result of man’s fruitless efforts to understand history from his limited perspective in a world without transcendent truths. A similar approach laid the basis for Aron’s dissertation *Introduction à la philosophie de l’histoire*, defended in 1938 in front of a skeptical audience of philosophers and sociologists at the Sorbonne. In this thesis, Aron went against the grain of French academia by presenting a theory of historiography which not only opposed deterministic philosophies of history but also the dominant paradigm of historical positivism. Influenced by German phenomenology, he stressed the plurality of historical interpretations and the situated character of every effort to comprehend the past. His dissertation also included elaborations on the concept of ideology. While Aron followed the arguments of his previous book by describing ideology as a way for man, as a “finite being unsatisfied with his finiteness,” to infuse a sense of meaning in the historical process, he also highlighted the correlation between ideologies and subversive politics. Writing just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Aron distinguished between political reformists, who accepted the existing order and sought to improve it from within, and revolutionaries, who rejected this order and wanted to destroy it. “The revolutionary […] has no program, unless it is a demagogic one,” he wrote. “Let us say that he has

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8 Aron, *German Sociology*, p. 63-64.
9 Ibid., p. 64-65.
an ideology, that is, the idea of another system, surpassing the present one and probably unrealizable; but only the outcome of the revolution will make it possible to distinguish between the anticipation and the Utopia.” Aron thereby took ideology to be a speculative vision of a better society, whose materialization required a wholesale destruction of the current society. Distancing himself from such revolutionary standpoints, he later described his dissertation as a proposal “to renounce the abstractions of moralism and ideology and look instead for the true content of possible choices, limited as they are by reality itself.”

Aron spent the Second World War in London, where he edited the Free French Forces’ paper La France libre. Upon his return to Paris at the end of the war, he turned down an offer for the chair of sociology at the University of Bordeaux and instead pursued a career as a political journalist. After a brief appointment in the Ministry of Information in the interim government established by General de Gaulle at the end of 1945, he became an editorialist in the resistance movement’s newspaper Combat. Along with Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, he was also one of the founders of Les Temps modernes. However, he only contributed a few essays to the journal. After increasing conflicts with Sartre, he left the editorial board of Les Temps and instead joined Le Figaro as a political columnist.

Aron’s departure from Les Temps reflected a disillusionment with the Marxist and revolutionary sentiments of intellectual life in postwar France. While his experiences from Germany had made him critical of all political movements which prescribed radical social transformation, the Cold War made his polemics almost exclusively directed against communism. In the years after the Second World War, Judt notes, “it was axiomatic for Aron that the totalitarian threat came from the Soviet Union and not from some hypothetical future revival of fascism.” As Aron put it, “[e]very action, in the middle of the twentieth century, presupposes and involves the adoption of an attitude with regard to the Soviet enterprise.” These convictions drew him towards the Congress for Cultural Freedom, where he would play an important role from the early 1950s onwards. Through his increasing involvement in the CCF and subsequent collaboration with British and American academics like Michael Polanyi, Daniel Bell and Edward Shils, Aron found an institutional basis for anticommunism.

For Aron, Marxism was the perfect embodiment of a philosophy of history in which transgressions on human rights were justified with reference to the

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12 Raymond Aron quoted in Baverez, Raymond Aron, p. 133. (“Théorie de la connaissance historique, mon livre […] invite à renoncer aux abstractions du moralisme et des idéologies pour chercher à déterminer le contenu véritable des choix possibles qui sont limités par la réalité même.”)
14 Aron, The Opium, p. 55.
natural trajectory of history. Marxism, he wrote as early as 1936, “claims to know the essence of present-day society and the secret of the future, and condemns as an error based upon self-interest the refusal to recognise or accept this law of history.” While such statements anticipated the later critique of Marxism elaborated by Popper and Arendt, Aron’s refutation of Marxism and communism was not merely located at an epistemological or philosophical level. By the mid-1950s, he came to doubt the empirical adequacy of describing countries as capitalist and communist, instead arguing that it was more appropriate to call them “industrial societies.” In his lectures on the topic at the Sorbonne in the years 1955-1956, he explained:

[T]he major concept of our time is that of industrial society. Europe […] does not consist of two fundamentally different worlds, the Soviet world and the Western world. It is one single reality: industrial civilisation. Soviet and capitalist societies are only two species of the same genus, or two versions of the same social type, progressive industrial society.

From this point of view, terms like socialism, communism and capitalism did not seem to have any clear significance, and the contradictions highlighted by the Marxist intellectuals around Sartre appeared to be pseudo-conflicts without connection to the realities of industrial society. Rather than accepting the description of the world offered by political doctrines, Aron chose to put his faith in sociological research. His skepticism versus ideologies and his belief in the possibilities of social science constituted the cornerstones of his confrontation with political radicalism in *The Opium of the Intellectuals*—a book which marked Aron’s definite break with his former friends from the École Normale.

*The Opium of the Intellectuals*

An attempt “to bring the poetry of ideology down to the level of the prose of reality,” *The Opium of the Intellectuals* might be described as an effort to counter the radicalism of the French intelligentsia with a moderate common-sense approach to politics. As Aron would later recall, he was “arguing neither with fascists nor with reactionaries but with the Left—that is, with the spiritual family I had sprung from and which I was accusing of betrayal.”

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15 Aron, *German Sociology*, p. 63.
Aron’s overall argument in *The Opium* is that the primary function of political ideologies—and Marxism in particular—is to provide disenchanted intellectuals with quasi-religious stimuli. In the book’s epigraph, Marx’s critique of religion as the opium of the people is juxtaposed with a quote from Simone Weil describing Marxism itself as a religion, “in the lowest sense of the word.” Following Weil, Aron suggests that Marxism is a “secular religion” without clear connections to objective social conflicts or injustices. The persistence of political ideologies in the West is a result of intellectuals’ desire for universal truths and transcendental meanings. Ideologies respond to their “longing for a purpose, for communion with the people, for something controlled by an idea and a will.” Having nothing to do with material reality, ideology is thereby approached as a strictly psychological phenomenon. “The feeling of belonging to the elect,” Aron writes, “the security provided by a closed system in which the whole of history as well as one’s own person find their place and their meaning, the pride in joining the past to the future in present action—all this inspires and sustains the true believer, the man who is not repelled by the scholasticism, who is not disillusioned by the twists in the party line, the man who lives entirely for the cause and no longer recognises the humanity of his fellow-creatures outside the party.”

### Aron’s concept of ideology

In contrast to Aron’s writings in the 1930s, *The Opium* does not offer an explicit definition of ideology. However, Aron discusses the concept in various passages. Early on, ideology is described as a “synthesis of an interpretation of history and of a program of action toward a future predicted or hoped for.” Ideology, Aron writes, “presupposes an apparently systematic formalisation of facts, interpretations, desires and predictions,” or—as he would explain after the book was published—it is “a certain allegedly total form of comprehensive and systematic interpretation of world history.” In other words, ideology seems to denote a way of organizing human temporality by connecting a particular interpretation of the past and a certain expectation for the future with a political agenda for the present. Echoing some of Arendt’s arguments in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Aron sees ideology as a pseudo-scientific framework for comprehending the historical process as the unfolding of a particular social conflict (like class struggle or clashes between nations). Unlike Arendt,
however, he consistently emphasizes the irrational, dogmatic and quasi-religious features of ideology. In line with the points made in his dissertation from 1938, he claims that history can never be predicted and that the future will always remain open. If one relies on ideologies and the left/right distinction, the diversity which characterizes modern society is effectively obscured. Instead of clarifying social conditions, political ideologies distort reality and violate the complexities of human life by forcing them into simplistic schemes. Fooled by the “myths” of the proletariat and the revolution, intellectuals try in vain to control the future and guide political action in accordance with their deterministic philosophies of history. They speak about communism and capitalism—concepts which cannot grasp the conditions of modern societies where a state-managed economy, ranging from the Keynesianism of European welfare states to the five-year plans of the Soviet Union, has transcended old ideological categories.

It should be emphasized that Aron almost exclusively uses the term ideology to describe Marxism and communism. Rarely mentioned in *The Opium*, political creeds like liberalism or conservatism are never described as ideologies. Marxism, on the other hand, seems to be the ideology par excellence, a deterministic philosophy of history which reproduces the central themes of Christian eschatology:

The Marxism prophetism [...] conforms to the typical pattern of the Judeo-Christian prophetism. Every prophetism condemns what is and sketches an outline of what should or will be; it chooses an individual or a group to cleave a path across the no-man’s land which separates the unworthy present from the radiant future. The classless society which will bring social progress without political revolution is comparable to the dreams of the millennium. The misery of the proletariat proves its vocation and the Communist Party becomes the Church which is opposed by the bourgeois/pagans who stop their ears against the good tidings and by the socialist/Jews who have failed to recognize the Revolution which they themselves had been heralding for years.  

Seen from this point of view, Marxism is a secular religion which has replaced the pillars of Christianity with materialist analogies. Out of touch with reality, it fails to understand how contemporary society works. Most importantly, Marxism’s idea of the inevitable collapse of capitalism has proved wrong. Revolutions during the twentieth century, Aron suggests, have actually occurred wherever the ruling class has failed to implement a capitalist economy along the lines of Western industrialized society. As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, the Bolsheviks have merely reproduced a modern industrial system in a more totalitarian form. While the Soviet Union and Western democracies may differ in terms of political programs, their ends are more or less the same:

both aspire for industrialization, raised productivity and stable economic growth. Since all advanced industrial societies give rise to a “techno-bureaucratic” hierarchy ruled by managers and organizers, fundamental power relations will not be changed by putting the means of production in the hands of the people.\textsuperscript{25}

As a result, the old Marxist idea of a socialist revolution is getting increasingly out of date. Nowadays, Aron explains, economists do not expect “the apocalyptic collapse of capitalism or the inevitability of total planning, but simply the necessity of government intervention in the shape of the lowering of the rate of interest or State investments.” In modern welfare societies where workers have become politically enfranchised and wealthy enough to buy television sets, there is “no decisive reason why the functioning of the system should […] become impossible or essentially different.”\textsuperscript{26}

In this way, the emergence of modern welfare states has falsified the Marxist claim about the inherent contradictions of capitalism. “Wherever democratic socialism has been successful,” Aron writes, “the factory workers, having become petty bourgeois, no longer interest the intellectuals and are themselves no longer interested in ideologies. The improvement of their lot has both deprived them of the prestige of misfortune and withdrawn them from the temptation to violence.”\textsuperscript{27} Contrary to the claims of revolutionaries, it is the Western welfare state, and not communism, which has liberated the working class from exploitation and impoverishment:

\begin{quote}
[T]he remuneration of the workers rises as productivity rises, social legislation protects families and the old, trade unions freely discuss conditions of work with the employers, and the extension of education increases the chances of promotion. This form of emancipation can be called real emancipation: it is characterized by concrete improvements in the condition of the proletariat, it leaves certain grievances […] and it cannot entirely eliminate opposition on the part of a minority, big or small, to the principles of the régime itself.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Aron’s concept of history

It is somewhere around here that it seems appropriate to designate Aron’s theories in \textit{The Opium} as a legitimizing narrative which effectively justifies Western liberal democracy against the threat from communism. First, the major political doctrine which opposes this society is described as incorrect and out of touch with reality. From Aron’s perspective, Marxism is neither a science nor an adequate critique of bourgeois society, but metaphysics for disen-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{25} Aron, \textit{The Opium}, p. 19.
\bibitem{26} Ibid., footnote on p. 173.
\bibitem{27} Ibid., p. 66.
\bibitem{28} Ibid., p. 75.
\end{thebibliography}
Chanted intellectuals. Second, those states which claim to represent an alternative to Western capitalism have merely reproduced the same system, albeit in a more ruthless form. If the Soviet Union is essentially an advanced industrialized society like the United States or Sweden, it is not an alternative in any significant sense. Third, and most important, if workers in Western democracies are already emancipated, as Aron suggests in the quote above, there is no reason to expect radical political change in their societies. (It should be pointed out that Aron is not concerned with other forms of social injustice: the situation for women or non-white groups in Western countries is ignored throughout The Opium. Sexist subordination is never mentioned in the book, and the lack of civil rights for Afro-American people in the United States is only acknowledged in passing as a minor “Colour prejudice”.

While some minority groups may keep struggling for social justice, liberal democracy is after all the best of political orders.

Written during the great wave of decolonization and published shortly after the Bandung meeting, The Opium offers a legitimizing narrative whose political message seems to point in two directions. On the one hand, it asserts that the working class in Western democracies lives in benevolent societies of steadily increasing equality, and that calls for social change are primarily romantic dreams of eggheaded intellectuals. If increasing productivity and democratic enfranchisement within the welfare state will emancipate the less fortunate, visions of a different society are both irrational and unwarranted. On the other hand, it seems to warn people in Third World countries that communism will not lead to an alternative to Western modernity but rather to a hideous version of in which all individual freedom is destroyed. The adequate way of entering the postcolonial era is not by fighting against liberal democracy and the capitalist economy but by accepting these systems. If this advice is followed, Aron’s implicit message seems to be, Third World countries might also end up as successful welfare states.

These political prescriptions dovetail with the progressivist concept of history which underpins The Opium. While Aron questions Marxist historical determinism and stresses that economic factors do not determine politics or culture, he nonetheless represents a concept of history in which economic growth and material improvements gradually reduce the space for ideological thought. As productivity rises, he suggests, as the former proletariat becomes petty bourgeoisie washing-machine owners, as technology and science make production more efficient, social conflicts are alleviated and political ideologies become redundant. In the United States, a country described as on the verge of moving beyond material scarcity, political controversies are said to be “more often technical than ideological”. In Great Britain, where economic differences are allegedly smaller than anywhere on the European continent,
politics is “related to immediate and practical problems,” and all parties con-
verge on liberal values and a commitment to “individual liberty and moderate

government”.\textsuperscript{31} In Sweden, a country which “[m]any observers regard […] as

a classless society,” the way of life has become completely uniform.\textsuperscript{32} Even in

the Soviet Union, where ideology still determines politics, industrialization

might in the long run undermine Marxist orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{33}

Aron’s argument that Western welfare states are going through a historical

shift from ideological conflicts to technical problem-solving and pragmatic

adjustments can also be seen as describing a \textit{transcendence} of the antagonistic

dimension of the political. This process is triggered by a dialectic between

economic development and political ideology: as industrialization, increased

productivity and technical progress create affluence throughout society, con-

flicts between different groups give way to consensus and collaboration. While

partisanship will not disappear completely—as Aron points out, the “real

emancipation” offered by the welfare state cannot eliminate opposition alto-

gether—the consensual mode of decision-making practiced in Western liberal
democracies demonstrates that social conflicts are at least partly transcended.

To put it in less theoretical terms, the affluent society has solved the former

crises between different groups, and thereby also those political ideologies

which used to fuel such conflicts.

If the transcendence of the political hinges on economic growth, however,
those countries which have not yet acquired the prosperity of the West will
continue to experience violent partisanship and ideological clashes. “Nowhere,
in Asia or in Africa, has the Welfare State spread enough benefits to stifle the
impulse towards irrational and foolish hope,” Aron writes.\textsuperscript{34} Since the “big
commercial or industrial firms established in Malaya or Hongkong or India
appear to have more in common with the capitalism observed by Marx than
with the modern industry of Detroit, Coventry or Billancourt,” communism
and anti-capitalist visions will still appeal to the restless masses of less develop-
ed countries.\textsuperscript{35} Social inequalities in the impoverished Third World make
Asian and African countries a seedbed for dogmatic creeds and subversive po-
litical movements.

In the long run, however, even poor countries in the periphery may break
free from ideologies and follow the course of Western welfare states. If the
“nations of Europe \textit{preceded the others} on the road to industrial civilization,” as
Aron suggests in \textit{The Opium}, and if it is true that parliamentary democracy
was “destined for the same triumphant progress across the globe as motor-cars
or electricity,” historical evolution may gradually transform Third World

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\textsuperscript{31} Aron, \textit{The Opium}, p. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 305.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 238.
\end{flushright}
countries into harmonious welfare states of the Western kind. Although Aron does not leave any clear answers, it is obvious that he touches on a familiar theme of modernization theory: if the process of industrialization which has occurred in Western countries is universal, all countries are likely to proceed towards the same telos. As Aron would later recall, he believed that there existed a “great wave of world industrialism” which reshaped societies all over the world. Unlike die-hard modernization theorists, however, he was more reserved about the prospects for Third World countries and the Soviet Union. Having spilled much ink on criticizing deterministic philosophies of history, he was reluctant to accept the idea of an inherent convergence between the Soviet Union and the West, and he carefully pointed out that recently decolonized countries could not model themselves directly on contemporary Western democracies.

Leaving the question of the Third World’s future quite open, it is clear that Aron does not see any place for political ideologies in contemporary Western welfare states. As he insists throughout The Opium, there is no such thing as an “ideology of the West” or an “American ideology.” “The true ‘Westerner,’” he writes, “is the man who accepts nothing unreservedly in our civilization except the liberty it allows him to criticize it and the chance it offers him to improve it.” Although there is an “essence of Western culture,” namely freedom of research and criticism, limitation of state power, and the autonomy of academic institutions, Aron emphasizes that the West “would be guilty of a fatal error if it thought that it possessed a unique ideology comparable to Marxism–Leninism.” Echoing Hughes’s arguments from 1951, he thereby implies that the individual’s freedoms of speech and criticism as well as autonomy versus the state are not ideological values in the sense that they belong to a specific political tradition. Whereas it could be argued that the idea of such freedoms stems from a particular ideological tradition—European liberalism from Locke, Hume and Smith via the French and American revolutions onwards—Aron does not discuss them in relation to any historical contexts or circumstances. The freedoms which he attributes to Western liberal democracy are presented as values transcending time and space; they are, as he puts it in a solemn phrase, “the heart and soul of the unending human

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36 Aron, The Opium, p. 305, 315. (Italics added.)
37 Aron, Memoirs, p. 277.
38 Aron, The Opium, p. 315. In his book on industrial society, Aron argued that the “idea that the Soviet and Western societies are gradually drawing closer together and are tending to converge towards a mixed form […] is at the most only a hypothesis,” which he only accepted “with many reservations.” Even if planners in Moscow would abandon price setting and accept market mechanisms in the economy, the Soviet Union’s collective ownership and one-party system would still make the country “far removed from the democratic-liberal or neo-capitalist societies of Western Europe and the United States.” Aron, 18 Lectures, p. 7.
39 Aron, The Opium, p. 57.
40 Ibid., p. 258-259, 316.
adventure”. Unlike the principles of Marxism, which Aron ascribes to disenchanted intellectuals and totalitarian dictators, the freedoms attached to liberal democracy are not bound to particular social groups or political struggles, but to humanity per se.

La fin de l’âge idéologique?

With all this in mind, it seems logical that Aron concludes The Opium by asking if l’âge idéologique—the period which began with the French Revolution and the Enlightenment’s philosophies of history—is now coming to an end. As he puts it in the book’s preface:

[D]idn’t Stalin carry off with him in death not only Stalinism, but also the age of ideology? That which characterizes the present period is no longer an excess of faith, but of skepticism. In a sense, the systems of ideas and beliefs which separated the camps and spiritual families are in the process of disintegration. The affluent society banks the fires of indignation. Imperfect and unjust as Western society is in many respects, it has progressed sufficiently in the course of the last half-century so that reforms appear more promising than violence and unpredictable disorder. The condition of the masses is improving. The standard of living depends on productivity—therefore, the rational organization of labor, of technical skills, and of investments. Finally, the economic system of the West no longer corresponds to any of the pure doctrines; it is neither liberal nor planned, it is neither individualist nor collectivist. How could the ideologies resist these changes […]?

In this passage, Aron seems to describe the present as a historical break between a past afflicted by poverty, social conflicts and rivaling political doctrines, and a future of increased productivity, social harmony and political consensus. If the age of ideology is coming to an end, it is because visions of radically different futures are excessive in a society of material plenty and political freedom. Grand ideas of more egalitarian social orders may make sense in Third World societies struck by inequality and exploitation, but in modern welfare states guided by social science—a source of knowledge which Aron claims to be “the only political universality which is accessible in our time”—and a rational organization of the economy, there is no need to imagine a society which differs from the present. While this social order might not be the “end of history” announced some forty years later, there are certainly similarities between Aron’s and Fukuyama’s conceptions of a society where the gap between the present and the future is shrinking. In the affluent welfare state where social engineering and Keynesian techniques guarantee everyone a slice of the pie, philosophies of history or visionary programs of political

41 Aron, The Opium, p. 319.
42 Ibid., p. xv.
43 Ibid., p. 318.
transformation are essentially irrational. What is needed instead, Aron suggests in the last pages of *The Opium*, is a humanity capable of criticizing all ideological dogmas and false prophecies. “If tolerance is born of doubt, let us teach everyone to doubt all the models and utopias, to challenge all the prophets of redemption and the heralds of catastrophe,” he writes in the very last lines of the book. “If they alone can abolish fanaticism, let us pray for the advent of the sceptics.”

In this closing scene, the underlying tensions of *The Opium* seem to be revealed. While questioning all utopian visions, Aron describes the coming of a social order where the inequalities of the past are giving way to material plenty and economic justice, and where political ideologies calling for radically different society are being replaced by a rational decision-making informed by science, technology and the freedoms of speech and criticism. While criticizing deterministic concepts of history, Aron formulates his own philosophy of progress, according to which economic development and increasing productivity make visions of a different future superfluous.

Setting out to demonstrate the inadequacy of dogmatic political ideologies, Aron provides his readers with a legitimizing narrative where the values of liberal democracy are naturalized, and where the contemporary welfare state is portrayed as a rational political order which has resolved the major problems which used to divide humanity and spark social conflicts. While this welfare state cannot eliminate all social conflicts and create a post-political paradise of total consent and unity, it can offer a “real emancipation” in contrast to the false promises of political movements which seek to overthrow the existing order of Western democracies. Written in the midst of the cultural Cold War, *The Opium* resolutely affirms the contemporary welfare state against the enemy looming outside of Western Europe.

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44 Aron, *The Opium*, p. 324.
6. Edward Shils and the politics of civility

In 1958, Edward Shils published “Ideology and Civility,” an essay based on his readings of Aron’s *The Opium of the Intellectuals* and British historian Norman Cohn’s 1957 *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. While this essay reflected the basic arguments of *The Opium* as well as Shils’s own “Letter from Milan,” it added new elements to the end of ideology theory. If Aron did not make clear whether the historical movement towards the post-ideological welfare state was universal—that is, whether modernization and industrialization would make Third World countries converge with the “advanced” Western countries—Shils attached the end of ideology theory to a historical narrative in line with the assumptions of modernization theory. And if Aron had not offered any alternative to ideology besides his general insistence on skepticism, Shils argued that ideologies should be succeeded by what he called civil politics.

In spite of being one of the major names of American twentieth-century sociology, no biography of Edward Shils has yet been published.1 Born in 1910 in Philadelphia in a family of immigrated Russian Jews, Shils graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1931 after studies in French literature and European languages. After a brief period as a social worker in New York, he relocated to Chicago in 1933 to get a degree in sociology. He was employed at the University of Chicago as a research assistant to Louis Wirth, with whom he translated Mannheim’s *Ideologie und Utopie* into English in 1936. Shils spent the war years in London, where he interviewed German ex-soldiers for the American Office for Strategic Service. Through his affiliation to the London School of Economics and subsequent friendship with academic exiles like Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper, he became increasingly interested in questions of science and intellectual freedom. He joined the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1953, and founded the organization’s journal *Minerva*,

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a periodical focusing on the Cold War politicization of science and scholarship. Shils would divide his academic career between the University of Chicago, where he was a member of the Committee on Social Thought, and English universities like the London School of Economics and King’s College. He continued teaching in Chicago until his death in 1995.

According to his friend Joseph Epstein, Shils was a man who could be merciless towards intellectuals whom he found unworthy of his intellect—and these included Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Michel Foucault, Allan Bloom, the Frankfurt School and Christopher Lasch. In 1969, Shils denounced Jean-Paul Sartre, Herbert Marcuse and Dwight Macdonald as “middle-aged courtiers” to the student movement which he strongly opposed. Unlike other scholars involved in the end of ideology discussion, he was never drawn to political radicalism. As historian Jefferson Pooley puts it, Shils “chose the West from the beginning, without any of the Cold War agonizing of ex-radicals.” In Shils’s own words, he “witnessed with revulsion the rush of […] intellectuals in the United States and Europe into the arms and snares of their respective communist parties.” Whether it came from left or right, he saw political dissent as hatred of society—a vice which he found particularly widespread among intellectuals. For Shils, his colleague Daniel Bell noted, the ideal role of an intellectual was “to be the moral guardian of the society, maintaining the continuity of tradition and of disinterested truth, and to be above political battle.” Consistently stressing the importance of moral consensus, social stability and respect for tradition, Shils espoused a “pluralistic society”

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2 Interested in the “governmentalisation of science and scholarship,” Shils devoted *Minerva*’s first issues to a debate about “big science” and the possibilities for “scientific autonomy” at a time when governments played an increasing role in planning and funding science. Assuming that scientists had historically enjoyed relative independence towards the state, Shils warned against the current “intrusion of political or governmental beliefs into the substance of intellectual work,” and criticized how “the politics of demagogy and of ideology” threatened scholars’ search for truth. While *Minerva*’s credibility in such questions was undermined after the revelations of its connection to the CIA, Shils kept editing the journal until his death. See Shils, “Minerva,” p. 10, 12. For a discussion of *Minerva*’s “big science debate” during 1962-1964, see Elena Aronova, “The Congress for Cultural Freedom, *Minerva*, and the Quest for Instituting ‘Science Studies’ in the Age of Cold War,” *Minerva* 50:3 (September, 2012).

3 Epstein, “My friend Edward,” p. 108-109. In his autobiography, Shils writes that he “read nearly all the publications in sociology in English, French and German” during a couple of years in the 1950s, and adds that he “learned little from that reading”. Shils, *A Fragment*, p. 49-50.


where political affect was minimized and the existing political institutions were universally accepted. Against an ideological radicalism which threatened the “sense of affinity on which the cohesion of civil society […] depends,” he suggested that democracy required a “lukewarm ‘ politicization’” and “moderation of political involvement.”

In the 1956 *The Torment of Secrecy*, Shils wrote that the “pluralistic society keeps men’s sentiments from flying outwards towards fixation on those remote objects which unsettle equanimity and disturb the pluralistic equilibrium. A well-working pluralistic society,” he continued, “absorbs sufficient of the attention and affection of its members into a wide range of more proximate concerns—workshop, neighborhood, club, church, team, family, friends, trade union, school, etc.”

In other words, Shils called for a society where people were more engaged in civil institutions than in politics—a position which had affinities with Herbert Tingsten’s ideas about the successful democracy. Intense political affects, Shils argued in *The Torment of Secrecy*, were only acceptable during election time.

The antidote to the ideological passions of intellectuals and revolutionaries was the political ideal which Shils had dubbed “civil politics.” Based on an adherence to the “common good” of society and a “sense of affinity” towards all fellow citizens, civil politics resisted the partisanship of ideologies. Democratic institutions, Shils wrote in 1960, required “a widely dispersed civility” which included a moderate attachment to the nation-state, an affirmation of the existing political order and a consensus on the basic rules of politics.

The advocacy of civil politics dovetailed with Shils’s categorical defense of Western modernity. As a young sociologist, he had been somewhat sympathetic to Karl Mannheim’s gloomy account of modern Western society as being on the verge of disintegration and implosion—a leading theme in Mannheim’s *Man and Society In an Age of Reconstruction*, which Shils translated into English in 1940. Through his acquaintance with Polanyi and Popper, however, Shils became increasingly skeptical of Mannheim and eventually turned against him.

In opposition to traditional sociological ideas of a dissolution of modern society due to withering *Gemeinschaft* bonds, he developed a more optimistic account of modernity. “[M]odern society,” he wrote in 1957, “is no

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9 Ibid., p. 159.
10 For Shils’s discussion about civil politics, see “Ideology and Civility,” p. 470-473.
12 For a discussion on Shils’s critique and eventual dismissal of Mannheim’s work, see Pooley, “Edward Shils’ Turn Against Karl Mannheim.” While this article is interesting and persuasive in many respects, Pooley’s attempts to depict Shils as an *anti-technocratic* social theorist seem less convincing, given the strong belief in technology and scientifically informed politics which the latter expressed during the 1950s. For Shils’s own account of his gradual dismissal of Mannheim, see Shils, *A Fragment*, p. 33-39.
lonely crowd, no horde of refugees fleeing for freedom. It is no *Gesellschaft*, soulless, egotistical, loveless, faithless, utterly impersonal and lacking any integrative forces other than interest or coercion. On the contrary, he argued, it was effectively held together by personal attachments, civil institutions, moral obligations and a widespread sense of civility.

These arguments were not merely directed towards an older generation of European sociologists like Tönnies and Mannheim or an American colleague like David Riesman, but also towards contemporary Marxists or leftists like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Dwight Macdonald. Against their critique of modern capitalism as a streamlined mass society where social alienation stripped human beings of creativity and political imagination—an account that Shils would criticize as made up by “snobbish radicals [...] with a hypocritical egalitarianism of Marxist inspiration”—he maintained that the modern mass culture of a country like the United States was benign. Not only was it an expression of historical progress, since it provided a wide range of cultural products for social classes whose cultural lot had previously been delimited to cock-fights and *littérature de colportage*. More importantly, mass culture bound individuals together and reduced the risks of moral or political dissent.

Shils’s affirmation of Western modernity was arguably most clear in his contributions to modernization theory in the late 1950s. As early as 1951, he and Talcott Parsons had outlined the pattern variables which constituted the basis for the subsequent distinction between “traditional” and “modern” societies. When Shils later co-founded the Chicago University’s Committee on the Comparative Study of New Nations and turned his attention towards the postcolonial world, his thoughts about modernity attained a more distinctly historical character. Comparing the contemporary United States with what he called the “new states”—particularly India, where he spent a year between 1955 and 1956—Shils concluded that modernity was primarily a Western phenomenon. “‘Modern’ means Western without the onus of dependence on the West,” he wrote in 1960. “The model of modernity is a picture of the West detached in some way from its geographical origins and locus”.

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quently, the liberal democracies of Europe and North America “need not aspire to modernity. They are modern.” As Shils explained in a keynote speech at a modernization theory conference in 1959:

In the new states “modern” means democratic and equalitarian, scientific, economically advanced and sovereign. “Modern” states are “welfare states,” proclaiming the welfare of all the people and especially the lower classes as their primary concern. […] [Modernity] involves universal suffrage. Modernity involves universal public education. Modernity is scientific. It believes the progress of the country rests on rational technology, and ultimately on scientific knowledge. […] To be advanced economically means to have an economy based on modern technology, to be industrialized and to have a high standard of living.\(^{16}\)

Shils’s definition of modernity was, in other words, an idealized version of contemporary Western liberal democracy. This was contrasted to “states which are not yet modern,” that is, “traditional” societies characterized by unstable political institutions, pervasive kinship or caste structures, social inequalities, widespread religious sentiment and a particularistic approach to the world.\(^ {18}\) But as the “not yet” in Shils’s formulation implied, he assumed that such societies were in the process of becoming modern. “The leaders of nearly every state,” he explained in 1960, “feel a pressing necessity of espousing policies which will bring them well within the circle of modernity.”\(^ {19}\) Their ideal was “not the image of a future in which no one has as yet lived […] but rather an image of their own future profoundly different from their own past, to be lived along the lines of already existent modern states”.\(^ {20}\) Like many modernization theorists, Shils’s political thought was marked by an implicit teleological determinism which postulated a historical movement towards modernity in the guise of Western liberal democracy. While he pointed out that there were different political methods of becoming modern—decolonized countries could, for instance, become “modernizing oligarchies”—he was certain that the end point of the process would be Western modernity.\(^ {21}\) As we will see, this would have important consequences for the persistence of political ideologies.

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\(^ {18}\) Shils, “Political Development in the New States,” p. 267. (Italics added.)

\(^ {19}\) Ibid., p. 265.


\(^ {21}\) For Shils’s thoughts about modernizing oligarchies, see ibid., p. 395-398.
“Ideology and Civility”

Shils’s intervention in the end of ideology discussion should be read against his skepticism of intellectual radicalism, his support for consensus, and his belief in Western modernity as the prototype of universal modernization. Published two years after Shils’s return from India, “Ideology and Civility” is the first contribution to the end of ideology debate in which the declining importance of ideologies is explicitly discussed in a West/Third World context.

Shils had sketched the outline of an end of ideology theory already in 1950. In the preface to an English translation of Georges Sorel’s *Reflexions sur la violence*, he argued that the political radicalism which had captivated Western intellectuals during the interwar period was now disappearing. As social democratic welfare programs seemed to have become the dominant mode of politics in Western democracies, Shils wrote, Marxist demands for radical social change had been replaced by modest calls for further nationalization and improved public services. The reason to read Sorel in the 1950s, he concluded, was not merely to understand “the state of mind of the revolutionary sect,” but to realize the futility of ideological distinctions in politics.22 In “Letter from Milan” five years later, Shils returned to these ideas by claiming that Western intellectuals had lost interest in ideologies and reached a moderate consensus on political matters. In the “new nations” of Asia and Africa, however, ideologies like nationalism and communism would continue to stir up political conflicts. Since the Third World had not yet reached the stage of Europe and North America, Shils concluded, Western intellectuals had to accept the situation and relate to the new nations as “partners” in shaping the future.

In the 1958 “Ideology and Civility,” these ideas are developed further. Suggesting that political ideologies have played a major role in Western politics since the end of the nineteenth century, Shils argues that there are now apparent signs of their decline. While political doctrines like fascism, Nazism and McCarthyism are briefly mentioned as ideologies, “Ideology and Civility” is mainly concerned with the alleged disappearance of Marxism. Described as the “very heart which has sustained ideological politics among intellectuals over the past century,” Marxism is said to be in a state of acute dissolution.23 Not only have events like the revolts in East Germany and Budapest discredited its claim to represent the people; more importantly, Marxism has proved to be intellectually impotent. “In every sphere of intellectual life, in economic theory, in history, and in sociology, Marxism has lost its power to attract because it is too simplistic, too threadbare intellectually and morally, and too

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often just wrong or irrelevant to the problems of the contemporary mind,” Shils writes. “The emergence of the social sciences as major subjects of university research and teaching […] constitutes a major factor in the tarnishing of Marxism.” A third reason for Marxism’s failure is that its promises of social justice have become more or less fulfilled in Western capitalist countries. With the economic boom in the United States and Europe, the clashes between socialists and capitalists seem far less relevant than twenty years ago.

In his definition of ideology, Shils follows Aron. Ideologies are creeds based on “the assumption that politics should be conducted from the standpoint of a coherent, comprehensive set of beliefs which must override every other consideration,” he writes. Rather than being confined to the political sphere, ideologies penetrate every corner of society, including religion, science, aesthetics and sexuality. Since all ideologies express “a violent hatred of the existing cosmic order, and especially of its earthly beneficiaries,” their ultimate goal is to destroy society and replace it with a completely new order. According to Shils, the hostility towards the prevailing society reflects the ideologies’ self-proclaimed affinity with history. “Ideological politicians must see their actions in the context of the totality of history,” he writes, and thereby consider their political programs to be “moving towards a culmination of history, either a new epoch, totally new in every important respect, or bringing to a glorious fulfillment a condition which has long been lost from human life.” In line with Aron’s critique, Shils maintains that political ideologies thereby continue the old tradition of Judeo-Christian millenarianism:

The ideological outlook expressed by millenarianism asserts […] that the reign of evil on the earth is of finite duration. There will come a moment when time and history as we know them shall come to an end. The present period of history will be undone by a cosmic act of judgment which will do justice to the wronged and virtuous by elevating them to eternal bliss, and equal justice to the powerful and wicked by degrading and destroying them for all time to come.

By defining ideology in these eschatological terms, Shils equates radical politics with Christian metaphysics: to call for a thorough transformation of society is the same as believing in a divine act of salvation. If the millenarian tradition in the West used to be sustained by the faithfuls’ constant return to the Bible, political ideologies have made it “available in an idiom more acceptable

24 Shils, “Ideology and Civility,” p. 454
25 Ibid., p. 450.
26 Ibid., p. 460.
27 Ibid., p. 461. As with Aron and his discussion of the affinities between ideology and millenarianism, it is clear that Shils, at least partly, draws on Mannheim’s discussion of utopia and chiliasm. See Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 211-220.
to the contemporary mind.” There is no longer any need to return to the Book of Revelations—people might as well read The Communist Manifesto or Mein Kampf.

Without using Aron’s term secular religion, Shils makes a similar point by claiming that political ideologies thrive in religious settings, and that their social function has been to provide the less fortunate with spiritual consolation. “Every society has its outcasts, its wretched, and its damned, who cannot fit into the routine requirements of social life at any level of authority and achievement,” he writes. “Those who are constricted, who find life as it is lived too hard, are prone to the acceptance of the ideological outlook on life.”

The age of ideology

While the utopianism of ideologies reflects religious ideas stretching back thousands of years, Shils claims that the “age of ideology” only dates back to the French Revolution. Before this, politics was the exclusive concern of elites who merely aspired to maintain the prevailing order. From the sixteenth century and onwards, however, a class of relatively autonomous intellectuals emerged in European societies. No longer entirely dependent on the patronage of religious, political or feudal elites, these intellectuals could go beyond the cultural discourse of the ruling classes and develop ideas which challenged existing political institutions. “The steady growth in the scale and importance of this stratum of the population in modern European societies is perhaps the decisive factor in the ‘ideologization’ which, on its better side, has been called the ‘spiritualization of politics’,“ Shils writes. The intellectuals, he continues, “have lived in a permanent tension between earthly power and the idea, which derives from their nature as intellectuals.”

More specifically, Shils identifies four intellectual traditions which have triggered the ideological outlook on politics: scientism, bohemianism, romanticism and populism. While these traditions had different characteristics and goals, they all bolstered the ideological age by calling for a rebellion against the existing social order. Instead of supporting their societies, Shils explains, intellectuals, writers and scholars who represented these traditions deliberately turned against the status quo. While Shils does not explain the precise connection between intellectuals and modern totalitarianism, it seems clear that he considers intellectuals to be partly responsible for the emergence of antidemocratic doctrines like Nazism and communism.

After the Second World War, however, the age of ideology seems to come to an end. Once the most influential ideologies of Western politics, Marxism

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30 Ibid., p. 463.
31 Ibid., p. 458-459. For a somewhat different perspective on the “spiritualization of politics,” see Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, p. 211-212.
and nationalism are now losing their influence on intellectual life. With increasing prosperity, efficient welfare institutions and the knowledge provided by social science, Shils explains, grand millenarian doctrines which oppose liberal democracy have lost their attraction. “The ideals of the European Enlightenment have quietly reasserted their validity without arousing intellectuals to passion on their behalf,” he writes, and continues: “It seems almost as if what was sound in the older ideologies has been realized and what was unsound has demonstrated its unsoundness so obviously that enthusiasm can no longer be summoned.” While particular social issues like the “woman question” or the “Negro problem” might remain in Western countries, they cannot be solved by grand doctrines which advocate large-scale transformations of society.

If the age of ideology is coming to an end, however, this is only the case in the West. Repeating the arguments from “Letter from Milan,” Shils claims that ideologies will continue to fuel conflicts in recently decolonized countries without functioning democratic institutions or efficient welfare systems:

Of course, ideological politics, Marxist, Islamic, Arabic, Hindu, Pan-African, and other, still exist in the new states outside the West in a vehement, irreconcilable form and often with great influence. But many in the West [...] believe that they too will pass when the new states in which they flourish become more settled and mature. Looking back from the standpoint of a newly-achieved moderation, Western intellectuals view the ideological politics of Asia and Africa, and particularly nationalism and tribalism, as a sort of measles which afflicts a people in its childhood, but to which adults are practically immune.

In Third World countries plagued by social conflict, ideologies will therefore continue to mobilize the masses against prevailing authorities and institutions. As these countries modernize and mature, however, they will probably experience the same transformations that now occur in the West. If the Third World slowly progresses towards the liberal democratic system of the West, it seems, as Shils puts it, “reasonable to think that the age of ideological politics is gradually coming to its end.”

Civil politics
But if this is the case, there must be some kind of alternative ground on which politics should be based. Returning to earlier discussions in works like The Torment of Secrecy, Shils suggests that ideologies should be replaced with what he calls civil politics. Such politics “do not stir the passions; they do not reveal

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33 Ibid., p. 456.
34 Ibid., p. 457.
man at the more easily apprehensible extremes of heroism and saintliness.”  

Concerned with “the common good” of society rather than abstract political imperatives, the civil politician “must maintain a sense of affinity with his society and share with his fellow citizens their membership in a single transpersonal entity.”

In spite of its concern with civil politics, “Ideology and Civility” does not offer any clear definition of civility. In the 1960 essay “Political Development in the New States,” however, Shils returns to the concept and argues that civility includes:

(i) a sense of nationality, i.e., a firm but not intense attachment to the total community and its symbols; (ii) a degree of interest in public affairs sufficient to impel most adults to participate in elections and to follow in a very general way what is going on in the country as a whole, with a reasonable and temperate judgment of the quality of the candidates and the issues; (iii) [...] a general acceptance and even affirmation of the legitimacy of the existing political order; (iv) a sense of their own dignity and rights, as well as their obligations, on which must rest their interest in maintaining their own private spheres, free from the arbitrary intrusions of authority, and (v) a sufficient degree of consensus regarding values, institutions and practices to accept limits on their own self-aggrandizing tendencies.

To sum up, civility entails an acceptance of the existing political order and its institutions, a firm—but not too intense—attachment to the nation, a non-passionate and moderate interest in political affairs, and respect for the individual’s autonomy in relation to the state. Civil politics refutes the idea of organizing society in accordance with doctrines or systems, and instead approaches social problems as particular issues to be solved on their own terms. Unlike the political ideologies’ obsession with a heavenly future to come, civil politics demands respect for traditions and an appreciation of the knowledge provided by the past. By taking all citizens of society into account rather than particular groups or classes, the aim of civil politics is to overcome the social disruption caused by ideologies. As Shils puts it, a “concern for the more general and for what transcends the immediate advantages of particular ‘interests’ would infuse a most precious ingredient into political life.” At the same time, he warns that civil politics should not jettison the heritage of ideologies altogether. “It has not been the substantive values sought by ideological politics which have done such damage,” he writes in “Ideology and Civility,” but “the elevation of one value, such as equality or national or ethnic solidarity, to supremacy over all others.”

36 Ibid.
But is “civil politics,” then, simply a euphemism for Western liberal democracy? Shils remains ambiguous on this question. In “Political Development in the New States,” on the one hand, he claims that democracy must rest on “a widely dispersed civility” and that this is one of the reasons why African and Asian countries, where “[t]ribe, religion, language and traditions of parochial hierarchy and acquiescence have stood in the way of the emergence of a civil order,” have faced problems in establishing democratic institutions. In “Ideology and Civility,” on the other hand, he argues that liberal democracy in itself challenges civility by permitting political conflict in the form of party struggles. Civil politics needs a “partial transcendence of partisanship” in order to reach a broad social consensus.

While remaining vague about the exact relation between civil politics and modern liberal democracy, Shils is relatively clear on three points. First, the main goal of civil politics is to transcend the ideologies’ partisan approach to politics. By demanding an acceptance of existing institutions and traditions, and promoting social affinity between all citizens, civil politics seek to replace the partisanship of ideologies with the pursuit of the common good. Second, civil politics is linked to modernity, or at least incompatible with traditional societies where kinship structures and organic solidarities disturb the establishment of a sovereign state. Third, civil politics should not be understood as an objective or necessary historical outcome of modernization, nor as a historical necessity, but as a normative political ideal for the post-ideological age.

Shils’s concept of history

In line with Arendt and Aron, Shils’s main objection to ideologies is their self-proclaimed affinity with history. By insisting that their political doctrines correspond to the laws of history, ideologically guided politicians and intellectuals can present their programs as the realization of tendencies existing beyond the scope of individual agency. According to such a perspective, a consistent alignment with a particular value or imperative—like the socialization of the productive forces, the absolute freedom of the individual or the superiority of a particular ethnic group—is the only way to approach the eventual coming of a new, and more righteous, society. From an ideological perspective, Shils writes, human time is just “a waiting and a preparation” for the remote historical event when humanity will be emancipated. In opposition to this fatalism, Shils calls for an outlook which recognizes individual autonomy and takes the present, rather than the historical process in its totality, as the point of departure.

42 Ibid., p. 453.
That said, it is obvious that “Ideology and Civility” itself entails a specific concept of history. Most obviously, the essay is based on an idea of the “age of ideology” which roughly dates between the French Revolution and the Second World War. With the rise of an autonomous class of European intellectuals and the development of countercultural movements, the ruling classes of Western societies were challenged by subversive groups which sought to revolt against the existing social order. By translating old religious ideas about an impending heaven on earth into the quasi-secular language of political ideology, intellectuals created a forceful weapon against prevailing institutions and authorities. While their ideologies played a crucial role in the popular uprisings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was not until the emergence of totalitarian mass movements in Europe and the brutal utopianism of Nazism and communism that the age of ideology reached its climax. But in the 1950s, Shils argues, Western countries are characterized by exhaustion with the devastating consequences of ideological politics. Undermined intellectually by empirical social science and socio-economically by the rise of democratic welfare states, ideologies are rapidly losing their force of attraction. This signals a historical shift in the political consciousness in Western countries—or, to put it differently, a decline of the ideological age. “Ideology and Civility” does, in other words, provide a concept of history in which the establishment of the affluent welfare state and the emergence of sociology as the foundation for politics means that earlier conflicts between social groups are settled and that political ideologies which seek to transform the prevailing order are undermined.

However, the end of ideology is not a universal phenomenon. Even though ideologies are on the wane in Europe and North America, Marxism and nationalism will continue to trigger political conflict in poor and undeveloped Third World countries. As these countries modernize and create democratic institutions similar to those which already exist in the West, however, the age of ideology is likely to end there as well. To put it differently, Shils’s concept of history is marked by a notion of a temporal distance between Western welfare states and Third World countries: if the former have now reached the end of the ideological age, the latter are still stuck in it. If this idea was already present in Shils’s 1955 letter from Milan, “Ideology and Civility” is also underpinned by the idea of an imminent historical transition from tradition to modernity. In line with what would be known as modernization theory, Shils assumes that all decolonized countries will begin to resemble, and eventually converge with, the liberal democracies of the West. This evolutionism is particularly clear in the essay’s coming-of-age metaphor, in which Western intellectuals are said to see the “ideological politics of Asia and Africa” as “a sort of measles” which afflicts children, but not adults. Explicitly putting the adults of the West in relation to the children of Africa, Shils seems to see development as a cultural process of growing up: if Third World countries are still in
the grip of ideologies, it is only because they have not yet achieved the maturity of their parents.

The idea that the ideological disposition of politics in the Third World will attenuate as these countries modernize can be discerned in other texts written by Shils around the same time. In the 1960 essay “The Intellectuals in the Political Development of the New States,” for instance, he claims that modernization will make intellectuals in the Third World “much less political” in their outlook. When their native countries “become more differentiated occupationally, and when they have developed a sufficiently large and self-esteeming corps of professional intellectuals,” Shils writes, “the passionate sentiment and energy [will] flow into channels other than the political.”

The historical implications of such assumptions are clear enough: Shils assumes that the historical development which brought Western countries to the end of the ideological age will repeat itself in Asia and Africa as well. To put it bluntly, there does not seem to be any alternative to the post-ideological democracy of the West—only different methods of achieving it.

Civil politics as the successor to ideology

But if the end of the ideological age ultimately appears to be a historical necessity, Shils carefully points out that the question of a possible successor to ideological politics remains open. And this, I would like to argue, is precisely where his theory of civil politics comes in. As a crystallization of Shils’s general political outlook, civil politics aims to replace ideology by overcoming conflict and radicalism, promoting moral consensus and advocating a steadfast affinity with the prevailing social order and its institutions. By pursuing politics on these grounds, the goal of civil politics is to overcome all particularistic social interests and attain the “common good” of a society—that is, values which benefit all citizens regardless of their class, ethnicity, nationality or sex.

Since conflicts—or even different opinions about how society should be organized—are essentially malign and dangerous from Shils’s point of view, they should as far as possible be excluded from politics. If such a position reflects a post-political vision of a society where partisanship has yielded to consensus and stability, civil politics can be understood as a program of post-politicization through which phenomena which risk creating rifts within the polity—whether intellectual dissent, intense political affects or partisan class interests—are toned down. Promoting national unity and a general acceptance of the prevailing political order, civil politics constitutes a deliberate effort to transcend the antagonistic dimension of the political and create a realm of politics cleansed from conflicts between different groups. If increasing wealth and the achievements of social science have weakened the attraction of subversive

doctrines and opened up for a process of decision-making beyond partisanship and opposition, civil politics appears to be an appropriate successor to ideologies. As Shils explains in the very last passage of his essay, civility has the capacity to go beyond all kinds of conflicts and boundaries between human beings:

There is now in all strata [...] a higher civil sense than earlier phases of Western society have ever manifested—and this despite class conflicts and ideological separatism and irreconcilability. Even ethnic barriers seem slowly to be yielding to the rising tide of civility. Is it too much to hope that the intellectuals [...] will themselves come more fully into this process, and thus, by one of the great continental drifts of history, bring the age of ideology to an end?  

Where the age of ideology ends, the age of civility begins. If civility gets a chance to thrive, Shils seems to suggest, the economic, ideological and ethnic barriers which have previously divided mankind and spurred conflict will disappear. Humanity will then stand at the threshold to a society guided by unity rather than partisanship and the common good rather than class-bound interests. The promise of civil politics is, to put it differently, to transcend the antagonistic dimension of the political and create a post-political order where all members support the existing social institutions, share the same interests and cling to the same values.

Perhaps because of the catchy title of his 1960 dissertation at Columbia University—"The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties"—American sociologist Daniel Bell was the intellectual who became most closely associated with the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. Although the essays in *The End of Ideology* ranged from analyses of New York longshoremen unions of the 1930s to critical discussions of the sexual motives behind Bolshevism, Bell would more than any other come to personify the end of ideology. “There are,” as the author himself put it years later, “some books that are better known for their titles than their contents. Mine is one of them.”

According to a recurring narrative about *The End of Ideology*, the book reflected Daniel Bell’s own political trajectory from the 1930s to the first years of the Cold War. Like many of his fellow Jewish New York intellectuals, Bell’s early life was marked by a gradual turn towards the political center, from the radicalism of the Depression, via increasing doubts about Marxism and socialism, to eventual reconciliation with American society.\(^2\) According to Howard Brick, *The End of Ideology* mirrored Bell’s “own passage, his own route to reconciliation, and his work has an unmistakable tone which identifies that reconciliation with maturation”\(^3\). In a similar vein, Nathan Liebowitz sees the book’s concluding chapter as “an epilogue to the events, experiences, and perceptions that shaped Bell’s life up until its writing.”\(^4\)

Born Daniel Bolotsky in 1919, Bell grew up in the poor Jewish neighborhoods of New York’s Lower East Side. Raised in a Russian family with a widowed mother working in the garment industry, Bell joined the youth division of the American Socialist Party at the age of thirteen. He was soon drawn to the “Old Guard,” a group of older men who had been members since the

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4 Liebowitz, *Daniel Bell*, p. 34.
party’s founding in 1901 and, following the elimination of syndicalist and Bolshevik fractions, had come to control the organization. Adherents of Karl Kautsky’s theories of a “mature” capitalist democracy as the prerequisite for socialism, this group was in continuous conflict with young party radicals who opposed democracy and vindicated revolutionary means. When the Old Guard broke away to form the new organization Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1936, Bell joined them.5

While the affiliation to the Old Guard made Bell a right-wing socialist, he was, as he later admitted, also “tempted by the Communist movement.”6 As a part of the circle of young leftists at New York’s City College, he mixed with both Stalinist and Trotskyist students. As one of these radicals—and later prominent neo-conservative—Irving Kristol remembered, Bell had “a kind of amused fondness for sectarian dialectics, knew his radical texts as thoroughly as the most learned among us, and enjoyed ‘a good theoretical discussion’ the way some enjoy a Turkish bath”.7 However, Bell never joined the communists. He was deeply affected by learning about the Bolshevik clampdown on the Kronstadt uprising in 1921, and was guided by the conviction that political ends never justified the means—an imperative which echoed both Max Weber’s distinction between the “ethics of responsibility” and the “ethics of ultimate ends,” as well as the moral theories of John Dewey.8

After graduate studies in sociology at Columbia, Bell joined the SDF’s The New Leader as a staff writer in 1940. Focusing on labor issues, Bell’s first years at the paper were concerned with discussing how an American intervention in the war would affect American postwar society. In a series of articles during the early 1940s, he argued that American intervention would dovetail with the interests of the working class not only by thwarting fascism but also by creating a political-economic structure that would facilitate a democratic socialism after the war. Maintaining that war planning provided an opportunity for the government to control business, advance labor rights and build public industries, Bell discerned, as his biographer Brick puts it, “an anti-capitalist force immanent in the war drive”.9

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5 For a discussion of Bell’s affiliation to the “Old Guard,” see Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 56-60. For Bell’s own account of the conflicts between the Old Guard and the party militants, see Daniel Bell, “The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States,” in Donald Drew Egbert & Stow Persons (eds.), Socialism and American Life, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 369-381.
8 For Bell’s own memories of learning about Kronstadt and his subsequent affirmation of Weber’s and Dewey’s moral theories, see Bell, “The Moral Vision of ‘The New Leader’,” The New Leader (December 24, 1973).
9 Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 73.
By the time the United States entered the war, Bell was starting to have second thoughts. Influenced by analyses of Nazi Germany’s political economy, he now argued that the wartime intermingling of government and business would create a corporatist power bloc of economic and political elites. Suggesting that there were structural similarities between the political economies of Germany and the United States, Bell claimed that contemporary America had “the industrial facade of the corporative state, without the brutal political connotations of a fascist party”. With this notion of an American “monopoly state”—a theory which was developed in an unfinished book project towards the end of the war—Bell began to depart from his progressivist conception of a smooth historical transition from capitalism to socialism. According to Brick, the war had one decisive effect on Bell’s thinking: “as he perceived the Monopoly State growing from the war regime, he recognized the harsh contravention of progress and concluded that the immanent development of society, rather than realizing his political aspirations, forced them outside the fold.”

As he left The New Leader in 1944, Bell was growing increasingly skeptical about the prospects of a strong labor movement in the United States. “I felt,” he later recalled, “that the Marxism I’d learned was kind of mechanical and sterile; that the impact of the war and the holocaust had shaken one’s view of a utopian or progressive or optimistic view of human nature and of society.”

In 1945, Bell left New York and began teaching social science at the University of Chicago, a place he would refer to as his “cloister.” Affiliated to the Department of Sociology, his contact with non-Marxist sociologists like Edward Shils and David Riesman drew him further away from Marxist political economy and towards a sociology of mass society, bureaucratization and alienation. Bell remembered the years after the Holocaust being marked by “the fear of anti-Semitism in the United States, the fear of mass politics, passionate politics, a fear of what happens when the world is so disordered there are no norms or rules.” In a 1945 letter to his friend Lewis Corey, he argued that European fascism had demonstrated that the major issue of the contemporary world was the manipulation of the masses. Fascism, Bell wrote, “was accepted by those who rejected classes and the older class systems, by those […] who did not want to belong to any class and who accepted fascism as a movement against all classes.” In societies where class affiliation broke down,

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11 Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 101.
13 For Bell’s description of Chicago as his cloister, see Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 241.
14 Daniel Bell quoted in Dittberner, “Appendix III,” p. 316.
15 Letter from Daniel Bell to Lewis Corey 1945 quoted in Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 117.
Bell warned, ethnic chauvinism was likely to thrive—and this was, as he claimed in an essay from 1944, particularly the case with the United States, where capitalist competition and social alienation created a widespread disorientation conducive to fascism and xenophobia.16

While such theories reflected Bell’s Marxist background, the years in Chicago marked a steady departure from radical politics. When Dwight Macdonald, editor of the short-lived Politics magazine, was accused of abandoning socialism for moral philosophy, Bell told him that he was becoming “increasingly apolitical” himself.17 “[T]he only constructive role we can play,” he wrote to Macdonald in 1946, “is that of critics,” so that “when some meaningful choices are possible say in fifty years, people shall have a truly relevant body of materials to draw upon.”18 These doubts about the possibility of emancipatory politics were reinforced by Bell’s two major theoretical influences at the time: Max Weber and American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. From Weber, he borrowed the account of modernity as a process of rationalization and bureaucratization, as well as a conception of politics as a negotiation between pursuing ultimate ethical values and accepting the responsibilities for—and practical limitations of—this pursuit.19 From Niebuhr, he appropriated a view of the human condition as an existential contradiction between being situated in a particular historical time and place and also being able to achieve a partial transcendence of these objective limits. According to Niebuhr, utopianism and modern totalitarianism was an expression of man’s failure to accept his limitations.20

The perspectives of Weber and Niebuhr were merged in Bell’s 1946 “A Parable of Alienation,” an essay which described modern society as permeated by a profound sense of social detachment. Rationalization, secularization and the omnipotence of economic calculation, Bell argued, had created an unfulfilled yearning for community. Writing for the magazine Jewish Frontier from his Chicago cloister, he suggested that the Jewish experience of alienation epitomized the current state of mind: the Jew could neither “go home” nor find a stable place in society. Including himself in the group of young Jewish intellectuals who “reject[ed] the basic values of American society as they stand,” Bell argued that he was bound to be outside of all movements:

[The intellectual] cannot surrender himself wholly to any movement. Nor can he make those completely invidious or utopian judgments regarding the

16 Daniel Bell, “The Face of Tomorrow,” Jewish Frontier 11 (June, 1944).
17 Letter from Daniel Bell to Dwight Macdonald 1945/1946 quoted in Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 122.
18 Letter from Daniel Bell to Dwight Macdonald 1946 quoted in Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 124-125.
19 For Bell’s avowal of Weber’s ethics of responsibility, see “First Love and Early Sorrows,” particularly p. 537.
20 For a discussion on Niebuhr’s influence on Bell, see Liebowitz, Daniel Bell, p. 88-93.
nature and needs of man which the cynic and romantic make. He can only
live without dogma and without hope.  

The alienated Jewish intellectual, Bell concluded, “can only live in permanent
tension and as a permanent critic.” This imperative seemed to be well in line
with his last effort to breathe life into socialism, when, in 1949, he was invited
to edit the journal Modern Review. Bell’s intention was to create a magazine
for critical analysis of socialist theory and praxis. After encountering a wide-
spread lack of interest among his intended contributors, however, he closed
Modern Review after only two issues. In his editorial farewell, he summarized
the episode in a tone that anticipated The End of Ideology:

The sad truth is that the old socialist and liberal community in the U.S. is a
tired one, and that few ways have been found to reach, awaken and excite the
number of young people who in their natural idealism are searching for a
moral community to sustain them. Perhaps it was the ideas themselves:
the old categories may have lost their viability and resiliency in a world where
unleashed destruction is on the prowl.

At the time of the Modern Review debacle, Bell’s political affiliations were
changing. In what seemed to be a move towards the political right, he had
begun working as editor at Fortune magazine in 1948. In the 1949 essay
“America’s Un-Marxist Revolution,” he refuted the left’s “simplistic generali-
izations” about class struggle, highlighted what he perceived to be President
Truman’s efforts to create a politically managed economy, and requested a
“new sense of civic obligation” in which all social groups could come to-
gether. In his Fortune writings, he argued that the left was exhausted and
that the growing influence of American trade-unionism had generated a mod-
erate and non-partisan approach to politics. In his first monograph, the 1952
The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States, he
criticized the socialists for their failure to adapt to contemporary society.
Blending Weber with Mannheim, Bell claimed that his former party fellows
were chiliasts who had neglected the tedious here-and-now of politics for un-
realistic utopian schemas which would never materialize. He joined the Con-
gress for Cultural Freedom in 1952, and became active in the organization
after the Milan meeting in 1955. Through increasing collaboration with Ray-

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22 Ibid., p. 19.
24 Daniel Bell, “America’s Un-Marxist Revolution. Mr. Truman Embarks on a Politically
25 See, for instance, Daniel Bell, “The Language of Labor,” Fortune (September, 1951); “La-
bor’s Coming of Middle Age,” Fortune (October, 1951).
mond Aron and Edward Shils, Bell was drawn into the end of ideology theory’s inner circle. While he had already touched upon the theme in his paper at the Milan conference, he first used the phrase in an article from 1957.²⁶

For Daniel Bell, the 1950s therefore meant an increasing acceptance of American society and its institutions. As he put it himself, he belonged to a “twice-born generation” which had turned from utopianism to pessimism and from radical dissent to political moderation. Bell’s process of deradicalization, described by Howard Brick as “a dialectic of estrangement and reconciliation,” would get its definite coda in *The End of Ideology*.²⁷

*The End of Ideology*

Published in 1960 as Bell’s doctoral thesis in sociology at Columbia, *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* is a volume of sixteen slightly edited essays published between 1952 and 1959. Apart from the postscript “The End of Ideology in the West. An Epilogue,” few of the texts are directly focused on the alleged decline of political ideology. The dissertation is concerned with a variety of issues, from analyses of organized crime in the United States to literature reviews of contemporary Soviet studies.

Because of its loose character, *The End of Ideology* contains, as pointed out by Brick, several contradictions and ambiguities.²⁸ While Bell’s general thesis indicates a social tranquilization and attenuation of political conflict, he also claims that “America in mid-century is in many respects a turbulent country.”²⁹ At one point, Bell hails contemporary society as “differentiated, variegated and life-enhancing,” yet at another, he describes the mood of his generation in terms of “pessimism, evil, tragedy, and despair.”³⁰ Dedicating an essay to criticize the socialist movement for refusing to adapt to the prevailing order, Bell still accuses it for reproducing Taylorist ideas of market efficiency. And while Bell describes the fifties as “the time which has seen the end of ideology,” he also claims that the political system of the United States forces every political group “to adopt an ideology which can justify its claims”.³¹

The end of what ideology?

Such ambiguities aside, a more important problem with *The End of Ideology* is Bell’s extraordinarily diverse usage of the term ideology. Job Dittberner claims

²⁶ See Daniel Bell, “The Once-Born, the Twice-Born, the After-Born,” *The New Leader* (April 1, 1957).
²⁸ Ibid., p. 6.
²⁹ Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 94.
³⁰ Ibid., p. 299, 287.
³¹ Ibid., p. 288, 63.
to discern a variety of different, although sometimes overlapping, meanings of “ideology” in the book. According to Dittberner, Bell sometimes uses the term as a reference to a total system of thought whose claims to possess all answers facilitate totalitarian practices, sometimes as a neologism for Aron’s “secular religion,” and sometimes as a synonym to Weber’s “ethic of ultimate ends” (as opposed to the “ethic of responsibility”). At times, ideology is used in terms of a legitimizing political rationale for particular interest groups like “Labor” or “Business,” and sometimes in Mannheim’s sense of specific social interests disguised as universal values. Elsewhere, ideology is equated with “false consciousness” in the Marxist vein, and sometimes—although Dittberner suggests that this is more implicit than explicit—with theories which distort reality and fail to capture the complexities of the world.\(^{32}\)

If the meaning of the term ideology is usually inferred rather than explicitly stated, Bell occasionally elaborates on it. In the essay “The Failure of American Socialism,” ideology is defined as “the façade of general interests and universal values which masks specific self-interest”—a formulation echoing Marx and Mannheim.\(^{33}\) At another point, Bell describes the ideologist as someone who “wants to live at some extreme, and criticizes the ordinary man for failing to live at the level of grandeur.”\(^{34}\) Elsewhere, ideologies are defined as “attempts to unite ideas, behavior, and character,” thereby demanding an unconditional commitment among their followers. The communist, fascist or die-hard American, Bell continues, “is not only supposed to believe certain things; he is supposed to act, to be something, and, in acting, to fix his character.”\(^{35}\) This definition highlights the connection between theory and practice: ideology is not merely a set of principles but also the consistent subordination of the ideological subject under a particular political doctrine in order to materialize such values.

This last notion informs Bell’s most detailed discussion of ideology, presented in the brief epilogue “The End of Ideology in the West.” Blending Mannheim’s theories about utopianism and chiliasm with Aron’s idea of secular religions, Bell depicts ideology as the historical substitute for religion. While Marxism purported to dismiss ideology by demythologizing religion, Bell argues, its call for revolution made it a “resumption of all the old millenarian, chiliastic ideas of the Anabaptists,” and, consequently, a new ideology.\(^{36}\) If religions used to absorb emotions and soothe the fear of death by promising otherworldly salvation, ideologies now fuse men’s passions and energies by channeling them into politics. In this way, the political cause becomes a substitute for religious transcendence:

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\(^{32}\) Dittberner, *The End of Ideology*, p. 198–199.

\(^{33}\) Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 269.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 288.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 316.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 370.
One can challenge death by emphasizing the omnipotence of a movement (as in the “inevitable” victory of communism) […]. The modern effort to transform the world chiefly or solely through politics (as contrasted with the religious transformation of the self) has meant that all other institutional ways of mobilizing emotional energy would necessarily atrophy. In effect, sect and church became party and social movement.37

With this psychologizing notion of political ideology as the individual’s substitute for religion, Bell clearly alludes to Aron’s discussion in *The Opium of the Intellectuals*. At the same time, there are traces of Mannheim’s theory of the chiliastic roots of utopianism. In contrast to Mannheim, however, Bell does not differentiate between ideology and utopia, thereby charging the term ideology with a subversive, rather than conservative, power.

Although ideology lacks any consistent signification in *The End of Ideology*, it can be argued that Bell’s theory of the end of ideology is largely based on the meaning provided in the epilogue. If ideology is about to come to an end, it is not in the sense of a decline of legitimizing group rationales, false consciousness or the ethical foundations of politics. Instead, the end of ideology signifies the end of “millenarian” doctrines which, by advocating a revolutionary break with the prevailing social order and its institutions, believes in the possibility of creating a radically new, and more egalitarian, society.

More specifically, Bell tends to use the term ideology as a reference to communism, and, at times, fascism. Although Dittberner might be correct in arguing that Bell during the 1950s “repeatedly pointed out how anachronistic laissez-faire ideology had become,” the fact remains that liberalism and conservatism are not described as ideologies in *The End of Ideology*.38 Apart from a passage where Bell depicts the end of the ideological age as a convergence between socialist, conservative and liberal thought, the word ideology is never employed for the latter political doctrines. Like Aron and Shils before him, Bell’s end of ideology is, by and large, the end of Marxism and socialism.

While Bell’s main discussion of the end of ideology appears in the “The End of Ideology in the West,” the underlying reasons for the decline of revolutionary doctrines in Western countries can be discerned throughout the book. For the sake of clarity, Bell’s theory can be divided into three separate chains of argument which deal with economy, politics and culture.

An economic collaboration between labor and capital

On a general level, *The End of Ideology* provides a picture of Western society where rising affluence and the establishment of welfare institutions have undermined the material foundations for political radicalism. By analyzing three

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37 Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 372.
structural changes in the economic system which seem to contradict the
Marxist or socialist critique of capitalism, Bell seeks to demonstrate the inade-
quacy of traditional anti-capitalism.

In the essay “The Breakup of Family Capitalism,” Bell highlights what he
perceives to be an economic shift from private property to managerial control
as the basis for production. Drawing on James Burnham’s *The Managerial
Revolution*, he argues that the past seventy-five years have meant the rise of a
“managerial economy” where technical skills and political position, rather than
wealth and property, have become the major means of power. “[P]rivate pro-
ductive property, especially in the United States, is largely a fiction,” Bell
writes, and continues: “No longer are there America’s ‘Sixty Families’ (or even
France’s ‘Two Hundred’).” If the old system gave rise to a single ruling group
with common interests, the managerial system triggers social mobility and
blurs class lines. While Bell points out that the rise of a new managerial class
may stimulate a new political ideology (in the sense of a legitimizing group
rationale) in order to justify its power, it is clear that Bell’s thoughts about the
breakup of family capitalism and the altered class structure serve to repudiate
leftist notions of capitalism as a system of mounting conflicts between workers
and capitalists.

Elsewhere in *The End of Ideology*, Bell is more straightforward in his dis-
missal of his old convictions. In the essay “The Capitalism of the Proletariat,”
he argues that Marx’s analysis of capitalism has been proved wrong. If Marx-
ism held that capitalist production necessarily led to exploitation, Bell writes,
the postwar economic boom has shown that the only way of achieving eco-
nomic equality is by increasing productivity. “One may argue about how much
productivity has advanced,” he writes. “What is settled is the fact that each
year the living standard of the worker will advance”. In “The Failure of
American Socialism,” he argues along similar lines:

> History [...] confounded Marx’s prophecy, at least in the West. The law of
> increasing misery was refuted by the tremendous advances of technology. The
> trade union began bettering the worker’s lot, and, in the political struggles
> that followed, it found that it could sustain itself not by becoming a revolu-
> tionary instrument against society but by accepting a place within society.

This development not only makes socialist calls for transforming the relations
of production superfluous but also opens up for a non-antagonistic relation
between labor and business. While parts of the labor movement still demonize
their employers as a class—a tendency which Bell sees as a residue of “the
ideological conception of labor as the ‘underdog’”—the stage is now set for

39 Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 41-42.
40 Ibid., p. 216.
41 Ibid., p. 272.
collaboration between workers and capital in the form of institutionalized collective bargaining. Bell finds it plausible that the labor movement will eventually abandon demands for social transformation for a moderate political program focused on questions like better housing, more schools and affordable health care.

Finally, Bell argues that class structure in Western societies is rapidly changing. Anticipating the leading theme of his 1973 *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, he suggests that the industrial proletariat is being replaced by a “salariat” of skilled workers in the service and research sectors. As a result of increasing productivity and automation, white-collar workers now exceed the number of industrial workers in the United States. While Bell does not elaborate on these changing class structures, he stresses that the rise of the salariat is likely to cause problems for the left. “These salaried groups,” he writes, “do not speak the old language of labor. Nor can they be appealed to in the old class-conscious terms.”

The decline of the working class in the United States, and, it seems, in the West in general, will therefore undermine the socialist movement’s material basis. As Bell puts it in a passage which draws on his paper in Milan, “[i]t is in the advanced industrial countries, principally the United States, Britain, and northwestern Europe, where national income has been rising, where mass expectations of an equitable share in that increase are relatively fulfilled, and where social mobility affects ever greater numbers, that extremist politics have the least hold.”

The rise of a political economy

Regarding politics, *The End of Ideology* paints a picture of Western liberal democracy—and the United States in particular—as a system where doctrines of large-scale change are replaced by institutionalized bargaining and technical engineering, and where class conflict has given way to political consensus. The main factor behind these developments is the New Deal, which, according to Bell, has paved the way for a politically managed economy. “[W]hat the New Deal did,” he writes, “was to legitimate the idea of group rights, and the claim of groups, as groups, rather than individuals, for government support. Thus unions won the right to bargain collectively and […] enforce a group decision over individuals; the aged won pensions, the farmers gained subsidies; the veterans received benefits; the minority groups received legal protections, etc.” With increasing governmental intervention in social affairs, Bell continues, the *laissez-faire* system of the interwar period has been

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42 Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 213.
43 Ibid., p. 218.
44 Ibid., p. 30.
transformed into a political economy where decisions are taken through collective deliberation. In the essay “Status Politics and New Anxieties,” he describes the American government as a “broker state” where a number of competing interests bargain under the supervision of a supposedly neutral state.  

In stark contrast to his earlier predictions of a quasi-fascist monopoly state, Bell now seems to see the state as a more or less neutral institution with the ability to mediate between competing interest groups.

These interest groups, Bell stresses, should not be understood as classes. In his critique of C. Wright Mills’s *The Power Elite*, he argues that “the prism of ‘class’ is too crude to follow the swift play of diverse political groups.” Understanding the new political economy of the broker state requires analyzing the competition between a multitude of interest groups rather than reducing politics to a struggle between supposedly homogenous classes. Although the broker state is only mentioned once in *The End of Ideology*, it is clear that Bell perceives this governmental system to be a democratic way of taming social conflict by inviting competing interests to a regulated political deliberation. “Democratic politics means bargaining between legitimate groups and the search for consensus,” he writes, adding that “only through representative government can one achieve consensus—and conciliation.” Through New Deal institutions like the National Labor Relations Board, the labor movement has become an integrated part of the political process, working side by side with business and farmer organizations. As long as associations and unions do not purport to represent “Labor” as a whole—a tendency which Bell warns will lead to the transformation of “concrete issues into ideological problems […] which can only damage a society”—the broker state will remain an efficient system for mediating between different interest-groups.  

As Bell puts it:

> In the 170 years since its founding, American democracy has been rent only once by civil war. We have learnt to include the “excluded interests,” the workers and the small farmers. These have secured a legitimate place in the American political equilibrium. And the ideological conflicts that almost threatened to disrupt the society, in the early years of the New Deal, have been mitigated.

In this sense, the liberal democracy of the United States—and, one might suppose, of the Western world in general—has integrated all groups and created conditions for a more rational way of organizing human life. Paradoxically, however, this seemingly inclusive conception of democracy relies on the exclusion of groups which do not qualify as what Bell calls legitimate actors.

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48 Ibid., p. 110–111.
49 Ibid., p. 110.
50 Ibid., p. 112.
On the one hand, Bell emphasizes that communism is not a legitimate interest but a conspiracy and a danger towards democracy *per se*. On the other, he objects to groups which instead of protecting the “specific tangible interest of a specific, tangible group” claim to represent the working class, the farmers, or business as a whole. Consequently, Bell seems to reserve the broker state’s negotiation table for organizations which neither call for major transformations of society nor purport to speak for classes or too extensive groups. While Bell does not make it explicit, “legitimate groups” seem to be those which have *a priori* accepted the framework of liberal democracy and the striving for consensus and reconciliation.

Taken together, Bell’s theories about liberal democracy, the broker state and legitimate groups constitute an attempt to *contain* the conflicts which spring from the political. If end of ideologists like Tingsten and Shils believe that social science or civility can unify all citizens and thereby *transcend* antagonism altogether, the post-politicization in Bell’s theories operates by neutralizing conflict by turning it into a regulated process of bargaining which aims to achieve consensus and reconciliation. While Bell, unlike Tingsten and Shils, acknowledges and accepts the existence of opposing interests, he nonetheless sets out to make sure that partisanship will not give rise to subversive claims or drastic changes. On the one hand, politics is earmarked for actors who accept the structure of the existing political order, and who represent specific groups rather than potentially subversive classes or diffuse social collectives. On the other, the goal of politics is said to be the achievement of consensus and reconciliation. As politics is designated as the search for agreement between groups deemed legitimate, those with radical demands or divergent claims are kept away. It should be noted that this kind of post-politicization does not deny or suppress conflicts which spring from the political. Instead, it *contains* them by channeling them into a safe outlet free from groups which express profound dissent or call for comprehensive transformations of society. Political actors who oppose the foundations of liberal democracy are either refuted as millenarian and utopian, as in the case of American socialists, or as conspiratorial, as in the case of communists. Rather than facilitating an encounter between opposing standpoints, politics is thereby reduced to negotiation between actors who *a priori* share an allegiance to the fundamental structures of the political system and the basic values of liberal democracy.

The effort to avoid opposition and partisanship is also apparent in Bell’s claim that complex industrial societies require technical expertise and small-scale problem-solving rather than radical visions. While not a technocrat in the strict sense of the word, he repeatedly suggests that politics in Western democracies has become a matter of technical expertise. On several occasions,
he refers to Popper’s “piecemeal technology” as the adequate mode of organizing advanced industrial societies, contrasting this with “bravura radicalism” and “eschatological visions.”\(^5\) The inability to find a pragmatic and small-scale approach to politics, Bell explains in “The Failure of American Socialism,” is the major reason for the decline of the socialist movement. By opposing capitalism and democracy as such rather than accepting them and trying to modify them from within, socialist and communist parties have gradually lost touch with reality and eventually disappeared entirely. As their utopian visions fade into the annals of sectarian politics, a new consensus is emerging in the West:

> Few serious minds believe any longer that one can set down “blueprints” and through “social engineering” bring about a new utopia of social harmony. At the same time, the older “counter-beliefs” have lost their intellectual force as well. Few “classic” liberals insist that the State should play no role in the economy, and few serious conservatives [...] believe that the Welfare State is “the road to serfdom.” In the Western world, therefore, there is today a rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues: the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism. In that sense, too, the ideological age has ended.\(^5\)

The welfare state has, in other words, merged socialism, liberalism and conservatism into a common belief in governmental planning and Keynesian regulation. This consensus, expressed in terms echoing Shils’s “Letter from Milan,” signifies the end of ideology. Like his other Congress for Cultural Freedom comrades, Bell perceives the welfare state to be a non-ideological institution driven by a rationality which transcends all partisan politics. His wartime fears about a quasi-totalitarian intermingling between government and business is here replaced by a confidence in the partnership between politicians, capitalists and workers.

If Bell’s attitude towards the state has changed, he still clings to one conviction of the 1940s, namely that the government’s increasing control is caused by the threat of war. In “The Prospects of American Capitalism,” Bell makes clear that the “creeping socialism” of which the Republicans complain so bitterly is the product not of any willed, ideological plan, but the hardly conscious response of the society to the challenge of war.\(^5\) Such a situation, he continues, not only forces government to control the economy but also imposes the same imperatives on all political parties. At several points in *The End of Ideology*, Bell claims that American politics is determined by the external factors of the Cold War rather than by internal conflicts. If “politics of the 1930’s was almost entirely domestic in its focus,” he writes, political life twenty years later

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\(^5\) Ibid., p. 373.  
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 82-83.
“is not a reflex of any internal class divisions but is shaped by international events.”

Bell’s discussion of the political impact of the Cold War and the threat from the Soviet Union has two important implications. On the one hand, it suggests that the increasingly active government in the United States is the inevitable outcome of external factors and not the product of deliberate action from any parties or groups. On the other hand, by describing the threat of Soviet communism as the overarching conflict of the postwar period, it downplays the importance of social conflicts within American, and Western, societies. With this last point, Bell re-actualizes the theme which informed Arthur Koestler’s and H. Stuart Hughes’s end of ideology announcements at the beginning of the 1950s. By evading internal conflict and highlighting the threat from the outside, the antagonistic dimension of the political is externalized and thus removed from the political community itself.

The exhaustion of cultural radicalism

Regarding culture, Bell traces a development in the West in which subversive cultural and intellectual expressions have become innocuous due to their gradual integration into mainstream society. Intellectuals and artists who used to oppose liberal democracy and take part in radical struggles have been reconciled with the prevailing order and begun advocating political moderation. For the radical intelligentsia, Bell explains, “the old ideologies have lost their ‘truth’ and their power to persuade.”

In line with the arguments made by Aron and Shils, Bell considers intellectuals to have played a fundamental role for the rise of political ideologies in the nineteenth century. Intellectuals who felt overlooked by bourgeois society, he explains, found a way of justifying themselves by creating ideologies through which they could oppose the prevailing order. Since “the intellectual felt that the wrong values were being honored, and rejected the society,” Bell writes, “there was a ‘built-in’ compulsion for the free-floating intellectual to become political.” While the discussion of the connection between intellectuals and radical politics is less detailed than in the writings of Aron and Shils, it is clear that Bell perceives the intelligentsia to have played a subversive role in Western societies from the nineteenth century onwards.

From the onset of the Second World War, however, this group abandoned political radicalism. An old generation of American intellectuals became disillusioned with the potential of emancipatory politics, and the same happened to Bell’s own generation, whose attraction to socialism and communism in the interwar period gradually turned into skepticism and pessimism. Bell gives a

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56 Ibid., p. 373.
57 Ibid., p. 372.
number of reasons for the exhaustion of cultural radicalism: the Moscow trials and the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact; the failure of American socialism to become a mass movement; the experience of Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism; the increasingly influential anti-rationalist thought of theorists like Niebuhr and Paul Tillich; the rise of the welfare state and the expanding opportunities for intellectual employment. Moreover, he argues, intellectuals realized that it was not Western liberal democracy but Soviet communism that was the major threat to freedom.

For all these reasons, the radical fervor of the 1930s turned into the political stalemate of the 1950s. “In a few short years, the excitement evaporated,” Bell writes. “The labor movement grew fat and bureaucratized. The political intellectuals became absorbed into the New Deal. The papier-mâché proletarian novelists went on to become Hollywood hacks.”58 As the former leftist intelligentsia came in from the cold, mainstream society began to accept and even embrace their cultural expressions. Whatever is currently considered avant-garde in culture, Bell claims, is quickly absorbed and acclaimed by the public. Now pursuing careers in universities, publishing houses and magazines, the onetime radicals have become an assimilated and respected part of American society.

At the same time, a younger generation of intellectuals—exemplified in Bell’s essay “The Mood of Three Generations” by Norman Podhoretz and Jack Kerouac—is searching for something to struggle for. While Bell thinks that society, “like a wise parent,” should accept youth’s yearning for revolt, he emphasizes the essential fruitlessness of contemporary radicalism.59 The young intellectuals are bound to become rebels without a cause:

[T]he problem for the generation is [...] an inability to define an “enemy.” One can have causes and passions only when one knows against whom to fight. The writers of the twenties—Dadaist, Menckenian, and nihilist—scorned bourgeois mores. The radicals of the thirties fought “capitalism,” and later, fascism, and for some, Stalinism. Today, intellectually, emotionally, who is the enemy that one can fight?60

The absence of an enemy makes the young generation’s search permeated by what Bell describes as a “desperate, almost pathetic anger.”61 The old ideas of the socialization of production or structural changes in the economy have lost their relevance. At the end of the day, he concludes “The Mood of Three Generations,” the decline of subversive cultural expressions must be understood in relation to a wider process of social integration. “Just as managerial authority is shared, in part, by the unions, and political power is shared, in

58 Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 290.
59 Ibid., p. 289.
60 Ibid., p. 288.
61 Ibid., p. 374.
part, with the ethnic and labor groups, so the culture, too, in part, has been transformed,” he writes. And here, Bell returns to one of the leading themes of *The End of Ideology*, namely the idea that economy, politics and culture, at least in Western liberal democracies, have become the matter of deliberation for many social groups rather than the concern of a few.

The end of ideology in the East?

Written by a man who had spent half his life in the socialist movement, *The End of Ideology* marks a reconciliation with American, and Western, society. While parts of the book, like the essay “Work and its Discontents,” retain a sense of Bell’s radicalism, *The End of Ideology* ultimately paints a favorable picture of liberal democracy and capitalism. In the realm of economy, the older system of raw capitalism has been transformed into a managerial economy where technical skill rather than capital is the main means of power, and where increasing social mobility blurs class stratification. As increasing productivity has proved to benefit all members of society, Marxist ideas of the inherent exploitation of capitalism have lost their credibility. Politically, the emergence of a broker system in which the government mediates between different interest groups has turned violent class conflict into a controlled process of institutionalized bargaining. With the rise of the Western welfare state, socialists, conservatives and liberals have reached a consensus on the supremacy of public welfare services, political pluralism and a mixed economy. Culturally, the intelligentsia has given up its antagonism towards the prevailing order and begun pursuing careers at universities and publishing houses. Cultural expressions which were previously considered to be social threats have become integrated into mainstream society.

Taken together, these developments have resulted in the social order which Bell describes as the end of ideology in the West. If *The End of Ideology* gives quite a clear message about the liberal democracies of the West, Bell is largely silent on the Eastern front. Apart from a brief passage in the essay “Ten Theories in Search for Reality,” where he suggests that the industrialization of the Soviet Union has forced the communist elite to abandon fundamental aspects of Marxism-Leninism, he never applies the end of ideology theory to a non-Western context.

Instead, Bell addresses these questions in a seemingly overlooked publication called *Marxism-Leninism. A Doctrine on the Defensive. The ‘End of Ideology’ in the Soviet Union?*. Published by Columbia’s Research Institute on Communist Affairs in 1965, this fifty-page text is an explicit effort to discuss the exhaustion of communism as a guiding ideology for political life in the Soviet Union. Bell sets off from the assumption that Soviet politics, in contrast

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Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 299.
to the “instrumental” value-system of American society, has been informed by an “ideological activism” involving “a constant scrutiny of canonical texts, a testing of achievements by the double standard of practical results and concordance with doctrine, and a constant specification of goals in order to spur the people to the ends set by the regime.”\textsuperscript{63} Because of increasing difficulties in solving the problems related to the management of advanced industrialism, however, Marxism-Leninism is now, by the mid-1960s, losing its position as a guiding ideology in the Soviet Union. Dialectical materialism has proved unable to cope with new discoveries in physics and mathematics. Historical materialism—or the idea of communism as the inevitable outcome of history—has been disproved by the fact that all industrial societies, whether labeled capitalist or communist, are subject to the same processes of bureaucratization, rationalization and technocratic imperatives. Marxist economic theory has failed both in allocating capital to necessary branches and in balancing the supply and demand of goods. Moreover, scientists and intellectuals in the Soviet Union have begun to demand a more open discussion, including more contact with Western colleagues.

According to Bell, all these failures of Marxism-Leninism signify the end of ideology in the Soviet Union. Soviet “has ‘opted out’ of the revolutionary game” he writes. “It does not particularly matter whether this is due to its vast internal problems in managing an increasingly complex and diversified economy and society, or because in a thermonuclear age Russia has learned that the risks of promoting revolution […] are too great and might provoke mutual destruction.”\textsuperscript{64} In all advanced industrial societies, Bell explains with a reference to Raymond Aron, “[m]anagement becomes a technical function; there is the application of science to technology in the exploitation of natural resources; a new class, the technical and professional, becomes predominant in society, and the criteria for social mobility is technical skill and education; there is a quantitative ‘rationalization’ of life.”\textsuperscript{65} In such a society, he explains, ideological dogma cannot prevail. Because of the discrepancies between Marxist-Leninism and the realities of advanced industrial society, the Soviet regime has been forced to jettison communism for a more rational and pragmatic approach to social change.

With the distinction between political action and technical expertise, Bell stresses the futility of politics in relation to the reality created by technological development and advanced industrialization. Since all complex industrialized

\textsuperscript{63} Daniel Bell, \textit{Marxism-Leninism}, p. 8-9. More specifically, Bell argues that the Marxist-Leninism of the Soviet Union includes a doctrine of class struggle, a concept of history as a universal process of passing through five different stages, a notion of the world as divided between the capitalist and socialist blocs, an assumption that planning and collective property are superior forms of economic organization, and an idea of the inevitable victory of communism.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 46.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 18-19.
societies require the same kind of technical measures, political programs cannot diverge from these requirements. In this process of post-politicization, politics is dismissed as a powerless activity which cannot transform the conditions and social relations created by the structures of production and technology. As Bell argues, contemporary industrial society needs instruments for managing the system of production, not visions of different societies.

From Bell’s point of view, such instruments already exist. What is striking about Marxism–Leninism is that all examples of changes in Soviet politics seem to be appropriations of theories and practices which already guide decision-making in Western countries. Whether it is the implementation of market principles instead of a planned economy, the acceptance of quantum physics and cybernetics, or the establishment of a scientific method based on experiment rather than ideological dogma, all such news in Soviet life are adaptations of economic and scientific practices already existing in the West. While Bell claims that “the theory of industrial society does not argue a ‘convergence’ of the social systems of capitalism and socialism” but merely highlights “the common features of development and common social structure,” his own account of current developments in the Soviet Union clearly indicates that the country is becoming increasingly similar to Western democracies.66 As Bell himself puts it, the ongoing changes in Marxism–Leninism “point in the direction of rejoining the diverse traditions […] of Western thought.”67 In other words, what Bell calls the end of ideology in the Soviet Union seems to be more or less the same as an acceptance of supposedly non-ideological Western standards.

Bell’s legitimizing narrative

For Daniel Bell, the end of ideology in the West is inextricably bound up with the rise of the welfare state and the persistence of New Deal politics in the 1950s. While Bell never quite clarifies whether the emergence of the welfare state has caused the decline of ideologies, or if the dawning ideological consensus between formerly rivaling parties has given rise to the welfare state, it is clear that the welfare state corresponds to a social situation where “utopian” or “millenarian” doctrines which aspire to overthrow society have run out of steam. With the establishment of a democratic system in which a governmental process of institutionalized bargaining between specific interest groups replaces the violent struggle between social classes, politics has become the means to pursue what Bell describes as the essence of democracy, namely the

67 Ibid., p. 32.
achievement of consensus. Since the groups and organizations which participate in the negotiation process converge on an acceptance of liberal democracy and the importance of public welfare, decision-making becomes a matter of small-scale problem solving and deliberation within the framework of the prevailing system.

As I have argued above, Bell’s discussion of the rise of the welfare state and the broker system can be understood as a containment of the conflicts which spring from the political. By designating politics as a practice which comprises specific interest groups that negotiate under the supervision of a supposedly neutral state, conflict is turned into a process of bargaining between actors who have already in advance been deemed legitimate by the prevailing system. Although such a practice accepts conflict to a certain extent, it is nonetheless based on the exclusion of political actors with too diverging demands. From Bell’s own perspective, however, the end of ideology does not mean the deliberate expulsion of radical alternatives but the de facto rise of a social rationality which transcends partisan interests and comprises all groups in society. To put it differently, Bell does not see the end of ideology as the temporary victory of Keynesian social democracy over rivaling ideologies but as the emergence of a post-ideological state underpinned by a universal consensus on the basic principles of governance.

By portraying the liberal democracies of North America and Europe as societies where the major social issues have been settled, where material wealth is redistributed in order to guarantee everybody a fair subsistence, and where enfranchisement has integrated previously excluded groups into the political realm, Bell’s end of ideology theory offers a legitimizing narrative in the guise of sociological analysis. By asserting that politics in the 1950s is ultimately determined by the external threat from the Soviet Union rather than by social conflicts within Western countries, Bell downplays the importance, or even existence, of internal controversies or injustices. As the antagonistic dimension of the political is externalized, conflict does not occur within us, but beyond us.

As a consequence of his affirmation of the existing society, all ideological alternatives to liberal democracy—whether in the form of socialism, communism, fascism or, perhaps, laissez-faire liberalism—are deemed to be irrational or eschatological dreams with no correspondence to welfare state reality. While there might not be any enemies left to fight, as Bell suggests in “The Mood of Three Generations,” there is an existing society to be defended.
Bell’s concept of history

Although Bell’s legitimizing narrative seems to be underpinned by a particular concept of history, it may be less clearly discernable than in the work of Raymond Aron or Edward Shils. If their theories are relatively strongly informed by the historical assumptions of modernization theory, Bell refrains from aligning himself too closely with such thoughts. In the epilogue of *The End of Ideology*, modernization theory—or what Bell calls “economic development”—is even rejected as an ideology itself, which, “for some of the liberals of the West” has become a replacement for older political disillusions.68

In spite of Bell’s refutation of modernization theory, his end of ideology theory is linked to a notion of increasing economic prosperity and the emergence of advanced managerial capitalism as historical developments which have triggered the exhaustion of political radicalism and doctrines like socialism and communism. While Bell does not use the term “modernization” to describe these changes, it is clear that he perceives the end of ideology to be an effect of socio-economic progress as well as of technological imperatives in the capitalist system of Western democracies. As implied in the very title of Bell’s epilogue, “The End of Ideology in the West,” this is not a universal phenomenon:

It may be […] that in newly awakened societies, like Asia’s, the impatient expectations of key social strata, particularly the intellectuals, may so exceed the actual possibilities of economic expansion that communism will come to look like the only plausible solution to the majority. Whether this will happen in India and Indonesia is one of the crucial political questions of the next decade.69

If the decline of political ideology depends on a certain level of economic prosperity and social stability, poor and undeveloped countries which have not reached the same stage of development as countries like the United States or Sweden cannot be expected to face the end of ideology. “[W]hile the old nineteenth-century ideologies and intellectual debates have become exhausted [in the Western world],” Bell explains, “the rising states of Asia and Africa are fashioning new ideologies with a different appeal for their own people. These are the ideologies of industrialization, modernization, Pan-Arabism, color, and nationalism.”70 Nonetheless, Bell points out, the dawning ideologies of the Third World are not identical with those which emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century. Whereas the latter were universalistic and humanistic, fashioned by intellectuals in order to achieve equality and freedom, the new

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68 Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p. 373-374.
69 Ibid., p. 30-31.
70 Ibid., p. 373.
doctrines in Asia and Africa are “parochial [and] instrumental” ideologies produced by politicians in order to trigger economic development and secure national sovereignty.\footnote{Bell, \textit{The End of Ideology}, p. 373.} If the Soviet Union and China have become prototypes for political struggles in recently independent countries, this is not because of communism’s promise of human equality and freedom but rather because of its ability to generate rapid industrialization in underdeveloped countries.

Stressing the difference between the post-ideological West and the still-ideological postcolonial world, Bell unwittingly seems to reproduce modernization theory’s distinction between the traditional countries of the Third World and the modern societies of the West: while the liberal democracies of Europe and North America have become modern and rational, the postcolonial countries are still trapped in the shackles of tradition. But does this, in line with the convergence theory elaborated by scholars like Walt Rostow, also imply that Third World countries will inevitably modernize and become post-ideological welfare states themselves? Are there any teleological notions in Bell’s concept of history?

*The End of Ideology* leaves no clear answer. Indeed, it is possible to read Bell’s insistence that poor countries in Asia and Africa merely embrace communism in order to reach the same level of industrialization as the West as a suggestion that, when they eventually reach the same historical stage as a country like the United States, they will abandon ideology and become post-ideological welfare states themselves. Apart from such indications, however, *The End of Ideology* does not come close to any kind of convergence theory or idea of a universal movement towards the post-ideological welfare state of the West. Such ideas are more apparent in *Marxism-Leninism*, where Bell bases his analysis of the end of ideology in the Soviet Union on theories about “industrial society” and industrialization. The basic point in *Marxism-Leninism* seems to be that communist countries, as they reach a certain level of industrialization and social complexity, will be *required* to jettison ideological dogma for a set of instrumental, pragmatic and non-ideological principles and techniques which already guide decision-making in Western societies. Since all advanced industrial societies entail a number of technological imperatives which must be followed, politics as such is *dismissed* as a practice which cannot in any fundamental way alter the conditions and social relations created by the structures of production and technology.

If *The End of Ideology* merely touches upon these ideas—and most clearly in the passages where Bell argues that contemporary countries require technological expertise rather than transformative visions—*Marxism-Leninism* gives the impression of a deliberate effort to link the end of ideology theory to a historical analysis of how industrial society develops and matures. There seem to be good reasons for concluding that Bell considers communism to be a passing phenomenon, at least in the long run. As countries like the Soviet...
Union and China mature socio-economically, they will become increasingly post-ideological. Whether Bell believes that recently independent countries in Asia and Africa will follow the same path is, however, less clear. In *Marxism–Leninism*, he repeats the argument from *The End of Ideology* that communist revolutions merely occur “in countries only starting on the path of modernization,” and not in mature industrial societies like the United States or France.\(^2\) When such countries industrialize and become subjects of bureaucratization and rationalization, it might be supposed that they will eventually reach the historical stage where Marxist ideology loses its ability to solve social and economic problems.

If Daniel Bell was the scholar to become most closely associated with the end of ideology theory, Seymour Martin Lipset was the one who would defend it most persistently. In a number of essays from the early 1960s onwards, Lipset returned to and affirmed the arguments of his 1960 book *Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics*. Against those who criticized the end of ideology theory as a complacent justification of the status quo, Lipset argued that the theme had also been developed by theorists on the left. Against those who claimed that Lipset actively advocated the end of political ideologies, he maintained that he merely analyzed a social phenomenon. And against those who dismissed Lipset as a conservative, he professed to be a socialist. “I consider myself a man of the Left,” he wrote in 1962, adding that he regarded “the United States as a nation in which *Leftist values* predominate.”

Biographically, Lipset had many similarities with Daniel Bell. Three years Bell’s minor, he grew up in a family of Russian Jews in the Bronx. Schooled in political radicalism from an early age, Lipset remembered being brought up

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1 See Lipset, “A Concept and Its History,” particularly p. 86-87. Based on Lipset’s 1972 article “Ideology & No End,” the essay “A Concept and Its History” is an effort to write the history of the end of ideology theory from Engels via Weber and Mannheim up to the discussion of the 1950s. By pointing out that Frankfurt School theorists like Theodor Adorno and Otto Kirchheimer also touched upon the idea of a weakening of ideological thought (in the Marxist sense of “false consciousness”), Lipset seeks to refute the notion of the end of ideology theory as an essentially conservative idea. Furthermore, Lipset argues that Aron, Shils, Bell and himself did not announce the end of political systems, utopian thinking or class conflict, but merely the decline of “the passionate attachments of an integrated revolutionary set of doctrines to the anti-system struggles of working class movements—and the consequent coherent counterrevolutionary doctrines of some of their opponents”. Returning to the conclusion of his 1964 essay “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics,” Lipset even suggests that the end of ideology theory was an ideology itself, and more precisely the ideology of “conservative socialism.” See Lipset, “A Concept and Its History,” p. 99, 98; “The Changing Class Structure,” p. 296. For more Lipset articles about the end of ideology discussion, see “Ideology & No End. The Controversy Till Now,” *Encounter* 39:6 (December, 1972); “Some Further Comments on ‘The End of Ideology’,” *American Political Science Review* 60 (March, 1966); “My View from Our Left,” *Columbia University Forum* 5 (Fall, 1962); “Ideology and Political Bias. A Reply to Peck,” *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 23:3 (Autumn, 1962).

2 Lipset, “My View from Our Left,” p. 31.
in an “atmosphere where there was a lot of political talk,” but where “you never heard of Democrats or Republicans; the question was communists, socialists, Trotskyists, or anarchists.” Like Bell, Lipset studied at New York’s City College and socialized with the same radical students at the school’s cafeteria. After a brief session in the Trotskyists’ youth organization, he joined the Young People’s Socialist League. Although he formally remained a member of the Socialist Party until 1960, his political trajectory was, in line with Bell’s, marked by a gradual turn towards the right. “I moved,” Lipset later recalled, “a considerable distance, from believing in Marxism–Leninism–Trotskyism to a moderate form of democratic socialism and finally to a middle-of-the-road position, as a centrist, or as some would say, a conservative Democrat.”

If Daniel Bell was a journalist-cum-scholar, Lipset’s career was always based at the university. After graduate studies in sociology at Columbia, he received a fellowship to go to Canada’s Saskatchewan in order to study the success of the socialist party Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Published as the 1950 dissertation Agrarian Socialism, these studies earned Lipset a doctorate in sociology. During the next couple of decades, he published a series of monographs and taught at Columbia, Stanford, Berkeley and Harvard. From 1962 to 1966, he served as Director of Berkeley’s Institute of International Studies—a research department concerned with comparative studies of political and economic development in the Third World. Described as “the most cited social scientist in the world,” Lipset was a versatile political sociologist whose research included questions of democracy, right-wing populism, social mobility, American exceptionalism and modernization theory. As his student Gary T. Marx puts it, “Marty shared the Enlightenment faith in a positivist social science that could provide answers and be used for social betterment.”

In his first published work, Agrarian Socialism, Lipset set out to answer Werner Sombart’s classic question why there was no socialism in the United States. Comparing the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation’s electoral triumphs with the failures of American socialist parties, Lipset argued that American socialism had been hindered not only by an electorate system which disfavored third parties but also by a relative lack of local activism and community organization. In Agrarian Socialism, Lipset also touched upon a topic which would be important for his later end of ideology theory. Discussing how the Canadian party had been forced to abandon controversial aspects of its socialist ideology in order to gain votes, he argued that all radical movements

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had to face the dilemma between doctrinal purity and political compromise. In terms resembling Bell’s *Marxian Socialism*, Lipset wrote:

> Once a movement achieves legality and wins broad lower-class support, it finds that an ultra-revolutionary, antisocietal approach tends to repel groups who want a change but are not completely dissatisfied with the status quo. At this stage, radical parties must make a choice: either continue to try to win majority support for an all-out radical socialist program, without compromising the original revolutionary doctrine, or seek to win votes for a limited set of objectives by compromising and modifying the parts of the program that challenge the basic values of the more stable groups.⁷

While “totalitarian groups” like communists and fascists were indifferent to public opinion, Lipset explained, all successful socialist parties had been required to eliminate doctrinaire Marxism for a more compromising and moderate political position. “The stronger a radical social movement becomes in a democracy, the less radical it appears in terms of the general cultural values,” he argued. “As it captures society, society captures it.”⁸

While Lipset did not develop the same kind of relation to the Congress for Cultural Freedom as the other end of ideologists, he was affiliated to the organization for many years. After the Milan conference in 1955, he wrote a notice for *The Canadian Forum* in which he, in line with Shils, emphasized that the meeting had been almost totally free from political controversy. “The issues dividing left and right had been reduced to a little more or a little less government ownership and economic planning,” he reported. “No one seemed to believe that it really made much difference which political party controlled the destinies of individual nations in terms of domestic policies.”⁹ While Lipset found the decline of political conflict somewhat disturbing and claimed that he still hoped for intense debates, he stressed that this emerging consensus was a natural result of current changes in Western democracies:

> As a political realist […] I doubt very much that an era in which Keynesian economics are almost universally accepted, in which various institutional safeguards have been created to prevent unemployment, and in which the conservatives find depressions politically impossible, will witness strong controversy between the left and right. Full employment plus strong unions means that the standard of living of the masses continues to rise in almost every industrialized country and the relative difference in style of life between the upper and lower classes constantly declines.¹⁰

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⁸ Ibid., p. 193.
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 171.
The emergence of welfare institutions and Keynesian techniques would settle social conflicts and end the antagonisms between left and right. While Lipset did not use the phrase the end of ideology until the publication of *Political Man* in 1960, his ideas during the mid-1950s were well in line with the arguments put forward by Tingsten, Aron and Shils. In the 1957 essay “Political Sociology,” he polemicized with Marx by suggesting that political radicalism and class conflict were not consequences of maturing capitalism, but, on the contrary, “a concomitant of economic backwardness.” Although underdeveloped countries in the Third World were susceptible to political radicalism, a revolutionary overthrow of the prevailing order “becomes less probable as industrialization is developed successfully.” Similar ideas were advanced in the 1959 article “Some Social Requisites of Democracy,” where Lipset argued that Western liberal democracies had entered “a ‘post-politics’ phase” with a narrowing gap between left and right. “Political controversy has declined in the wealthier stable democracies because the basic political issue of the industrial revolution, the incorporation of the workers into the legitimate body politic, has been settled,” he wrote. If politics had come to an end in the West, however, Lipset noted that the situation was different in decolonized Third World countries where poverty, sharp class divisions and low levels of education continued to fuel revolutionary and non-democratic doctrines like communism.

In other words, Lipset’s end of ideology theory emerged from a juxtaposition of the industrialized countries of the West and the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa. This distinction was also a cornerstone in his major contribution to modernization theory, the 1963 monograph *The First New Nation*. Studying the United States’ political history from the eighteenth century onwards, Lipset suggested that the country could be seen as the first nation in the world to break with colonization, develop an industrialized economy and become modern. More than any other country, American society was permeated by values like achievement, egalitarianism and universalism—precisely those principles which modernization theorists claimed to be emblematic of modernity. These values, in turn, corresponded to what Lipset saw as modern democracy, namely a political system where universal enfranchisement and parliamentary representation attenuated class conflict and prevented revolutionary sentiments and violence. Whereas politics in underdeveloped countries tended to be plagued by virulent conflicts about how to organize society, a modern political system was one “in which the basic internal issues

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12 Ibid., p. 89.
revolve around an interest struggle for the division of national income within a welfare state.”

As the first nation to complete the journey from decolonization to modernity, Lipset argued, the United States could offer Third World states useful experiences for their own efforts to mature and develop. While he did not think that “the new nations will necessarily recapitulate the American experience,” *The First New Nation* was strongly underpinned by a notion of historical development as a transition from traditional society towards the cultural value system, industrialized economy and post-ideological democracy which already existed in the United States. “[I]t may be argued that the entire Western world has been moving in the American direction in their patterns of class relationships, family structures, and ‘other-directedness,’ and that America […] has merely led the way in these patterns,” he wrote. “Thus, at any given time, the differences between America and much of Europe may have remained constant, but this difference might have represented little more than a time lag.”

If Gilman’s claim that the end of ideology theory came out of a comparison between the “industrial” and “underdeveloped” worlds seems somewhat exaggerated, it is certainly correct when it comes to Lipset. His end of ideology theory was firmly embedded in a distinction between the post-ideological West, where the problems caused by industrialization had been settled, and the poor and underdeveloped Third World, where wishes of revolution and radical social change still fueled political ideologies like Marxism and nationalism. While these ideas might have been most apparent in the postscript to *Political Man*, analyzing Lipset’s end of ideology theory requires us to look more closely at two texts published around the same time, namely the essays “Socialism—Left and Right, East and West” from 1958 and “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics” from 1964.

The socio-economic roots of radicalism

In “Socialism—Left and Right,” Lipset sets out to criticize Marx’s idea that the working class would necessarily become more radical as capitalism matured. Current experience, he writes, has proved the opposite to be true. All over the industrialized West, left-wing groups have abandoned the dream of overthrowing capitalism and begun regarding socialism as a utopian myth. This decline of political radicalism, Lipset explains, is ultimately a consequence of successful industrialization. In European, North American and

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15 Ibid., p. 2.
16 Ibid., p. 130.
Australasian countries where “the transition to large-scale industry is more or less completed,” he writes with a reference to Friedrich Engels, Marxism and revolutionary socialism have disappeared or become a sectarian dogma on the margins of politics. “With the growth of economic productivity, the narrowing of the consumption gap in food, clothing, shelter and education, and the rise of the welfare state, the wealthier countries of Western Europe and Australia have begun to resemble the United States,” Lipset claims. The workers of these countries are interested in consuming, not revolting.

In other words, successful industrialization and increasing productivity have undermined the socio-economic basis for radicalism in Western capitalist countries. Political radicalism, Lipset argues, must be understood as a side effect of a too rapid process of industrialization whereby the dissolution of traditional social bonds generates widespread social anxieties. “Wherever industrialization occurred rapidly introducing sharp discontinuities between the pre-industrial and industrial situation, more rather than less extremist working-class based movements emerged.” This was the case at the turn of the century in countries like Sweden, Norway and, most obviously, Russia. Radicalism, Lipset explains:

is found in nations in the early stages of rapid industrialization in which the process itself, though leading to ultimate economic improvement, so disrupts the social and economic conditions of those incorporated in an expanding industrial proletariat that they become potential recruits for extremist movements offering to solve their problems by drastic revolution. Among Western countries, which are past these early stages, extremism is found in the so-called “semi-industrial” nations such as France, Italy, Spain and Greece […]. The United States and Canada escaped the worse evils of industrialization and the consequent radical protests.

In this passage, Lipset outlines the concept of history which undergirds all his writings on the end of ideology. As countries industrialize, they gradually reach a level of material wealth which eliminates the social basis for political doctrines which demand fundamental changes of society. Political radicalism might afflict countries going through the early stages of industrialization, but once these are passed, it will decline. If the masses of the Third World “need the hope implicit in revolutionary chiliastic doctrine” and thereby endorse revolutionary parties, workers in the already industrialized societies of the West support moderate and democratic trade unions.

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19 Ibid., p. 188.
20 Ibid., p. 175-176.
21 Ibid., p. 188.
22 Ibid., p. 191.
If mature Western democracies have moved beyond violent political conflict, Lipset continues, the same kind of moderation cannot be expected from progressive movements in Third World countries. To demand that the leaders of the non-communist left in such states “conform to Western images of the responsible role of unions and Socialist parties,” he writes, “is to forget that many Western labor unions and Socialist parties were similarly ‘irresponsible and demagogic’ in the early stages of their development.” Western socialists must remember that their own organizations faced similar dilemmas when their countries had not yet become fully industrialized.

While “Socialism—Left and Right” might not employ the characteristic terminology of modernization theory, it is obvious that the concept of history expressed in the essay draws on central assumptions of postwar development theory. First, Lipset makes the same distinction between the underdeveloped and traditional countries of Asia and Africa and the industrialized and modern countries of the West. Second, he assumes that the transition from traditional society to industrialized modernity tends to stimulate social unrest and political radicalism—particularly in the form of communism. Finally, the essay is based on the idea of industrialization as a unilinear historical process in which different countries can be located at different points of advancement. To be more precise about this last point, Lipset seems to divide countries into three categories depending on their degree of modernization. First, Western countries like the United States, Canada and the Scandinavian nations, which have completed industrialization, grown wealthy and become stable democracies characterized by declining radicalism and political moderation. Second, semindustrialized countries of southern Europe where the relatively low rate of productivity means the persistence of a dissatisfied working class with sympathies for subversive doctrines like Marxism. Third, underdeveloped and still-industrializing countries of the Third World in which the ongoing transition from traditional society to industrialism generates social distress which makes them highly sensitive to revolutionary doctrines and movements.

In his “Socialism” essay, Lipset represents a concept of history in which industrialization, as an objective historical process, pushes the traditional and underdeveloped countries towards the state of industrialized modernity already achieved by nations like the United States and Canada. Insisting that the wealthiest countries of Europe “have begun to resemble” the United States, and comparing the current turmoil in the Third World with the situation in Western countries during their early stages of industrialization, he implies that there is a historical movement towards the liberal democracy of the United States. Since successful industrial development undermines the socio-economic basis for political radicalism, there seems to be good reasons to believe that communism will eventually pass away and be remembered as an

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unfortunate, yet inevitable, consequence of the transition from tradition to modernity.

**Political Man**

In his 1960 monograph *Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics*, Lipset continues to investigate the correlation between socio-economic development and political ideologies. While the book ties the concept of history in “Socialism—Left and Right” to Lipset’s variation of the end of ideology theme, it also provides a discussion of the post-political order which appears as the telos of industrialization and modernization.

*Political Man* is primarily an effort to analyze the socio-economic conditions which foster and sustain a democratic society. Lipset defines democracy as a political system “which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office.” While democracy requires a peaceful “play” of power and the existence of a political opposition to currently ruling groups, such opposition must not diverge too much from the prevailing order. “A stable democracy,” Lipset maintains, “requires relatively moderate tension among its contending political forces.”

Returning to his earlier writings, Lipset argues that contemporary Western democracies have entered “a ‘post-politics’ phase” characterized by declining conflict between left and right and a widely shared consensus on the superiority of the welfare state. As previously marginalized classes have become enfranchised and incorporated into the political order, the class struggle which used to spark violent partisanship has been transformed into institutionalized collective bargaining within the framework of Keynesian political economy. If this order—which seems to resemble the broker state which appears in Daniel Bell’s writings—is the final stage of what Lipset calls a stable democracy, democracy itself is described as the result of successful modernization. Democratic structures, Lipset explains, are established and sustained by economic growth, industrialization, urbanization and expanding education. Whereas rural societies with deficient educational institutions tend to make people susceptible to anti-democratic doctrines like fascism and communism, urbanization and material affluence create moderate and reformist attitudes. If the deprivation of the masses in underdeveloped countries “predisposes them to view politics as black and white, good and evil,” the working classes in affluent

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24 Lipset, *Political Man*, p. 27.
25 Ibid., p. 78-79.
26 Ibid., p. 82.
societies are more likely to “develop longer time perspectives and more complex and gradualist views of politics.”

Since democracy depends on economic modernization, stable democracies only exist in the West. “[T]he conditions related to stable democracy,” Lipset writes, “are most readily found in the countries of northwest Europe and their English-speaking offspring in America and Australasia.” The United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden are described as the most legitimate and efficient democracies, where the major issues which used to divide society have been solved. In decolonized countries in Asia and Africa, on the other hand, poverty and incomplete industrialization make the establishment of democracy difficult. The survival of democracy in Third World countries depends on these states “ability to meet the needs of their populations over a prolonged period, which will probably mean their ability to cope with industrialization,” Lipset writes. In order to become stable democracies, they have to pursue the modernization process which Western countries have already gone through.

If successful modernization is a prerequisite for democracy, undemocratic doctrines which oppose the prevailing order are, conversely, the outcome of incomplete or deficient modernization. Repeating the argument of “Socialism—Left and Right,” Lipset claims that the appeal of “extremist movements” can be seen as “a response by different strata of the population to the social effects of industrialization at different stages of its development.” Whereas working-class extremism like communism and revolutionary socialism is found in societies undergoing rapid industrialization, and middle-class extremism like fascism exists in countries with large-scale capitalism and a strong labor movement, upper-class extremism like reactionary monarchism is most common in less developed economies where the traditional bonds to royal and clerical institutions remain strong. In this way, all political ideologies and movements which challenge liberal democracy are seen as expressions of obstacles and strains occurring at different stages of industrialization. “Only the well-to-do, highly industrialized and urbanized nations seem immune to the virus,” Lipset notes.

The end of ideology in the West?
In the last chapter of Political Man, Lipset discusses the emergence of the contemporary Western welfare state in terms of the end of ideology. While

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27 Lipset, Political Man, p. 90, 45.
28 Ibid., p. 57.
29 Ibid., p. 70.
31 Ibid., p. 135.
he does not give any clear definition of ideology, his usage of the term is less complex than in the work of previous end of ideologists. Apart from a passage where Lipset makes a somewhat loose connection between “ideological politics” and uncompromising parties which seek to reconstruct the world in accordance with their political philosophies, ideology is simply employed as a synonym for political doctrine.\textsuperscript{32} In this sense, socialism, communism, fascism, racism, conservatism, Peronism, regionalism and Americanism are all referred to as ideologies. Even liberalism—a doctrine which none of Lipset’s predecessors define as an ideology—is described as such.\textsuperscript{33}

When Lipset writes about the end of ideology in \textit{Political Man}, however, the exact meaning of the term ideology is not particularly important. Clarifying that the phrase is taken from Shils’s “Letter from Milan,” he simply uses it as a point of departure for an analysis of the decline of conflict in Western democracies. While one of the premises of \textit{Political Man} is that a stable democracy requires consensus as well as conflict—consensus on the “rules of the game,” conflict about the distribution of wealth and privilege—Lipset observes that “serious intellectual conflicts among groups representing different values have declined sharply” in Western democracies.\textsuperscript{34} He recounts his experience of the Milan conference: the lack of controversy, the consensus on the importance of welfare institutions, and the belief that conservatives and socialists have the same agenda. As the only questions in Western parliaments concern trivial issues like the price of milk or the size of pensions, politics is now, Lipset explains with a reference to Herbert Tingsten, boring. The end of controversy in European and North American democracies marks a milestone in Western history:

\begin{quote}
This change in Western political life reflects the fact that the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved: the workers
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Drawing on political scientist Sigmund Neuman, Lipset distinguishes between “parties of representation” and “parties of integration.” Whereas the former are the kind of parties in Anglo-American and Scandinavian democracies which primarily see their function as securing votes during elections, parties of integration pursue “ideological politics” which “by definition […] does not include the concept of tolerance.” Triggered by uncompromising political ideologies, such parties “are concerned with making the world conform to their basic philosophy. They do not see themselves as contestants in a give-and-take game of pressure politics, but as partisans in a mighty struggle between divine or historic truth on one side and fundamental error on the other.” The most radical forms of integrationism, Lipset explains, are expressed by fascist and communist organizations which define the world entirely in terms of struggle. See Lipset, \textit{Political Man}, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{33} According to Lipset, liberalism means “a commitment to \textit{laissez-faire} ideology, a belief in the vitality of small business, and opposition to strong trade-unions; […] a demand for minimal government intervention and regulation; […] support of equal opportunity for achievement, opposition to aristocracy, and opposition to enforced equality of income; […] anticlericalism and antitraditionalism.” Ibid., p. 129.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 439.
have achieved industrial and political citizenship; the conservatives have accepted the welfare state; and the democratic left has recognized that an increase in over-all state power carries with it more dangers to freedom than solutions for economic problems.\textsuperscript{35}

Since the social conflicts of industrialization have been resolved, political visions about radically different societies are no longer relevant. Rising living standards and enfranchisement of previously excluded groups have reduced social discontent and conflict. As the working class still feels relatively deprived in relation to the rich, class struggle will continue, but “it will be a fight without ideologies, without red flags, without May Day parades.”\textsuperscript{36}

In this way, the end of ideology is merely another name for the society which Lipset perceives to be the end of successful modernization and industrialization, and which he himself describes in terms of post-politics. While minor disagreements and struggles will persist, the conflictual dimension of the political has largely been \textit{transcended} in favor of a general consensus on the supremacy of liberal democracy and capitalism. If the masses have abandoned anti-capitalist doctrines and revolutionary movements, Lipset argues, the intelligentsia have given up their critique of the \textit{status quo} and turned to sociological investigations of mass culture, bureaucratization and social conformity. This “shift away from ideology towards sociology,” he writes, reflects “the loss of interest in political inquiry.”\textsuperscript{37} The postwar economic boom, the realization that Soviet communism is more repressive than Western liberal democracy, and the success of moderate socialism in Europe and North America have made intellectuals reconcile with their own societies. “Like Burke, they have come to look for sources of stability rather than of change,” Lipset writes. “The political issue of the 1950s has become freedom versus Communism, and in that struggle many socialist and liberal intellectuals find themselves identifying with established institutions.”\textsuperscript{38}

While the intelligentsia’s flight from radicalism reflects a general acceptance of contemporary Western society, Lipset acknowledges that some critics in the United States are concerned with what they perceive to be the rise of a bureaucratized and streamlined mass society where people become conformist and status-oriented. Against the accusation of conformity, he maintains that citizens in democratic countries permeated by the values of achievement and egalitarianism are bound to become sensitive to people around them. “[A]s we become more equalitarian,” he writes, “we, and other peoples as well, become more concerned with the opinions of others, and therefore more democratic and more American in the Tocquevillian sense.”\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[35] Lipset, \textit{Political Man}, p. 442-443.
\item[36] Ibid., p. 445
\item[37] Ibid., p. 453.
\item[38] Ibid., p. 368, 369.
\item[39] Ibid., p. 449.
\end{footnotes}
Against the assumption that contemporary mass society eliminates meaningful art and culture, Lipset paints a picture of an affluent society where culture has become democratized and available to all classes:

There is considerable evidence to suggest that higher education, greater economic security, and higher standards of living strengthen the level of culture and democratic freedom. The market for good books, good paintings, and good music is at a high point in American history. There is evidence that tolerance for ethnic minorities too is greater than in the past. More people are receiving a good education in America today than ever before, and regardless of the many weaknesses of that education, it is still true that the more of it one has, the better one's values and consumption patterns from the point of view of the liberal and culturally concerned intellectual.\(^{40}\)

With this affirmation of contemporary American—and Western—society as an order of economic security, democratic freedom and cultural innovation, Lipset provides his readers with a compelling legitimizing narrative. If contemporary Western democracies have solved the social problems of the industrial revolution and turned the violent class struggles of earlier times into a post-political order where a peaceful play of power distributes the goods, there is no need for political doctrines or movements which demand social change.

While Lipset considers political ideologies to be superfluous in the stable democracies of the West, however, he carefully emphasizes that the end of ideology is not a global phenomenon. In line with “Socialism—Left and Right,” he concludes Political Man by pointing out that there is a need for ideologies in underdeveloped Third World countries where the problems of industrialization, religion and the status of democracy “are still unsettled.”\(^{41}\) He continues: “Ideology and passion may no longer be necessary to sustain the class struggle within stable and affluent democracies, but they are clearly needed in the international effort to develop free political and economic institutions in the rest of the world.”\(^{42}\) While Western intellectuals must accept that they cannot contribute much to politics in their own countries, they still have an important role to play in the Third World by helping progressive movements in their struggle for democracy and economic development. In an interesting remark towards the very end of Political Man, Lipset hints that his own book can be read as such an effort. Just like the purpose of Alexis de Tocqueville’s studies of nineteenth-century American democracy was to help Europeans in their efforts to fight absolutism and establish democratic institutions, he explains, the analysis of contemporary Western democracy might contribute to the current political development of Asia and Africa. If Tocqueville provided the oppressed people of Europe with an image of their future,

\(^{40}\) Lipset, Political Man, p. 451-452.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 454.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 456.
Lipset’s clarification of the post-political welfare states of the West constitutes a prototype for the historical development of the Third World.

The European journey towards modernity

Although Lipset returned to the end of ideology theme in several texts at the beginning of the 1960s, few of these added much substance to the arguments already presented in Political Man. The 1964 essay “The Changing Class Structure and Contemporary European Politics” is the exception. An effort to discuss the end of ideology in a strictly European context, this essay offers a clear expression of Lipset’s concept of history.

The history of Western industrialization, Lipset argues in his essay, has largely been a story about class conflict triggered by different political ideologies—or Weltanschauungen—which purported to represent the interests of different social groups. In recent years, however, rising affluence and growing bureaucratization have minimized class conflict and laid the basis for a political system of institutionalized bargaining between workers, business and politicians. With higher living standards, the political and economic integration of groups that used to be excluded, and the acceptance of science and expert knowledge as efficient ways of solving social problems, political ideologies have become obsolete. As industrial production modernizes—a process where family-owned corporations are transformed into large-scale organizations supervised by professional managers—the workers become less antagonistic to capitalists.

Once again, Lipset describes the end of ideology as the result of successful modernization. Since “nations with a high level of industrialization and urbanization tend to have a low level of ideological conflict,” the clearest example of a post-ideological society is also the world’s most modernized country, namely the United States. As “the most advanced society technologically,” Lipset continues, the United States “has presented the image of the European future.” While European countries might lag behind in the journey towards modernity, current changes in these countries indicate that they are approaching the post-political welfare state of the United States. The postwar economic boom and the improvements achieved through governmental planning have engendered a widespread consensus on state regulation, collective bargaining and public welfare institutions. In a passage echoing Tingsten and Bell, Lipset writes the recent history of Europe:

One the one hand, many of the political-economic issues that occasioned deep conflict between representatives of the left and of the right were resolved

44 Ibid., p. 272.
in ways compatible with social-democratic ideology. On the other hand, the
dominant strata, business and other, discovered that they could prosper
through economic reforms that they regarded a decade earlier as the rankest
socialist measures. The socialists and trade unionists found that their formal
structural objectives […] had been accomplished with the cooperation of their
political rivals. The need for government planning for economic growth and
full employment was generally accepted; the obligation of the state to provide
welfare services for the ill, the aged and other dependent groups was viewed
as proper by all parties; and the right of the trade union and political repre-
sentatives of the workers to participate in decisions affecting industry and
politics also was increasingly coming to be accepted.45

With the rise of this class-transcending consensus and political collaboration,
European parties which traditionally represented ideologies like Marxism,
laissez-faire liberalism and reactionary conservatism have begun to endorse
the welfare state. While residues of communism exist in semi-modernized parts
of Europe with low rates of urbanization and relatively non-centralized indus-
tries, most left-wing parties have given up Marxism, accepted economic modern-
ization and approached a moderate social democratic position. And while
reactionary movements still have some appeal in backwards regions with a
petty bourgeoisie which resents large-scale capitalism, these movements are
too marginalized to pose a threat to the evolution of industrial society in Eu-
rope.

Ultimately, this changing political landscape reflects Europeans’ satisfac-
tion with the status quo. If business representatives in France, Italy, and Ger-
many have dropped their hostility towards the state and begun “accepting the
set of managerial ideologies characteristic of the more stable welfare democ-
racies of northern and western Europe,” radical leftists have realized that cap-
tialism does not need to be overthrown.46 Since the West “is ceasing to be
capitalist in any traditional meaning of the term,” Lipset explains, “Com-
munists in the developed countries will not have to make a revolution or come
power in their own right.”47 As an example, the Italian communist party
has turned reformist, begun collaborating with business groups, and, as Lipset
puts it, “joined forces with modernization”.48

More than any other group, it is the emerging urban middle class of clerks,
technicians, managers and civil servants that embodies the support for the
prevailing society. Since the major interest of this growing class is to secure
further employment and push for greater educational opportunities, its mem-
bers are firm supporters of the welfare state and collective bargaining. By fa-
voring moderate politics and dismissing extreme movements on the left and
right, they play a highly important role for stabilizing class relations and pushing the political system towards consensus. By acting in accordance with values like universalism and individual achievement, they epitomize modernity. These changes, Lipset concludes, not only mean the end of rigid class hierarchies but also the final triumph of the cultural values which undergird industrial society. Contemporary Europe is characterized by an increasing emphasis on individual achievement rather than inherited ascription, universalism rather than particularism, and interaction based on the specific roles of individuals rather than their diffuse generalized statuses. By explicitly drawing on Parsons’s pattern variables, it is clear that Lipset describes the transition from tradition to modernity. As modernization proceeds, he continues, European countries will gradually converge with the most developed nation in the world:

All these changes imply the emergence of a somewhat similar social and political culture, one which increasingly resembles the first advanced industrial society to function without institutions and values derivative from a feudal past, the United States. And as has been indicated earlier, this should mean the end of class-linked severely ideological politics. 49

The journey towards modernity is, in other words, a journey towards the contemporary United States. But while the arrival at this destination means the end of total ideologies in the form of Weltanschauungen, they do not mean the end of ideology. In a peculiar, yet crucial remark at the end of “The Changing Class Structure,” Lipset stresses that the emerging consensus on political pragmatism, collective bargaining, gradual reform and governmental planning must be understood as an ideological position, and, more precisely, as “conservative socialism.” 50 As the first end of ideology theorist, then, Lipset ends up declaring the end of ideology to be an ideology in its own right.

A concluding note on Lipset: the tensions of the post-political

Seymour Martin Lipset’s writings on the end of ideology between 1958 and 1964 represent a concept of history in which the capitalist industrialization which occurred in a number of European and North American countries from the mid-eighteenth century onwards is portrayed as a universal process which triggers historical development in all countries. Strongly influenced by modernization theory, Lipset sees history as a process where the forces of urbani-

50 Ibid., p. 296.
zation, industrialization and bureaucratization gradually transform underdeveloped and poor countries into affluent and stable democracies which, in his own words, are located in “a ‘post-politics’ phase”. As countries advance along this process and become affluent, the social basis for political doctrines which aspire to overthrow the prevailing order is eliminated.

Arguably the most teleological of the end of ideologists of the 1950s, Lipset sees industrialization as a process which is destined to lead up to the modernized welfare state epitomized by the contemporary United States. Consistently referring to the successive stages of industrialization—ranging from “pre-industrialism” to the “completion” of industrial development—Lipset clings to an evolutionist concept of history in which different countries are located at different points of advancement along a line of unilinear development. If a few Western states, like the United States and Canada, have completed this evolution and become post-political welfare states characterized by a widespread consensus on the principles of governance, the wealthiest countries in Europe are rapidly approaching this destination. For underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa, however, a long way remains. Still in the early stages of industrialization, these countries are plagued by poverty, social conflict and revolutionary ideologies which threaten to destroy the prevailing order. While Lipset leaves the question of the Third World’s future somewhat hanging in the air, his confidence in the progressive forces of industrialization and his reminder that Western countries experienced similar obstacles during early stages of their development indicate that the underdeveloped countries’ transition to industrialized modernity is merely a question of time. While these countries might need some help from progressive Western intellectuals like Lipset himself, there does not seem to be any question about the direction of their development.

The determinism of this end of ideology theory—acknowledged by Lipset himself after the publication of Political Man—makes it all the stronger in terms of a legitimizing narrative.51 If the welfare state which awaits at the end of modernization represents a more egalitarian, democratic and affluent society, resistance against it appears to be both politically irrational and historically pointless. But while Lipset in a way goes further than previous end of ideologists by presenting the Western welfare state as a natural order which transcends all historical antagonisms between different groups, he nevertheless

51 In an interview from 1972, Lipset acknowledged that one of the underlying themes of Political Man, namely the Marxist assumption that a society’s ideological superstructure changes in adjustment to the underlying technological base, had opened up for a deterministic concept of history in which “the United States as the most advanced country should represent the future rather than the past.” He continued: “From a deterministic perspective, the non-ideological politics of the United States […] should be the kind of politics that the others are moving toward rather than it happening the other way around.” Seymour Martin Lipset quoted in the chapter “Appendix IV. Interview with Seymour Martin Lipset, May 1972” in Ditbener, The End of Ideology, p. 341-342.
suggests that this order is based on a particular ideology, and thereby corresponds to the interests of specific groups. His statement that the end of ideology is itself an ideology was followed up in 1966, when he admitted that anyone who “says that he prefers a system with a low degree of ideologically intense political conflict […] is making an ideological choice.”

These comments create a highly interesting tension in Lipset’s work. Without them, his end of ideology theory would simply be a strong legitimizing narrative embedded in a concept of history as the inexorable movement towards the post-political welfare state where all ideologies have become redundant. With them, Lipset seems to open up for an interpretation of this society as a historically contingent order which can become the object of future struggles and conflicts. Is the welfare state a final form of society which has solved all previous contradictions, or is it a society pregnant with its own future? This is the question which lurks between the lines of Lipset’s writings on the end of ideology.

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9. From Berlin to the Bronx. A summary of the end of ideology discussion in the 1950s

Reviewing the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, one point seems so obvious that there is hardly any reason to dwell on it. From Arthur Koestler’s speech in Berlin in 1950 to Daniel Bell’s 1965 *Marxism–Leninism*, all variations on the end of ideology theme were informed by categorical, at times hostile, anticommunism. Inextricably bound to the Cold War’s mounting tensions between the two superpowers, the ideas discussed in the chapters above took part in a wider cultural and intellectual struggle to undermine Soviet communism and Marxist sympathies in Western Europe and the United States. If many who announced the end of ideology were former communists or radical socialists who now distanced themselves from what they had once believed in, others, like Hughes, Tingsten and Shils, merely proclaimed the decline of a doctrine which they had never supported.

The end of ideology theories’ consistent anticommunism can be observed in the way the very term “ideology” came into play. While appearing to describe the decline of political doctrines in general, the discussion was largely concerned with the alleged end of communism and Marxism. With the exception of Lipset, none of the theorists discussed above designated liberalism or conservatism in terms of ideologies. Even Bell, who perceived the end of ideology to be a dawning consensus between socialists, liberals and conservatives, was reluctant to apply the term to the latter doctrines. In his study of Marxism–Leninism, Bell deliberately contrasted the “ideological activism” of the Soviet Union with the “instrumental” value system of American society. In so doing, he basically delivered the same message as Aron had done when he claimed that the West had no “unique ideology comparable to Marxism–Leninism” or when Hook suggested that Western countries had no ideology in common.

If the end of ideologists saw communism as a partisan ideology of disenchanted intellectuals and romantic fanatics, they refrained from grasping their own values or opinions as connected to particular social groups or historical struggles. Instead, they sought to render them as universal, natural or objective, and, by the same token, as independent of current political structures. Thus, Hughes contrasted communist ideology with what he called “Western freedoms,” whereas Tingsten described the politics of the successful democracy in terms of “applied statistics” and “techniques.” Making clear that there
was no such thing as a Western ideology, Aron implied that the freedoms of speech and criticism which he set out to defend in *L’Opium* were a part of human nature, or, as he put it, “the heart and soul of the unending human adventure”.¹ In Shils’s writings, civility was seen as a set of principles which encapsulated the “common good” of society, thus transcending all partisan interests. In all these cases, the values which the end of ideologists themselves supported tended to be described as comprehending humanity in its entirety or expressing a scientific rationality rather than being connected to a particular political doctrine. Once again, the exception is Lipset, whose argument that the end of ideology was itself an ideology seemed to draw him towards Mannheim’s notion of all political thought as socially determined, and away from the idea of an epistemological position from which one could criticize ideologies without being an ideologist oneself.

If all end of ideology theories of the 1950s converged on a firm anticommunism and a steadfast support for the West, there were important differences between them. During the very first years of the decade, the end of ideology was not perceived as signifying the end of all social conflicts, but the rise of a new historical battle which could not be understood or fought according to the old dichotomies of left and right or socialism and capitalism. Affected by the outbreak of the Korean War and what was perceived to be the beginning of a new global antagonism, Koestler and Hughes saw the end of ideology as corresponding to a situation where Western Europeans were forced to sidestep all internal political disagreements and redirect their energies towards the common enemy of Soviet communism. According to this concept of history, the end of ideology did not reflect the rise of a harmonious and peaceful world without antagonism, but the emergence of an overarching threat which made the old struggles between socialists and capitalists obsolete. Yet Koestler and Hughes expected all significant internal conflicts in Western Europe—and the West in general—to disappear. As Europeans would unite to defend “Western freedoms” against the tyranny of communism, there would be no space for rivaling ideologies or visions of a different future. In their writings, the conflictual dimension of the political was externalized from within the countries of Europe to a space beyond the continent, where it was played out as a militarized and potentially cataclysmic battle between Europe and the Soviet Union. By drawing attention to the threat from Soviet communism and calling for European unity against the external enemy, Koestler and Hughes provided their readers with a mobilizing narrative. Since liberal democracy risked being crushed, Europeans had to drop their internal disputes, abandon neutralism and come together in a resolute defense of Western values and freedoms.

From 1952 onwards, the end of ideology was announced in a more gleeful tone. Beginning with Herbert Tingsten’s articles about the successful democracy, the end of ideology was now described as the result of a situation where universal enfranchisement, Keynesian techniques, increasing productivity and the achievements of social science had paved the way for a society where political doctrines calling for radical transformations of liberal democracy and capitalism had become superfluous. Epitomized by the affluent welfare state, this society was assumed to have solved the problems of the industrial revolution and overcome the violent class conflicts of earlier periods. Small-scale problem-solving and technical measures would replace doctrines calling for structural change.

It should be emphasized that this concept of history, expressed in different variations by Tingsten, Aron, Shils, Bell and Lipset, did not involve any explanations of the political or social struggles which had brought the contemporary welfare state into being. As Howard Brick puts it, the regime of the welfare state was portrayed “as a generic stage of evolutionary development, an achievement of ascendant social rationality.” Rather than being the result of concrete historical conflicts over the formation of the postwar world order, the welfare state and its concomitant consensus were seen as the logical outcome of non-political processes like economic growth and modernization. As shown in the chapters above, most end of ideology theories from the mid-1950s onwards were underpinned by notions of modernization or industrialization as historical processes which, through their own dynamics, would transform all countries into affluent, democratic and stable welfare states. Although a scholar like Bell distanced himself from what he perceived to be the “ideology” of economic development, his colleagues Aron, Shils and Lipset elaborated different concepts of history in which modernization or industrialization were ascribed an objective historical force which would alter the conditions of politics. As countries modernized and industrialized, the argument went, they would eventually reach a stage of economic affluence where political ideologies calling for major social transformation became superfluous. If the advanced industrial states in the West had already reached this stage and transcended the age of ideology, poor and underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa were only going through the earlier phases of modernization, thereby being plagued by the same kinds of ideological controversies which the West had experienced fifty years before. As Third World countries advanced on the trail towards industrial civilization, however, they would also become post-ideological welfare states.

If such a concept of history was most apparent in Lipset’s conviction that modernization would make all nations converge with the most advanced country—the United States—and thereby rid themselves of ideological conflicts, it could also be discerned in Aron’s insistence on the universal validity

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2 Brick, Daniel Bell, p. 218.
of Western industrialization, or, better still, in Shils’s assertion that the ideological controversies in Third World countries was “a sort of measles” which would disappear as these countries grew up. For all their critique of the historical determinism which permeated ideologies like Marxism, many end of ideologists themselves described historical development as propelled by forces which operated more or less independently of human action. While rejecting historical evolutionism in the guise of ideologies, they nonetheless subscribed to a concept of history in which the development of society was seen as the result of processes and dynamics which were considered to be both universal and inevitable.

In contrast to Koestler’s and Hughes’s writings in the very first years of the 1950s, the theorists from Tingsten onwards described the end of ideology as a general social tranquilization whereby the major antagonisms between groups—both nationally and internationally—would be replaced by class-transcending consensus and collaboration between workers, business and government. From this perspective, the end of ideologies like Marxism were the political expression of a more general decline of conflict throughout society. If there were no enemies left to fight, as Bell put it in 1960, it seemed reasonable to expect what Tingsten had described as the development from politics to administration. While Lipset explicitly used the term “post-politics” to describe this scenario, most end of ideologists were satisfied with pointing out that contemporary Western liberal democracy had solved the basic social inequalities of earlier times and thereby put an end to ideologies which fueled conflicts by pitting groups against each other. As we have seen, their writings involved different forms of post-politicization. For Tingsten, Shils and Aron, the conflictual dimension of the political was being transcended in favor of new and non-partisan ways of organizing life in accordance with science or civility. While minor disagreements might occur in the post-ideological welfare states, they argued, economic affluence and democratic enfranchisement had settled the fundamental conflicts of the past and opened up for widespread consensus on the basic principles of governance. For Bell, by contrast, the conflicts which constitute the political were contained by being channeled into a process of institutionalized negotiation between “legitimate” interest groups which had accepted the foundations of the prevailing political order. While such a process of post-politicization accepted conflicts to a certain extent—as objects of deliberation and bargaining between groups searching for consensus—this acceptance was based on the exclusion of actors who expressed profound dissent, purported to represent social classes, or demanded comprehensive transformations of society. Instead of enabling an encounter between opposing standpoints, politics became earmarked for groups which a priori shared a commitment to liberal democracy and the capitalist economy. As discussed above, however, Bell’s writings did not merely contain conflict. At times—and most clearly in his text on the Soviet Union—politics as such was dismissed as a
practice which could not transform the conditions and social relations created by the structures of advanced industrialism and technological development. The technological imperatives which all complex industrial societies entailed seriously circumscribed the possibility of transformation by political means.

By demonstrating the benevolence and progressiveness of Western liberal democracy in contrast to the tyranny and exploitation of Soviet communism, the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s came up with a strong legitimization of the social and economic relations of liberal democracy and capitalism. If Tingsten claimed that there was no better regime than his post-political successful democracy, Aron made it clear that there was no alternative to prevailing American society. Such statements provided policy makers and the wider public in North American and European democracies with legitimizing narratives which stressed the irrationality of resistance against the prevailing order. These legitimizing narratives were perhaps most clearly directed towards the working classes, whose emancipation by liberal democracy, as Aron stressed in 1955, could be contrasted with the “false emancipation” offered by communism. If the welfare state had liberated the workers, they had no reason to revolt against it.

The legitimizing features of the end of ideology theories from Tingsten onwards rested not only on their celebrations of contemporary Western liberal democracy, but, equally importantly, on the way in which they sought to naturalize this society by describing it as caused by processes which were external to, and independent of, concrete power struggles between different groups. Here again, the end of ideologists recurring references to modernization, industrialization and social science served an important function. By describing the welfare state as the result of industrial development, the forces of modernization and the achievements of science—both the pragmatic knowledge provided by sociology and the Keynesian techniques provided by economics—it was depicted as a regime which corresponded to objective historical processes. The welfare state was not the contingent historical crystallization of class conflict or the struggle between Soviet communism and Western liberal democracy but the result of forces and processes which were not only exterior to the realm of politics but also largely independent of human aspirations in general. To resist the welfare state meant resisting modernity and industrialization—or, one might perhaps say, resisting the very dynamics of history.

In relation to previous research, it should be observed that my study is not the first one to highlight the legitimizing aspects of the end of ideology discussion in the 1950s. Noting how the end of ideology became identified with the American side of the Cold War, Howard Brick argues that “there was hardly ever any doubt that ‘the end of ideology’ was itself ideological in the sense of mobilizing ideas for the sake of a political battle.”3 In a quite similar vein, Giles Scott-Smith has described the discussion as a way for the CCF to

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gather European intellectuals in its efforts to undermine Soviet sympathies and reinforce the support for the Marshall Plan and NATO. If the examination of legitimizing and mobilizing narratives on the pages above has made similar points, my investigation has sought to further the analysis of the end of ideology discussion by focusing on two aspects which have not been comprehensively covered in previous research. First, by reviewing the concepts of history in the end of ideology theories of the 1950s, I have sought to clarify the latter’s positions on questions about the course and dynamics of historical development. Demonstrating how the theories were informed by ideas of modernization and industrialization, I have argued that many end of ideologists of the 1950s thought that the processes associated with modernization would transform all countries into post-ideological democracies. Second, by analyzing processes of post-politicization, I have discussed how these theories conceptualized politics in terms of conflict, consensus and reconciliation. Examining discursive attempts to transcend, contain or externalize conflicts—or at other points dismiss politics altogether—I have sought to show that the end of ideologists, in different ways, sought to present Western liberal democracy as a society which had moved, or were about to move, beyond the struggles and conflicts of the early twentieth century. As a result, all citizens would converge on a widespread consensus on the basic principles of governance.

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Part II.
No alternatives
10. Post–Cold War theories in the 1990s

When the true significance of the 1980s freedom revolution sinks in, politics, culture—indeed, the entire human outlook—will change. […] Capitalism will lose its century-old connotation of materialism and greed, and will at last be recognized as an unambiguous good, the only system compatible with our creative human natures.¹

Dick Armey, 1994

Some people think the debate about globalization is whether it is good or bad. To me, globalization just is. We cannot stop it; we have to accept it, and adjust to it. Those countries, those companies, those people who adjust to a changing world will do better. Those who resist will suffer.²

John R. Malott, 1998

All around the globe, socialists are embracing capitalism, government are selling off companies they had previously nationalized, and countries are seeking to entice back multinational corporations that they had expelled just two decades earlier. Marxism and state control are being jettisoned in favor of entrepreneurship; the number of stock markets is exploding; and mutual fund managers have become celebrities. Today, politicians on the left admit that their governments can no longer afford the expansive welfare state, and American liberals recognize that more government may not hold the solution to every problem. Many people are being forced to reexamine and reassess their root assumptions.³

Daniel Yergin & Joseph Stanislaw, 1998

On October 29, 1987, Daniel Bell entered the podium in one of the halls at the London School of Economics to deliver a talk in a series of public lectures arranged by the Cambridge journal Government and Opposition. Only ten days after the Black Monday stock market crash, Bell devoted his lecture to reviewing the intellectual legacy of his twenty-seven-year-old dissertation The End of Ideology. Under the title “The End of Ideology Revisited,” he began the talk

by criticizing how parts of the New Left in the United States had used his book—or the title of his book—to dismiss its author as a conservative technocrat defending the prevailing political order. *The End of Ideology*, Bell insisted, must be understood in a larger historical context, and more particularly as a part of the “war of ideas” fought by intellectuals in the postwar years about the future of the Soviet Union and Stalinism. On the one side, there were the apologists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Bertolt Brecht—men who had overlooked the Moscow Trials, the Gulag Archipelago and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact for an idealized picture of the Soviet Union as a progressive force pushing the world towards the promised land of socialism. On the other side, there were Albert Camus, Raymond Aron, Arthur Koestler and Bell himself, who had argued that ideologies—totalizing philosophies of history which called for revolutionary change—were incorrect modes of thinking which led not only to personal self-deception but to terror and violations of human rights. “The normative consensus emerging in the postwar years in the West,” Bell explained with reference to the latter group, “held that civil politics could replace ideological politics; that the dream of organizing a society by complete blueprint was bound to fail; that no comprehensive social changes should be introduced, necessary as they might seem, without some effort to identify the human and social costs, and that no changes in the way of life [...] be undertaken if they could not be reversed”.

In the end, Bell informed his audience, they had been right. Despite the political turmoil of the 1960s—the rise of student radicalism, the civil rights movement, Third World decolonization and the growing resistance to the Vietnam War—no political ideology had been able to mobilize people under a single banner in opposition to Western liberal democracy. Rather than falsifying the end of ideology theory, the events of May 1968 had merely demonstrated the irrationalities of a generation of postwar baby boomers who revolted against the affluent society which their parents had scrambled to create. “In all this turbulence,” Bell explained in his talk, “there were no new socialist ideas, no ideologies, no programmes. What one saw was the outburst of romantic yearning which restated the Arcadian visions of earlier generations.”

By the end of the 1980s, Bell continued, two ongoing developments seemed to indicate that ideology was coming to an end. First, the political disillusionment and the stagnating economy of the Soviet Union signaled the bankruptcy of communism as an alternative to Western liberal democracy. While central planning along the lines of Marxism–Leninism had proved incapable of organizing a complex modern economy, the economic successes of Brazil, Japan and South Korea showed that Third World countries could prosper by embracing capitalism. As even the Soviet Union and China now

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4 Bell, “The End of Ideology Revisited (Part I),” p. 132.
5 Ibid., p. 138.
6 Ibid., p. 149.
began to employ market mechanisms, the very word “socialism” was becoming hollow. Second, the old Marxist themes of class struggle and socio-economic inequality were becoming increasingly irrelevant. In the late 1980s, one could discern a shift of political conflict from social and economic issues to problems concerning race and culture. Ethnic identities, Bell explained:

seem to become more and more salient as group attachment and conflicts between groups on ethnic, linguistic, religious, communal and similar lines seem to be sources today of cultural/political identifications. [...] As one approaches the twenty-first century, the problems of colour, of tribalism, of ethnic differences—in south-east Asia, the Middle East, the fratricidal hatred in the Muslim world—all bespeak an agenda of issues which contemporary sociology, least of all Marxism, is ill-prepared to understand.7

In the end, Bell concluded, ideology was over. Since men would always seek moral justifications for their acts, no political system could persist outside a framework of morality. A stable moral order, however, must transcend partisan interests and restrain disrupting passions between people. “And that is,” Bell made clear, “the defeat of ideology.”8

If Bell had largely left it to Seymour Martin Lipset to defend the end of ideology theory after 1960, his lecture at the London School of Economics demonstrated that he still clung to his beliefs of the postwar years. What is most interesting about the talk, however, is that it anticipated two post-Cold War theories which would be launched during the years to come. On the one hand, Bell’s insistence that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the demise of Marxism-Leninism meant the end of ideology shared fundamental assumptions with Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 article “The End of History?”. On the other hand, his claim that the rise of ethnic and cultural antagonisms would replace the ideological struggles of the twentieth century was much in line with Samuel Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilizations?” from 1993.

Along with British sociologist Anthony Giddens’s theories about the dawn of a political landscape beyond left and right, the works of Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington re-actualized the dormant end of ideology discussion of the 1950s.9 After the fall of the Berlin Wall, scholars on both sides of the

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8 Ibid., p. 331.
9 There are, of course, other works after 1960 which recall some of the elements of the end of ideology theories of the 1950s. The most obvious is perhaps French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard’s famous 1979 La Condition postmoderne, in which the “grand narratives” of human emancipation and the self-reflexive development of spirit is said to have reached an end. Lyotard’s argument that such “metanarratives”—which also include Marxism and nationalism—have lost their credibility does to a certain extent resonate with the way in which scholars like Raymond Aron and Daniel Bell insisted that the totalizing and teleological thought systems in the guise of political ideologies were becoming obsolete. There are, none-
Atlantic once again claimed that the age of ideologies was over, that left and right had lost their significance, that Marxism was dead and that liberal democracy was the future of humanity. Communism, socialism and other political doctrines calling for profound social change were once again seen as being out of touch with reality.

While the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s mirrored many of the arguments presented by Daniel Bell and his colleagues after the Second World War, they were the products of quite different intellectual and historical contexts. Before taking a closer look at these contexts, three clarifications should be made. First, if the discussion of the 1950s was tied together by the phrase “the end of ideology,” the theorists of the 1990s did not base their arguments on it. While both Fukuyama, Huntington and Giddens converged on the assumption that the old ideologies had become obsolete, the phrase itself was not of particular importance. I have therefore found it appropriate to describe their work as post-Cold War theories rather than end of ideology theories. Second, unlike the quite cohesive discussion of the 1950s when the end of ideology was announced by a number of personally affiliated scholars with a common base in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the post-Cold War theories after the fall of the Berlin Wall cannot be understood in terms of a singular discussion or debate. The writings analyzed in the forthcoming chapters should rather be seen as separate works which did not necessarily share any common political or institutional grounds. Third, and related to this last point, the theories presented by Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington between 1989 and 2000 were conceived from quite different perspectives. If I have described the end of ideology theories of the 1950s as variations on a basic theme, Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington discussed questions of modernity, political conflict and historical progress in sharply contrasting ways. If scholars like Aron, Shils and Lipset clung to one or several of the central assumptions of modernization theory, the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s developed these assumptions in quite different directions.

theless, crucial differences between these perspectives. First, Lyotard’s rejection of any connection between scientific development and human emancipation is hardly in line with the end of ideology theorists’ confidence in the political possibilities of natural science and empirical sociology. Second, his skepticism towards any kind of linear development of science and knowledge contrasts with the end of ideology scholars’ belief in the progressive features of scientific work. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Lyotard’s diagnosis of the postmodern era as characterized by the proliferation of separate “language-games” without common discursive regulations seems to conflict with the end of ideology theorists’ leaning towards a universalistic rhetoric based on concepts like individual freedom, human rights and political autonomy. For a further comment on the relation between La Condition postmoderne and the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, see Brick, “The End of Ideology Thesis,” p. 107-108.
The fall of the Berlin Wall and Cold War triumphalism

The post-Cold War theories must first of all be understood in relation to the geopolitical transformations caused by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991, and the democratic overthrow of communist regimes in Eastern Europe effectively ended four decades of Cold War conflict between the socialism of the Eastern bloc and the liberal democracy of the United States and its Western European allies. As a result of this “political earthquake,” as Tony Judt describes the events of 1989, the world ceased to be comprehensible in terms of a static antagonism between West and East. “What had once seemed permanent and somehow inevitable would take on a more transient air,” Judt notes. “The Cold-War confrontation; the schism separating East from West; the contest between ‘Communism’ and ‘capitalism’; the separate and non-communicating stories of prosperous western Europe and the Soviet bloc satellites to its east: all these could no longer be understood as the products of ideological necessity or the iron logic of politics.”

From a Western perspective, the fall of the Berlin Wall triggered a new political outlook. If the end of actually existing socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe meant the apparent defeat of Marxism as a historical project, it also seemed to confirm the supremacy of Western, and, more particularly, American society. By the end of the 1980s, politicians, journalists and scholars in the United States and Europe began celebrating the end of the Cold War as a historical triumph for liberal democracy and capitalism. “After a few millennia of trying every form of political system,” American columnist Charles Krauthammer announced in the spring of 1989, “we close this millennium with the sure knowledge that in liberal, pluralist, capitalist democracy we have found what we have been looking for.” He continued:

This decade has seen the rest of the world register its agreement that to be modern—to be advanced and humane—is to embrace such Western political values as pluralism, democracy and free markets. The verdict is in from Korea, Chile, the Philippines, much of Africa, Poland, Hungary, China. And now, mirabile dictu, the Soviet Union.”

For Krauthammer, the fall of communism thus marked the victory of Western culture, politics and economy. This notion was shared by the aged Karl Popper, who explained in 1993 that “Western culture is in many respects superior to all others.” This was proved, he continued, “by the way in which Western culture is readily implemented all over the world.” When Popper died in 1994, he did so in the conviction that his open society was in safe hands. “It seems

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obvious,” he argued, “that there is hardly a more peace-loving nation on this earth than the United States of America.”

If Krauthammer and Popper saw the end of the Cold War as a grand triumph for Western culture, others interpreted it as the irrevocable failure of socialism. “The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism behind the Iron Curtain, and the changing character of China have reduced the defenders of a Marxian-type collectivism to a small hardy band concentrated in Western universities,” economist Milton Friedman wrote in 1994. “Today there is wide agreement that socialism is a failure, and capitalism a success.” Such convictions would have reverberations for a long time to come. In September 2002, one year after the 9/11 terror attacks, the American government opened its National Security Strategy with the following lines:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity.

Taking the end of the Cold War as evidence of the historical victory of Western liberal democracy and capitalism, these statements belong to the genre of literature which historian Ellen Schrecker has called “Cold War triumphalism.” For politicians and writers celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall as a great triumph for the West, Schrecker argues, communism’s failure was tantamount to America’s success. Rather than being caused by internal contradictions or political dissidence in the socialist countries, the fall of the Soviet Union was seen as the outcome of the strategic policies of the American government, the dynamic vitality of the American economy and the moral superiority of American culture. In terms of politics, the triumphalist discourse regarded the end of Soviet communism as a proof of the superiority of liberal democratic institutions over dictatorial one-party systems. In terms of the economy, it saw the fall of the Berlin Wall as an indication that the neoliberal systems which had been established in Europe and the United States during the 1980s were superior to any kind of planned or state-organized economic

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13 Milton Friedman in Armey et al., “Serfdom USA,” p. 16.

system. “Just as winning the Cold War vindicated the West’s military buildup,” Schrecker writes, “so too it conferred a similar legitimacy to the neoliberalism that came to dominate economic thought by the 1980s.”

The conviction that the West had won the Cold War gave new impetus to modernization theory’s old ideas about a historical evolution towards liberal democracy. As noted in Chapter 1, modernization theorist Lucien Pye argued in the spring of 1990 that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the events at Tiananmen Square in Beijing signaled “another great turning point in history” and that there were “historic forces at work” dismantling authoritarian regimes and triggering democracy and pluralism. The same year, political scientist Dankwart A. Rustow published “Democracy. A Global Revolution?,” an essay discussing what was perceived to be a worldwide transition towards liberal democracy. According to Rustow, the post-totalitarian states of the Soviet Union and Third World had no options other than to embrace Western politics:

> Whatever the impetus for political change in Warsaw, Beijing or Santiago, there was little doubt about its direction. Neither communist nor military regimes managed to hold out any viable ideological alternative. [...] When communist regimes started tottering, four decades of their own Cold War propaganda left little doubt in the minds of the citizenry that capitalism and democracy were the logical alternative.17

Similar ideas were advanced by political scientist Bruce Russett, whose 1993 book *Grasping the Democratic Peace* suggested that the end of the Cold War opened up for a more peaceful world order comprised of mutually respectable liberal democracies. “The end of ideological hostility,” Russett wrote with reference to the fall of the Soviet Union, “represents a surrender to the force of Western values of economic and especially political freedom.” If history was a process of wars and conquest, he explained towards the end of the book, an international system of democratic states “might in that sense represent ‘the end of history.’”18

The post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s all took part in this celebration of the West. They interpreted the fall of the Berlin Wall as the end point for socialist or Marxist movements which had posed a major threat to Western liberal democracy during the latter part of the twentieth century. If Margaret Thatcher had claimed already in the early 1980s that there were no alternatives to the laissez-faire policies pursued by the Tories in the United Kingdom,

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16 Pye, “Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism,” p. 6, 5.
they followed suit by proclaiming that political movements which aspired to transform the prevailing order of the West were bound to fail. Political ideology was ending, as Francis Fukuyama put it in 1989, because of “the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.”19 Convinced that he lived “in a world where there are no alternatives to capitalism,” Anthony Giddens argued that the dreams of socialism were “as dead as the Old Conservatism that once opposed them.”20 Even Samuel Huntington, whose *Clash of Civilizations* did not subscribe to the triumphalist concept of history, celebrated the superiority of the West against other cultures in the world. With the end of the Cold War and the demise of what President Reagan had called the “Evil empire,” the ghost which had haunted Europe since the mid-nineteenth century indeed seemed to be dead. This signaled the triumph not only of liberal democracy, but also of free market capitalism.

The neoliberal turn

As seen in the chapters above, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s was closely connected to Keynesianism and the idea of a welfare state designed to prevent the social inequalities of the interwar period. By contrast, the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s were more influenced by neoclassical, or neoliberal, economic theory. If the end of ideologists of the 1950s celebrated Keynesian techniques and state-supervised collaboration between labor and capital, the theorists of the 1990s had an essentially anti-Keynesian approach. Convinced that the days of comprehensive governmental intervention were over and that markets should largely be left to regulate themselves, theorists like Francis Fukuyama and Anthony Giddens argued that the retreat of the nation-state and the demise of large-scale welfare systems signaled the end of Marxism and socialism.

Such ideas resonated with the wider triumphalist discourse. According to intellectual historian Nelson Lichtenstein, the end of the Cold War was not only perceived to be a success for Western liberal democracy but also an indication that the deregulations and privatizations pursued by governments in the United States and the United Kingdom during the 1980s were superior to any kind of planned system. The demise of the Soviet Union and the opening of the Chinese economy, Lichtenstein writes:

> seemed to demonstrate that any organization of society that substituted economic planning for a market mechanism was bound to lead to a disaster of the first order, both political and social. Indeed, the elimination of this world-

19 Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 3.
historical rival devaluated the ideological role played by those Keynesian, so-
cial-democratic programs and compacts that in the early Cold War years had
been a vital component of the claim that in the world of “actually existing”
capitalism the sharp elbows had been tucked and the marked forces tamed.

While the roots of neoliberalism stretch back to political economists like
Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the rise of twentieth-century neoliberal
thought is often attributed to a number of meetings in Western Europe
around the time of the Second World War. Most important was the estab-
lishment of the Mont Pelerin Society in Switzerland in April 1947, where
philosopher Friedrich Hayek gathered a number of academics, intellectuals
and politicians in order to create a network of resistance against what was
perceived to be a drift towards collectivism and state interventionism in West-
ern democracies. In response to what was called “the present crisis,” the
group—which included Ludwig von Mises, Karl Popper, Michael Polanyi,
Herbert Tingsten, Milton Friedman and Wilhelm Röpke—sought to vindic-
cate the values of private property, individual liberty and free markets. As
Hayek had argued in his 1944 classic *The Road to Serfdom*, collectivism and
state planning contained inherent totalitarianism. In a paper distributed to the
participants at the Mont Pelerin meeting, he stressed the importance of pre-
senting “a new liberal program which appeals to the imagination” and a “truly
liberal radicalism” which could transcend the diluted social liberalism of the
late 1940s.

The most important institution for the promotion of neoliberal theories,
however, was the formation of the Chicago School of Economics. Originally
established by Hayek and a number of University of Chicago economists in

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the late 1940s as a research project on free markets, this network would become closely associated with American economist Milton Friedman. In his 1962 bestseller *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman criticized Keynesianism by stressing the necessity of limited government, privatization of public monopolies, reduction of welfare measures and the introduction of a flat-rate income tax. As Friedman explained in 1974, “‘Chicago’ stands for belief in the efficacy of the free market as a means of organizing resources, for skepticism about government intervention into economic affairs, and for emphasis on the quantity theory of money as a key factor in producing inflation.”

If such ideas “were pushed to the margins by Keynesianism and the welfare state,” as political theorist Benjamin R. Barber puts it, the crisis of European and North American economies in the early 1970s opened up for the actual implementation of neoliberal economics. With the 1971 breakdown of the Bretton Woods system, the 1973 oil crisis, and the increasing problem of simultaneous inflation and unemployment, Keynesian measures seemed incapable of generating economic stability. After the conservative political triumph at the end of the 1970s—epitomized by Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 victory in the United Kingdom and the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan in the United States—the stage was set for a new economic practice beyond Keynesianism.

Committed to downsizing welfare state institutions, the Thatcher government followed Friedman’s recommendations and began privatizing public enterprises, reducing taxes, restricting union power and encouraging entrepreneurial initiative. Convinced that it “is our duty to look after ourselves,” Thatcher saw the task of government to be the liberation of the individual from all kinds of state interference. During the same period, the Reagan administration launched the program of “Reaganomics” which included cutting taxes, downsizing the federal budget, deregulating industries and stressing the importance of a balanced budget. Calling for “a substantial break with past policy,” the President argued that government itself was one part of the economic problems facing the United States:

> Well-intentioned government regulations do not contribute to economic vitality. In fact, government spending has become so extensive that it contributes to the economic problems it was designed to cure. More government intervention in the economy cannot possibly be a solution to our economic problems.

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25 For a discussion about the formation of the Chicago School of Economics during the 1940s, see Rob van Horn & Philip Mirowski, “The Rise of the Chicago School of Economics and the Birth of Neoliberalism,” in Mirowski & Plehwe (eds.), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin.*


problems. [---] It is our basic belief that only by reducing the growth of government can we increase the growth of the economy. [---] The new policy is based on the premise that the people who make up the economy—workers, managers, savers, investors, buyers, and sellers—do not need the government to make reasoned and intelligent decisions about how best to organize and run their own lives.29

By the end of the 1980s, the policies pursued by the Thatcher and Reagan governments had become accepted by large segments of leading economists in Europe and the United States. In 1989, British economist John Williamson coined the term the “Washington Consensus” to describe the prescriptions which American government agencies and international financial institutions like the IMF propagated towards poor countries in Latin America. If the development policies of the postwar decades had been guided by modernization theory’s assumption that economic growth in the Third World should be attained through governmental planning, the Washington consensus described by Williamson sought to shrink the purview of the state by preventing budget deficits, opening up for foreign capital, privatizing state enterprises and deregulating markets. The new consensus, Williamson explained, “may be summarized as prudent macroeconomic policies, outward orientation, and free-market capitalism.”30

During the 1990s, the fall of the Keynesian consensus was reflected in the rightwards drift of socialist parties in Europe. This was perhaps most clear in the United Kingdom, where the Labour Party rebranded itself as New Labour in 1994, distancing itself from its previous commitment to Keynesianism. In the party’s 1997 election manifesto—a text cleansed from the words socialism or social democracy—party leader Tony Blair explained that the party would move beyond “the bitter political struggles of left and right” and that class conflict or problems about private or public ownership “have no relevance whatsoever to the modern world”.31 Clearly influenced by neoliberal economics, the manifesto stated that government could not prevent economic downturns and that New Labour did not intend to raise taxes, increase public expenditure or interfere with the deregulations of trade and industry pursued by the Tories. “The era of the grand ideologies” [...] is over,” Blair announced in

Praising consensus and downplaying class conflict, he described New Labour as a party for “the self-employed and the unemployed, small businesspeople and their customers, managers and workers, home-owners and council tenants, skilled engineers as well as skilled doctors and teachers.”

In relation to the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s, it should be stressed that the neoliberal ideas about the self-regulating market tended to entail explicitly anti-political impulses. If Hayek had argued in *The Road to Serfdom* that the chief task of government was to preserve the order of the market, his follower Murray N. Rothbard maintained that “the political process inherently tends to delay and thwart the realization of any expected gains.” Rothbard’s colleague James M. Buchanan endorsed what he called “the simple principle of laissez-faire” which stated that “results which emerge from the interactions of persons left alone may be, and often are, superior to those results that emerge from overt political interference.” At the end of the century, Swedish journalist Johan Norberg followed suit by arguing that “a society does not have to be held together by political force and centralized decision-making,” since “common agreements and self-interest are often a much more appropriate and efficient way of organizing life.” If the laws of the market were to be extended to all spheres of society, as neoliberals argued with increasing confidence in the 1990s, there was no need for grand political doctrines like Marxism or a Keynesian political economy. From this perspective, Lichtenstein observes, capitalist markets were seen as “the key to the resolution of all social and political problems, both at home and abroad.” After the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of actually existing socialism, nothing seemed to stop capitalism from universal expansion. The world was, to put it differently, becoming globalized.

The age of globalization

If postmodernism was the key concept of the 1980s, British sociologist Malcolm Waters wrote in 1995, “globalization may be the concept of the 1990s, a key idea by which we understand the transition of human society into the third millennium.” Rarely heard of in political or academic discourse before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, globalization would, as Waters put it, become “the buzzword of the 1990s in the analysis of social change.” Ranging from highbrow academic investigations to business magazine manuals, the proliferating literature on globalization suggested that the increasing transnational flow of capital, labor, technology and commodities was about to break down national borders and integrate countries all over the world into a single system of market capitalism.

While globalization would become the subject of harsh debates in which dissenting voices questioned the desirability of these historical developments and criticized the allegedly neoliberal imperatives underlying the celebrations of globalization, most scholars seemed to agree on some basic assumptions. First, globalization was seen as a process in which national markets were being integrated into a single worldwide capitalist system. With the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the gradual liberalization of the Chinese economy, no external forces or boundaries seemed to restrain capitalism from a global extension. If the international economic system previously comprised loosely tied national units, American business scholars Lee E. Preston and Duane Windsor explained in 1992, it was now possible to discern the emergence of “a truly ‘global’ economy, an interdependent system of trade, investment, and development that touches nearly all parts of the world.” Increasing transnational trade and financial investments, the integration of European nations into a common market, and concerted political efforts to facilitate international mobility of capital seemed to mark the emergence of a global economic system beyond the Cold War’s divisions along national or geopolitical lines. “Today goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, communications, as well as crime, culture, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs, readily flow

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39 Ibid., p. 38.
across territorial boundaries,” political scientists David Held and Anthony McGrew wrote in 1993. “The existence of global systems of trade, finance and production binds together the prosperity and fate of households, communities and nations across the world.”

Second, globalization was seen as a process whereby the unleashed forces of the market undermined governmental power. As political scientist Robert W. Cox put it in 1994, “a new global political structure is emerging. The Old Westphalian concept of a system of sovereign states is no longer an adequate way of conceptualizing world politics.” The essence of the new world order, American law professor Richard A. Falk explained in 1993, “is the globalization of capital and the power of market forces, bypassing even the strongest states. States are now unable really to control interest rates or the value of their own currencies, the most elemental aspects of traditional notions of territorial sovereignty.” With the growing influence of multinational corporations, transnational finance institutions and worldwide media conglomerates, scholars argued, globalization minimized the sovereign nation-state's capacity to pursue comprehensive political reforms. As political economist Susan Strange argued in her 1996 *The retreat of the state*, “the impersonal forces of world markets […] are now more powerful than the states to whom ultimate political authority over society and economy is supposed to belong. Where states were once the masters of markets, now it is the markets which, on many crucial issues, are the masters over the governments of states.” While Strange largely refrained from using the term globalization, her book was nonetheless concerned with demonstrating how accelerating flows of finance, technology and organized crime transferred political power from nation-states to transnational corporations, economic cartels and other non-governmental authorities.

Third, globalization was perceived to be an—at least partly—irreversible historical process which was propelled by technological factors beyond the purview of human aspirations or political agency. “[M]any globalizing forces,” Malcolm Waters observed in his book on globalization, “are impersonal and beyond the control and intentions of any individual or groups of individuals.”

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Waters’s colleague Roland Robertson suggested that “the trends towards the unicity of the world are, when all is said and done, inexorable.” From this perspective, globalization was seen as a process which evolved regardless of the actions of politicians or ordinary citizens. As Finnish-Swedish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright wrote in 1997, the “moulding forces of transnational character are largely anonymous and therefore difficult to identify. They do not form a unified system or order.” Like modernization thirty years earlier, globalization was, as we will see in the following chapters, perceived to be a historical subject in its own right.

If the scholarly literature tended to refrain from drawing too drastic conclusions about the implications of globalization, many economists, policymakers and journalists used the concept in a more straightforward and unambiguous manner. These “market globalists”—to use political scientist Manfred B. Steger’s term—praised globalization as an inescapable historical process which would bring prosperity and affluence to the world. “[G]lobalization is inevitable,” American Under-Secretary of State Stuart E. Eizenstat explained in 1998. “Like the waves crashing on the ocean shore, there is nothing we can do to stop it. The question should not be how to resist globalization, but how best to adapt to it, to adjust to it, and to shape it to our advantage.” In an article mocking the Zapatista guerilla in Mexico, American journalist Thomas L. Friedman refuted writers who thought that globalization could be reversed. “It can’t,” he explained to his readers. “It’s inevitable.” In a similar vein, Filipino politician Manuel Villar Jr. told the United Nations in 1998 that “we cannot simply wish away the process of globalization,” and that the development towards global integration was “irreversible.”

If globalization was inevitable, market globalists also maintained that it was an essentially advantageous phenomenon which would benefit both advanced capitalist countries in the West and underdeveloped nations in Asia,

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49 See the chapter “The Roots of Market Globalism” in Steger, *Globalisms*.
Africa and Latin America. In the Global Development Report from 1995, the World Bank advised “developing and transitional economies” in non-Western countries to secure growth and prosperity by joining the global market, shrinking the public sector and letting market forces allocate resources. “If poor countries do not pursue market-based policies, or if the trend toward greater global integration is halted by protectionism,” the Report warned, “the future could instead witness slow growth and increasing global inequality.”

Similar ideas were advanced at the very top level of politics. After the G-7 summit in Lyon in the summer of 1996, the heads of state published the joint statement “Making a Success of Globalization for the Benefit of All,” which explained:

Economic growth and progress in today’s interdependent world is bound up with the process of globalization. Globalization provides great opportunities for the future, not only for our countries, but for all others too. Its many positive aspects include an unprecedented expansion of investment and trade; the opening up to international trade of the world’s most populous regions and opportunities for more developing countries to improve their standards of living; the increasingly rapid dissemination of information, technological innovation and the proliferation of skilled jobs. These characteristics of globalization have led to a considerable expansion of wealth and prosperity in the world. Hence, we are convinced that the process of globalization is a source of hope for the future. History shows that rising living standards depend crucially on reaping the gains from trade, international investment and technical progress.

By facilitating transnational trade and a globally integrated market economy, globalization would bring prosperity to the whole world. For President Clinton’s administration in the United States, the integration of previously non-capitalist countries into the global market became an explicit foreign policy objective. “Throughout the cold war, we contained a global threat to market democracies,” Clinton’s National Security Adviser Anthony Lake explained in the fall of 1993. “[N]ow, we should seek to enlarge their reach.” In practical terms, Lake continued, this did not only mean strengthening new democratic countries and market economies but also countering “backlash states” which “cut themselves off from the very forces that create wealth and social dynamism.”

If the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s was intimately tied up with the bipolar world order and the Cold War’s static conflict between the West

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and the East, the post-Cold War theories launched after 1989 were all marked by the idea of an increasingly unified and interconnected world. Although Anthony Giddens was the only theorist studied below to use globalization as a key concept in his writings, Francis Fukuyama’s and Samuel Huntington’s theories were also based on the assumption that the borders and divisions which had set different parts of the world apart were now rapidly breaking down. As the twentieth century was coming to an end, the people of the world were no longer separated by material walls or geopolitical blocs. But while Fukuyama, Giddens, and Huntington all agreed on the breakdown of the bipolar world order, they had sharply differing prescriptions about how to handle this new and unified world.
In his essay “Time of Illusion,” American historian Bruce Cumings remembers walking through the University of Chicago in the winter of early 1989 and seeing a poster for a lecture on Hegel by a man named Francis Fukuyama. Assuming that the speaker would be “one of the venerable Japanese scholars of Hegel,” Cumings was disappointed when he realized that Fukuyama was a young American State Department deputy who claimed to have found a radically new meaning of Hegel’s dialectics. Although the lecture was introduced by prominent classicist Allan Bloom, who claimed that the speaker had written a remarkable text on the end of the Cold War, Cumings was not impressed by Fukuyama’s arguments. “And so I departed after twenty minutes,” he remembers, “thinking that this line of argument would go nowhere.”

Little did Cumings know that Francis Fukuyama was about to spark one of the greatest intellectual controversies in the United States during the 1990s. With his insistence that the fall of the Soviet Union marked the universal victory of liberal democracy and the end of human history—first presented in the 1989 essay “The End of History?” and later developed in the monograph *The End of History and the Last Man* from 1992—Fukuyama indeed made some audacious statements. At the same time, his early work echoed contemporary Cold War triumphalism in the United States and Western Europe. In the words of Ellen Schrecker, Fukuyama was “triumphalism’s intellectual guru.” Arguably the boldest of the theorists discussed in this dissertation, Fukuyama presented a full-blown legitimizing narrative which stressed the historical necessity of the prevailing political order and equated human nature with liberal democracy and free market capitalism.

As illustrated by Bruce Cumings’s anecdote, Fukuyama was a relatively unknown scholar in 1989. While holding a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard, his professional background was primarily in think-tank-directed research and professional policy-making. Born in 1952 in Chicago in a family of Japanese immigrants, Fukuyama pursued undergraduate studies in classics and political philosophy at Cornell University during the early 1970s. After a

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2 Ibid.
brief period of studying comparative literature in Paris and attending the seminars of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, he left the humanities and enrolled in political science at Harvard. Remembering his time with Derrida and Barthes, Fukuyama later explained that he was “turned off by their nihilistic idea of what literature was all about” and that he “developed such an aversion to that whole over-intellectual approach that I turned to nuclear weapons instead.”

By the time of his 1981 dissertation Nuclear Shadowboxing. Soviet Intervention Threats in the Middle East, Fukuyama was employed as an analyst at RAND Corporation’s Political Science Department in Santa Barbara. Specializing in issues on Soviet foreign policy, he spent the 1980s writing a number of RAND studies on the Soviet Union’s military role in Afghanistan and Middle Eastern countries. At the time of his end of history essay in 1989, he had recently been appointed as Deputy Director at the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff in Washington with a special responsibility for European political-military affairs.

As a philosophy student at Cornell under Allan Bloom, Fukuyama had been introduced to the idiosyncratic readings of Hegel pursued by Russian-French philosopher Alexandre Kojève in Paris during the late 1930s. The idea of equating the fall of the Soviet Union with what Kojève had called the end of history, Fukuyama explained afterwards, was born in 1988 when he read a text in which Mikhail Gorbachev claimed that the essence of socialism was competition. After delivering the lecture at the University of Chicago in the early winter of 1989, Fukuyama went on to develop his ideas on dialectics, democracy and historical progress into a more cohesive essay. In the summer of 1989, less than six months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, “The End of History?” was published in a small-circulation international relations journal, The National Interest, along with comments from prominent intellectuals like Bloom and Irving Kristol. “There was,” as Fukuyama remembered, “no respectable academic journal that would print an article with a title like ‘The End of History?’, much less one that would feature it prominently”.

Fukuyama and Kojève

While Fukuyama liked to see himself as a Hegelian, his theories were strongly filtered through the thought of Alexandre Kojève. To understand Fukuyama’s theories about the end of history, we should therefore take a brief look at Kojève’s lectures on Hegel as presented in his 1947 Introduction à la Lecture de

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Hegel—a work edited and published by French poet Raymond Queneau and later presented to an American audience by Allan Bloom.

In his reading of *Phenomenologie des Geistes*, Kojève argued that human history was propelled by what Hegel had called the dialectic between master and slave. According to Kojève, human beings were characterized by an innate desire to be recognized as humans rather than merely animals. What distinguished men from animals was that they were able, and willing, to transcend the biological drive for self-preservation and risk their lives for the sake of being recognized by others. Human history, Kojève explained, had therefore begun in a bloody fight involving two men ready to die in order to force the other to recognize them. When faced with the threat of death, one of these contestants surrendered to the other. By failing to overcome his animal existence, he lost the battle and became a slave who was forced to satisfy the other by working for and recognizing him. The victor, on the other hand, had proved his humanity by challenging death and pursuing the battle to its end. He became a master, existing as an ostensibly free human being thanks to the recognition of the slave.

The essential problem with the relation between master and slave, Kojève explained, was that the latter failed to provide the former with an authentic recognition. Such recognition could only come from another human being, which the slave, who had failed to meet the requirements to become human, was not. Rather than being a genuinely free human being, the master was dependent upon an animal-like thing, trapped in what Kojève called “an existential impasse.” The slave, in contrast, had the seeds of freedom in his own hands. In the process of working for the master and educating himself in order to undertake this labor, he gradually started to take control over nature. By transforming nature into objects, he became aware of his own, autonomous, existence and began attaining an idea of human freedom. By negating nature through his work, Kojève wrote, “the Slave transforms himself […] and thus creates the new objective conditions that permit him to take up once more the liberating Fight for recognition that he refused in the beginning for fear of death.”

While this master and slave dialectic had triggered history throughout the millennia, Kojève explained, it would not continue forever. Through a revolution pursued by the slaves, history would finally culminate in a society where the dialectic was resolved so that all members of humanity recognized each other as free human beings. In this “universal and homogenous state,” all differences of class, race and nation would be overcome, and each individual would become recognized as a citizen. “By fully realizing Individuality,” Kojève wrote, “the universal and homogenous State completes History, since

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7 Ibid., p. 29–30.
Man, satisfied in and by this State, will not be tempted to negate it and thus to create something new in its place.\(^8\)

With the emergence of the universal and homogenous state, humanity would enter a post-historical phase where the dichotomy between humanity and nature would be overcome and philosophy elevated into absolute science. For Hegel, Kojève claimed, the end of history was already in the making. The young Hegel of the *Phenomenologie* had perceived the universal and homogenous state to be created by Napoleon in the wake of the French Revolution. By overthrowing *l’ancien régime* and installing a political order based on the Enlightenment credo of individual freedom, the French bourgeoisie had transcended the dialectics between master and slave. While Hegel knew that this process was not yet fully completed, Kojève maintained, he nonetheless thought that Napoleon’s wars in Europe and the subsequent dissemination of the Enlightenment marked the first steps towards such a state.

For Kojève himself, the end of history had *de facto* been reached in the democracies of Europe and North America. With Napoleon’s 1806 battle in Jena against the Prussians, he explained, “the vanguard of humanity virtually attained the limit and the aim, that is, the *end*, of Man’s historical evolution. What has happened since then was but an extension in space of the universal revolutionary force actualized in France by Robespierrre-Napoleon.” All of subsequent history had the basic effect of forcing post-Napoleonic Europe to “speed up the elimination of the numerous more or less anachronistic sequels to its pre-revolutionary past.”\(^9\) This development has proceeded farthest in the United States—a country described by Kojève as a classless society on the verge of Marxist utopia—and in Japan. In post-historical Japan, he explained, the violence and slavery of previous history had been replaced by an aesthetic snobbism expressed through tea ceremonies and flower arrangements. Instead of caring about religion, politics or ethics in the historical sense—that is, systems related to the master and slave dialectic—the Japanese were devoted to a sheer play with forms. Perhaps, Kojève speculated, “the recently begun interaction between Japan and the Western World will finally lead [...] to a ‘Japanization’ of the Westerners (including the Russians).”\(^10\)

“The End of History?” and the triumph of liberal democracy

In his essay “The End of History?” from 1989, Fukuyama draws heavily on the concept of history presented by Kojève. Seemingly indifferent to the 1980s discussions about postmodernity, the end of “grand narratives” and the illusion

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\(^8\) Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p. 237.

\(^9\) Ibid., footnote on p. 160.

\(^10\) Ibid., footnote on p. 162.
of historical progress, Fukuyama devotes the article to constructing a philosophy of history which culminates in the contemporary United States. While he follows Kojève in arguing that humanity is approaching a post-political era without conflict or struggle, he is more keen to proclaim this as a great victory for liberalism.

Fukuyama begins his essay by claiming that the fall of the Soviet Union marks not merely the end of forty years of geopolitical conflict, but, more importantly, the climax of a historical process which has gone on for centuries. “What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War,” he writes, “but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”\textsuperscript{11} Eager to distance himself from the discussion of the 1950s, he asserts that this does not mean the “end of ideology” in the sense of a convergence between capitalism and socialism, but the “unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.”\textsuperscript{12} The triumph of the West, he continues, is evident in the exhaustion of alternatives to Western liberalism, the new political landscape in the Soviet Union and China, and the spread of Western consumerism culture all over the world.

Drawing on Kojève, Fukuyama describes human history as a teleological process in which the inevitable diffusion of liberalism—and more precisely the liberal values of liberty and equality—eventually materializes in a universal liberal democratic state. Rejecting materialist concepts of history, he claims that history is propelled by the dialectical development of human consciousness, or, more exactly, by the interplay between the “large unifying world views that might best be understood under the rubric of ideology”.\textsuperscript{13} History is a process in which ideologies clash against each other, thereby giving rise to ever higher forms of consciousness. If historical events like wars, upheavals and regime changes can appear to occur in an incomprehensible clutter, they actually express the logical historical development of ideologies.

If Hegel (according to Fukuyama/Kojève) had argued that history in this sense had ended with France’s defeat of the Prussian monarchy in 1806, Fukuyama follows suit by insisting that all major events of the past two centuries are expressions of the dialectical, yet inevitable, cunning of liberalism. Many wars and revolutions fought since the beginning of the nineteenth century “have been undertaken in the name of ideologies which claimed to be more advanced than liberalism, but whose pretensions were ultimately unmasked by history,” he writes.\textsuperscript{14} In line with Kojève, he argues that the historical function of the world wars was to spread liberal values around the world. The wars not

\\textsuperscript{11} Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 4.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 15.
only brought the peripheral parts of humanity “up to the level of its most advanced outposts,” but also forced the countries “at the vanguard of civilization to implement their liberalism more fully.”

In this way, Fukuyama’s concept of history is tantamount to the inevitable universalization of Western liberal democracy, a process in which all countries gradually approach the societies of North America and Western Europe. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, humanity has reached what Fukuyama calls “the end of history”—a harmonious society whose characteristics are described in strictly post-political terms:

The state that emerges at the end of history is liberal insofar as it recognizes and protects through a system of law man’s universal right to freedom, and democratic insofar as it exists only with the consent of the governed. […] All prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied. There is no struggle or conflict over “large” issues, and consequently no need for generals or statesmen; what remains is primarily economic activity.

If the world used to be torn apart by ideological struggles, the end of history heralds a time without adversaries, and, consequently, without politics. As the antagonistic dimension of the political has been completely transcended, politics has been replaced by peaceful economic exchange. For Fukuyama, the order which awaits at the end of history rests on two pillars: on the one hand, a universal liberal consensus which recognizes the rights of all individuals, and on the other, a free market economy which delivers the goods. It can be described “as liberal democracy in the political sphere combined with easy access to VCRs and stereos in the economic.”

The end of all alternatives and the post-historical world

Since every human conflict can now be reconciled within liberal democracy, all ideological alternatives have collapsed. If fascism was destroyed after the Second World War, as Fukuyama briefly notes, a more longstanding threat came from communism, whose followers claimed that liberal democracy would implode because of the contradictions between labor and capital. According to Fukuyama, however, “the class issue” has been successfully resolved in the West. Like many end of ideologists of the 1950s, he asserts that “the egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx.”

As socialist utopia has materialized in the form of liberal democracy, no one in the West believes in communism any longer. Similar trends can be seen

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 8.
18 Ibid., p. 9.
in other parts of the world—particularly in Asia—where an increasing number of countries are moving towards liberalism. While democracy in Japan might be fragile, Fukuyama notes, the country has conformed to history “by following in the footsteps of the United States to create a truly universal consumer culture.”\(^{19}\) Other states have followed Japan’s example and industrialized, established free markets and revolted against old dictatorial regimes. Even China—once the most palpable threat to Asian democracy—is now liberalizing its economy along Western lines.

Most important, however, are the reforms occurring in the Soviet Union. While Fukuyama does not expect the country to become a liberal democracy in the foreseeable future, he emphasizes that Gorbachev’s *perestroika* has allowed a circulation of ideas which will undermine Marxism. At the end of history, he writes:

> it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies, merely that they end their ideological pretensions of representing different and higher forms of human society. [...] Gorbachev has finally permitted people to say what they had privately understood for many years, namely, that the magical incantations of Marxism-Leninism were nonsense, that Soviet socialism was not superior to the West in any respect but was in fact a monumental failure.\(^{20}\)

Fascism and communism are not the only ideologies shattered by recent developments. Regarding the other competing ideologies—religious fundamentalism and nationalism—Fukuyama argues that neither pose any serious threat to the liberal hegemony. With the exception of reactionary Islamism, which does not have any bearing outside of the Muslim world, all religions can be peacefully practiced within the personal sphere granted by liberal democracy. Nationalism and ethnical chauvinism, on the other hand, should not primarily be seen as a threat to liberalism but as ways for oppressed groups to achieve political autonomy and representative institutions. While nationalism might “constitute a source of conflict for liberal societies,” Fukuyama writes, “this conflict does not arise from liberalism itself so much as from the fact that the liberalism in question is incomplete.”\(^{21}\)

As all ideological alternatives to liberal democracy are disappearing, the world is becoming increasingly pacific. Against those who hold that international relations are necessarily guided by conflict, Fukuyama insists that interactions between countries will now be pursued through peaceful economic exchange. The end of Marxism, he explains, “means the growing ‘Common

\(^{19}\) Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 10.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 13-14.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 15.
Marketization’ of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states.”

At this point, the world will be divided into two parts. On the one hand, the “post-historical world” where liberalism reigns and all ideological alternatives are obsolete. This world is primarily limited to the liberal democracies of North America and Western Europe, where all citizens enjoy political rights and a constant flow of commodities distributed by the free market. Outside of the post-historical world, there are the non-Western countries where the end of history is not yet reached, and where ideologies like nationalism, ethnic chauvinism and even communism still distort human consciousness and stir up antagonism. As Fukuyama puts it, “the vast bulk of the Third World remains very much mired in history, and will be a terrain of conflict for many years to come.”

As ever more countries embrace liberalism and approach the end of history, however, the threat to post-historical harmony will not primarily be posed by sovereign states. A deeper challenge, Fukuyama explains, will come from individuals in the post-historical world who, bored with economic calculation and the fleeting pleasures of consumption, might revolt against the dullness at the end of history. While such insurrections would be deeply irrational, both in relation to individual well-being and to historical reason itself, they would still be able to throw humanity back into history. And so Fukuyama ends his triumphalist account of twentieth-century America on a surprisingly ambivalent note:

I can feel in myself, and see in others around me, a powerful nostalgia for the time when history existed. Such nostalgia, in fact, will continue to fuel competition and conflict even in the post-historical world for some time to come. Even though I recognize its inevitability, I have the most ambivalent feelings for the civilization that has been created in Europe since 1945, with its north Atlantic and Asian offshoots. Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once again.

Reactions to the article

The debate about “The End of History?” began immediately. In one of the pre-written comments in The National Interest, Allan Bloom hailed the essay and argued that Fukuyama had begun an important discussion of how to define the West in an age where the Soviet Union could not offer a negative counter-image. Seconding Fukuyama’s concept of history, Bloom agreed that the movement towards liberalism was global. “The science […] of the West

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21 Ibid., p. 15.
24 Ibid., p. 18.
has won in the non-Western world,” he wrote with reference to Alexandre Kojève, “and it is largely Western nostalgia that wants those old, rooted cultures to be preserved when those who belong to them no longer really want them and their grounds have disappeared in the light of reason.” In a similar vein, French international relations scholar Pierre Hassner—once a close associate of Raymond Aron—thought that Fukuyama had written a “brilliant and stimulating” essay. While Hassner questioned Fukuyama’s indifference to the persistence of war, conflict and poverty in poor countries, he shared the conviction that all ideological alternatives to the West had failed and that economic calculation would replace “grand politics.”

If Bloom and Hassner praised Fukuyama’s essay, other commentators were less sanguine. Former New York intellectual and prominent neoconservative Irving Kristol claimed that he did not “believe a word of it” and suggested that all political regimes—including the liberal democracy of the United States—were transitional and historical. Kristol’s wife, historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, went even further by questioning Fukuyama’s teleological reading of Hegel and stressing that Hegel’s dialectics actually implied an infinite historical process. Dismissing the idea of liberal democracy as the ultimate stage of humanity, Himmelfarb maintained that states like Russia and Iran were more likely to embrace authoritarian or theocratic politics than conform to the political system of North America. And in the West, she claimed, liberal democracy was still facing problems of socio-economic inequality.

The sharpest attack came from political scientist Samuel Huntington. In an article in the following issue of *The National Interest*, Huntington dismissed Fukuyama’s teleological concept of history as a speculative form of “endism”—the naïve idea that wars were coming to an end and that the world would become increasingly pacific. A critic of modernization theory since the 1960s, Huntington refused to see history as a happy saga about the world’s successive transition towards Western liberal democracy. The endism which Fukuyama represented, he argued, “tends to ignore the weakness and irrationality of human nature. [...] So long as human beings exist, there is no exit from the traumas of history.”

While Huntington agreed with Fukuyama that communism had lost its appeal, he did not consider this to be a triumph for liberal democracy nor a decline of ideology *per se*. “A set of ideas or an ideology may fade from the scene in one generation only to reappear with renewed strength a generation

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27 Irving Kristol in “Responses to Fukuyama,” p. 27.
or two later,” he wrote, exemplifying with the unexpected turn from Keynesianism to neoliberalism during the postwar decades.²⁹ And whereas scholars of the postwar period had expected religious, ethnic and nationalist identities to disappear as underdeveloped countries modernized, such identifications had now, by the late 1980s, become the primary bases for political action in most countries. “If any one trend is operative in the world today,” Huntington wrote in a passage scorning modernization theory, “it is for societies to turn back toward their traditional cultures, values, and patterns of behavior.”³⁰ Rather than follow the United States towards the post-political paradise at the end of history, non-Western countries might as well fall back on traditional forms of religious fundamentalism and ethnic chauvinism.

Unlike the “relaxed complacency” of Fukuyama’s essay, Huntington had no ends in sight.³¹ Not even Marxism seemed to be dead. In a final mocking gesture, he claimed that the very idea of a society where conflict was replaced by a rational administration was taken from Marx. Juxtaposing Fukuyama’s thoughts on the post-historical world with a section where Engels spoke about communism as the ultimate stage of history, Huntington remarked that “The End of History?” only seemed to confirm the endurance of Marxism.

In the winter issue of The National Interest, Fukuyama responded to his critics. Writing just as the Berlin Wall was being torn down, he began by claiming that his usage of the term history had been misunderstood. Since the Hegelian meaning of “history” concerned the “history of ideology,” announcing the end of history did not mean proclaiming the end of historical events as such but the end of the evolution of philosophical thought about how to organize society. In this sense, Fukuyama insisted, Hegel had been right. The fall of communism demonstrated the adequacy of seeing the end of history as materialized in the liberal democracies which had been established after the French and American revolutions.

Returning to his concept of history, Fukuyama praised Hegel for having laid the foundation of “our modern understanding of history as an evolution from primitive to modern, through a succession of stages of ‘false consciousness’ during which men believed in the legitimacy of such things as chattel slavery and the divine right of kings.”³² To understand history in this “historicist” manner—as a process whereby thoughts taken to be eternal truths were successively unmasked as historical constructions—Fukuyama claimed, in fact *required* postulating something like an end of history. Otherwise, historical consciousness would degenerate into a dark relativism with no moral or epistemological standards. Taking Nietzsche and Heidegger as examples of such

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³⁰ Ibid., p. 9.
³¹ Ibid., p. 4.
deviations, Fukuyama warned that a “historicism without a concept of an end of history leads to consequences (fascism and the glorification of war) which few of us would be willing to stomach.” Such an irrationalism could only be avoided by accepting Hegel’s idea that history would eventually reach an end point where “opinion finally reached the status of truth and ideology turned into philosophy.”

In this interesting twist, Fukuyama seemed to expose the legitimizing features of his narrative: without a historical telos where a set of political principles—like the liberal values of freedom and equality—are naturalized into an indisputable universal consensus, society is bound to dissolve into anarchistic disorder. In contrast to the theoretical perspective of this dissertation, which insists that the political is always constituted by opposing ideas about how to organize society, Fukuyama regards such dissensus as a threat which must be suppressed—in his case by arguing that human history is bound to culminate in liberal democracy. In this light, announcing the end of history is perhaps not so much an ontological as an ethical statement in order to find an absolute foundation for society.

Fukuyama did, however, stress that he did not expect a global end of history to occur for a long time. Against Huntington’s accusation of complacency, he made it clear that “the democratic revolution is far from complete in the world and will […] require considerable work and struggle to implement more fully.” While “the vanguard of human history” had already become post-historical by the early nineteenth century, many of the world’s nations were still stuck in history.

This meant not only that Soviet leaders would face great obstacles in their efforts to steer the country towards liberal democracy but also that the United States would encounter resistance “as it helps guide Europe through [the] transition” towards the end of history.

In line with the modernization theorists, Fukuyama thereby suggested that his own country should assist other states to become modern. But while post-historical countries could help less developed countries to reach the end of history, the evolution towards liberal democracy was ultimately inevitable. Anticipating one of the key themes of his 1992 monograph, Fukuyama emphasized that liberalism in fact corresponded with human nature:

The worldwide democratic revolution and the belief in egalitarianism on which it is based was not a product of the 1980s, or even of the period since the French Revolution. […] Progress toward democratic egalitarianism seems to be an inevitable historical process that has been underway for many centuries and which no one in the long run can resist. Human nature, in other words, has changed over the past couple of millennia: our modern democratic-egalitarian consciousness is in some sense a permanent acquisition, as

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34 Ibid., p. 24.
35 Ibid.
much a part of our fundamental “natures” as our need for sleep or our fear of death.\textsuperscript{36}

Although human consciousness had evolved throughout the centuries, the inclination towards liberal democracy had turned out to be a natural desire of man. Consequently, political ideologies which opposed liberalism went against human nature. As in his first essay, Fukuyama emphasized that communism, nationalism or Islamism would not pose fundamental threats to the emerging universality of liberal democracy. Towards those, like Himmelfarb, who claimed that liberal democracy was still plagued by internal social problems, he asserted that these stemmed “less from liberal principles than from their incomplete implementation.”\textsuperscript{37}

If any doctrine might successfully challenge the liberal reign, Fukuyama admitted at the end of the article, it would be right-wing authoritarianism. In spite of guaranteeing everybody material comfort and political equality, liberal democracy did not provide its citizens with any higher aims or causes. “[S]ince there is a side of man that despises a riskless life, that seeks danger and heroism and sacrifice,” he wrote, men might by sheer irrationality revolt against the social order at the end of history.\textsuperscript{38} Rather than coming from an egalitarian doctrine like socialism, such a revolt would probably be incited by the traditional right.

\textit{The End of History and the Last Man}

After the controversy around his 1989 essay, Fukuyama spent three years expanding his theories into a full-length monograph. Published in 1992, \textit{The End of History and the Last Man} was an ambitious effort to present his ideas in a more comprehensive fashion. Spurred by the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union and the apparent realization of his 1989 predictions, Fukuyama spent well over 300 pages arguing for the historical necessity of liberal democracy and capitalism. If the title of his original essay was punctuated by a somewhat cautious question mark, the end of history was now presented as a matter of fact.

The basic project of \textit{The End of History} can be described as an attempt to outline the historical mechanisms which have triggered the emergence and universalization of liberal democracy and free market capitalism. If Fukuyama’s 1989 essay was based on a strictly idealist concept of history, the monograph is supplemented with an extensive discussion about the materialist dy-

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
namics of history. Through a peculiar cross-reading of Kojève and modernization theory, Fukuyama constructs an impressive philosophy of history which culminates in the contemporary United States. If the end of ideology theorists of the 1950s consistently warned against the dangers of totalizing philosophies of history, *The End of History* is an explicit attempt to provide such a narrative.

**Fukuyama’s concept of history**

Nineteenth-century society, Fukuyama explains in *The End of History*, was characterized by a firm belief in historical progress, a linear development of science, and a gradual universalization of the liberal values of freedom and equality. All over the world, *l’ancien régime* would be replaced by free and democratic societies. In the twentieth century, however, such convictions were seriously damaged. With the ruthless violence of the First World War, the rise of totalitarianism, and the growth of “radical ideologies that sought to control all aspects of human life,” Fukuyama writes, the concept of history as a more or less smooth transition from absolutism to liberal democracy was abandoned.  

“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 spite of the twentieth century’s historical pessimism, Fukuyama claims, the values of liberalism are now spreading all over the world. As non-democratic states have collapsed—a process which includes the fall of Soviet communism, the breakdown of South European fascism and the demise of authoritarian dictatorships in Latin America and Asia—the number of liberal democracies has multiplied. In effect, there are no longer any alternatives:

> [T]he twin crises of authoritarianism and socialist central planning have left only one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potentially universal validity: liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty. [...] For a very large part of the world, there is now no ideology with pretensions to universality that is in a position to challenge liberal democracy, and no universal principle of legitimacy other than the sovereignty of the people.  

With the triumph of Western democracy and free market capitalism, Fukuyama argues, the gloomy historical consciousness of the twentieth century must be revised. Against the idea that history has no meaning or direction, he insists on writing a “Universal History”—that is, “history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of

40 Ibid., p. 7.
41 Ibid., p. 42, 45.
all peoples in all times.” Implicit in all such histories, he continues, is the idea of a telos—a historical end point which makes all particular events intelligible and meaningful. Drawing on the Kojèveian Hegel and Kant, Fukuyama reiterates the arguments of his 1989 essay: history should be understood as a cohesive process which evolves according to a unilinear trajectory propelled by underlying laws or mechanisms. As a dialectical development in which systems of thought and entire political orders collide against each other, history will eventually reach a point where all social contradictions are resolved. As Fukuyama puts it:

We can think of human history as a dialogue or competition between different regimes or forms of social organization. Societies “refute” one another in this dialogue by triumphing over them or by outlasting them—in some cases through military conquest, in others through the superiority of their economic system, in others because of their greater internal political cohesion. If human societies over the centuries evolve toward or converge on a single form of socio-political organization like liberal democracy, if there do not appear to be viable alternatives to liberal democracy, and if people living in liberal democracies express no radical discontent with their lives, we can say that the dialogue has reached a final and definitive conclusion.

Thus liberal democracy and global capitalism represent mankind’s historical telos—a society where all fundamental conflicts are solved in favor of a universal consensus on the superiority of the prevailing state of things. “Today,” Fukuyama claims, “we have trouble imagining a world that is radically better than our own, or a future that is not essentially democratic and capitalist. […] We cannot picture to ourselves a world that is essentially different from the present one, and at the same time better.” The future is, to put it differently, bound to be a static repetition of the present.

The two mechanisms of history

If the social order of liberal democracy and capitalism constitutes the telos towards which humanity has proceeded, Fukuyama explains, we can observe two “mechanisms” which have steered historical evolution in this particular direction. First, “the progressive unfolding of modern natural science” has pushed humanity towards free market capitalism. Through mankind’s increasingly systematic conquest of nature—a process made possible by the application of natural science and technology to material production—all societies have undergone a similar process of economic modernization, including industrialization, urbanization and the implementation of a bureaucratic structure. “This

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42 Fukuyama, The End of History, p. xii.
43 Ibid., p. 136-137.
44 Ibid., p. 46.
‘unplanned revolution’,” Fukuyama writes, “has replicated itself in all industrialized countries, regardless of whether that country was capitalist or socialist, and in spite of differences in the religious and cultural backgrounds of the pre-industrial societies out of which they emerged.”

Most importantly, economic modernization has entailed a “rational organization of labor”—increasing specialization of professions and division of labor, as well as a demand for a mobile work force. The only economic system which can cope with such developments is capitalism, which, as Fukuyama puts it, “has proven far more efficient than centrally planned economic systems in developing and utilizing technology, and in adapting to the rapidly changing conditions of a global division of labor, under the conditions of a mature industrial economy.” In a passage echoing Bell’s Marxism–Leninism, he argues that the demise of Marxism was a direct consequence of the rise of postindustrial modes of production. Technological progress forces countries to accept capitalism:

[T]he unfolding of technologically driven economic modernization creates strong incentives for developed countries to accept the basic terms of the universal capitalist economic culture, by permitting a substantial degree of economic competition and letting prices be determined by market mechanisms. No other path toward full economic modernity has been proven to be viable.

The inevitability of capitalism is not only apparent in the way in which all “developed countries” have been integrated into a global market but also in the way formerly protectionist and socialist nations in the non-West now endorse free markets. The economic boom of southeast Asia, Fukuyama claims, shows that socialism is a fruitless model of development. “[T]here are few versions of modernity other than the capitalist liberal-democratic one that look like they are going concerns,” he notes. “Modernizing countries, from Spain and Portugal to the Soviet Union and China to Taiwan and South Korea, have all moved in this direction.”

For readers of this dissertation, it should be clear that Fukuyama’s efforts to describe capitalism as the historical telos of economic development—or, as he sometimes puts it, the development of natural science—draws heavily on postwar modernization theory. Hailing modernization theory as “the last significant Universal History to be written in the twentieth century,” he suggests that the American development scholars correctly assumed that all countries would gradually become industrialized democracies of the Western kind. Where Fukuyama differs from the modernization theorists is in his neoliberal emphasis on free markets and deregulation. In The End of History, the end

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45 Fukuyama, The End of History, p 78.
46 Ibid., p. 91.
47 Ibid., p. 96-97.
48 Ibid., p. 133.
point of economic modernization is not a Keynesian welfare state but a deregulated global market organized by an economic rationality.

According to Fukuyama, the unfolding of natural science—or what we have identified as modernization theory in its neoliberal guise—can explain the historical evolution towards a capitalist world market. However, Fukuyama continues, it does not explain mankind’s journey towards liberal democracy. To demonstrate the historical necessity of democracy, he argues, the first historical mechanism must therefore be supplemented with a “totally non-materialist historical dialectic,” namely what Kojève/Hegel called the “struggle for recognition.”

If human history began with Kojève’s bloody battle for recognition, the rest of it amounts to the unfolding and eventual reconciliation of the master and slave dialectic. “The problem of human history can be seen [...] as the search for a way to satisfy the desire of both masters and slaves for recognition on a mutual and equal basis,” Fukuyama writes, and as such, “history ends with the victory of a social order that accomplishes this goal.”

To prove that this order is tantamount to liberal democracy, Fukuyama rearticulates Kojève’s philosophy of history in triumphalist terms. Going back to the beginning of history, he claims that both parts in the battle for recognition are left unsatisfied: the master cannot be recognized by the slave, who in turn is reified into an object with the task of working for the master. Through his increasing control over nature, however, the slave attains abstract ideas of freedom. During history, Fukuyama claims, such ideas have formed the basis for a number of “slave ideologies” which contained an ideal notion of freedom but nevertheless served to perpetuate the slaves’ subordination. While there have been many such ideologies—stoicism, skepticism and communism—the most prominent was Christianity. “The idea of freedom received its penultimate form in Christianity,” Fukuyama writes, “because this religion was the first to establish the principle of the universal equality of all men in the sight of God, on the basis of their faculty for moral choice or belief.” The Christian God, he continues, “recognizes all human beings universally, recognizes their individual human worth and dignity.”

As a (slave) ideology, however, Christianity merely articulated an idea of freedom. The events which incorporated these ideas in the material world were the American and French revolutions. “The modern liberal democratic state that came into being in the aftermath of the French revolution,” Fukuyama writes, “was, simply, the realization of the Christian ideal of freedom and universal human equality in the here-and-now.” By offering all citizens

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50 Ibid., p. 152.
51 Ibid., p. 196, 197.
52 Ibid., p. 199.
a “rational recognition”—a recognition in which each individual is acknowledged as free and autonomous—liberal democracy reconciled the dialectic which had propelled all of history:

The internal “contradiction” of the master–slave relationship was solved in a state which successfully synthesized the morality of the master and the morality of the slave. The very distinction between masters and slaves was abolished, and the former slaves became the new masters—not of other slaves, but of themselves. This was the meaning of the “Spirit of 1776”—not the victory of yet another group of masters, not the rise of a new slavish consciousness, but the achievement of self-mastery in the form of democratic government.  

By granting all individuals political and legal rights on the basis of their affiliation to humanity, liberal democracy provides a rational and universal form of recognition. And by abolishing the distinction between master and slave, it creates a classless society where the conflicts of history are resolved. “The historical process that begins with the master’s bloody battle ends in some sense with the modern bourgeois inhabitant of contemporary liberal democracies, who pursues material gain rather than glory,” Fukuyama writes. As history ends and liberal democracy spreads around the world, old ideologies like Christianity and communism are replaced by a more rational form of human consciousness. If people used to support different political doctrines, Fukuyama writes, there is now “a general consensus that accepts liberal democracy’s claims to be the most rational form of government”. The collapse of communist states reflects “the achievement of a higher level of rationality” among the citizens of these countries.

With his discussion of the two mechanisms of history, Fukuyama ends up by dismissing politics altogether. By portraying history as the logical development of the unfolding of natural science and the struggle for recognition, he reduces all historical events to variables of these two mechanisms. If the development of natural science and the dialectic between master and slave are the factors which have determined all social relations throughout history, political action is simply incapable of transforming society in any way which diverges from the currently existing order. As free market capitalism and liberal democracy are ultimately the result of historical necessity, there is no historical contingency and thus no political alternatives. In this way, politics as such is dismissed as an impotent and superfluous activity which will disappear when the dialectic which have propelled history are resolved.

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54 Ibid., p. 189.
55 Ibid., p. 211.
56 Ibid., p. 205.
The resistance from culture

While all political alternatives have vanished, there are still cultural threats to the global victory of liberal democracy. The persistence of cultural differences, Fukuyama writes in a passage anticipating Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations*, “may mean that international life will be seen increasingly as a competition not between rival ideologies […] but between different cultures.”

Although the end of history means the establishment of a rational recognition granted by the liberal democratic state, some communities and movements—particularly in non-Western countries—keep clinging to irrational forms of recognition based on national, ethnic and religious affiliations. In this way, the cultural collectivism of Asian countries and the reactionary aspirations of Islamic fundamentalism might challenge the hegemony of liberal democracy—at least in non-Western countries. While nationalist and religious sentiments are potentially reconcilable with a democratic order, they might also undermine the universalism on which liberalism is built. “Recognition based on groups,” Fukuyama stresses, “is ultimately irrational.”

As an heir of modernization theory, Fukuyama suggests that the rise of religious fundamentalism and chauvinistic nationalism should be seen as side-effects of the historical transition towards (Western) modernity. Whereas the revival of Islam in the Middle East can be understood as the outcome of failed or incomplete modernization, he explains, strong nationalistic currents mainly emerge in countries stuck in the first stages of industrialization. While Fukuyama leaves the question of a religious renaissance somewhat open, he forcefully argues that violent nationalism and ethnical chauvinism will eventually decline. Taking postwar Europe as an example, he argues that all advanced liberal democracies have turned nationalism—like religion before it—into a strictly private matter. It is only in the least modernized parts of Europe that nationalistic feelings will continue to trigger violence and war. In states which have already established liberal democratic systems and reached the end of history, nationalism will recede and give way to a globally interconnected capitalist market.

The two worlds at the end of history

“For the foreseeable future,” Fukuyama writes, “the world will be divided between a post-historical part, and a part that is still stuck in history.” An assemblage of European and North American democracies which have already reached the end of history, the post-historical world is a pacific and harmonious order in which antagonism has given way to universal recognition, and where the barriers between states have broken down for a “single, integrated

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58 Ibid., p. 242.
59 Ibid., p. 276.
world market." Organized by rational economic principles, post-historical countries will not make war with other states. While they may have different opinions on minor questions, Fukuyama deems it unthinkable that they would turn their weapons against each other. “The fundamentally un-warlike character of liberal societies is evident in the extraordinarily peaceful relations they maintain among one another,” he writes.61

In contrast to the post-political harmony of these countries, the states “still stuck in history” will continue to experience a variety of religious, national and ideological conflicts. Depending on their stage of historical development, Third World countries will invade their neighbors, fight bloody battles and experience internal conflicts. To prevent such irrationalities, the post-historical countries must help them towards the end of history. While the United Nations has lost its capacity to promote democratic and liberal values, Fukuyama explains, NATO could shoulder the responsibility. As “a league of truly free states brought together by their common commitment to liberal principles,” NATO is a worthy actor for carrying out the eternal peace which Kant outlined in his essays on cosmopolitanism.62

Apart from helping the historical countries to reach the end of history, Fukuyama explains that the post-historical countries face a last challenge. Since the struggle for recognition derives from human nature, the social harmony and material wealth created by democracy and capitalism are not able to eliminate man’s yearning for pride and recognition. The people of China and Romania will one day “create for themselves a stable democratic society” and “have dishwashers and VCRs and private automobiles,” Fukuyama asserts.63 But will they be genuinely happy, or does happiness reside in the very struggle to achieve democracy and wealth? With these questions in mind, Fukuyama warns that people in post-historical countries might eventually revolt against the meaninglessness at the end of history:

Experience suggests that if men cannot struggle on behalf of a just cause because that just cause was victorious in an earlier generation, then they will struggle against the just cause. They will struggle for the sake of struggle. They will struggle, in other words, out of a certain boredom: for they cannot imagine living in a world without struggle. And if the greater part of the world in which they live is characterized by peaceful and prosperous liberal democracy, then they will struggle against that peace and prosperity, and against democracy.64

The end of history, Fukuyama continues, hinges upon liberal democracy’s ability to channel the struggle for recognition into peaceful outlets. Luckily,

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60 Fukuyama, The End of History, p. 275.
61 Ibid., p. 262.
62 Ibid., p. 283.
63 Ibid., p. 312.
64 Ibid., p. 330.
several such channels exist. First, entrepreneurship and economic competition can function as a substitute for the bloody battles of earlier times. “Metaphorical wars” will emerge among lawyers and bond traders who consider themselves as “sharks” and “masters of the universe.”65 Second, democratic politics can offer similar outlets. Although the fundamental issues have been resolved and the differences between parties are steadily shrinking, the post-historical citizens will be able to express their struggle for recognition by participating in debates, campaigns and referendums. Third, sports and athletics can offer opportunities for achieving recognition. Finally, the struggle for pride and glory can be satisfied by engagement in civil organizations and associations like churches, labor unions and school boards.

If the struggle for recognition can be pursued in these peaceful manners, the fate of humanity seems to be in safe hands. Although those who oppose values like freedom and equality per se will have the possibility to start history over again, Fukuyama finds it improbable that liberal democracy will ever be overthrown by a different social order. “Those whom the old, pre-democratic world failed to satisfy were the vast majority of mankind; those left unsatisfied in the modern world of universal recognition are many fewer in number,” he writes. “Hence the remarkable stability and strength of democracy in the contemporary world.”66

Unlike earlier political systems, liberal democracy satisfies all parts of the human soul: reason, desire and thymos—the part of the soul from which the yearning for recognition springs. As such, it constitutes a social order without conflicts and antagonisms. At the end of history, the conflictual dimension of human society is transcended once and for all. Since free market capitalism has solved the problem of material scarcity and liberal democracy has solved the dialectics of recognition, there is no longer any need for politics in the sense of opposing ideas of social change. As partisanship and irrational struggles for recognition have been replaced by consensus and universal recognition, all that remains is a pragmatic administration of the prevailing order, on the one hand, and peaceful economic exchange between individuals, on the other. With his repeated insistence that economic interaction will succeed political conflict—a recurring theme in his writings between 1989 and 1992—Fukuyama aligns himself with the neoliberal idea of free market exchange as the most rational way of organizing society.

As ever more countries approach the end of history, Fukuyama explains in the last pages of his book, the cultural relativism and pessimism of the twentieth century will yield to a widespread conviction that there indeed exists a universal history which ends with liberal democracy and free market capitalism. In this spirit, The End of History closes with a depiction of humanity as a long wagon train slowly proceeding through a desert towards a small town.

66 Ibid., p. 334.
Although some carriages have been “attacked by Indians” and “set aflame,” whereas others have given up the journey and set up permanent camps back along the road, the great majority of the cars will eventually arrive peacefully at the end station.67 And if enough wagons pull into town, Fukuyama asserts, it will be obvious for all passengers that there was only one journey and one destination. With this extraordinary metaphor—a curious blending of the old American myth of the penetration of the Western frontier and modernization theory’s notion of a manifest destiny—Fukuyama assures his readers that all human beings are passengers on the same voyage to the post-political paradise at the end of history.

Fukuyama’s legitimizing narrative

In his writings on the end of history, Francis Fukuyama presents a full-blown legitimizing narrative in which contemporary Western society is portrayed as the most rational and highest of social orders. According to Fukuyama, the liberal democracy and free market capitalism of contemporary North America and Western Europe is the logical conclusion of human history. As the eventual outcome of the struggle for recognition and economic modernization, Western society is nothing less than a historical necessity. On the one hand, liberal democracy has solved the master and slave dialectic by providing all human beings with rational and universal recognition. On the other hand, capitalism has solved the problem of material scarcity by offering a global model for achieving unlimited affluence and wealth.

By providing a solution to the underlying conflicts which have triggered all of previous history, liberal democracy constitutes a post-political order in which all human needs are satisfied and all visions of alternative societies have become superfluous. At the end of history, the ideological conflicts which turned the twentieth century into a genocidal slaughterhouse have given way to a widespread consensus on the importance of organizing society in accordance with the liberal values of individual freedom and equality. As Fukuyama himself emphasizes, this does not mean the end of ideology in the old sense of a convergence between welfare state socialism and a capitalist economy, but in the sense of an unconditional victory for political and economic liberalism. Since liberal democracy satisfies all parts of the human soul, any kind of political resistance against it is fundamentally irrational. Not only would such an opposition undermine the wellbeing of millions of individuals, but perhaps more importantly disobey the rationality of history.

When juxtaposed with end of ideology theorists of the 1950s such as Aron and Bell, it is clear that Fukuyama distinguishes himself by elaborating an

explicitly teleological concept of history. While the former considered themselves to be resolutely anti-Hegelian and non-Marxist, Fukuyama does not conceal the teleological features of his end of ideology theory. Through a dialectical, yet inevitable, historical process, mankind has progressed through and jettisoned a number of ideologies, and eventually attained the highest stage of consciousness: liberalism. Although a number of Third World countries are “still stuck” in history, they will eventually catch up with the posthistorical countries of Europe and North America.

In spite of their neoliberal inclinations, Fukuyama’s writings between 1989 and 1992 are clearly affiliated with the basic themes of modernization theory. Like Walt Rostow, Daniel Lerner and Seymour Martin Lipset, Fukuyama assumes that the historical experiences of the United States and the liberal democracies of Western Europe also constitute historical development per se. Since the liberal democracy of the United States constitutes the telos towards which all countries proceed, there is no other alternative than to accept the fate of history and embark on the inevitable journey towards liberalism and capitalism.

In line with the modernization theorists, Fukuyama believes that this process should be accelerated by the countries at the vanguard of history. If the former tended to ordinate industrialization and development programs for Third World nations, however, Fukuyama is more inclined to use military means. Through organizations like NATO, the posthistorical world can help non-Western countries to complete the historical process by assisting them in establishing democracy and joining the capitalist market. Although Fukuyama’s confidence in the historical necessity of liberal democracy and free markets makes it excessive for him to formulate a mobilizing narrative, his theories nonetheless contain elements of mobilization. Rather than giving in to idleness, the West should actively and decisively hasten the end of history across the world.
12. Samuel Huntington and the clash of civilizations

With the ideas presented in *The End of History*, Francis Fukuyama revived the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s. If several commentators noted the similarities between Fukuyama’s ideas and a debate which had taken place several decades before, not everyone was pleased with the comparison. Daniel Bell, for instance, denied all affinities with Fukuyama. In a tribute to Raymond Aron published in *The New York Times Book Review* in the winter of 1990, Bell caustically remarked that Kojève’s idea of the end of history had repeated itself twice. “[O]nce in the tragedy of French intellectuals such as Merleau-Ponty who supported the terror of Stalin as ‘historical necessity,’” he wrote, “the second time as farce, in the recent essay by the former State Department official Francis Fukuyama.” By suggesting a connection between Fukuyama and one of his major intellectual foes of the 1950s, Bell made clear that the author of *The End of History* was in a completely different trench than Aron and himself.

One of the first to compare Fukuyama’s ideas with the postwar end of ideology discussion was political scientist Samuel P. Huntington. In his previously mentioned essay “No Exit” from the fall of 1989, Huntington observed that although Fukuyama employed the same phrase as Bell had done thirty years earlier, he seemed to “have something more sweeping in mind.” According to Huntington, Fukuyama’s conviction that the collapse of communism meant the end of ideological conflict was incorrect. Not only could new ideologies emerge and create unexpected political turmoil, he argued. Moreover, a revival of seemingly exhausted political doctrines was also possible. “Communism may be down for the moment,” Huntington wrote, “but it is rash to assume that it is out for all time.”

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4 Ibid., p. 9.
A few years later, Huntington seemed to have changed his mind. In the 1993 essay “The Clash of Civilizations?” he accepted Fukuyama’s theory that the age of ideologies had ended. “It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic,” Huntington wrote. With the end of the Cold War, the battles between communism, fascism and liberalism were over. Such political doctrines, Huntington argued, would become increasingly irrelevant as guidelines for human action. While he agreed with Fukuyama about the end of ideology, however, he did not share the latter’s progressivist concept of history. Rather than seeing the future as the inevitable rise of a global liberal democratic order, Huntington maintained that the world would be characterized by increasingly violent conflicts between what he called “civilizations.” In sharp contrast to modernization theory’s idea of a gradual decline of “traditional” values and communities, he anticipated a widespread revival of cultural, ethnic and religious identities. The end of the Cold War did not mean a universal triumph of Western modernity but heightened antagonism between the Muslim, Chinese and Western civilizations.

If such arguments were diametrically opposed to modernization theory and its progressivist concept of history, they were fully in line with Huntington’s academic production. As Nils Gilman puts it, “modernization theory was the most consistent counterpoint to Huntington’s own theoretical impulses throughout his career.” From the mid-1960s onwards, Huntington published a number of articles and monographs criticizing the prevailing understanding of modernization from a conservative point of view. According to Gilman, Huntington opposed modernization theory on two basic points. On the one hand, he rejected the desire to impose technocratic change on faraway nations in the Third World. On the other, he questioned the idea of modernization as a progressive, convergent or inevitable force. “Impatient with prophetic utopianism,” Gilman notes, Huntington “was a maverick critic of all forms of liberal progressivism, including modernization theory.”

Described as “the most influential U.S. political scientist and one of the world’s most prominent public intellectuals,” Samuel Phillips Huntington was born in New York in 1927. After studies at Yale and the University of Chicago, he earned his Ph.D. in political science and began teaching at Harvard at the age of twenty-three. While Huntington’s academic breakthrough came with the 1957 monograph The Soldier and the State, his first major confronta-

\[7^7\] Ibid., p. 229.
tion with modernization theory was pursued in the essay “Political Development and Political Decay” from 1965. Against scholars who defined “political development” as the progressive evolution towards a Western liberal democratic system, Huntington claimed that political development had nothing to do with modernization \textit{per se}, and that “de-development” and decay was fully possible. Rather than seeing political development as the implementation of Western democratic institutions, Huntington suggested that it should be understood in terms of a given regime’s capacity to impose order and stability. The main foreign policy objective for the United States vis-à-vis the Third World was therefore not to promote social mobility or increase literacy but to secure governmental control and authority. Huntington developed these arguments in the 1968 \textit{Political Order in Changing Societies}, a book based on the claim that the primary difference between countries was not their form of government but their \textit{degree} of it. “The differences between democracy and dictatorship,” Huntington wrote, “are less than the differences between those countries whose politics embodies consensus, community, legitimacy, organization, effectiveness, stability, and those countries whose politics is deficient in these qualities.”

As states characterized by order and stability, the United States and the Soviet Union had more in common with each other than with developing Third World countries where insurgencies, military coups and ethnic conflict were commonplace. The latter countries were, in Huntington’s own terminology, “politically underdeveloped.”

The basic argument of \textit{Political Order} was that rapid social change and the subsequent mobilization of new groups into politics tended to outpace the development of political institutions. Rather than facilitating political integration, Huntington argued, economic growth destabilized institutions and bred political instability. This meant that American efforts to spur economic development and improve social mobility in the Third World were counterproductive in terms of triggering political development. If anything, Huntington argued, the processes typically associated with modernization generated political decay:

This decay in political institutions has been neglected or overlooked in much of the literature on modernization. As a result, the models and concepts which are hopefully entitled “developing” or “modernizing” are only partially relevant to many of the countries to which they are applied. Equally relevant would be models of corrupt or degenerating societies highlighting the decay of political organization and the increasing dominance of disruptive social forces.

Against the optimistic forecasts of modernization theory, Huntington thereby questioned the idea that Third World modernization would lead to a replication of the liberal democratic system of Europe and North America. Western scholars had simply confounded an idealized version of what they saw as the telos of political development with the de facto situation in non-Western countries. Their ideas, Huntington maintained, had “the same air of hopeful unreality which characterized much of the sympathetic Western writing about the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.”

Described as a “Leninist Burkean”—an epithet which referred to his conservatism as well as genuine admiration for the Bolsheviks’ skills in shouldering political leadership and imposing authority—Huntington despised American postwar progressivism. In the article “The Change to Change” Modernization, Development, and Politics” from 1971, he attacked modernization theory for being teleological in assuming that Western countries had reached the end point of evolution and that other countries would follow the same path. Moreover, he argued, it was mistaken to think that the forces of modernization would eliminate all “traditional” bonds and identities. Modernization “may give new life to important elements of the pre-existing culture, such as religion,” he wrote, and continued: “Tribal and other ascriptive ‘traditional’ identities may be invigorated in a way which would never have happened in ‘traditional’ society.” Huntington concluded the essay by openly abandoning the term “political development” for the more neutral concept of “political change.”

The denunciation of teleological or unilinear concepts of history would remain a leitmotif for Huntington throughout his career. In his 1991 book The Third Wave, he argued that there was no historical necessity behind the recent wave of democratization in non-Western countries. “History is messy and political changes do not sort themselves into neat historical boxes,” he wrote. In contrast to the triumphalist narratives delivered around the same time by theorists like Fukuyama and Bruce Russett, Huntington reiterated the arguments which he had made for decades, explaining that a wave of democratization might be followed by a relapse to authoritarianism. “History has proved both the optimists and the pessimists wrong on democracy,” he made clear, “and future events will probably continue to do so.”

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11 Huntington, Political Order, p. 35.
12 For a discussion of Huntington as a Leninist Burkean, see John Gretton, “The double-barreled character of Professor Huntington,” Times Educational Supplement (June 29, 1973). For Huntington’s interest in Lenin, Stalin and Mao, see Huntington, Political Order, p. 336-343.
15 Ibid., p. 315.
Although Huntington remained a scholar for his whole life, his academic career was also interrupted by recurring sojourns in the top rank of politics. His involvement with the American government began in 1967, when the Johnson Administration sent him to Saigon in order to map strategies for the Vietnam War. This led to the publication of an infamous essay in *Foreign Affairs* in which Huntington implied that sustained bombing of the Vietnamese countryside would create a “forced-draft urbanization,” thereby undermining communist sympathies in rural areas.\(^1\) While he subsequently became a major target for the anti-war movement on both sides of the Atlantic, he continued to accept controversial policy tasks. For many years during the 1970s, Huntington served as an advisor for Brazil’s military regime, for which he wrote a report stressing the need of political stability and warning against the “explosive effects” which would be caused by too much democratization.\(^2\) Towards the end of the 1970s, he was officially employed by the American government and spent two years in Washington as the head of President Carter’s National Security Council.

When Samuel Huntington launched his theories about the clash of civilizations in 1993, he had already spent decades battling with modernization theory, redefining Third World development and opposing the idea of a progressive universalization of Western democracy. While—perhaps somewhat paradoxically—he remained a supporter of the Democratic Party for his whole life, it seems safe to say that he was a more conservative thinker than scholars like Bell, Lipset or maybe even Fukuyama. Highlighting the omnipresent possibility of hostility between different cultures, Huntington did not believe in the possibility of a global human order beyond antagonism and struggle. Yet his theories of the end of ideological conflicts and the clash of civilizations offered a legitimizing narrative which sought to defend and reinforce the social order of Western liberal democracy.

“*The Clash of Civilizations?***

Like Francis Fukuyama’s writings on the end of history, Huntington’s theories about the clash of civilizations should be understood as an effort to grasp the emergent post-Cold War world order. Whereas Fukuyama amplified the triumphalist mood of contemporary American political discourse, however, Huntington once again turned up to play the role of the party pooper. His 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations* was, as researcher Toby Zanin has noted,

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an “odd artefact” which “broke the mood of [the] celebratory zeitgeist” following the fall of the Soviet Union. In a similar vein, Edward W. Said argues that Huntington’s original essay served “as a very brief and rather crudely articulated manual in the art of maintaining a wartime status in the minds of Americans and others”. Although Huntington hailed the West and its political institutions, his gloomy predictions of never-ending antagonism did not seem to justify any kind of Panglossian complacency.

While the very phrase “clash of civilizations” was launched in a 1990 essay by historian Bernard Lewis, Huntington first presented the term in his article “The Clash of Civilizations?” in the summer of 1993. Published in the third year of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, the essay highlights the allegedly increasing significance of ethnic and cultural identities in the post-Cold War world. With the end of the antagonism between Western liberal democracy and Soviet communism, Huntington explains, mankind is entering a new era in which political differences have become irrelevant. Instead of distinguishing between countries on the basis of their political or economic systems, or their level of economic development, they should be categorized in terms of their culture. As Huntington writes:

[T]he fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics.

A civilization, Huntington goes on to explain, is “a cultural entity,” or, to be more precise, “the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.” It is not only defined by objective factors like religion, language, history, customs and institutions but also by the subjective self-identification of its members. People belonging to different civilizations, Huntington argues, have radically different opinions about religion, group identification, gender roles, liberty, authority and rights. Since such differences are the

22 Ibid., p. 23, 24.
product of centuries,” they are “far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes.”

Before continuing, three aspects of Huntington’s theories must be stressed. First, it should be clarified that Huntington makes a basic distinction between ideology and culture. Whereas his 1989 essay “The Errors of Endism” did not distinguish between religious, ethnic and political affiliations, and instead made the case that Fukuyama’s end of history theory would be disproved by the renaissance of religious, ethnic and ideological conflicts, “The Clash of Civilizations?” is based on the premise that ideology and culture are essentially different phenomena. While Huntington does not define the exact meaning of ideology, he basically uses the term as a reference to twentieth-century political doctrines like communism, fascism and liberal democracy. In contrast, culture denotes the supposedly archaic and native characteristics which distinguish one group of people from another. Whereas ideology is consistently described as a passing historical phenomenon which did not exist before the twentieth century, cultural factors like religion, language and traditions are supposed to represent more deep-rooted and innate features of human life.

Second, Huntington’s notion of culture/civilization is considerably essentialist. From his point of view, “civilizations” are homogenous, monolithic and organic entities with clear and distinctive features. Consequently, Huntington assumes that all members of a civilization cling to the same set of opinions and convictions. While admitting that people can redefine their identities and that a civilization can consist of several sublevels—a citizen of Rome can, for instance, identify both as a Roman, Italian, Catholic, Christian, European and Westerner—Huntington does not question the existence of an indissoluble bond between the individual and the civilization. “The civilization to which [a person] belongs,” he writes, “is the broadest level of identification with which he intensely identifies.”

Third, and related to the last point, Huntington is concerned with the external frictions and antagonisms between civilizations rather than the internal conflicts within them. One of the most frequently highlighted aspects of his clash of civilizations theory is that struggles and disagreements between individuals or groups within the same civilization are consistently overlooked. By refraining from acknowledging any sorts of internal conflicts within the “Western,” “Chinese” or “Islamic” civilizations, Huntington ascribes a strong

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24 Ibid., p. 24.
post-political quality to them. With his simultaneous denial of conflicts within civilizations and affirmation of geopolitical conflict on an inter-civilizational level, he *externalizes* conflict by consistently transferring it from within each civilization to a space between them. Rather than something which occur within the political communities of different civilizations, conflicts are only played out between vast cultural entities like the West and Islam.

**Huntington’s concept of history**

The clash of civilizations, Huntington explains in his 1993 essay, is “the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world.” After the Peace of Westphalia, conflict in the West was largely an affair between kings who sought to extend their territories, armies and economic strength. With the establishment of sovereign nation states and the popular uprisings which followed the French Revolution, the wars between absolute monarchs were replaced by conflicts between nations—a pattern which lasted until the end of the First World War. And then, in 1917, came the age of ideologies:

> [A]s a result of the Russian Revolution and the reaction against it, the conflict of nations yielded to the conflict of ideologies, first among communism, fascism-Nazism and liberal democracy, and then between communism and liberal democracy. During the Cold War, this latter conflict became embodied in the struggle between the two superpowers, neither of which was a nation state in the classical European sense and each of which defined its identity in terms of its ideology.

Since the Cold War was *the* war between ideologies, the defeat of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall effectively ended the age of ideologies. As ideological antagonism has now disappeared, Huntington explains, conflicts will increasingly be played out between groups from different civilizations. “The fault lines between civilizations,” he notes, “are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed.”

One of the main reasons for the intensification of cultural identities, Huntington goes on to argue, is the increasing interaction between people from different civilizations. Without using the very term globalization, he claims that “the world is becoming a smaller place” and that increasing migration and economic exchange between regions will “enhance the civilization-consciousness of people that […] invigorates differences and animosities stretching or

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27 Ibid., p. 23.
28 Ibid., p. 29.
thought to stretch back deep into history.” In this way, globalization reaf-
firms regional identities which, rather than having to do with ideology or pol-
ities, stem from the sense of belonging to a civilization. From Huntington’s
perspective, this shift from ideological to cultural conflicts marks a return to a
more fundamental dimension of antagonism—the clash between different
civilizations. Unlike the superficial adherence to ideologies, cultural identities
reveal a deeper, and more essential, aspect of human existence:

In the former Soviet Union, communists can become democrats, the rich can
become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and
Azeris cannot become Armenians. In class and ideological conflicts, the key
question was “Which side are you on?” and people could and did choose sides
and change sides. In conflicts between civilizations, the question is “What are
you?” That is a given that cannot be changed.

In sharp contrast to the idea that identities related to culture, ethnicity and
religion will disappear as countries become modern, Huntington thereby pre-
dicts a renaissance of the patterns of identification which the modernization
theorists considered to belong to “traditional” societies. Most non-Western
countries, he claims, are now returning to their historical and cultural roots.
With the “Asianization” of Japan, the “Hinduization” of India, the “re-Islam-
ization” of the Middle East and the potential “Russianization” of Russia, the
West has ceased to be the indisputable prototype for developing countries.

In the future, Huntington argues, conflict will be played out between
“seven or eight major civilizations,” namely the Western, Confucian, Japanese,
Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American “and possibly African” ones. On
the one hand, civilizational conflict will be fought as territorial battles between
different groups located along the “fault lines” of civilizations. On the other
hand, states from different civilizations will struggle against each other for
military and economic power as well as control over international institutions.
Although the West might face conflict with all other civilizations, Hunting-
ton especially stresses the risk of a clash with the Islamic world. “Conflict
along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going
on for 1,300 years,” he writes, and continues: “This centuries-old military in-
teraction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline.” In Huntington’s
own words, “Islam has bloody borders.”

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30. Ibid., p. 27.
31. Ibid., p. 25.
32. Ibid., p. 31-32, 35.
The West versus the rest

As a civilization, Huntington explains, the West is currently at the peak of its power. If its major external threat—Soviet communism—has disappeared, military conflict within the West is practically unthinkable. Along with Japan, the West dominates and controls the world economy. Its hegemony in military and economic affairs is secured through a nexus of international institutions like the IMF and the United Nations.

While Huntington holds the West to be superior to all other civilizations, however, he rejects the idea that Western civilization would have a kind of universal validity. “Western ideas [...] often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures,” he writes. “The very notion that there could be a ‘universal civilization’ is a Western idea, directly at odds with the particularism of most Asian societies and their emphasis on what distinguishes one people from another.”

Rather than evolving into a worldwide triumph of Western liberal democracy, the future is likely to be characterized by escalating conflicts between “The West and the Rest”: a situation where all civilizations will struggle against the dominance of the Western world.

From Huntington’s perspective, the policy prescriptions for a forthcoming battle between the West and the rest are clear. First, the Western world must strengthen its civilizational unity and suppress internal differences. Western countries should not only incorporate societies of Eastern Europe and Latin America but also limit the military power of Confucian and Islamic states. Second, the West should maintain its military superiority in Asia and reinforce control over international institutions which promote its objectives. But while the West must “maintain the economic and military power necessary to protect its interests,” Huntington explains, it must also refute misplaced universalisms and accept the religious and philosophical foundations which underpin the other civilizations. Against those who perceive the end of the Cold War to be a global triumph of the United States, Huntington soberly concludes his essay by proclaiming that “there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others.”

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order

Like Fukuyama, Huntington went on to develop his theories about the clash of civilizations into a monograph. Arguably his most famous and controversial work, the 1996 *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*

34 Ibid., p. 49.
35 Ibid.
continued the author’s revolt against contemporary American triumphalism. Against those who perceived the post-Cold War period to be characterized by increasing post-political harmony, Huntington depicted the future as a violent battle against fundamentally different cultural entities. Against those who thought that Western values and institutions would triumph in each corner of the globe, Huntington dismissed such universalism as false, immoral and dangerous.

In *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington repeats the argument that the end of the Cold War marks the decline of ideological conflict. Rather than being mobilized by political doctrines like communism, fascism or liberalism, he argues, people all over the world will begin to align themselves according to their cultural affiliations. As the ideological movements of the twentieth century disappear and cease to provide people with meaningful identities and motivations, culture and civilization become the main sources of affiliation. “In this new world, local politics is the politics of ethnicity; global politics is the politics of civilizations,” Huntington writes. “In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities.”

**The rejection of the West**

In line with contemporary scholars of globalization, Huntington claims that the post-Cold War world is becoming increasingly intertwined in terms of economics, culture and communications. Unlike the bulk of theorists discussed in this dissertation, however, Huntington argues that such integration, rather than producing homogenization, convergence or a global diffusion of Western values, will reinvigorate cultural differences and antagonisms:

In today’s world, improvements in transportation and communication have produced more frequent, more intense, more symmetrical, and more inclusive interactions among people of different civilizations. As a result their civilizational identities become increasingly salient. The French, Germans, Belgians, and Dutch increasingly think of themselves as European. Middle East Muslims identify with and rally to the support of Bosnians and Chechens. Chinese throughout East Asia identify their interests with those of the mainland. Russians identify with and provide support to Serbs and other Orthodox peoples. These broader levels of civilizational identity mean deeper consciousness of civilizational differences and of the need to protect what distinguishes “us” from “them.”

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37 Ibid., p. 129.
In this sense, a civilization provides a vast group of people—including diasporas around the world—with a collective identity, thus creating a homogeneous social community without any kinds of internal conflicts or controversies. With the increasing division of humanity along civilizational lines, Huntington explains, the assumptions of modernization theory have proved wrong. Since the bulk of non-Western countries have modernized without abandoning their own cultures, traditions and institutions, the idea that all states will come to resemble each other—or, rather, resemble Western liberal democracy—must be dismissed. “It is sheer hubris to think that because Soviet communism has collapsed, the West has won the world for all time and that Muslims, Chinese, Indians, and others are going to rush to embrace Western liberalism as the only alternative,” Huntington writes. “The Cold War division of humanity is over. The more fundamental divisions of humanity in terms of ethnicity, religions, and civilizations remain and spawn new conflicts.”

Although Huntington considers the civilizational turn to be a global phenomenon, he pays particular attention to what he calls the “Asian affirmation” and the “Islamic Resurgence.” With the economic growth of Japan, China and the other Asian Tigers, he explains, Asian countries have begun to celebrate their own cultures (particularly Confucianism) and ascribe all their accomplishments to their own traditions and institutions. As a result of this “Asian triumphalism,” the Sinic and Japanese civilizations are strengthening their muscles against the West and promoting the “East Asian model” as an alternative model for economic development. Meanwhile, Huntington observes, “Muslims in massive numbers” are turning towards Islam. “Beginning in the 1970s,” he writes, “Islamic symbols, beliefs, practices, institutions, policies, and organizations won increasing commitment and support throughout the world of 1 billion Muslims stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and from Nigeria to Kazakhstan.” Triggered by the rapid population growth in the Muslim world, the Islamic Resurgence is described as a comprehensive effort from fundamentalist groups as well as more moderate politicians to transform their countries in accordance with Islamic law and culture.

The consolidation of non-Western civilizations, Huntington argues, will have a highly destabilizing effect on the world. Since the formation of a civilization necessarily implies the existence of another civilization, there will always be a potential for inter-civilizational antagonism. “It is human to hate,” Huntington stresses. “[People] naturally distrust and see as threats those who are different and have the capability to harm them. […] In the contemporary

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40 Ibid., p. 109, 111.
world the ‘them’ is more and more likely to be people from a different civilization.”

If the conflicts of the twentieth century were ideological, those of the twenty-first will be civilizational.

The rise and fall of civilizations

Having described the post-Cold War period as an era beyond political ideologies, Huntington goes on to take a broader grip on the historical process. “Human history,” he writes at the beginning of The Clash of Civilizations, “is the history of civilizations. It is impossible to think of the development of humanity in any other terms.” Throughout the millennia, humanity has evolved through the rise and fall of numerous civilizations—from the ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians via the Hindu and Sinic civilizations to Christianity and Islam.

Huntington divides the history of civilizations into three periods. Before the sixteenth century, interactions between civilizations were—with some exceptions—scarce. Temporally and geographically separated, each civilization largely led its own life. By the end of the fifteenth century, however, the quite recently consolidated Western (or European) civilization began to conquer the world through colonial and imperialist force. “For four hundred years,” Huntington writes, “intercivilizational relations consisted of the subordination of other societies to Western civilization.” Western dominance over Asia, Africa and Latin America meant not only the elimination or subjugation of other cultures, but also eager efforts to impose the political and legal institutions of the West on the rest of the world. By the beginning of the twentieth century, finally, the world began moving from unidirectional Western power to a multicivilizational order. With decolonization and the rise of the Third World, Western hegemony declined and gave way to an international order of continuous interaction between civilizational entities like the West, Islam, China and Russia. “Global political geography,” Huntington writes, “thus moved from the one world of 1920 to the three worlds of the 1960s to the more than half-dozen worlds of the 1990s.”

The emergence of a multicivilizational world order beyond Western hegemony, Huntington explains, can also be seen in the decline of political ideologies. The days when Western doctrines like liberalism, socialism, anarchism, corporatism, Marxism, communism, social democracy, conservatism and fascism swept across the world are over. “As the world moves out of its Western phase, the ideologies which typified late Western civilization decline, and their place is taken by religions and other culturally based forms of identity

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41 Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations, p. 130.
42 Ibid., p. 40.
43 Ibid., p. 51.
44 Ibid., p. 54.
and commitment,” Huntington writes. “The intracivilizational clash of political ideas spawned by the West is being supplanted by an intercivilizational clash of culture and religion.”

The end of ideology is, in other words, the resurgence of civilizations. The collapse of Soviet communism does not mean the final victory of Western civilization or the universalization of liberal democracy. On the contrary, as Huntington consistently points out throughout *The Clash of Civilizations*, the West has reached its zenith and is now on the brink of decay. Drawing on historians like Toynbee and Spengler, he argues that all civilizations evolve according to a common scheme—from emergence and hegemony to decline and invasion. Civilizations, he writes, “are dynamic; they rise and fall; they merge and divide; and as any student of history knows, they also disappear and are buried in the sands of time.” In other words, Huntington presents a cyclical concept of history:

> When civilizations first emerge, their people are usually vigorous, dynamic, brutal, mobile, and expansionist. […] As the civilization evolves it becomes more settled and develops the techniques and skills that make it more Civilized. As the competition among its constituent elements tapers off and a universal state emerges, the civilization reaches its highest level of Civilization, its “golden age,” with a flowering of morality, art, literature, philosophy, technology, and martial, economic, and political competence. As it goes into decay as a civilization, its level of Civilization also declines until it disappears under the onslaught of a different surging civilization […].

Clinging to this cyclical concept of history in which different civilizations replace each other in an eternal process of rise and fall, Huntington rejects all historical teleologies. “Societies that assume that their history has ended,” he sardonically notes, “are usually societies whose history is about to decline.” This critique should be seen not only as directed against the post-political triumphalism of Fukuyama or modernization theory’s belief in a universal historical evolution towards Western modernity but against any attempts to universalize Western history or society. According to Huntington, the “development of the West to date has not deviated significantly from the evolutionary patterns common to civilizations throughout history.” The end of the Cold War does not signify the global triumph of Western culture or the worldwide revolution of liberal democracy. In biting contrast to the sunny prognoses of Fukuyama, Bruce Russett and other triumphalists, Huntington anticipates the

46 Ibid., p. 44.
47 Ibid., p. 320-321. Huntington uses “Civilization” with a capitalized C to distinguish between a civilization in the sense of a cultural entity and civilization in the sense of a higher level of morals, religion, learning, art, technology and material well-being.
48 Ibid., p. 301.
49 Ibid., p. 302.
emergence of a chaotic world plagued by disorder, antagonism and increasing violence:

Much evidence exists in the 1990s for the relevance of the “sheer chaos” paradigm of world affairs: a global breakdown of law and order, failed states and increasing anarchy in many parts of the world, a global crime wave, transnational mafias and drug cartels, increasing drug addiction in many societies, a general weakening of the family, a decline in trust and social solidarity in many countries, ethnic, religious, and civilizational violence and rule by the gun prevalent in much of the world. [...] On a worldwide basis Civilization seems in many respects to be yielding to barbarism, generating the image of an unprecedented phenomenon, a global Dark Ages, possibly descending on humanity.50

A plea against universalism and multiculturalism

With such gloomy predictions in mind, it should be clear that Huntington does not present a teleological concept of history in which humanity proceeds towards a global post-political order where antagonism has given way to harmony and consensus. Indeed, The Clash of Civilizations might even be read as a conservative refutation of the progressivist concepts of history which have characterized most theories analyzed in this dissertation.

As already noted, however, Huntington’s theories are underpinned by a strong inclination to overlook conflicts and frictions within civilizations. Whereas the relation between civilizations are supposed to be characterized by ever-present antagonism and conflict, the social relations within each civilization are featured by consent and unity. “Publics and statesmen are less likely to see threats emerging from people they feel they understand and can trust because of shared language, religion, values, institutions, and culture,” Huntington writes. Because of the indissoluble bond between the individual and her civilization, people “rally to those with similar ancestry, religion, language, values, and institutions.” 51 In this way, it is assumed that the cultural traditions, moral rules and religious customs of each civilization constitute an overarching social consensus which all citizens naturally embrace. This kind of cultural essentialism allows Huntington to state that “one-fifth or more of humanity” is affected by the Islamic Resurgence, or that “Asians” behave in a certain way. 52 From this perspective, there are no significant social, economic—or even cultural or religious—conflicts between groups belonging to the same civilization. Civilizational entities like “the West,” “China,” and “Islam” are presented as homogenous and monolithic entities in which all citizens are bound together in an organic unity. “In a world where culture counts,” Huntington writes in his distinctive militaristic prose, “the platoons are tribes

51 Ibid., p. 34, 126.
52 Ibid., footnote on p. 109, 107-109.
and ethnic groups, the regiments are nations, and the armies are civilizations."

By downplaying conflicts within civilizational units and simultaneously stressing the mounting clashes between them, Huntington’s writings externalize the conflicts which spring from the political by moving them from within the community to a space beyond it. Unlike efforts to transcend or contain the antagonistic dimension of the political, conflict is affirmed—and even radicalized—but merely as something happening in a militarized, and potentially vicious, form between homogenous civilizational communities. Like Koestler and Hughes forty years before, the purported lack of antagonism in the community to which “we” belong—in Huntington’s case the West—is contrasted with the heightened tensions between this community and its enemies on the outside.

While the cultural essentialism of The Clash of Civilizations tends to be expressed in a descriptive manner, it is also highly normative. Highlighting the potentially disastrous threat from Islam, Huntington actively calls for increased unity and homogeneity within Western civilization. Since countries without a clear civilizational identity are bound to implode, as he argues throughout the book, all cultural differences within countries must be resolutely fought. While Huntington suggested already in his 1993 essay that Western civilization must strengthen its cultural cohesion, The Clash of Civilizations goes further in its demand to stop “moral decline, cultural suicide, and political disunity in the West.” Huntington is particularly worried about multiculturalism. Multiculturalists in the contemporary United States, he argues, seek to undermine the “American Creed”—that is, faith in individual liberty, democracy, individualism, rule of law and private property. By defending the rights of ethnic, racial or sexual groups, they weaken the individualism on which Western society is based. The multiculturalists, Huntington deplores:

have attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings. […] The American multiculturalists […] wish to create a country of many civilizations, which is to say a country not belonging to any civilization and lacking a cultural core. History shows that no country so constituted can long endure as a coherent society.

A rejection of the American Creed, Huntington continues, would mean not only the end of the United States, but of Western civilization per se. The future of the United States and the West therefore hinges on Americans’ ability—

54 Ibid., p. 304.
55 Ibid., p. 305-306.
and willingness—to refuse the heresies of multiculturalism, reaffirm their commitment to Western civilization and strengthen the political and military bonds with Europe. The main responsibility of Western leaders, Huntington writes, is “to preserve, protect, and renew the unique qualities of Western civilization. Because it is the most powerful Western country, that responsibility falls overwhelmingly on the United States of America.”

A clash against multiculturalism: Huntington’s mobilizing narrative

In his writings on the clash of civilizations, Huntington identifies two major threats to the prevailing order of Western liberal democracy. On the one hand, the Islamization of Muslim countries threatens to launch a global jihād against the West. On the other hand, multiculturalism in the United States and elsewhere threatens to break the cohesion of Western society and destroy it from within. If the end of ideologists of the 1950s were primarily concerned with the danger posed by communism, Huntington’s theories are formulated in response to a world order which has moved beyond the Cold War’s bipolarity between the United States and the Soviet Union. The world will no longer be plagued by ideological conflicts but by antagonisms between different cultures.

Unlike many theorists discussed above, Huntington does not represent a progressivist or evolutionist concept of history in which prevailing Western society is described as the natural or inevitable outcome of forces inherent in history. Neither does he attempt to naturalize Western society by portraying it as a universal order which will spread over the world as a result of successful modernization or economic development. As an adherent of a cyclical concept of history in which all civilizations experience a similar process of rise and decline, Huntington rather considers the West to be on the brink of decay. Instead of complacently leaning back and awaiting the end of history, Westerners must submit themselves to increasing unity, cohesion and discipline.

Huntington’s warning against Islam, his acknowledgement of the fragility of Western civilization and his call for increasing unity and consensus within the West constitute the basis for a strong mobilizing narrative. Although Huntington consistently describes Western civilization as a cohesive community without internal conflicts and antagonisms, he actively requests further reinforcement of the bonds which hold it together. As something not-yet-fully-realized, the post-political qualities within Western civilization must be actively strengthened—not only by fighting the Muslim enemies at the gates but also by resisting groups within the West which threaten to disrupt the

consensus on which this society is built. By highlighting the external threat from Islam while simultaneously calling for unconditional struggle against multiculturalists who seek to undermine the American Creed of individualism, liberal democracy and private property, Huntington actively seeks to minimize the space for dissent and conflict within the West.

In terms of a mobilizing narrative, Huntington’s ideas display several similarities with Arthur Koestler’s and H. Stuart Hughes’s end of ideology theories from the early 1950s. If Koestler and Hughes contrasted the post-political stasis of European society with the mounting antagonism between the West and Soviet communism, Huntington’s writings contain a similar process of post-politicization where conflict is externalized from within “our” community—Western civilization—to a space beyond it. If Koestler and Hughes warned that Europe might be crushed by the external threat posed by the Red Army, Huntington sees the West as being highly vulnerable to an attack from Islam or other inimical civilizations. If Koestler and Hughes criticized Europeans who supported a neutral position between the Cold War superpowers, Huntington’s polemics are directed against multiculturalists who do not unequivocally defend their own civilization. The main difference between these writers concerns the usage of the term ideology. Whereas Koestler and Hughes refrained from conceiving the essential values of the West as ideology, Huntington follows Fukuyama in describing liberalism—or liberal democracy—as an ideology alongside communism and fascism.

By overlooking differences and conflicts—whether of a social, economic, cultural or religious kind—within Western society, Huntington ends up by representing “the West” as essentially synonymous with what he calls the American Creed. His critique of multiculturalism is also a critique of dissent in general, and in this sense an effort to thwart political projects which oppose the credo of individualism, liberal democracy and private property. Since all political programs that aspire to change Western society will hasten its decline, as Huntington emphasizes with increasing urgency in the last part of The Clash of Civilizations, the only thing to do is to preserve and protect “the unique qualities of Western civilization.” While The Clash of Civilizations is not an instance of Cold War triumphalism in the same way as Fukuyama’s writings, it is, as Bruce Cumings observes, “still a celebration of ‘the West’ as against the rest.”

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If Fukuyama breathed new life into the end of ideology discussion by embracing American modernization theory, Huntington’s ideas of the end of ideological antagonism and the clash of civilizations were based on a rejection of it. In contrast, British sociologist Anthony Giddens can be seen as located somewhere in between. On the one hand, Giddens’s theories about an emerging political landscape beyond left and right drew on the idea that the latest phase of modernity had made old political doctrines and categories obsolete. Unlike supporters of traditional modernization theory, however, Giddens did not unambiguously celebrate the blessings of modernity. Taking a position which seemed to reflect the Frankfurt School’s critique of instrumental rationality, he warned that the forces usually ascribed to modernization—particularly the development of science and technology—had generated dangerous side-effects which threatened to devastate nature and strike back at humanity. In his 1990 book The Consequences of Modernity, he questioned the idea that “the emergence of modernity would lead to the formation of a happier and more secure social order,” and requested an “analysis of the double-edged character of modernity.”

Another difference between Fukuyama, Huntington and Giddens was the latter’s political affiliation. As a supporter of the British Labour Party, he did not see himself as a conservative or neoliberal. While his left-wing sympathies were in line with the end of ideologists of the 1950s, however, Giddens did not consider the welfare state to be the social institution which had made political ideologies superfluous. Instead, his writings in the 1990s were based on the assumption that globalization had undermined the welfare state and that Keynesianism had become ineffective and counterproductive. While nominally critical of neoliberalism, he did not believe in a revolution against capitalism or in governmental control over the market forces. As the subtitle of his 1998 book The Third Way indicated, Giddens’s theories aimed at a “renewal of social democracy.” Often referred to as “Tony Blair’s guru,” he was one of the most influential figures in the creation of a New Labour party which would abandon socialist dogma and transcend the traditional distinction between left and right. The term “the third way,” Giddens remembered many years later, “was self-consciously associated with the invention of the term the

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‘New Democrats’ in the US—and later with ‘New Labour’ in Britain under the leadership of Tony Blair.”

Giddens’s involvement in the top rank of British politics was the outcome of a long academic career which had made him known as one of the world’s most influential sociologists. Born in London in 1938, Giddens received an undergraduate degree from Hull University in 1959 and went on to study sociology at the London School of Economics. After writing a master’s thesis on sport in British society, he was employed at the University of Leicester in 1961. After a brief period as a guest lecturer in Canada and the United States, he moved to King’s College, Cambridge, where he received his doctorate in 1974 and later became Professor of Sociology. Giddens remained at Cambridge until 1997, when he was appointed as Director of the London School of Economics.

Described as “a virtual one-man publishing industry,” Giddens was a highly productive scholar whose writings covered a variety of topics. After the release of the 1971 Capitalism and Modern Social Theory—an analysis of Marx, Durkheim and Weber—he spent the next twenty years publishing a steady stream of books which elaborated on methodological issues in sociology, analyzed the class structure of Western society and offered critical readings of the founding fathers of his discipline. In the 1979 Central Problems in Social Theory, he launched the “theory of structuration”—the idea that the structures which regulate society are not external to or independent of individuals but actively sustained by recursive practices pursued by these individuals themselves. While the concept of structuration was long considered to be Giddens’s major contribution to social theory, he also became widely known as the author and editor of several sociological introductions and readers.

Giddens’s theories about the third way, the end of the left/right distinction, and the “exhaustion of received political ideologies,” as he put it in his 1994 book Beyond Left and Right, should be read against his critique of Marxism and his writings on modernity and globalization. In the two-volume A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, published between 1981 and 1985, Giddens set out to discuss the major shortcomings of Marx’s philosophy. While not an antagonistic engagement with Marx, A Contemporary Critique sought to criticize the metahistorical foundations of historical materialism. As Giddens explained early in the first book:

If by “historical materialism” we mean the conception that the history of human societies can be understood in terms of the progressive augmentation of

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4 Giddens, Beyond Left and Right, p. 10.
the forces of production, then it is based on false premises, and the time has come finally to abandon it. If historical materialism means that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”, it is so patently erroneous that it is difficult to see why so many have felt obliged to take it seriously. If, finally, historical materialism means that Marx’s scheme of the evolution of societies […] provides a defensible basis for analyzing world history, then it is also to be rejected.5

According to Giddens, Marx’s thought was based on an evolutionist concept of history in which humanity progressed through various “stages,” ultimately culminating in a classless society where the dialectic which had propelled history would be resolved. Because of its teleological idea that history would end in a society which had overcome all forms of exploitation, Giddens argued that Marxism risked “being translated into ideology” in the sense that it could be employed to legitimize the prevailing order of self-proclaimed socialist states. “[A]ny theory which might be taken to imply that there can be an ‘end of ideology’ in an empirical society,” he explained, “displays a vulnerability to itself becoming ideological—in virtue of the fact that a regime guided by that theory may chose to declare that the time has arrived, that henceforth ideology exists no longer.”6 Distancing himself from all end of ideology theories, Giddens stressed that no society would be able to bring an end to every form of oppression and exploitation.

In the second volume of A Contemporary Critique, Giddens continued his criticism of evolutionism by launching a “discontinuist interpretation of history” which highlighted the novelty of European modernity in relation to all previous historical periods. In so doing, he appropriated the terminology of modernization theory. “What separates those living in the modern world from all previous types of society, and all previous epochs of history, is more profound than the continuities which connect them to the longer spans of the past,” Giddens wrote, and continued: “In a period of three hundred years […], the face of the earth has been wiped clean. That is to say, traditional societies of all types have become more or less completely dissolved.”7

In spite of his fondness for the terms “traditional” and “modern,” Giddens did not clarify whether the evolution towards modernity was a universal historical force, or if he merely employed the term modernity to designate the European nation-state which had emerged in the seventeenth century. This question was indirectly addressed in his 1990 book The Consequences of Modernity, in which Giddens also introduced the concept of globalization. Modernity, he argued in the book, was characterized by three essential dynamics.

6 Ibid., p. 247.
First, it meant that time and space became increasingly separated from each other, thus transformed into “empty” categories without any connection to a particular spatial or geographical setting. Second, modernity detached human life from local contexts and introduced forms of interaction which spanned over indefinite areas of time and space. Third, modernity triggered an increasing reflexivity on social life which undermined all privileges of tradition. “[O]nly in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalised to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life,” Giddens wrote. “What is characteristic of modernity is not an embracing of the new for its own sake, but the presumption of wholesale reflexivity”.8

Apart from these dynamics, Giddens explained, modernity could also be defined in terms of its four “institutional dimensions”: a capitalist economy of commodity production based on private property, wage labor and competitive markets; an industrial system organizing production by coordinating labor, machinery, technology and raw materials; apparatuses of surveillance controlled by states or political administrations; and the consolidation of a monopoly of the means of violence within a territorially bounded nation-state.

While modern institutions may have originated in Europe, Giddens explained, modernity should not be seen as a specifically Western affair. “Modernity,” he wrote in an oft-quoted passage, “is inherently globalising”.9 If modernization meant that human life was detached from spatial and temporal boundaries, the term “globalisation” denoted the process which intensified worldwide social relations and linked distant places and events to each other. Globalization was, in other words, a direct consequence of the inherent dynamics of modernity. While Giddens noted the “dialectical” character of globalization and stressed that the forces of globalization would create entirely new forms of human interaction, he nevertheless acknowledged that these dynamics molded the world in accordance with Western institutions:

The declining grip of the West over the rest of the world is not a result of the diminishing impact of the institutions which first arose there but, on the contrary, a result of their global spread. The economic, political, and military power which gave the West its primacy […] no longer so distinctly differentiates the Western countries from others elsewhere. We can interpret this process as one of globalization, a term which must have a key position in the lexicon of the social sciences.10

For Giddens, then, modernization and globalization were closely related concepts. As globalization wore on, it would create a world order of “no others,” where all human beings collectively faced various kinds of risks created by sci-

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9 Ibid., p. 63.
10 Ibid., p. 52.
ence and technology. While political injustices and economic inequalities between groups would remain for the time being, Giddens anticipated the emergence of "forms of world interdependence and planetary consciousness."  

Rather than having transcended modernity, Giddens argued in The Consequences of Modernity, the present period should be understood as a radicalization of modernity. A few years later, Giddens and German sociologist Ulrich Beck launched the term "reflexive modernization" to describe the contemporary era. In a jointly written volume from 1994, Beck explained that reflexive modernization was "a radicalization of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity."  

Characterized by profound processes of detraditionalization and globalization, reflexive modernization would undermine traditional forms of politics and make the old doctrines obsolete. Unlike earlier phases of modernity, Giddens argued, the very categories of left and right would become obsolete.

**Beyond Left and Right**

Published in 1994, Beyond Left and Right. The Future of Radical Politics can be seen as the offspring of Giddens's parallel interests in Marxism and modernity/globalization. While the book was not presented as an official sequel to the first volumes of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Giddens considered it to be a continuation of the project he had begun at the beginning of the 1980s. Unlike the cautious reading of Marx's theories in the first volumes of the series, however, Beyond Left and Right articulated a much more sweeping, and, it must be said, bluntly dismissive, critique of Marxism. This denunciation was closely connected to Giddens's discussions about the emergence of a new phase of modernity where the historical progressivism of earlier periods had declined. While Giddens might not be a modernization theorist in the conventional sense of the term, it seems fair to describe Beyond Left and Right as an effort to outline the political—or, as I will argue, post-political—features of modernization.

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Reflexive modernization and globalization

As Giddens explains in the opening of *Beyond Left and Right*, the end of the twentieth century has been a period a reflexive modernization, to be distinguished from the “simple modernization” of earlier times. Simple modernization was based on an unwavering faith in the progressive development of political institutions and economic production. Since science and technology were supposed to provide society with absolute truths, their development would engender the gradual refinement, and eventual emancipation, of humanity. Risks—that is, different kinds of threats to human life—were not seen as created by human action, but as “external” to the process of modernization itself. Finally, simple modernity rested upon the existence of various traditions which regulated human life in relation to the nation, religion, class, gender and sexuality. Such traditions provided individuals with more or less definite identities, roles and behavioral patterns.

Reflexive modernization, by contrast, is characterized by profound detradi
tionalization. Increasing globalization—which according to Giddens both means a “compression” of time and space as well as the rise of a worldwide capitalist economy—undermines the legitimacy of all traditions. Globalization destabilizes local contexts of action and forces everyone to engage in incessant reflection on themselves. “Our day-to-day lives,” Giddens writes, “have become experimental in a manner which parallels the ‘grand experiment’ of modernity as a whole.”

As the forces of globalization oblige all individuals to engage in active reflection rather than passively adapting to the prescriptions of tradition, humanity enters a “post-traditional society”:

> We are the first generation to live in a thoroughly post-traditional society, a term that is in many ways preferable to “postmodern”. A post-traditional society is not a national society—we are speaking here of a global cosmopolitan order. […] It is a society […] in which tradition changes its status. In the context of a globalizing, cosmopolitan order, traditions are constantly brought into contact with one another and forced to “declare themselves”.

The deterioration of tradition, Giddens continues, is paralleled by the disappearance of “nature” as an independent entity. If simple modernization assumed that historical progress was equivalent to man’s increasing control and eventual mastery of nature, reflexive modernization means an awareness of the interconnectedness between nature and culture. With “the transformation of the natural into the social and cultural”—a process caused by scientific and technological interventions in the environment—nature can no longer be seen as independent of human action. Rather than being external, risks against humanity are understood as “manufactured” by mankind itself. Manufactured

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14 Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, p. 82-83.
15 Ibid., p. 83.
16 Ibid., p. 47.
risks, Giddens writes, do not “respond to the Enlightenment prescription of more knowledge, more control. Put more accurately, the sorts of reactions they might evoke today are often as much about damage control and repair as about an endless process of increasing mastery.” Against the rationalism of simple modernity, reflexive modernity creates an awareness that the development of science and technology itself creates risks which cannot be resolved by even more science and technology.

Politics beyond left and right
According to Giddens, the shift from simple to reflexive modernization has several profound consequences for politics. First, the breakdown of simple modernization and the idea of mankind’s progressive mastery over nature means the end of political doctrines that envision the future in terms of a fundamentally new society of human control and freedom. Echoing the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, Giddens claims that history has no direction and that humanity is unable to mold the world in accordance with its desires. “Political radicalism can no longer insert itself […] in the space between a discarded past and a humanly made future,” he writes. Or, as he puts it in a passage addressed to the left:

Today we must break with providentialism, in whatever guise it might present itself. Not for us the idea that capitalism is pregnant with socialism. Not for us the idea that there is a historical agent—whether the proletariat or any other—that will more or less automatically come to our rescue. Not for us the idea that “history” has any necessary direction at all. We must accept risk as risk, up to and including the most potentially cataclysmic of high-consequence risks; we must accept that there can be no way back to external risk from manufactured risk.

With manufactured uncertainty and the awareness that scientific development is not inherently benign, the historical progressivism of simple modernity must be abandoned. As a result, ideologies which envision the future as a place where humanity can cultivate its own garden are weakened. Repeating Daniel Bell’s formulation from 1960, Giddens claims that the current period “reveals plainly enough the exhaustion of received political ideologies” like socialism, liberalism and conservatism.

Second, the left/right distinction has become irrelevant. “The trite observation that there is no longer a right or a left takes on a new intellectual and practical power in present-day social conditions,” Giddens writes. During

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17 Giddens, Beyond Left and Right, p. 4.
18 Ibid., p. 10.
19 Ibid., p. 249.
20 Ibid., p. 10.
21 Ibid., p. 49.
the period of simple modernization, the left and the right could be distinguished on the basis of their approach to social change and tradition. Today, however, such a division cannot be made. With the fall of the Soviet Union, socialists have abandoned the dream of abolishing capitalism and become “conservatives” whose only objective is to preserve the welfare state. The old conservatives, on the other hand, have become “radicals” who call for the dismantling of welfare institutions and the universal expansion of free markets. With these inverted positions, Giddens argues, the terms left and right have lost their meaning.

Third, globalization has undermined the territorially bounded nation-state and made Keynesianism impossible. With the emergence of a global market economy, the old ideas of controlling—let alone overthrowing—capitalism have become unrealistic. This means not only the end of communism but also the decline of welfare state socialism:

[T]he idea that the “irrationalities” of capitalist enterprise can be overcome by the socializing of production can no longer be defended. With its dissolution, the radical hopes for so long carried by socialism are as dead as the Old Conservatism that once opposed them. A modern economy can tolerate, and prosper under, a good deal of central planning only so long as certain conditions hold—so long as it is primarily a national economy; social life is segmentalized rather than penetrated extensively by globalizing influences; and the degree of institutional reflexivity is not high. As these circumstances alter, Keynesianism falters and Soviet-type economies stagnate.  

Fourth, a post-traditional society of heightened reflexivity requires increasing attention to what Giddens calls “life politics,” to be distinguished from the “emancipatory politics” of previous eras. Whereas emancipatory politics sought to liberate groups from structural injustices, life politics is concerned with questions of life styles in a globalized world. “Life politics is a politics of identity as well as of choice,” Giddens writes. While he claims that such politics do not merely concern the individual, it is clear that they correspond to the profound individualization which Giddens sees as a cornerstone of post-traditional society. “In a detraditionalizing society,” he writes, “the requirement to construct a self as a continuing process becomes more acutely necessary than ever before.”

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23 Ibid., p. 91.
24 Ibid., p. 224.
Dialogic democracy: post-politics in the age of globalization

To sum up, Giddens describes the rise of a society where the political ideologies of simple modernization have become exhausted, where the left/right distinction is irrelevant, where globalization undermines the sovereign welfare state and the dreams of overthrowing capitalism, and where the focus must shift from questions of emancipation to questions of life styles in a post-traditional context. Taken together, these changes pose a serious challenge to liberal democratic institutions. Contemporary democracies, Giddens notes, are plagued by declining rates of voting and a mounting indifference towards political institutions. As he argues throughout *Beyond Left and Right*, a globalized world of reflexive modernization requires a “democratizing of democracy.”

Such a project, Giddens suggests, should be based on the introduction of a “dialogic democracy” in order to open up society’s major institutions for public deliberation. Rather than being confined to the realm of “orthodox politics”—the traditional parliamentary system of parties, trade unions and organizations—dialogic democracy must comprehend wider areas of social life. Giddens identifies four contexts where such democratization is on the advance. First, in the personal realm, where questions of marriage, sexuality and parenthood are increasingly negotiated by partners and family members. Second, among social movements and self-help groups which create discursive spaces where different problems can be contemplated. Third, in business corporations where traditional hierarchies are replaced by decentralized systems which open up for discussions about authority and work. Fourth, at the global level, where an increasing dialogic exchange between corporations, states and social movements may facilitate the emergence of a “global cosmopolitanism.”

Although Giddens considers the current state of dialogic democracy to be a possibility rather than an actual reality, he nonetheless sees dialogue as a necessary means of doing politics in reflexive modernization. “Globalization, reflexivity and detraditionalization,” he writes, “create ‘dialogic spaces’ that must in some way be filled.” In an era where the institutions of the nation-state have become undermined and where life political questions are more pressing than emancipation from structural injustices, dialogue is presented as the replacement for traditional ideologies like socialism and liberalism.

However, we might ask, how efficient is dialogue when dealing with political issues which involve groups with conflicting interests and opinions? Can dialogic measures come to terms with serious social problems like global warming and economic inequality? With these questions in mind, it should be stressed that Giddens’s idea of dialogic democracy is closely linked to concepts like consensus, cooperation and tolerance. While he notes that dialogue is not always oriented to the achievement of consensus, he stresses that its goal

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is to “enhance social cohesion” and bring about “the avoidance or minimizing of conflicts”. Describing dialogue as a method “of creating an atmosphere of mutual tolerance,” he compares a successful dialogue with what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a “fusion of horizons.” In other words, the purpose of dialogue is to facilitate communication in order to create tolerance and understanding.

Giddens’s endorsement of dialogue must be understood in relation to one of the crucial, yet not quite explicit, themes of Beyond Left and Right, namely that the exhaustion of political ideologies and the decline of the left/right distinction reflect a more fundamental disappearance of conflict. While drawing attention to serious social problems like climate change and global poverty, Giddens does not see such issues as related to groups with different interests. On the contrary, the premise of Beyond Left and Right is that they can be successfully resolved by forging alliances between groups previously opposed to each other. In his discussion of the future of welfare systems, for instance, Giddens proposes “a new pact between the affluent and the poor” in order to restrict the “productivism” which permeates contemporary society. Rather than redistributing resources from rich to poor—a method used by the now defunct welfare state—this pact would facilitate collaboration and acknowledge the “common interests” of all groups. In Giddens’s words:

Such a pact would be an “effort bargain” founded on lifestyle change. Its motivating forces would be the acceptance of mutual responsibility for tackling the “bads” which development has brought in its train; the desirability of lifestyle change on the part of both the privileged and the less privileged […].

According to Giddens, similar arrangements should be made at the global level. Since direct redistribution of wealth between rich and poor countries is “unlikely to be forthcoming and in any case might be counterproductive,” he suggests that Western and Third World nations should begin working in tandem. By recognizing “the common interests of humanity as a whole,” they can overcome partisanship and begin to cooperate.

The idea that all problems can be solved through dialogue and partnership stems from Beyond Left and Right’s representation of the present world order as one where the conflictual dimension of the political will be transcended. As the forces of modernization integrate humanity in a singular whole and reveal everybody’s common interests, fundamental conflicts between human groups will disappear. While this post-political vision of a global cosmopolitan order of harmony and cooperation—a vision to which we will return shortly—has

26 Giddens, Beyond Left and Right, p. 127.
27 Ibid., p. 119.
28 Ibid., p. 194.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 197.
31 Ibid., p. 219
the character of being *not-yet-fully-realized* rather than already existing, it is nonetheless an order which can and should be triggered by the establishment of dialogic procedures. If an end of ideologist like Daniel Bell suggested that the partisan ideologies of the early twentieth century would give in to a process of negotiation and bargaining within the framework of the broker state, Giddens ascribes a similar task to dialogue. As a way of facilitating collaboration and forming pacts, dialogue is essentially a way of *containing* conflicts by channeling them into a deliberative process between actors striving after consensus and reconciliation. As Chantal Mouffe points out in her analysis of *Beyond Left and Right*, Giddens believes that “a ‘democratization of democracy’ can take place without having to define an adversary.”  

As a way of *containing* conflicts rather than enabling an encounter between potentially irreconcilable positions, Giddens’s dialogic democracy does not include any deliberation on the foundations of the existing society. Although he insists that dialogue should cover a variety of life political issues, it is noteworthy that it does not comprehend the political or economic systems as such. As Giddens himself puts it, “dialogic democracy encourages the *democratizing of democracy* within the sphere of the liberal democratic polity.”  

It has become commonplace in the literature of deep ecology to call for “a non-violent revolution to overthrow our whole polluting, plundering and materialistic industrial society and, in its place, to create a new economic and social order which will allow human beings to live in harmony with the planet”. Yet were such a strategy even remotely feasible, it would undermine the emphasis on the interdependence of things, continuity and so on supposed to be central to green values. Such an agenda is as internally contradictory as it is implausible.

Taking the persistence of liberal democracy and capitalism for granted, Giddens’s project of democratizing democracy is situated within the framework of the prevailing social order. By *containing* conflicts and simultaneously preventing possibilities of a major transformation of social institutions, dialogic democracy is an enterprise tailored for a society where all major questions have...
already been settled. If reflexive modernization is said to be an era beyond political ideologies and the left/right distinction, it is also an era without apparent alternatives to the present.

Global cosmopolitanism and a world beyond conflict

As *Beyond Left and Right* proceeds, Giddens becomes increasingly clear about the post-political vision which underlies the book. Criticizing the “productivism”—that is, the constant production of commodities—which characterizes contemporary society, he argues that the idea of everlasting accumulation must come to an end. In spite of this critique, Giddens refutes any structural transformations of the economic system itself. Having already stressed the impossibility of a society beyond capitalism, he maintains that the ecological crisis spawns a “global interdependence” between all human beings. Since climate change affects mankind in its entirety, the only way of solving it is by sidestepping internal conflicts and forming lifestyle pacts between rich and poor. In the long run, Giddens explains, such pacts might lead to “a utopia of global cooperation, which recognizes the unity-in-diversity of human beings.”

After the breakdown of the Cold War’s bipolar world order, humanity is about to become integrated into a singular community. “We are now in a world where there are *many others*, but also where there are *no others*,” Giddens writes, and continues: “A world with no others is one where […] we all share common interests, just as we face common risks.” Such a development towards a unified humanity can also be discerned in the increasing commitment to universal values and human rights. According to Giddens, “this is probably the first time in history that we can speak of the emergence of universal values—values shared by almost everyone, and which are in no sense the enemy of cosmopolitanism.” With the universalization of these values, mankind will enter “a global cosmopolitan order” which allows people to come together through dialogic interaction. Characterized by a “cosmopolitan acceptance of difference,” global cosmopolitanism will enable rational and non-violent deliberation about how to shape the future of an increasingly interdependent humanity.

As global cosmopolitanism disperses among individuals throughout the world, a similar development is supposed to occur between states. Militarism, Giddens explains, was largely a phenomenon of simple modernization and the international system of sovereign nation-states. With globalization’s weaken-

35 Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, p. 223.
36 Ibid., p. 253.
37 Ibid., p. 20.
38 Ibid., p. 253.
ing of the state, the decreasing influence of nationalism and “the disappearance of clear-cut external enemies,” military action will disappear. In the future, states will simply cease to make war against each other:

States without enemies [...] are in quite a different situation from either the Cold War or preexisting systems of military alliance and national antagonism. Although border disputes may remain, and invasions sometimes occur, most states no longer have any incentive to wage offensive war. “Peace” takes on quite different connotations in such circumstances than it did when it meant absence of war in a nation-state system permanently geared up for it. Hence the interests of governments and peace organizations are much more convergent than they used to be; and there is no reason why they shouldn’t often work in tandem rather than in opposition.

Echoing Fukuyama’s idea of a post-historical world of pacific states, Giddens thus predicts the rise of an international order without armed conflict. With the rise of global cosmopolitanism and the decline of militarism, the world will become increasingly harmonious. While Giddens’s utopia is one where “many others” live side by side, it is also one where there are “no others,” since all individuals have united under the banner of global cosmopolitanism. Assuming that all subjects of global cosmopolitanism will accept cultural differences while identifying with humanity as a whole, Giddens refrains from mentioning any potential conflicts between them. Cultural, ethnic or sexual differences “can become a medium of hostility; but it can also be a medium of creating mutual understanding and sympathy,” he writes. “Understanding the point of view of the other allows for greater self-understanding, which in turn enhances communication with the other.”

Thus, despite his critique of simple modernization’s rationalism, Giddens ends up by expressing a firm belief in the potential of rational deliberation. Through dialogic engagement and the increasing acceptance of universal values and human rights, cultural differences can be accepted as an innocuous feature of a global cosmopolitan order. By suggesting that reflexive modernization has revealed the common interests of humanity and that all diverging interests can be reconciled through dialogue and group-transcending collaboration, Beyond Left and Right articulates a post-political vision of a world where the conflictual dimension of the political will sooner or later be transcended altogether. If global cosmopolitanism appears to be the telos of this development, it will be reached by the establishment of dialogic procedures which contain conflicts and create consensus.

39 Giddens, Beyond Left and Right, p. 233.
40 Ibid., p. 235.
41 Ibid., p. 244.
Fundamentalism: global cosmopolitanism’s excluded others

Despite the efforts to cleanse politics from conflict, however, *Beyond Left and Right* winds up outlining a new antagonism between two groups with no common grounds at all. Throughout the book, Giddens warns that global cosmopolitanism might be challenged by a number of “fundamentalist” movements which will refuse to act according to the rules of dialogic democracy. Whether in a religious, ethnic, nationalist or sexist form, fundamentalism is characterized by a lack of reflexivity and a rejection of dialogue and compromise. “Refusing the discursive engagements which a world of cosmopolitan communication tends to enforce, fundamentalism is protecting a principle as much as a set of particular doctrines,” Giddens writes.42 “Fundamentalism in a world of cosmopolitan communication,” he notes elsewhere, “is always potentially dangerous. For it is a refusal of dialogue in circumstances where such dialogue is the only mode of mutual accommodation.”43

In other words, the conflict between cosmopolitanism and fundamentalism concerns the very essence of politics. By rejecting the premises of dialogic democracy and threatening to use violence, the latter shakes the foundations on which global cosmopolitanism is based. Since by definition they lack common political grounds, fundamentalists and cosmopolitans cannot confront each other in a political way.

Seemingly unable to come up with a solution to this problem, Giddens refrains from discussing how to handle the antagonism between fundamentalists and cosmopolitans. Despite its claims to include all individuals and groups, global cosmopolitanism thereby gives rise to an insurmountable barrier between a “we” and a “they”—the modern cosmopolitans on the one hand, and the intractable fundamentalists on the other. At the same time, the antagonistic dimension of the political is externalized. Conflict is now acknowledged, but merely as something happening between a homogeneous “us”—the cosmopolitans—and an equally homogenous “them”—the fundamentalists. As with all externalization of conflict analyzed above—whether the parts involved are democrats/communists, Westerners/Muslims or cosmopolitans/fundamentalists—this antagonism cannot be dealt with through political institutions. Having already designated politics as a process of dialogue, collaboration and consensus, Giddens cannot but exclude the fundamentalists from this process. As Chantal Mouffe notes, the borders of dialogic democracy “are in fact constituted by [the] very exclusion” of the fundamentalists, who by definition have to act outside of the democratic process.44

By excluding the fundamentalists, Giddens ensures that those who do not cling to dialogue and the reflexive attitude enforced by modernization are kept

42 Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right*, p. 85.
43 Ibid., p. 48.
out of politics. Such a move serves to ensure that the political realm is earmarked for individuals and groups which already share a basic commitment to the prevailing order of liberal democracy and capitalism. Rather than clearing the way for social change—a process which would require a political confrontation between groups with different ideas and visions—Beyond Left and Right ends up by dismissing those with too diverging demands. This dismissal seems to resonate with the book’s basic message, namely that the fall of the Berlin Wall has made all alternatives to the prevailing society superfluous.

The third way and the “modernization” of social democracy

Leaving Beyond Left and Right behind, we will now proceed to what is arguably Giddens’s most important contribution to British politics: his two books about a modernized social democracy beyond socialism and neoliberalism. In the 1998 The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy and the 2000 follow-up The Third Way and its Critics, Giddens outlined the foundations of the “third way” politics which Tony Blair had come to endorse after New Labour’s victory in the 1997 elections in the United Kingdom. For Blair, the third way represented “a modernised social democracy” which had transcended the old left’s obsession with state control and high taxation as well as the neoliberal right’s rejection of public investment. Following the new Prime Minister, Giddens argued that a third way beyond socialism and neoliberalism was the only way to resurrect social democracy in an era when “pre-existing political ideologies,” as he put it, “have lost their resonance.” Like Blair, he saw the third way as an attempt to modernize social democracy and go beyond the old left’s obsolete conceptions of politics.

In his writings on the third way, Giddens again explains that the capitalist system cannot be overcome. What should social democracy do, he asks, “in a world where there are no alternatives to capitalism?” With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the old dreams of building a socialist society are dead. While the economic theories of socialism were always incorrect, Giddens argues, they particularly failed by underestimating capitalism’s ability to renew itself and create increasing wealth. “A successful market economy,” he asserts, “generates far greater prosperity than any rival system.”

The triumph of global capitalism is not the only reason why socialism is out of joint. Giddens also argues that the traditional class society has ceased

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to exist. “The class relations that used to underlie voting and political affiliation have shifted dramatically, owing to the steep decline in the blue-collar working class,” he writes. “The large-scale entry of women into the workforce has further destabilized patterns of class-based support.” With the demise of the proletariat and the rise of “wired workers” in the IT sector, one can now discern a turn towards “post-materialist” values concerning questions of individual self-expression rather than economic improvement. “As affluence increases,” Giddens observes, “lifestyle issues grow in importance as compared to economic or fiscal concerns.”

Changing class structures, increasing prosperity and a declining commitment to the left/right division have left the labor movement without its traditional popular basis. If social democracy emerged in an industrial society of commodity production, a “new knowledge economy” of technology, information and finance capital has now arisen. As a globalizing economic system, Giddens argues in The Third Way and its Critics, this new economy will eventually eliminate all previous modes of production. In terms which resemble the postwar modernization theorists, he describes the evolution towards the knowledge economy as a teleological—and, it seems—universal force:

Societies and regions can move from an agrarian to a knowledge economy without passing through a phase of old-style industrialization. One example is the area around Chicago in the Great Lakes region, where agricultural markets were displaced by financial markets. The much-discussed “Silicon Valley” of India in Bangalore is another illustration.

In contrast to his earlier critique of evolutionism, Giddens now explicitly discusses economic development in terms of historical “stages.” To facilitate the transition towards the new knowledge economy, he argues, third-way social democracy must give up Keynesian measures and pursue economic policies which keep inflation low, limit government borrowing, promote labor flexibility and stimulate entrepreneurship.

Five dilemmas
The end of socialism, the decline of the old class society and the rise of the knowledge economy have made social democracy out of date. To recover from its ideological crisis, Giddens suggests in The Third Way, social democracy must come to terms with five dilemmas. First, it must adjust to globalization—a process which is understood both as the compression of time and space and as the global spread of capitalism. Globalization alters old power

50 Giddens, The Third Way and its Critics, p. 42.
51 Ibid., p. 70.
52 See, for instance, ibid., p. 66.
structures, Giddens explains, both by undermining the sovereignty of the state and by sowing the seeds for local and ethnic identities.

Second, social democracy has to accept the increasing individualism of contemporary society. “All Western countries,” Giddens writes, “have become culturally more pluralistic, with a proliferation of lifestyles—a consequence, in some part, of the very affluence the ‘welfare society’ helped to produce.” As tradition and collectivism have been supplanted by a reflexive approach to life, social democracy must begin to pay attention to questions of individual opportunities and responsibilities.

Third, social democracy has to conform to a political landscape where the distinction between left and right is irrelevant. “The division between left and right reflected a world where it was widely believed that capitalism could be transcended, and where class conflict shaped a good deal of political life,” Giddens writes. “Neither of these conditions pertains today.” As capitalism now reigns unchallenged, the old conflict between the former left and right has been settled:

With the demise of socialism as a theory of economic management, one of the major division lines between left and right has disappeared, at least for the foreseeable future. The Marxist left wished to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a different system. Many social democrats also believed that capitalism could and should be progressively modified so that it would lose most of its defining characteristics. No one any longer has any alternatives to capitalism—the arguments that remain concern how far, and in what ways, capitalism should be governed and regulated. These arguments are certainly significant, but they fall short of the more fundamental disagreements of the past.

According to Giddens, contemporary problems regarding the environment, family, work and personal identity cannot be addressed in terms of left and right. In contrast to the old left’s “politics of redemption,” which scapegoated capitalists and corporations, the third way does not admit any such clear adversaries.

Fourth, social democracy must confront a situation of declining confidence in traditional parties and politicians. While Giddens asserts that “challenger parties”—both right-wing populists and green movements—will not gain any major support, he emphasizes the increasing importance of non-governmental organizations and social movements. Governments must be ready not only to collaborate with such movements, but also shoulder the responsibility of reconciling possible conflicts between them.

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53 Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 34.
55 Giddens, *The Third Way*, p. 43-44. 

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Fifth, social democracy should incorporate an ecological perspective into its outlook. On the one hand, it must be ready to take measures against problems like pollution and global warming. On the other hand, it has to pay increasing attention to the possible, but yet unknown, risks against humanity which might be caused by science and technology.

The adjustment to globalization

If there is any term which recurs in Giddens’s writings on the third way, it is globalization. In the discussion of the dilemmas that social democracy must confront, Giddens argues that globalization has triggered individualism, altered the shape of the left/right distinction and undermined traditional parties. While he once notes that globalization should not be seen as a force of nature, he consistently discusses it in terms of an objective, and seemingly inevitable, process.

In spite of Giddens’s earlier critique of deterministic evolutionism, he now clings to a concept of history in which globalization is conceived as a development which not only proceeds independently of human action, but also becomes a subject in its own right: globalization transforms, undermines, unleashes. Whatever political interests or human activities lay behind globalization remain out of discussion. As political scientist Ray Kiely has noted, globalization “becomes reified in Giddens’s account—it is an inevitability that is not open to challenge”.56 While the concept of reflexive modernization is notably absent from the books on the third way, globalization seems to play the same role: it is an objective historical process to which humanity must abide. As politics will not be able to control the forces of globalization, Giddens makes it clear that “governance must adjust to the new circumstances of the global age”.57 The modernization of social democracy, he explains, “means reforming social institutions to meet the demands of a globalizing information order.”58

Such an adjustment means not only omitting the old pretensions of transforming capitalism, but also replacing the welfare state with a “social investment state” which fights mounting welfare dependency, stresses citizens’ individual obligations and extends the collaboration between government, business and voluntary groups. Since globalization has emasculated the possibilities of Keynesianism, governments should be more inclined to use market forces for its purposes. As Giddens puts it, political ideals become empty if they do not relate to “real possibilities.”59 Most reforms proposed in The Third

57 Giddens, The Third Way, p. 72.
58 Giddens, The Third Way and its Critics, p. 32.
Way—including offering more individual autonomy, decentralizing institutions and reforming welfare systems—can be seen as efforts to adjust politics to the “reality” of globalization. As globalization also entails the rule of capitalism, Giddens’s reform suggestions further include making government more “efficient,” stimulating entrepreneurship and competition, encouraging business to run public services, abolishing the fixed age of retirement and cutting corporate taxes. While his premise is that the third way transcends both stagnant socialism and hardcore neoliberalism, his prescriptions tend to comply with the dictates of a market economy to which he claims that there are no alternatives. His ambiguity towards neoliberalism is perhaps most palpable when, while stressing the need to regulate markets, he suggests that the WTO, IMF and World Bank should continue to influence global politics.

Even poor non-Western countries, Giddens explains, must adapt to the market economy and gain the confidence of international finance capital. “The modernizing left,” he explains in terms mirroring the consensual approach of Beyond Left and Right, “recognizes that the interests of the developed and developing countries are often the same, rather than always contradictory.” To reach the same level of development as Western countries, poor states should not resist, but join, the prevailing capitalist economy.

To put Giddens’s ideas about the relation between the third way and globalization in my theoretical terms, one can say that politics as such is dismissed. If Daniel Bell stressed the political impossibility of altering the social relations created by technological development and advanced industrialism, and Fukuyama argued that politics could not resist the mechanisms of history, Giddens dismisses a political transformation of the social relations and institutions created by globalization. In relation to the seemingly inevitable forces of globalization, politics appears to be a powerless practice which cannot prevent or alter the integration of the world, the decline of the nation-state and the rise of a worldwide capitalist market. Rather than transforming the society created by globalization, politics must adjust and tailor itself according to it.

A cosmopolitan and democratic world
As in Beyond Left and Right, Giddens remains optimistic about globalization and the prospects of humanity. With the end of the bipolar world order, liberal democracy no longer has any clear enemies. As globalization makes the world more integrated and draws societies together, large-scale conflict between nation-states is getting less likely. If nations used to be in an antagonistic relation to each other, Giddens points out, “national identities must [today] be sustained in a collaborative milieu.” The era of large wars is over:

60 Giddens, The Third Way and its Critics, p. 167.
The world is no longer divided between two militarized power blocs. The boundaries between nations have almost everywhere been fixed and agreed by international consensus. In an information age, territory no longer matters as much to nation-states as in the past. [...] Democracy is becoming more widespread and there is truth in the idea that democracies do not go to war with one another.62

But while large-scale war between nations will decline, armed conflict between subnational and ethnic groups might persist. With the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in mind, Giddens suggests that the proper way to solve such struggles is by “the enforcement of cosmopolitan principles.”63 Dismissing critique against NATO’s interventions in Kosovo, he argues that the international community must continue to intervene in such conflicts, especially by facilitating dialogue and enforcing cosmopolitan values. “A cosmopolitan outlook,” Giddens explains in The Third Way, “is the necessary condition of a multicultural society in a globalizing order.”64

While Giddens does not subscribe to Fukuyama’s concept of history, where the end of the Cold War simply means the end of all forms of antagonisms, he is ultimately confident that the global community and the growing number of liberal democracies will be able to handle subnational and ethnic conflicts. As cosmopolitanism will spread across the world, the popular support for democratization will also increase. “The appeal of democracy does not come wholly, or perhaps even primarily, from the triumph of liberal democratic institutions,” Giddens writes, “but from the deeper forces that are reshaping the global society, including the demand for individual autonomy and the emergence of a more reflexive citizenry.”65 In The Third Way and its Critics, he similarly claims that “globalization actively promotes democracy, even in nations that may have little history of it.”66 The desire for democratic forms of government thus stems from the processes of modernity and globalization themselves—or more precisely, from the reflexive and individualist attitudes bolstered by modernization. If Fukuyama sought to naturalize liberal democracy by connecting it to human nature, Giddens instead seems to see democracy as an inherent outcome of modernity/globalization.

Unlike Fukuyama, however, Giddens does not equate the popular demand for democracy with de facto existing democracies. On the contrary, he acknowledges the seemingly growing contempt for parties and politicians. “The crisis of democracy,” he writes, “comes from it not being democratic

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62 Ibid., p. 140.
65 Ibid., p. 71.
66 Giddens, The Third Way and its Critics, p. 159.
In spite of this critique, Giddens does not question liberal democracy as such. Rather than taking the popular disillusionment with existing politics as a request for another political system, he interprets it as a wish to adjust imperfections within the existing political order. All reforms which he proposes in order to democratize democracies—decentralizing state institutions, creating greater transparency, introducing more deliberation between politicians and citizens—therefore aim to improve the conditions for sustaining the existing institutions of liberal democracy. As for the rest of the end of ideologists and post-Cold War theorists discussed above—save Koestler, Hughes and Huntington—Giddens’s outlook seems to preclude explicit alternatives to the present. In the globalized and soon-to-be-cosmopolitan world where all major conflicts have been settled and globalization has constrained the possibilities of political change, capitalism and liberal democracy appear as necessities which everybody—including socialists—have to accept. While the third way is formulated out of a seemingly genuine concern with contemporary social problems, Giddens’s tendency to overlook the antagonistic dimension of the political makes his program incapable of challenging the power structures which made such problems appear in the first place.

A final note on Giddens’s concept of history

The political writings of Anthony Giddens contain an interesting contradiction between two quite different perspectives on history. On the one hand, Giddens strongly rejects evolutionistic and deterministic concepts of history which depict the historical process as a unilinear or dialectical development where humanity proceeds through successive “stages.” Like the end of ideologists of the 1950s, he refutes concepts of history—and most obviously Marxism—which purport to identify metaphistorical dynamics (like class struggle) or subjects (like the proletariat) which inevitably push humanity forward. While Giddens’s refutation of historical materialism is most thoroughly elaborated in A Contemporary Critique during the 1980s, it also appears in his later writings. Apart from the explicit dismissal of Marxist teleologies in Beyond Left and Right, the book’s central concept of “reflexive modernization” is based on the premise that history can no longer be understood as a progressive development culminating in the final emancipation of mankind. The critique of the old left’s “politics of redemption” in The Third Way and its Critics seems to make a similar point: there can be no singular act of revolution which will once and for all liberate humanity.

On the other hand, Giddens himself leans towards an evolutionistic concept of history. With his characterization of “modernization” and “globaliza-

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tion” as historical processes which are supposed to evolve more or less independently of human action, he begins to subscribe to the kind of determinism which he earlier sought to repudiate. By refraining from discussing how modernization and globalization have come into being and been sustained over time, Giddens treats them as objective facts which humanity must simply accept. A similar inclination to reify historical processes can be seen in Giddens’s discussion about the rise of the “new knowledge economy” in which economic development is understood in terms of successive stages through which societies proceed. In his prescriptions of how to pursue the “transition” from contemporary modes of production to a modern knowledge economy, Giddens mirrors both Marxism’s and modernization theory’s idea of economic development as a teleological process leading towards the most “advanced” form of production.

It should be emphasized that Giddens’s evolutionistic concept of history, in which humanity is seen as progressing from “simple” modernization towards a “reflexive” or globalized modernity, is closely connected to his political theories. The exhaustion of ideologies, the end of the left/right distinction, the decline of conflict and the emergence of global cosmopolitanism are all described as results of the evolution from simple modernization to a more advanced form. In this light, the project of Beyond Left and Right and the books on the third way can be seen as an attempt to adapt and tailor politics to modernity’s latest phase: the globalized society of reflexive modernization. Since the objective forces of modernization and globalization give rise to capitalism, individualism and democratization, political movements simply have to accept them. While the market economy can be regulated to a certain extent, and further democratization of the institutions of liberal democracy can be pursued, capitalism and liberal democracy as such cannot be transcended. Hence Giddens’s claim that there are “no alternatives”: a modern society cannot be organized in an essentially different way. Those who oppose the prevailing order too staunchly, or fail to formulate their demands in accordance with the dialogic rules prescribed by reflexive modernization, are dismissed as fundamentalists who must not participate in the political process.

While the exclusion of the fundamentalists might appear to be a drastic move, it should be remembered that Giddens wants politics to be a process without antagonism and partisanship. His advocacy of a dialogic democracy in which different groups deliberate in order to achieve consensus and create pacts can be seen as a way of containing the antagonistic dimension of the political. In the dialogic procedures prescribed by Giddens, there are no adversaries or partisans—these have a priori been excluded—but only potential partners and collaborators.

More than anything else, the aim of dialogic democracy is to adapt humanity to the society which awaits at the end of modernization and globalization. While Giddens’s post-political vision of a global cosmopolitan order
has the character of something not-yet-fully-realized rather than something de facto existing, it is nonetheless a society which is already in the making. As globalization binds the world together and reveals the common interests of mankind, conflict will simply disappear—both within countries and on the international level. Although humanity will continue to face different kinds of challenges and problems, these issues will not be related to different groups with conflicting interests. As such, the antagonistic dimension of the political will be transcended. In the cosmopolitan order of “global cooperation” and “unity-in-diversity” presaged in Beyond Left and Right, all problems will be possible to solve by partnership and life style pacts between groups which previously opposed each other. Giddens’s confidence in a new political landscape where governments, social movements, business and interest groups freely collaborate in order to reach common goals is also a belief in a social democracy which has transcended partisanship and opposition. From this perspective, Giddens’s ideas and New Labour’s agenda seem more or less identical. Indeed, one might say that Giddens provides the intellectual rationale for Tony Blair’s ambition of making New Labour a party for employed and unemployed, managers and workers, rich and poor—or, to put it differently, for everyone.

Taken together, Giddens’s writings between 1996 and 2000 construct a legitimizing narrative in which the post–Cold War world of global capitalism and liberal democracy is naturalized as the logical outcome of the seemingly inevitable forces of modernization and globalization. While Giddens lacks Fukuyama’s Panglossian complacency and does not describe the present order as the best of worlds, he nonetheless opposes all movements which demand structural transformation of society. In so doing, he also effectively legitimizes existing political and economic institutions.
14. No alternatives. A summary of the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s

In the last year of the twentieth century, New York Times journalist Thomas Friedman published The Lexus and the Olive Tree, a book celebrating the blessings of globalization. If the Cold War had enforced militarism, political antagonism and a draconic state-control of markets and production, Friedman argued, the new world system of globalization would break down borders and integrate all societies into a single system of free market capitalism. Celebrating countries “dedicated to modernizing, streamlining and privatizing their economies in order to thrive in the system of globalization,” Friedman asserted that all societies, including “under-developed” ones, would benefit from jumping on the global train.\(^1\) The democratization of finance, information and technology caused by globalization had demonstrated that there was only one way forward:

> Once the three democratizations came together in the late 1980s and blew away all the walls, they also blew away all the major ideological alternatives to free-market capitalism. People can talk about alternatives to the free market and global integration, they can demand alternatives, they can insist on a “Third Way,” but for now none is apparent. [---] [I]n the end, if you want higher standards of living in a world without walls, the free market is the only ideological alternative left. One road. Different speeds. But one road.\(^2\)

The worldwide expansion of free markets, Friedman explained, would make the world a peaceful place. No countries with a McDonald’s, he claimed in what was to become a famous apology for global capitalism, had ever fought a war against each other since each got its hamburger restaurant. If this “Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention” postulated a perpetual peace between capitalist states, however, Friedman noted that globalization also seemed to engender more or less violent reaffirmations of local identities and attachments. In spite of the breakdown of walls and borders, half the world was still fighting about each other’s olive trees. “Olive trees are important,” Friedman admitted. “They represent everything that roots us, anchors us, identifies us and locates us in this world—whether it be belonging to a family,

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 103-104.
a community, a tribe, a nation, a religion, or, most of all, a place called home."

In this way, globalization was a two-edged process, oscillating between a structural integration and homogenization along the lines of a worldwide market economy, on the one hand, and efforts to reclaim old traditions, on the other. The country that was best suited to reconcile this dialectic, Friedman explained at the end of his book, was the United States:

America at its best takes the needs of markets, individuals and communities all utterly seriously. And that’s why America, at its best, is not just a country. It’s a spiritual value and role model. [---] There is no better model for this on earth today than America. And that’s why I believe so strongly that for globalization to be sustainable America must be at its best—today, tomorrow, all the time. It not only can be, it must be, a beacon for the whole world.

A prime cut of Cold War triumphalism in the form of happy-go-lucky journalism, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* drew together many of the ideas expressed by the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s. On the one hand, it assumed that the end of the Cold War meant the end of all alternatives to American liberal democracy and that the inevitable forces of globalization would give rise to a worldwide capitalist market of peaceful economic exchange. On the other hand, it acknowledged that the increasing interaction between communities throughout the world would spur reaffirmations of ethnic and religious identities. In a way, Friedman’s book could be read as an attempt to synthesize the perspectives of Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington into a single narrative announcing the rationality of the present state of things.

In contrast to the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s discussed here cannot be summed up in terms of a cohesive conversation. Although Fukuyama, Huntington and Giddens agreed that the fall of Soviet communism and the end of the Cold War had put an end to the ideological struggles of the twentieth century and eliminated all political alternatives to liberal democracy, they represented quite different concepts of history. For Fukuyama, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of ideological antagonism between East and West signaled the end of history as such, or to put it differently, the emergence of a global order of liberal democracy and free market capitalism where all conflicts had become resolved and antagonism would be replaced by peaceful consumption. Blending modernization theory with Kojèvean Hegelianism, Fukuyama saw liberal democracy and capitalism as the historical *telos* towards which all countries were heading. As a country already located at the end of history, the United States could help nations “still stuck in history” to reach their final goal. For Giddens, the forces of modernization and globalization had successively made humanity increasingly intertwined and unified. With the collapse of communism and

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3 Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, p. 31.
4 Ibid., p. 474-475.
other partisan ideologies which sought to create new societies, the stage was set for a global cosmopolitan order organized by universal human rights and ongoing dialogic engagements about ways of living in a globalized world. The dangerous side-effects of modernization could be effectively dealt with through dialogue, collaboration and pacts between organizations, business and governments. For Huntington, the end of ideological conflicts marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall meant the resurgence of a more fundamental dimension of human conflict which had gone on for millennia, namely the one between different cultures. The end of the Cold War’s divisions between West and East did not signify the coming of global cosmopolitanism or peaceful market exchange but escalating clashes between countries and communities belonging to different civilizations. While the West might have fought down communism, new enemies could be seen on the horizon. This was no time for complacency.

The diverging concepts of history in the writings of Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington were also connected to different processes of post-politicization. For Fukuyama, liberal democracy and free market capitalism represented the ultimate reconciliation of history’s dialectic, or, in other words, the rise of a post-political order where all human needs were satisfied and all conflicts about how to organize society had been settled. Since democracy granted all individuals rational recognition and capitalism provided them with material goods, the antagonistic dimension of the political was completely transcended. As ever more countries reached the end of history—a place where the United States and Western Europe already happily resided—the world would become a peaceful place without masters or slaves. Stressing the historical necessity of the prevailing political and economic systems in Western democracies, Fukuyama dismissed politics as an impotent activity which could not move humanity in alternative directions. For Giddens, modernization and globalization had undermined divisive political ideologies, dissolved the left/right distinction and integrated humanity into a single community where humanity shared the same interests and faced the same risks. Dismissing all politics which did not conform to the forces of globalization, Giddens advocated a new social democracy which accepted globalization as a matter of fact which could not be resisted. If such a position entailed an affirmation of capitalism and liberal democracy, it also meant facilitating the emergence of a post-political order of global cosmopolitanism where all conflicts would eventually be transcended. Until this had materialized, the problems facing humanity could be settled by dialogic engagements which aimed at containing conflicts and turning them into non-partisan collaborations. The only ones who could not take part in such a dialogue, Giddens argued, were the “fundamentalists” who rejected discursive engagement. By pinpointing these fundamentalists as a major threat to the emerging order of global cosmopolitanism, Giddens ended up by externalizing the antagonistic dimension of the political. Conflict was now
openly affirmed, but only as something occurring beyond any political institutions as a static antagonism between a homogenous “us”—the tolerant cosmopolitans—and an equally homogenous “they”—the ruthless fundamentalists. If Giddens’s theories appeared to be haunted by a seemingly irresolvable antagonism between cosmopolitans and fundamentalists, Huntington’s ideas of the clash of civilizations were marked by a similar externalization of conflict. On the one hand, Huntington assumed that all civilizations were characterized by internal unity, harmony and consensus. Systematically overlooking any kinds of intracivilizational conflicts—whether of a social, economic, cultural or religious kind—he presented “the West” or “Islam” as homogenous, monolithic—and indeed post-political—entities where all citizens were bound together in an organic unity. On the other hand, he warned against the mounting conflicts between these civilizations. With his denial of conflicts within civilizations and affirmation of geopolitical conflict between them, Huntington externalized conflict by consistently transferring it from each civilization to a space beyond it. Instead of occurring within the political communities of each civilization, conflicts were merely played out between vast cultural entities like the West and Islam.

In different ways, the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s provided their readers with legitimizing narratives hailing the prevailing order and dismissing visions of alternative societies or developments. This is arguably most clear in Fukuyama’s writings, in which contemporary Western society was explicitly described as a historical telos which would not undergo any further transformations. Since liberal democracy and capitalism satisfied humanity’s most basic demands, all alternative forms of society—whether communism, fascism, social democracy etc.—simply went against the grain of human nature. As all countries by sheer historical necessity would end up as capitalist liberal democracies, the only thing humanity could do was to help Third World countries catch up with the United States and the West. A similar kind of legitimation was articulated in Giddens’s claim that there were “no alternatives” to the prevailing order of liberal democracy and global capitalism. By describing this society as the product of modernization and globalization—historical forces which seemed to have emerged and evolved independently of human action and political struggles—Giddens ended up by portraying it as the logical crystallization of processes operating beyond human purview. Since the forces of modernization and globalization fostered capitalism, individualism and democratization, political movements simply had to submit to them—and those who did not were dismissed as fundamentalists. In the case of Huntington, finally, the prevailing order of the West was not legitimized through a progressivist or evolutionist concept of history. Opposed to triumphalist ideas of the imminent universalization of Western values and institutions, Huntington rather saw the West as a civilization on the brink of decay. Warning that Western countries might be crushed by its enemies within
and beyond, he urged all citizens of the West to unite under the “American Creed” of individualism, liberal democracy and private property. Through his highly essentialist depiction of Western society and his requests for increasing unity in order to avoid the West’s “cultural suicide,” Huntington provided a strong mobilizing narrative calling for unconditional struggle against militant Islamists and subversive multiculturalists.

As noted in the introduction, some researchers have discussed one or several of the post-Cold War theorists from a perspective similar to my own. If Žižek has used the term post-politics to demonstrate affinities between Fukuyama and Huntington, for instance, Mouffe and Swyngedouw have employed the same term in their analyses of Giddens’s writings. In relation to previous research, the past four chapters have sought to provide a more in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences between the post-Cold War theorists. First, by scrutinizing their concepts of history, I have demonstrated how Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington presented historical narratives formulated in response to the demise of Soviet communism and the end of the bipolar world order. Moreover, the investigation has shown how ideas of modernization, and, more critically, globalization, informed the concepts of history during the 1990s. Second, by examining processes of post-politicization, I have discussed the different ways in which the post-Cold War theorists sought to describe Western liberal democracy as an order which had, was about to, or had the potential to move beyond social conflicts. Third, by highlighting the legitimizing and mobilizing aspects of the post-Cold War theories, I have demonstrated how Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington sought to justify and defend the existing social order of liberal democracy—either by naturalizing it as the necessary outcome of modernization or globalization, or by calling for resistance against its external enemies and internal renegades.

Unlike previous research, my investigation of the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s has also sought to provide a comparison between Fukuyama, Giddens and Huntington, on the one hand, and the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, on the other. We will now draw the conclusions from this comparison and summarize the results.
Part III.
After the end
15. After the end. A conclusion

As noted in the introduction to this dissertation, some previous studies have briefly remarked on the affinities between the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and one or several of the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s. While Huntington, whose warnings against impending intercivilizational chaos seems to draw him away from the sanguine mood of the 1950s, is absent from such comparisons, several scholars have paid attention to the similarities between theorists like Bell, Lipset, Aron, Fukuyama and Giddens. In relation to these somewhat tentative juxtapositions, this dissertation has sought to provide a comprehensive comparison of the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s. The time has come to sum it up.

As demonstrated in the chapters above, the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s involved a number of personally affiliated scholars and intellectuals with a common institutional base in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. A product of the early phases of the Cold War, this discussion was primarily formulated in response to the increasing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. Deeply affected by the outbreak of the Korean War, early end of ideologists like Koestler and Hughes feared an imminent Soviet invasion of Europe and sought to rally all Europeans in a united front against Stalin. With the mounting threat from Soviet communism, they argued, Europeans would sidestep internal disagreements, abandon ideological partisanship and come together in a resolute defense of liberal democratic society. This meant the end of ideological doctrines calling for radical transformations of prevailing Western society.

If Koestler and Hughes wrote in a militarized style and called for unity against the Soviet Union, later end of ideologists operated in a more academic setting. Assessing Marxism and communism from a sociological perspective, they sought to demonstrate the irrelevance of these ideologies in modern welfare states with advanced industrialized economies. As the processes of modernization and industrialization rationalized production and triggered a techno-scientific administration of the economic system, grand doctrines calling for major transformation of society would give in to technical expertise and small-scale social engineering. Increasing productivity and rising affluence would raise the standards of living and bolster widespread popular satisfaction with the prevailing society. On the political level, the establishment of
welfare states designed to prevent the inequalities of the interwar period smoothed the rough edges off the market economy and undercut the radical left’s critique of capitalism. With institutionalized bargaining and Keynesian techniques, the conflict between labor and capital would stabilize and turn into state-supervised collaboration. Having been granted political and economic rights, the working class would give up its violent opposition to capitalism and endorse moderate and reformist trade unions. In a similar way, intellectuals would abandon their traditional hostility towards the prevailing order and accept a position as critics within the existing society. This social tranquilization would marginalize revolutionary doctrines like Marxism and communism.

If ideologies had ceased to be relevant in the welfare states of Europe and North America, however, the situation was supposed to be different in Third World nations which had not yet modernized to the same extent as the West. Characterized by shaky democratic institutions, deep economic inequalities, and widespread social distress generated by the transition from traditional to modern society, these countries offered fertile ground for subversive doctrines calling for radical change. Nevertheless, many end of ideologists thought that the situation would change as Third World nations became more developed. Influenced by the forecasts of modernization theory, they argued that the processes of modernization and industrialization would gradually transform these countries into the kind of post-ideological welfare states which already existed in the West. Comparing the current turmoil in the decolonized Third World with the violent partisanship and class conflicts which had plagued Western countries during their transition to modernity, they subscribed to the idea that successful modernization would undermine the social basis of ideological partisanship. While postcolonial countries were seen as lagging behind in history, they would gradually catch up with the West.

While the phrase “the end of ideology” at first glance seemed to signify the end of all political doctrines, the discussion in the 1950s was mainly concerned with the alleged decline of communism and Marxism. As shown in this dissertation, most end of ideologists of the 1950s saw ideology as a deterministic philosophy of history which designated specific groups (like the proletariat) as the singular subject of historical evolution. According to this definition, ideologies described history as a teleological process evolving towards a predetermined telos. Writing after the Second World War, the end of ideology theorists argued that the crimes of Stalinism and Nazism could be explained by these ideologies’ claims to have found the objective laws of history. Justifying their political agendas by referring to the inevitable forces of history, political ideologies downplayed individual freedom and sanctioned violations of human rights in the name of historical progress.
By defining ideology in this way, the end of ideologists of the 1950s applied the term to those doctrines—like Marxism, communism, and to a certain extent, fascism—which they sought to declare dead. By the same token, political doctrines like liberalism and conservatism could be kept out of the discussion. With the exception of Lipset, none of the end of ideologists of the 1950s described liberalism as an ideology in their writings on the topic. The values which they supported themselves—political pluralism, individual liberty, freedom of speech and private property—were never discussed as being attached to a political doctrine or an ideology. Using alternative labels like “Western freedoms” or “civility,” the end of ideologists sought to render these values as universal or natural, as though they were detached from existing political structures or conflicts. A similar point can be made about the welfare state, whose emergence and establishment were not discussed in relation to concrete historical conflicts or partisan interests. Rather than being the contingent outcome of a political struggle involving groups with opposing interests, the regime of the welfare state was, as Brick puts it, seen as “an achievement of ascendant social rationality.”

To put it differently, it was perceived to be a universal political institution which served the interests of all citizens regardless of their class, race or social position.

In contrast to the end of ideology discussion of the 1950s, the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s did not constitute a cohesive dialogue or debate. Launched by three scholars who did not share a common analytical perspective or institutional basis, these theories were only loosely connected. As this dissertation has demonstrated, however, they were drawn together by the assumption that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union had ended the age of ideologies and made the distinction between left and right obsolete. Although the very phrase “the end of ideology” was less significant than it had been in the 1950s, the post-Cold War theorists clung to a similar idea, namely that political ideologies like Marxism and communism would no longer be able to rally people around programs calling for profound social transformation. If the twentieth century had been haunted by “a paroxysm of ideological violence,” as Fukuyama put it, political ideologies promising revolution and emancipation were now fading away. Like forty years earlier, doctrines which opposed the foundations of liberal democracy and capitalism were diagnosed as exhausted.

In contrast to the 1950s, however, these conclusions were drawn after the de facto end of the Cold War and four decades of static bipolarity between West and East. Instead of being determined by the seemingly never-ending antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, the world was perceived as entering a new era marked by increasing forces of integration described under the rubric of globalization. In the globalized world order, the

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1 Brick, _Daniel Bell_, p. 218.
2 Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 3.
argument went, there were no longer any apparent alternatives to liberal democracy and capitalism. According to the post-Cold War theorists, the West had won the war, defeated the Soviet Union and left communism on history’s trash heap. While they drew quite different conclusions about the consequences of this development, they shared the conviction that the end of actually existing socialism meant the end of ideological hostility per se.

If the end of ideology in the 1950s tended to be seen as the outcome of economic growth, modernization and industrialization, the post-Cold War theorists gave a number of different explanations for this phenomenon. For Fukuyama, the end of ideology was the logical conclusion of historical mechanisms which had operated beyond human purview for millennia. On the one hand, the liberal democratic state’s successful reconciliation of the master and slave dialectic would trigger a worldwide consensus on the supremacy of liberal democracy and the failure of alternative doctrines. On the other hand, modernization and industrialization had through their own dynamics given rise to a capitalist economy which no political ideology could resist. For Huntington, by contrast, the end of the ideological age was a reflection of the decline of Western civilization. As the West lost its hegemony over the world, he argued, “[t]he intracivilizational clash of political ideas spawned by the West” would be replaced by intercivilizational conflicts between different cultures and religions. For Giddens, finally, the exhaustion of traditional ideologies was the outcome of a “reflexive modernization” in which traditional modernity’s rationality and belief in human progress and emancipation were replaced by cautiousness and skepticism towards the possibility of molding the world in accordance with prefigured models. Moreover, Giddens thought that the inevitable globalization of capitalism would undermine ideologies calling for an overthrow or Keynesian control of the market forces.

Giddens’s disbelief in Keynesianism reflected a crucial difference between the 1950s and the 1990s, namely contrasting ideas about the welfare state. If the end of ideologists of the 1950s tended to see the welfare state as the institution which would generate a rational redistribution of resources, thereby making ideological controversies superfluous, the post-Cold War theorists considered it to be obsolete. From their perspective, the decline of ideologies would not be followed by the establishment of a universal welfare state of Keynesian economics and governmental planning but by a free market economy. Influenced by neoliberalism, Fukuyama argued that the end of history was a time when politics as such was replaced by peaceful economic exchange on a capitalist market. The end of history did not presage a convergence between capitalism and socialism but “an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.” While Giddens did not go that far, he nonetheless emphasized that globalization and the disintegration of the nation-state would

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3 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 54.
4 Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 3.
make Keynesianism impossible and that the traditional welfare state should be replaced by a “social investment state” which restricted government intervention in the economy and accepted capitalism as a system of free markets.

Yet another difference between the 1950s and 1990s was the way in which the term “ideology” was employed. First, and as already noted, the very phrase “the end of ideology” was not of particular importance in the 1990s. Although expressions like Fukuyama’s “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and Giddens’s “exhaustion of received political ideologies” certainly resonated with expressions from the 1950s, the post-Cold War theorists did not ascribe any overwhelming significance to such phrases. Second, these theorists did not understand ideology as a deterministic philosophy of history but instead used the term as a synonym for political doctrine. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the post-Cold War theorists were not reluctant to apply the term ideology to liberalism. If Fukuyama described liberal democracy as “an ideology of potentially universal validity,” and Huntington wrote about the “Western ideology of liberal democracy,” Giddens included liberalism in the group of ideologies which were said to be exhausted. In contrast to the discussion of the 1950s, then, the term ideology was not simply used as a code word for communism or Marxism.

At first glance, it might seem that the approach to history constitutes another difference between the 1990s and the 1950s. If post-Cold War theorists like Fukuyama and Huntington openly endorsed grand philosophies of history, the end of ideologists of the 1950s rejected such positions. Against the determinism of ideologies like communism and fascism, the latter maintained that history had no inherent laws, direction or logic. “Historical destiny,” Aron explained in a characteristic formulation from 1955, “is simply the unalterable crystallisation of our actions; in the future it is always undecided.” Writing in an anti-Hegelian tradition, Aron and his peers purported to be free from assumptions about the dynamics, directions and telos of history, instead seeing the historical process as the contingent outcome of human action. As my analysis has demonstrated, however, many end of ideology theories in the second part of the 1950s were strongly underpinned by the historical assumptions of modernization theory. Through their own dynamics, the processes of modernization or industrialization would transform all countries into affluent, democratic and stable welfare states. While advanced industrial states in the West had already reached this stage, recently independent countries in Asia and Africa would gradually advance along the trail of industrial civilization and become post-ideological welfare states themselves. Such a concept of history was not only clear in Lipset’s idea that modernization would make all

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5 Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” p. 4; Giddens, Beyond Left and Right, p. 10.
7 Aron, The Opium, p. 182.
nations converge with the United States, or in Aron’s insistence on the universal validity of Western industrialization, but also in Shils’s claim that the ideological conflicts in underdeveloped nations could be seen as “measles” which would fade away when these countries became more mature.

In spite of their critique of “historical determinism,” “millenarianism” and “secular religions,” then, many end of ideologists of the 1950s themselves subscribed to a totalizing, and even deterministic, concept of history in which historical development was seen as impelled by forces which operated more or less independently of human action. Rather than making a clear distinction between the philosophers of history of the 1990s and the anti-Hegelians of the 1950s, it seems more adequate to say that theorists of both decades subscribed to totalizing concepts of history. The common denominator was post-war modernization theory, which was either affirmed—as in the writings of Aron, Lipset and Fukuyama, or rejected—as in the case of Huntington.

Post-politicization

The scholars and intellectuals studied in this dissertation articulated various kinds of post-political visions. From Arthur Koestler’s refutation of the distinction between socialism and capitalism in 1950 to Anthony Giddens’s program of a third way beyond left and right fifty years later, they predicted the rise of a social order where the fundamental conflicts of earlier times had been, or were about to be, replaced by a consensus on the basic principles of organizing society. The decline of political ideologies, the decreasing relevance of the left/right distinction and the disappearance of revolutionary rhetoric were taken to be proof of the emergence of a society free from the violent class conflicts which had characterized earlier phases of Western modernity. Rather than signifying that dominant groups sought to suppress partisanship and disagreements from institutionalized politics, these phenomena were seen as reflecting a de facto decline of conflict. As Seymour Martin Lipset put it in 1960, the end of ideology demonstrated that the basic problems of the industrial revolution had been settled. Thirty years later, Fukuyama followed suit by claiming that the decline of ideologies like Marxism heralded the coming of a society where “all prior contradictions are resolved and all human needs are satisfied.” In this way, the purported rise of a political realm free from conflict was seen as a reflection of a more profound tranquilization of class relations throughout society. The post-political visions examined in this dissertation were based on the assumption that human groups—whether humanity in its entirety or a particular human community like Europe or the West—were capable of getting beyond what Chantal Mouffe has called the antagonistic dimension of the political.

As a normative idea of how society should be organized, a post-political vision seeks to promote practices which eliminate partisanship and minimize disagreement. As we have seen in the chapters above, such practices include the employment of social science and technology, the exercise of dialogue and tolerance and the universalization of human rights and civility. By the same token, a post-political vision seeks to resist and curb practices which cause rifts in the polity—hence its skepticism towards political ideologies or discursive dichotomies (like left/right or capitalism/communism) which tend to divide people into different groups. In contrast to the partisanship of ideologies, the theorists studied in this dissertation hoped to turn politics into something, as Erik Swyngedouw puts it, “one can do without making decisions that divide and separate”. In other words, the aim was to create a polity cleansed from internal conflicts.

In order to achieve this, the end of ideologists of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s represented processes of post-politicization which sought to neutralize the conflicts which characterize the political. First, some theorists held that the antagonistic dimension of the political would be transcended in favor of a society where all groups came together under some universal principles or practices. In Tingsten’s successful democracy or in Fukuyama’s end of history, for instance, Western liberal democracy was presented as an order which had resolved all previous social conflicts and opened up for an administration of the prevailing political order and economic system in accordance with widespread popular consensus on the basic principles of governance. Since the affluent welfare state or the universal liberal democratic state satisfied the essential needs of all citizens, conflict would disappear and politics as such be replaced by applied statistics or peaceful economic exchange. Second, some theorists thought that conflict could be contained by being channeled into a regulated process of bargaining or deliberation. In Bell’s broker state or in Giddens’s dialogic democracy, the establishment of collective bargaining or dialogic interaction between groups searching for consensus and reconciliation would transform partisanship into collaboration. While such a containment accepted disagreement to a certain extent, it was nevertheless based on the exclusion of actors—like communists and fundamentalists—who opposed the existing political institutions and economic system. Third, some theorists externalized the antagonistic dimension of the political by arguing that conflict should not occur in “our” society, but between “us” and our collective enemy beyond. In Koestler’s and Hughes’s warnings against Soviet communism or in Huntington’s clash of civilizations, the lack of antagonism within the supposedly homogenous European or Western society was contrasted with the mounting threat from the communist or Islamist enemies beyond. Conflict was thereby acknowledged, and even affirmed, but

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9 Swyngedouw, “Impossible ‘Sustainability’ and the Postpolitical Condition,” p. 25.
merely as something happening in a space between “us” and our common “enemy,” where it was played out as a militarized antagonism which could not be solved by any political means. Fourth, some theorists dismissed politics as such as an impotent practice incapable of challenging or altering the forces which de facto determined social relations or institutions. In Bell’s discussion of advanced industrialism or in Giddens’s theories of globalization, politics was described as a powerless activity which could not change the social reality created by technological development or globalizing forces. Since industrialism entailed a set of technological imperatives which must be followed, and since globalization inevitably undermined the nation-state and spurred a global market economy, politics simply had to accept the present state of things and submit to a reality which it could not change.

As this demonstrates, adherence to a particular process of post-politicization does not preclude subscribing to others. If Bell’s and Giddens’s writings included containment of the political as well as the dismissal of politics as such, a theorist like Fukuyama highlighted the transcendence of the political and dismissed politics. A post-political vision can, in other words, include several processes of post-politicization.

Concepts of history

If the theorists analyzed in the chapters above represented different processes of post-politicization, they also subscribed to different concepts of history. While most of them attached their ideas to a progressivist concept of history which described liberal democracy and capitalism as a kind of culmination or end point of human history, others dismissed such teleologies and maintained that the prevailing society did not necessarily represent a final form of society. If the first of these positions can be said to express a celebratory concept of history, the latter represented an alarmist equivalent.

In the celebratory concept of history, post-political society—whether in the form of a Keynesian welfare state, a capitalist world market or a global cosmopolitan order—was presented as a successful resolution of conflicts and disagreements which had plagued humanity during earlier stages of history.

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10 It should be pointed out that tendencies towards an externalization of conflict can be discerned among many theorists analyzed in this dissertation. While maintaining that communist movements in Western Europe and North America no longer posed a serious threat to liberal democracy, several end of ideologists in the latter part of the 1950s nonetheless highlighted the persistence of antagonism between the West and the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, Fukuyama and Giddens identified external threats against Western liberal democracy—Fukuyama by pushing for NATO intervention in non-Western countries "still stuck in history," and Giddens by warning against the fundamentalists who sought to crush global cosmopolitanism.
While such a concept of history was sometimes formulated in explicitly teleological terms, as in Fukuyama’s idea that the universal victory of liberal democracy meant the end of history as such, it could also be described more generically as an impending social tranquilization. During the 1950s, end of ideology theorists like Tingsten, Shils, Aron, Bell and Lipset believed that Western liberal democracy had solved the basic social problems generated by the industrial revolution and put an end to the old socio-economic conflicts of capitalism’s earlier phases. The establishment of the welfare state in postwar United States and Western Europe, and the concomitant consensus on the basic principles of governance, were not seen as the result of class struggle or political conflicts, but as the product of economic development and the objective forces of modernization and industrialization. In the 1990s, Fukuyama and Giddens represented the globalized order of worldwide capitalism and liberal democracy in similar terms. If earlier history had been characterized by violent conflicts between social classes and political ideologies like communism, fascism and liberalism, the globalization of the market economy, the universalization of individual human rights and the worldwide integration of mankind into a singular community would pacify antagonism and undermine all doctrines which aspired to overthrow the prevailing order. As with their predecessors of the 1950s, Fukuyama and Giddens did not see their societies as the contingent result of political struggles but as the outcome of historical forces—economic modernization, the struggle for recognition and globalization—which had proceeded independently of human aspirations throughout centuries or even millennia.

The celebrators of the 1950s and 1990s believed that the historical evolution which had led up to the prevailing Western society was a universal process which would occur throughout the world. While poor and underdeveloped Third World countries had not yet reached the social order which already existed in North America and Western Europe, the forces of modernization, industrialization and globalization would drive them towards it. In the 1950s, it was suggested—and sometimes explicitly stated—that underdeveloped countries in Asia and Africa, where divisive political ideologies still fueled conflict and struggle, would sooner or later mature, stabilize and become successful welfare states themselves. In the 1990s, Third World countries were said to be going through the same processes of globalization and economic development which had already occurred in the West. During both decades, the celebrators suggested that Western countries, led by the United States, ought to help “underdeveloped” or “historical” countries to complete their historical development towards the affluent welfare state or the end of history. The exact character of such assistance was not always made clear. While Fukuyama’s calls for NATO intervention in faraway countries openly authorized militarism, Lipset was considerably vaguer when he suggested that Western
intellectuals like himself should “help” Third World movements in their efforts to go beyond tradition and underdevelopment. In any case, the celebratory concept of history echoed older colonial narratives in which the evolutionary superior Europe was assigned the civilizing mission of helping less enlightened countries in their journey towards civilization and modernity. While underdeveloped countries might be located in earlier phases of history, Europe should assist them in their struggle to catch up with the most modern countries.

Since post-political society would successfully resolve the conflicts and antagonisms of earlier history, the celebrators did not expect it to go through any further transformations. If the political ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth century—whether liberalism, socialism, communism or fascism—had perceived the future to be a more or less distant place where their respective utopias would materialize, the celebrators regarded the future as a temporal unity whose contours were largely determined by the present. The rejection of the future’s emancipatory potential was articulated through their recurring dismissal of alternative societies—a theme which ran through their writings from Raymond Aron’s 1955 claim that there were no alternatives to the present system to Anthony Giddens’s argument in 1998 that no one had any alternatives to capitalism. Since the prevailing order of liberal democracy and capitalism was ultimately the result of objective historical forces, political resistance to it also contradicted history as such. If the end of ideologists of the 1950s claimed that communism contradicted the technological rationality enforced by modernization and industrialization, Fukuyama held that nationalism and ethnic chauvinism contradicted the rational recognition enforced by the inevitable victory of liberalism. From Giddens’s perspective, subversive fundamentalism contradicted the dialogic principles enforced by globalization. All “alternatives”—whether identified as communism, nationalism, ethnic chauvinism or a more diffuse “fundamentalism”—were thereby said to disobey history’s own dynamics.

In sharp contrast to the celebrators, the alarmists had no time for complacency. While theorists like Koestler, Hughes and Huntington agreed that conflict between ideologies would decline and political dichotomies like left and right were becoming obsolete, they did not see this as the coming of a global order of consensus and harmony. Rather than marking the end of history or being an evolutionary prototype for all countries, Western liberal democracy faced serious dangers which had to be resolutely counteracted. At the beginning of the 1950s, Koestler and Hughes described the end of ideology and the emergence of post-political stasis in Europe as the effect of the mounting threat from the Soviet Union. The intensification of the Cold War and the danger posed by communism would thwart all internal political disagreements in Europe and trigger a homogenous consensus in which all ener-
gies were directed against the external enemy. In the 1990s, Huntington argued along similar lines by explaining that the decline of ideological antagonism after the fall of the Berlin Wall did not mark the end of history or the global triumph of liberal democracy, but a renaissance of cultural and ethnic hostility played out between different civilizations. Although the West had successfully brought down communism and fascism, it now faced the even stronger enemy of Islam.

Since the alarmists did not see their own societies as a universal end point of antagonism but as an order under attack from external enemies, they kept progressivist or teleological concepts of history at bay. Describing the situation in postwar Europe as a “vital emergency” and calling for immediate action against Soviet communism, Koestler did not identify any inherent historical forces which would push the world towards liberal democracy and capitalism. Hughes went even further, suggesting that the current state of things in Europe marked a regression to the irrationalism and elitism of the early twentieth century. And Huntington, who had spent decades battling against the sunny forecasts of modernization theory, clung to a cyclical concept of history in which all civilizations—including the West—replaced each other in an eternal process of rise and fall.

Rather than demonstrating the correspondence between liberal democracy and progressive historical forces like modernization and industrialization, the alarmists were focused on reinforcing and consolidating the strength of the West or Europe. Celebrating the West and its “freedoms” and “creeds,” they condemned everybody who failed to rally under the banner of the West. If Koestler and Hughes criticized European neutralists who supported a non-aligned position between the United States and the Soviet Union, Huntington was scandalized by American multiculturalists who supported tolerance and pluralism instead of reinvigorating the American Creed. By refusing to act in accordance with the principles and values prescribed by liberal democracy, these enemies within would undermine the cohesion of their own societies and hasten the decline of the West. In that way, they effectively cleared the way for communists or Islamists.

Legitimizing and mobilizing narratives

By hailing liberal democracy and capitalism and rejecting alternative political systems, the end of ideologists of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theorists of the 1990s provided their readers with legitimizing and mobilizing narratives which justified the existing societies in the United States and Western Europe. Supporters of liberal democracy and capitalism, those who subscribed to the celebratory concept of history tended to legitimize the prevailing social order by describing it as the natural outcome of seemingly objective historical
forces like modernization, industrialization, globalization or the master/slave
dialectic. By portraying their societies as the necessary result of such forces,
the celebrators sought to present liberal democracy and capitalism as the nat-
ural state of things, and, consequently, as institutions beyond political contest-
ation.

On the one hand, such naturalization served to conceal the historical pro-
cesses and political struggles which had brought the existing society into be-
ing. Rather than being the contingent product of historical events and political
conflicts between groups with different interests, the existing society was seen
as the crystallization of processes operating independently of history and pol-
itics. If Karl Marx criticized the classical economists for presenting bourgeois
society as a natural or eternal order which could not be transcended, a similar
point can be made about the celebrators who presented twentieth-century lib-
eral democracy as the outcome of laws, dynamics or dialectics which seemed
to mold social relations and institutions regardless of human action.

On the other hand, and as has already been pointed out, such naturaliza-
tion rendered all potential opposition to the existing order an irrational
enterprise. By contradicting modernization, industrialization, globalization or
the master/slave dialectic, such resistance went against the grain of history
itself. By emphasizing the rationality of the status quo and refuting aspirations
of social transformation, the celebrators also questioned the very idea of the
future as a place where any major changes or challenges to the given order of
things were possible, or even thinkable. If modernity, as Koselleck argued, was
characterized by an ever-widening gap between the room of experience and
the horizon of expectation, they rather sought to shrink the gap. In so doing,
all that remained was the present, and the existing social and economic rela-
tions of liberal democracy and capitalism. Since the prevailing society was the
result of objective historical forces or an ascending social rationality, alterna-
tives to this order were historically impossible.

When it came to the alarmists, the prevailing society was justified in a dif-
f erent way. Refraining from presenting progressivist or teleological concepts
of history and refusing to see the existing state of things as a logical outcome
of historical evolution, they did not seek to naturalize liberal democracy by
referring to underlying historical forces or processes. Instead, theorists like
Koestler, Hughes and Huntington legitimized the existing order by present-
ing it as the necessary alternative to complete human devastation. Emphasiz-
ing the imminent threats from communism or Islam, they maintained that
the unanimous popular endorsement of the social and economic order of
Western liberal democracy was the only safeguard against what could other-
wise turn into an unprecedented historical catastrophe. If Hughes warned that
a Soviet invasion of Europe could be “far worse” than the Nazi occupation had
been, Huntington speculated that the clash of civilizations might yield to a
“global Dark Ages” in which humanity would relapse into barbarism and anarchy.

Such fearmongering was a vital component in the mobilizing narratives presented by the alarmists. More than anything else, these narratives were formulated in order to rally all citizens on behalf of the West and unify them under the “freedoms” or “doctrines” which were said to be constitutive of Western society. By the same token, the mobilizing narratives sought to thwart internal dissent in the West and undermine movements and doctrines which opposed the prevailing society or envisioned alternatives to it. In line with the legitimizing narratives, the mobilizing ones also let it be clear that there was no alternative to liberal democracy and capitalism. However, it should be emphasized that this lack of alternatives did not reflect a historical impossibility so much as a political impossibility. While Koestler, Hughes and Huntington could easily imagine alternatives to liberal democracy—namely foreign invasion and destruction—they forcefully argued that it should not be altered but rather strengthened and reinforced. From their point of view, the choice seemed easy: either liberal democracy and capitalism in its current shape or nothing at all.

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By rejecting alternatives to the prevailing society, the end of ideologists and the post-Cold War theorists provided an intellectual foundation for what Italian writer Franco “Bifo” Berardi has recently described as “the slow cancellation of the future.” As Berardi argues in his book After the Future, our time is haunted by the feeling that the present will exist forever and that the future cannot offer any alternatives. If modernity entailed a sense of temporality based on the concepts of progress, development and evolution, our post-futuristic era seems to be marked by an overwhelming disbelief in the future’s emancipatory potential. “[W]hat has disappeared, more than anything else, is the credibility of a progressive model of the future,” Berardi writes, and continues: “The future becomes a threat when the collective imagination becomes incapable of seeing alternatives to trends leading to devastation, increased poverty, and violence.” Rather than being a place where a new, and potentially better, society can materialize, the future is reduced to a static repetition of the present. As it slides out of view, politics become an activity of management and administration rather than of change and development.

In this dissertation, I have sought to analyze how the historical pessimism which Berardi observes was bolstered by a number of scholars and intellectuals during the latter half of the twentieth century. By approaching the end of

12 Ibid., p. 59.
ideology discussion of the 1950s and the post-Cold War theories of the 1990s as legitimizing and mobilizing narratives which ultimately serve to justify the prevailing society, I have attempted to demonstrate how—rather than interrupting a paralyzing historical pessimism—they in fact reinforce the temporality encapsulated in the “there is no alternative” catchphrase. The scholars and intellectuals analyzed in this book sought to shrink the gap between the future and the present.

If I have taken two specific periods of twentieth-century intellectual history as objects of investigation, however, the theoretical framework of this dissertation can potentially be used to analyze any kinds of theories which announce the end of ideology or history, or which presents the given order of things as the pinnacle of all human development. Scrutinizing the concepts of history, processes of post-politicization and legitimizing/mobilizing narratives in theories like these makes it possible to expose their underlying positions on questions of historical dynamics and change, their methods of dealing with conflict, and their ways of justifying existing social institutions and relations. As such, the applicability of the theoretical tools presented here are not restricted to the historical material which has been analyzed, but are also relevant when studying other periods and areas of history or political theory.

In a time like ours, when global economic instability and inequality, increasing environmental problems, growing numbers of refugees and escalations of xenophobic violence summon the world’s attention, the critical interrogation of theories proclaiming the end of ideology or history might help break the spell of the present and provide the impetus for political transformation. If this era, as Wendy Brown has suggested, is characterized by the sense that “the future [...] becomes relatively continuous with the present,” the problems of today demand that we question all theories which dismiss political alternatives to the existing society and instead seek to reclaim the future.13 If we live after the ends of ideology and history, it is time to begin anew. As Hannah Arendt points out, “there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise, the only ‘message’ which the end can ever produce.”14

Svensk sammanfattning

Under 1950-talet utropade ett antal samhällsvetare och intellektuella i Europa och USA de politiska ideologiernas död (the end of ideology). Ideologierna, som under första halvan av 1900-talet hade haft en så avgörande roll i västvärldens politiska liv, ansågs efter andra världskrigets slut ha förlorat sin betydelse i Europas och Nordamerikas liberala demokratier. I och med framväxten av keynesianskt styrda välfärdsstater kunde de ekonomiska och sociala klyftor som präglat den gamla tidens industriksamhälle jämnas ut. De politiska rörelser som strävade efter att revoltera mot den liberala demokratin och upprätta annorlunda samhällsordningar skulle inte längre ha någon materiell grund eller attraktionskraft. 1950-talets högkonjunktur hade medfört hög sysselsättning, välstånd bland breda befolkningslager och goda möjligheter till konsumtion. Detta hade i sin tur gett upphov till färre sociala motsättningar och ifrågasättande av de liberala demokratiernas spelregler. De antidemokratiska rörelser som under mellankrigstiden hade dragit nytta av den ekonomiska misären i Europa och USA antogs få svårare att förankra sina program bland människor som istället för soppkök och matkuponger omgav sig med kylskåp och tv-aparater.

Föreställningen om ideologiernas död, som i olika varianter bland annat presenterades av den amerikanske sociologen Daniel Bell, den franske filosofen Raymond Aron och den svenska publicisten Herbert Tingsten, kom att ifrågasättas under det politiskt turbulenta 1960-talet. Kritiker menade att de som utropade ideologiernas död inte enbart beskrev en påstådd utveckling, utan aktivt uppmanade till acceptans och bejakande av den rådande samhällsordningen och dess institutioner. Trots denna kritik kom liknande idéer till uttryck i samband med Berlinmurens fall 1989 och Sovjetunionens påföljande kollaps. Sommaren 1989 publicerade den amerikanske statsvetaren Francis Fukuyama essän ”The End of History?”, där han hävdade att Sovjetkommunismens upplösning innebar ”historiens slut” och att de politiska ideologier som motsatte sig liberalismen skulle dö ut. Ett par år senare gav den brittiske sociologen Anthony Giddens ut boken Beyond Left and Right, där han argumenterade för att en ”global kosmopolitism” skulle sprida sig över världen och överbrygga de gamla ideologiska motsättningarna mellan höger och vänster. Den amerikanske statsvetaren Samuel P. Huntington kritiserade i The Clash

Syfte och frågeställningar


Teoretiska begrepp

I syfte att undersöka dessa frågeställningar utvecklar avhandlingen ett teoretiskt ramverk som tillämpas i analysen. Först presenteras begreppet ”historiesyn” (concept of history). Utifrån teoretiker som Reinhart Koselleck och Peter Osborne definieras historiesyn som ett begripliggörande av historien i termer av en singulär och sammanhängande process av tid. Detta begripliggörande
Inkludera implicita eller uttryckliga antaganden om den historiska processens dynamik, riktning och eventuella slutmål.


Undersökningen


I avhandlingens avslutande kapitel sammanfattas resultaten. Förutom en jämförelse mellan 1950-talets diskussion om ideologiernas död och 1990-talets teorier inbegriper denna sammanfattning en diskussion om de historiesyner, postpolitiserings och legitimerande/mobiliserande berättelser som går att urskilja i de analyserade teorierna.

Resultat

Jämförelsen mellan 1950-talets diskussion om ideologiernas död och teorierna som formulerades på 1990-talet visar att en liknande idé kom till uttryck under båda decennier: politiska ideologier som marxism och kommunism hade inte


Vissa teoretiker hävdade att sociala konflikter i det postideologiska samhället hade överskridits till förmån för en ordning där alla grupper förenades i gemensamma värderingar och målsättningar. Andra ansåg att konflikterna nu hade tyngts genom att kanaliseras i en reglerad process av förhandling och överläggning mellan utvalda aktörer. Somliga teoretiker externaliserade konflikten genom att förringa inre sociala motsättningar och samtidigt uppmärksamma yttre antagonism mellan ”värt” samhälle och den gemensamma fienden utanför. Slutligen förkastade vissa teoretiker politik helt och hållet som en kraftlös praktik utan förmåga att påverka befintliga sociala institutioner och relationer.

Avhandlingens analys visar också att de historiesynar som kom till uttryck hos de studerade teoretikerna kan delas in i två huvudkategorier: en triumfatorisk (celebratory) och en alarmistisk (alarmist) historiesyn. I den triumfatoriska historiesynen beskrevs det rådande postpolitiska samhället i västvärlden som en lösning på konflikter och oenigheter som tidigare präglat människoligheten. Då alla fundamentalta motsättningar hade lösts skulle samhället inte genomgå några ytterligare omvandlingar, och det fanns därför, som triumfalister uttryckte saken, ”inga alternativ” till den rådande ordningen. Den historiska utvecklingen som lett fram till det existerande västerländska samhället framställdes av triumfalister som en universell process som skulle återupprapas över hela världen. Även om ”underutvecklade” länder ännu inte uppnått den samhällsordning som redan existerade i västvärlden skulle moderniseringens, industrialiseringens och globaliseringens krafter föra dem dit.

Enligt den alarmistiska historiesynen, å andra sidan, utgjorde det rådande postpolitiska samhället i västvärlden inte embryo till en global ordning av harmoni och konsensus. Snarare än att utgöra ”historiens slut” eller en universell modell för länder i tredje världen framställdes den västerländska liberala demokratin som en bräcklig ordning som hotades av allehanda faror. Om 1950-talets alarmister varnade för det yttre hotet från Sovjetunionen och den inre faran från de grupper och individer som förhöll sig neutrala i kalla kriget uppmärksammade 1990-talets alarmister det yttre hotet från islam och den inre faran från subversiva mångkulturalister. För att rädda samhället från dessa hot uppmana alarmisterna till ökad enighet kring ”västerländska värderingar” samt till gemensam kamp mot samhällets inre och yttre fiender.

De triumfatoriska och alarmistiska historiesynerna motsvarades i många och mycket av det som i avhandlingen kallas för legitimerande och mobiliserande berättelser. De teoretiker som representerade den triumfatoriska historiesynen tenderade att legitimera den rådande samhällsordningen genom att framställa den som det naturliga resultatet av till synes objektiva processer som modernisering, industrialisering eller globalisering. Genom att beskriva sina egna samhällen som det nödvändiga resultatet av dylika krafter framställde triumfalisterna den liberala demokratin och kapitalistiska ekonomin som naturliga institutioner bortom det politiska handlandets räckvidd. Eftersom det
rådande samhället var resultatet av objektiva historiska krafter var alternativ till denna ordning *historiskt omöjlig*.

Beträffande alarmisterna försvarades det rådande samhället på ett annat sätt. Istället för att naturalisera den liberala demokratin genom att framställa den som resultatet av objektiva historiska krafter eller processer legitimerade de den rådande ordningen genom att beskriva den som det nödvändiga alternativet till total ödeläggelse. Genom att uppmärksamma de påstådda hoten från kommunismen eller islam hävdade alarmisterna att ett ovillkorligt stöd för den rådande liberaldemokratiska och kapitalistiska ordningen i västvärlden var det enda sättet att motverka vad som annars kunde utmynna i en historisk katastrof. I likhet med de legitimerande berättelserna klargjorde de mobiliserande motsvarigheterna att det inte fanns något alternativ till den liberala demokratin och kapitalismen, men denna brist på alternativ återspeglade inte en historisk omöjlighet så mycket som en *politis omöjlighet*: samhället *gick visserligen att förändra, men det borde inte förändras*.

Genom att förneka alternativ till den rådande samhällsordningen bidrog 1950-talets diskussion om ideologiernas död och de likartade teorierna på 1990-talet till det som den italienske författaren Franco "Bifo" Berardi har kallat för "framtidens långsamma återkallande". Om den västerländska moderniteten kännetecknades av en temporalitet som bottnade i uppfattningen om en växande klyfta mellan erfarenheten av det förflutna och förväntningarna på framtidens sökte de teoretiker som studeras i *No alternative* dämpa tron på framtidens emancipatoriska potential. Därigenom bidrog de också till den historiska pessimism och politiska handlingsförlamning som tycks prägla vår samtid.
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