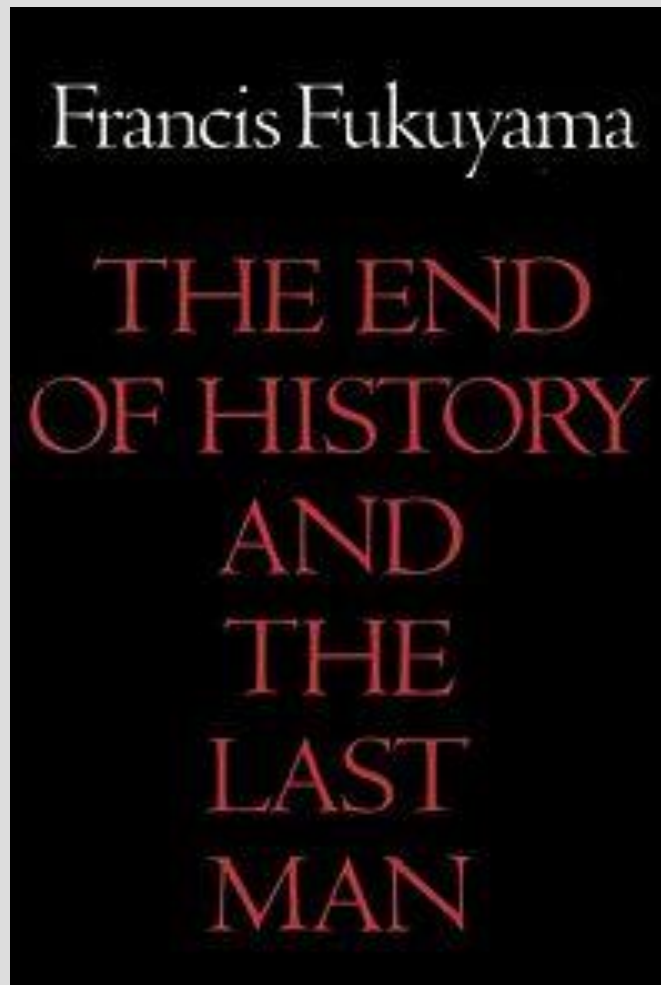


The End of History

Democracy and Liberalism in East Central Europe in the 90s.



Where did the term come from?

- Francis Fukuyama: 1989. Article in National Interest: The End of History?
- 1992: Expanded into a book: The End of History and the Last Man
- Western liberal democracy may signal the endpoint of humanity's sociocultural evolution
- Liberal democracy will be the final form of human government

What exactly did Fukuyama say?

„What we are witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”

What does it mean?

- History is an evolutionary process
- The end of history means that there is no progression after attaining liberal democracy
- This does NOT mean that historical events do not occur after the end of history
- Fukuyama argues that democracy has historically proved a better system and even if it suffers setbacks it will become more and more prevalent

What does it mean? II.

- It does NOT mean American-style democracy is the only acceptable political system → however his theory has widely been interpreted this way
- It means more and more countries will turn to parliamentary democracy and a combination of free market capitalism

Why was this important for East Central Europe?

- At the change of regime the former Soviet satellite states wanted to orient toward the West
- The acceptance of parliamentary democracy and free market capitalism was the key to accession to NATO and the EU
- Institutions could be easily and quickly adapted but not necessarily the political culture

What made the end of history possible?

- During the 90s a global wave of democratization started (Third wave of democratization)
- For over a decade liberal-left governments were in power in the most important nations
- There was a consensus in liberal democracy being the non-plus ultra of political systems → countries expected greater well-being
- EU accession etc. required not just political liberalization but economic as well
- By the mid 2000s there was a consensus that ECE democracies were established democracies

Liberal democracy is not a given though

- Historically the components of liberal democracy were separate
- Democracy → Demos: the power of the people – i.e: universal suffrage
- In the 1980s the liberal human rights aspect started to become more influential
- „Illiberal” democracy = majoritarian democracy, liberal democracy more concerned with minorities, equality

How did history return?

- Fukuyama's book did not see religious fundamentalism as a counterpoint to liberal democracy
- Benjamin Barber: 1992 essay, 1995 book - Jihad vs. McWorld. „McWorld” secular, liberal, corporate friendly
- Samuel Huntington: 1993 essay, 1996 book: The Clash of Civilizations. Response to The End of History: temporary conflict over ideologies will be replaced by ancient conflict of civilizations. Dominant civilizations decide the form of government. This is constantly changing.

The return of history

- After 9/11: The End of History criticized as the symbol of the excessive optimism of the West thinking that the end of the Cold War would mean the end of global conflict
- Fareed Zakaria: 9/11="the end of the end of history"
- Iraq war and later Arab Spring showed the limits of nation building and democracy export

The return of history II.

- Religious fundamentalism and ethnic rivalry not the only cause for the return of history
- Robert Kagan: 2008: *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*: the world remains unipolar but geopolitical realignment raise new threats of regional conflict.
- Russia and China have brought back ideology into geopolitics
- Financial crises further weakened the credibility of liberal democracy

What exactly did Kagan say?

„What we do know is that the global shift toward democracy coincided with the historical shift in the balance of power toward those nations and peoples who favored the liberal democratic idea, a shift that began with the triumph of the democratic powers over fascism in World War II and was followed by a second triumph of the democracies over communism in the Cold War. The liberal international order that emerged after these two victories reflected the new overwhelming global balance in favor of liberal forces. But these victories were not inevitable, and they need not be lasting. Today, the reemergence of the great autocratic powers, along with the reactionary forces of Islamic radicalism, has weakened the order and threatens to weaken it further in the years and decades to come.”

What alternatives are there?

- In 2015 the Journal of Democracy decided to review the third wave of democratization
- They found setbacks but is democracy really in decline? Depends on how you look at it. Liberal democracy is.
- However progress is not always linear
- Richard Youngs: The Puzzle of Non-Western Democracy: There has to be greater variation amongst what we see as a democracy (ie: in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East)