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To cite this article: Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1993) Fukuyama and liberal democracy: the ends of history, *Economy and Society*, 22:2, 218-232, DOI: [10.1080/03085149300000012](https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149300000012)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085149300000012>



Published online: 28 Jul 2006.



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Fukuyama and liberal democracy: the ends of history

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

Abstract

Fukuyama's work has had an uneven reception – dismissed as lightweight and applauded by American conservatives and part of the British left. His work is remarkable for the combination of national security concerns with Big Questions, but underneath the Hegelian gloss it is a conventional restatement of American belief in liberal democracy. Liberal democracy therefore is the focus of this inquiry. First the argument of Fukuyama's essay is compared with that of his book. Next his argument on liberal democracy is examined in relation to three problem areas: liberalism and its exclusions, liberalism and democracy, liberalism and imperialism. Converting history into ideas and divorcing ideas from social actors are main weaknesses of Fukuyama's argument. A major limitation of liberal democracy is that it is conceived in a nation state framework, which holds global concerns at bay and thus blocks the further global extension of democracy.

Fukuyama's thesis of the end of history evoked a great deal of attention because it seemed to provide the ideological foundation for a new round of US hegemony. The mood in US debates at the time was pessimistic, while global political realities, in particular the weakening of the Soviet Union, provided opportunities for a new American assertiveness. Setting forth an ideological stance for the post-Cold War political dispensation, Fukuyama's essay filled the ideology gap. Its timing and grandiloquence lent it weight. Fukuyama's thesis, in an essay in *National Interest* in summer 1989, was that the end of history is upon us:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, 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.¹

Economy and Society Volume 22 Number 2 May 1993

© Routledge 1993 0308-5147/93/2202-0218 \$3.00/1

It was noted that 'there has been an awful lot of history since 1806'.² In reply to his critics Fukuyama explained:

'History', for Hegel, can be understood in the narrower sense of the history of ideology, or the history of thought about the first principles, including those governing political and social organization. The end of history then means not the end of worldly events but the end of the evolution of human thought about such first principles.

Fukuyama's book *The End of History and the Last Man* fine tunes and extends the argument of the essay.³ The book is more probing and intellectually ambitious, well researched and set within a historical framework, but also very uneven. The style is flat, the sources while generally valid in history, are narrow in philosophy, biased in political theory and old-fashioned in sociology.

For all the copious press coverage which Fukuyama's thesis received initially there was little serious critical reaction mainly because it was viewed as lightweight.⁴ It was referred to as 'The beginning of nonsense'. On the left reactions have been mixed. The main reaction has been to dismiss Fukuyama as a capitalist ideologue, but his essay has also been included among readings on the modern condition.⁵ Gunder Frank opines that Fukuyama has been misunderstood, like himself, and proceeds to reiterate his familiar argument of the economic determination of world affairs – a thesis that overlaps with Fukuyama's argument.⁶ Perry Anderson bestows generous praise on Fukuyama for producing a work of 'conviction and elegance', an 'original argument': 'It is safe to say that no one has ever attempted a comparable synthesis – at once so deep in ontological premise and so close to the surface of global politics.'⁷ Fred Halliday, while making a number of critical points, gives Fukuyama a sympathetic reception, noting that 'his work raises many questions of interest and challenge to historical materialism'.⁸

Visiting Europe in 1992 to promote his book Fukuyama observed, 'It is strange to find that, in Europe, many of the people who defend me are Marxists',⁹ as if proving a point Samuel Huntington had made in reaction to the essay: 'Fukuyama's thesis itself reflects not the disappearance of Marxism but its pervasiveness . . . Marxist ideology is alive and well in Fukuyama's arguments to refute it.'¹⁰ Further intellectual affinities concern Hegel and the nostalgia for a holistic approach to history. Some also wanted to avoid the kneejerk reaction of dismissing Fukuyama as another capitalist ideologue; but since several reactions go much further than this in hailing Fukuyama's work they raise deeper questions: are we witnessing a convergence of marxism and liberalism, or is this reception an indication of ideological disarray on the left? Joseph McCarney notes, 'Clearly, the reception of Fukuyama's book offers a rich field of inquiry'.¹¹

In this light it is appropriate to contextualize Fukuyama's work. *The National Interest* where his essay originally appeared, started in October 1985 as a neoconservative journal which seeks to alter US foreign policy; its board of

directors includes Henry Kissinger, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Samuel Huntington and Charles Krauthammer. In the words of its publisher Irving Kristol, the journal is to lead in a 'war of ideology' to create a 'new Republican Party'.¹² At the time Fukuyama was deputy director of policy planning at the State Department, where he was appointed in 1981. Fukuyama has a history of employment in the national security state; he was previously employed as a military analyst for the Rand Corporation, specializing on Soviet policy *vis à vis* the Third World. After resigning from the State Department he returned to the Rand Corporation.

In one of the early reactions to the essay the president of the Council on Foreign Relations claimed that Fukuyama's article was 'laying the foundation for a Bush Doctrine'. On several points the essay is strident propaganda, but also strange, because since when do we hear about Hegel from the State Department? Fukuyama had been a philosophy student at the University of Chicago where one of his teachers was the conservative philosopher Allan Bloom (known for *The Closing of the American Mind*), who familiarized him with the work of the Hegel scholar Alexandre Kojève and the philosopher Leo Strauss. He also studied poststructuralism at the Sorbonne in Paris. It is this combination of interests and alloy of competences that, in all likelihood, accounts for the wide and uneven appeal of Fukuyama's work – the 'darling of American conservatives' being hailed by part of the British left. Both find relief in an aura of intellectual depth leavening American foreign policy and seek a breather from empiricism in the wide arms of Hegel.

The book suggests a wider ambition than the essay: to reflect on the post-Cold War situation from the point of view of the national security state – a constellation often characterized as the shadow government of the United States.¹³ If the Rand Corporation was the main think-tank of the Cold War, it would also want to position itself in strategic thinking after the Cold War. In the light of his record of previous publications, all of which are in the national security mode,¹⁴ Fukuyama comes across as a mandarin in Chomsky's sense, an intellectual of the national security state, *with* intellectual pretensions.

Fukuyama's work and its reception do provide an opportunity to discuss some of the deeper issues raised by the end of the Cold War. As Michael Rustin notes, 'Its thesis, that capitalist democracy is the final stopping place of historical evolution, is of compelling interest, and one that it would be evasive to ignore.'¹⁵ Fukuyama's ambivalent celebration of western triumphalism is part of the writing on the wall, and what appears in capitals is liberal democracy. Spelling out the problems of liberal democracy is relevant also in the wider context of contemporary rethinking of political theory.

The theme of the End has several parallels in post-war American discourse. It is reminiscent of Daniel Bell's *End of Ideology* and brings to mind the convergence thesis advanced by Huntington and Brzezinski in the 1950s, arguing that in the end capitalism and communism will converge because they share the common fate of advanced industrial societies. Fukuyama gives this theme a different, Hegelian turn.

With Hegel the theme of the end is elucidated by his saying, 'The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk,' or, when a process is completed, when the sun has set on it, it is possible to gauge its underlying reason. 1806, when Napoleon's army defeated the Prussian monarchy at the Battle of Jena, was in Hegel's view the turning point in history ushering in the triumph of the ideals of freedom and equality of the French Revolution. In his later work Hegel retreated from this theme. It was revived in the 1930s by Alexandre Kojève (1902–68), a Russian émigré who taught philosophy at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris, where his students included Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Lacan and Raymond Aron. Kojève wrote an influential précis of Hegelian philosophy, through which the 'end of history' gained currency once again.¹⁶

Fukuyama offers a strange kind of Hegelianism: neither right Hegelianism, which is statist, nor left Hegelianism, which is marxist, but a brand new combination, liberal Hegelianism. Torbjorn Knutsen notes, 'There is no Hegelian content to fill his Hegelian terminology – there is, for example, no dialectical method to guide the discussion.'¹⁷ This has been remedied to an extent in the book. Still, as Timothy Fuller noted, it is 'dialectic without tears'.¹⁸ Several scholars have pointed out that Fukuyama's reading of Hegel is inconsistent and derivative of Kojève's narrow interpretation.¹⁹ Hegel's philosophical rigour is entirely absent from Fukuyama's thinking, where Hegelian, or better Kojévian terminology rather serves as a gloss upon what is essentially a very conventional American reiteration of faith in liberal democracy. On the one hand, Fukuyama attributes primacy to economic development, while on the other, he departs from the *Wall Street Journal* school of materialist determinism by attributing importance to culture and ideas in conditioning economic development (thus economic development in Asia has been fostered by its cultural heritage, the familiar Confucian capitalism thesis). The idealist conception of history, coming back full circle to Hegel's view in its most simplistic form, enables Fukuyama to talk about 'first principles' and 'ideological evolution' detached from social and material realities. Theory is divorced from practice, ideas are dehistoricized: reading history as ideology is a way of putting aside precarious questions.

Upholding the United States as an example to the world, a 'city set upon a hill', is a motif as old as the Pilgrim Fathers. Manifest Destiny served this purpose since the nineteenth century. In the 1950s during the United States' 'rise to globalism' liberal democracy was held up as America's guiding light, institutionalized as part of American foreign policy and theorized as part of modernization theory. Now after the demise of communism, it is dusted off and reinstated as America's beacon. In this light Fukuyama's argument is a perfectly conventional restatement of American foreign policy orthodoxy. The main different ingredient is the Hegelian terminology.

During the late Reagan years the mood in US debates was one of pessimism and decline. Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* set forth the theme of imperial over-extension. The trillion dollar magnitude of the US

deficit had become apparent and was brought home by bank failures such as the Savings and Loan institutions. The Japanese challenge and the pending 'Asian Century' loomed on the horizon. Fukuyama's essay struck a note of optimism: the Cold War is over and we have won, a note of basic confidence in the American posture. The United States in effect was identified with the 'end state' of history, with Kojève's 'universal state': 'We might summarize the content of the universal homogeneous state as liberal democracy in the political sphere combined with easy access to VCRs and stereos in the economic.'²⁰

To establish a closure to a process or epoch makes it possible to identify its governing logic. To declare ideological evolution closed is a manoeuvre of power, the vantage point of a superpower declaring its rationale as *the* logic. It illustrates Foucault's thesis of knowledge as power: imperial knowledge proclaiming an era of unilateralism first of all in the realm of 'ideas'.

1.

I will first review Fukuyama's central thesis, comparing the essay and the book, and then subject it to criticism. The bold argument of the essay is that economic liberalism *precedes* political liberalism. Economic liberalism – i.e. capitalism or free market economics – is made the underpinning, the driving force of political liberalism: 'What is important from a Hegelian standpoint is that political liberalism has been following economic liberalism, more slowly than many had hoped but with seeming inevitability.'²¹ There is nothing 'Hegelian' about this (it's economic determinism and 'Hegel put on his head'), but it is icing on the cake of neo-liberalism: Reagan's 'magic of the marketplace' extended to the political forum. This thesis, that economic development leads to liberal democracy, is reiterated in the book but qualified with many ifs and buts. East Asian countries and the Middle East are mentioned as counter-examples.

Fukuyama defines political liberalism as the right to individual freedoms protected by the rule of law. This includes the right to personal freedom and property, religious freedom, and political rights. Democracy is defined as the right of all citizens to vote and participate in politics. The two, according to Fukuyama, can be disengaged: a society can be liberal but not democratic, such as Britain in the eighteenth century, or democratic but not liberal, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran now. Exceptions to the argument are dealt with by arguing that we should not be distracted 'from the larger pattern that is emerging in world history'.

What is emerging victorious, in other words, is not so much liberal practice, as the liberal *idea*. That is to say, that 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.²²

Fukuyama asks, 'Are we simply witnessing a momentary upturn in the fortunes of liberal democracy, or is there some longer-term pattern of development at work that will eventually lead all countries in the direction of liberal democracy?' Reviewing 400 years of modern history he finds 'a pronounced secular trend in a democratic direction' and concludes that 'there is a fundamental process at work that dictates a common evolutionary pattern for *all* human societies – in short, something like a Universal History of mankind in the direction of liberal democracy'.²³ The 'mechanism' underlying this evolutionary pattern in his view is mainly economic. Thus, industrialization generates new social actors and social complexities for which democracy is the most 'functional' political arrangement. Yet, while this is set forth as the main dynamic underlying the trend toward liberal democracy, in his book Fukuyama regards it as inconclusive: 'An economic account of history gets us to the gates of the Promised Land of liberal democracy, but it does not quite deliver us to the other side.'²⁴ A further dynamic ingredient in his view is dialectics, namely the political dialectics generated by elite struggles for recognition and prestige. Thus, in addition to economic dynamics, Fukuyama adds the 'struggle for recognition' as a motive in political evolution.

The contemporary outcome of this process of evolution is a world split between a *post-historical* world of democratic societies, and a *historical* world of non-democratic societies, which coincides with the Third World. These worlds interact on several points: on questions related to oil, weapons proliferation, the environment and immigration. By the post-historical world the ensuing conflicts are to be dealt with in a 'realist' way, i.e. according to national interest.

The post-historical world, although it has achieved liberal democracy, is not free of problems. Questions *not* settled by liberal democracy are those related to ethnicity, culture and religion. The United States is a case in point. In the essay Fukuyama made this astonishing claim about the United States:

the egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx . . . the root causes of economic inequality do not have to do with the underlying legal and social structure of our society, which remains fundamentally egalitarian and moderately redistributionist, so much as with the cultural and social characteristics of the groups that make it up, which are in turn the historical legacy of premodern conditions. Thus black poverty in the United States is not the inherent product of liberalism, but is rather the 'legacy of slavery and racism' which persisted long after the formal abolition of slavery.²⁵

This is in fact an echo of an opinion for which Kojève was famous, that post-war America is a classless society: 'One can even say that from a certain point of view, the United States has already attained the final stage of Marxist

“communism”, seeing that, practically, all the members of a “classless society” can from now on appropriate for themselves everything that seems good to them. . . .²⁶ Fukuyama’s book qualifies this argument.

Black slavery constituted the major exception to the generalization that Americans were ‘born equal’, and American democracy could not in fact settle the question of slavery through democratic means. . . . Given the profoundly cultural nature of the problem, on the side both of blacks and whites, it is not clear that American democracy is really capable of doing what would be necessary to assimilate blacks fully, and to move from formal equality of opportunity to a broader equality of condition.²⁷

Thus, what is hailed as an achievement in the essay comes out as a failure in the book; the ‘cultural problem’ which in the essay comes across as a problem of blacks, in the book is presented as a problem of whites and blacks. Accordingly the claims of the triumph of liberal democracy on close reading turn out to be admissions of failure, without even a redeeming future in sight. In a response to Fukuyama, Irving Kristol put it this way: ‘We may have won the Cold War, which is nice. . . . But this means that now the enemy is us, not them.’²⁸

2.

The epitome of liberal modernity, the United States, is in reality in a profound crisis – Fukuyama’s ‘classless society’ has the largest underclass of any western society. This raises the general question, what is the relationship between liberalism’s universalist claims and its particularist history? Can history whenever it proves embarrassing to theory, be simply dismissed or relegated to second place? From the *history* of liberalism several problems emerge which are ignored by Fukuyama and which we can group as *liberalism and its exclusions, liberalism and democracy, liberalism and imperialism*.

In Fukuyama’s treatment, whenever a problem arises in relation to the actual achievement of liberal democracy, his discourse retreats from the practice to the *idea*. Hegelian idealism serves as an alibi and figleaf. It follows from this methodological premise (ideas make history) that we end up with ahistorical liberalism, abstracted from history, a liberalism without actors, divorced from social forces, disculpated from its faults. What conflicts there are, and Fukuyama perceives several, are never inherent in liberalism but always due to extraneous factors. Thus the conflicts arising from ‘nationalism and other forms of racial and ethnic consciousness’ do ‘not arise from liberalism itself so much as from the fact that the liberalism in question is incomplete’.²⁹

Fukuyama’s argument on the United States begs the question: for what is the relationship between liberalism and the ‘legacy of slavery and racism’, or for that matter between ‘premodernity’ and ‘modernity’? Did not slave labour

from Africa contribute to building the foundations of North America's development?³⁰ This strange myopia – a strangeness that typifies an entire era and in which the logic of empire is inscribed – was intrinsic already in Hegel's distinction between the peoples *with* history and those *without* history, presumably, without any relationship existing between them. As if there was no relationship between empire and its objects, between metropolitan prosperity and the exploitations upon which it built, between the front and rear entrances of the edifices of western civilization. As if the dialectic between master and slave which Hegel so astutely observed in the microsphere, did not also hold on the global canvas of human history. Was there no relationship between the prosperity accumulating in Bordeaux, Le Havre, Nantes, the centres of the French slave trade, and the power eventually claimed by the 'third estate' in Fontainebleau and Paris?³¹

If we examine the fine print of the American or French revolutions, *who* are 'We the People'?³² What is the relationship between liberalism's claims and its exclusions within the nation, and secondly, in a global context? Implicitly the only social forces who count in Fukuyama's view are the bourgeoisie. After the era of the bourgeois revolutions, what of any possible significance can be the struggles of workers, slaves, women, minorities, peasants, colonized and indigenous peoples? Are these not simply social stirrings that unfold 'inevitably' under the lofty ideological banners of the French and American revolutions? One of the episodes that ushered in the American 'empire of liberty', in Jefferson's term, was the Removal Policy of native American peoples to reservations west of the Mississippi, which occasioned, for instance, the forced trek of the Cherokees, known as the Trail of Tears. In the first volume of *Democracy in America* Tocqueville commented that the Americans 'kindly take them by the hand and transport them to a grave far from the land of their fathers'. He concluded, 'It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity.'³³

Is it possible then to separate the *history* from the *theory* of liberalism? Uday Mehta has argued, 'The facts of political exclusion – of colonial peoples, slaves, women, and those without sufficient property to exercise either suffrage or real political power – over the past three and a half centuries must be allowed to embarrass the universalistic claims of liberalism.'³⁴ The exclusions of liberalism, according to Mehta, are *not* incidental: 'the exclusionary basis of liberalism' derives 'from its theoretical core, and the litany of exclusionary historical instances is an elaboration of this core'. This interpretation is elucidated by close readings of liberal statements on natural equality, natural rights and political rights from Locke to Mill, which show that 'behind the capacities ascribed to all human beings, there exists a thicker set of social credentials that constitute the real bases of political inclusion'. 'Liberal exclusion works by modulating the distance between the interstices of human capacities and the conditions for their political effectivity.'³⁵

Part of the subtext of liberalism and of the epoch is racism. Let's recall

how the division of labour between makers and objects of history actually worked out, for instance in the words of the eminent historian Lord Acton in 1862:

The Celts are not among the progressive, initiative races, but among those which supply the material rather than the impulse of history, and are either stationary or retrogressive. The Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Teutons are the only makers of history, the only authors of advancement. Other races . . . are a negative element in the world. . . . The Chinese . . . the Hindoos . . . the Slavonians . . . etc.³⁶

In a recent essay Bhikhu Parekh examines the relationship between liberalism and democracy. Liberalism is a theory of the state based on individualism and individual rights (using a minimalist definition of what constitutes an individual) which in Europe, notably Britain, precedes the attainment of democracy by 200 years, and is therefore the dominant partner in liberal democracy:

It is democracy conceptualised and structured within the limits of liberalism. Broadly speaking liberalism constitutes its theory of the state, and democracy its theory of government. Liberalism determines the nature of the state (formal, abstract), its structure (separate from the autonomous civil society, a clear separation between public and private), its rationale (protection of the basic rights of its citizens), and its basic units (individuals and not groups or communities).³⁷

'To insist on the universality of liberal democracy', according to Parekh, 'is to deny the West's own historical experience'. 'Since the liberal principle of individuation and the other liberal ideas are culturally and historically specific, a political system based on them cannot claim universal validity.'³⁸ Political systems combining liberalism and democracy differently are very well possible – such as democratic liberalism ('making democracy the dominant partner and defining liberalism within the limits set by it'), an option close to social democracy; or they may be assigned equal important (each limiting the excesses of the other), which is the way liberal democracy has evolved in some Asian and African countries. Liberal democracy is least relevant, according to Parekh, for cohesive community-based polities, as in Islamic countries in the Middle East, or for multi-communal societies, such as India. Thus, 'It would appear that the democratic part of liberal democracy has proved far more attractive outside the West and is far more universalisable than the liberal.'³⁹

Another question that has been raised is whether Fukuyama's 'post-history' resembles postmodernity. Or, to what extent does liberalism belong to an 'age of ideology' which itself is past, not in the sense of Daniel Bell's end of ideology, but in the sense evoked by postmodernism? There is a clear distinction between claims à la Fukuyama and the postmodern. Fukuyama does not advance a postmodern position, quite the contrary, he claims the triumph of an 'idea' aligned with a geopolitical entity: 'The triumph of the

West, of the Western *idea*, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism.⁴⁰ While postmodernism, as in the case of Lyotard, departs from the end of the grand narratives of totality and freedom, of Enlightenment and liberation, Hegel's narrative of totality included, Fukuyama reclaims Hegel and reinstates the narrative of liberalism. Fukuyama's argument rather belongs with modernity for it is in many ways a restatement of modernization theory. This was likewise a theory 'without a future': 'the advanced countries of the West, it was assumed, had "arrived"'.⁴¹ For complacency there never is a future.

3.

In a scathing critique of the policy of the French socialist government in the Gulf War, Régis Debray pointed out that democracies have been imperialist ever since Athens and the Delian League.⁴² The combination of democracy at home and imperialism abroad is an age old formula. This is a dimension consistently marginalized in political theory. Rereading 'the great political theorists', whether Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau or Mill, will not settle the question because political theory is traditionally focused on the relationship between state and civil society, sovereign and people. This relationship is theorized, negotiated, regulated, whereas the global environment remains an essentially unregulated state of 'international anarchy', outside the purview of political philosophy and left to the Realpolitik of 'national interest' and the 'balance of power' as the constituents of 'world order'. By comparison to the sphere of state and society, the international sphere is undertheorized, or more precisely, theories of international relations, such as the theory of just war, justifications of imperialism and the realist theory of international power politics, reflect the priority of the domain of the state. In the absence of a concept of 'world society', there is no equivalent to the notion of the 'social contract' regulating international relations, except for the codes of diplomacy and international treaties and agreements, which reflect the predominance of the world order made up of states.

This forms part of the dark side of Fukuyama's argument. A *global* theory of political principles requires for its foundation a kind of world history that has hardly been written yet: again the question is, what is the relationship between Hegel's 'peoples without history' and those who inhabit 'history'? In the New World Order the discourse has moved up: the 'peoples without history' are now 'mired in history', while the erstwhile inhabitants of history are in the 'post-historical' state: 'Clearly, 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.'⁴³ The end of the Cold War and the shift from the East/West axis brings us back to the North/South axis of conflict, which after all is a much older terrain of conflict. If we wonder what principles regulate this relationship, we suddenly depart from the realm of lofty political ideas: liberal

democracy pertains to the state in relation to society, not to the relations *among* peoples and states. Here Fukuyama simply reverts to a restatement of the National Interest, which duly reminds us of the journal where his essay was originally published.

Fukuyama concedes, 'most "liberal" European societies were illiberal insofar as they believed in the legitimacy of imperialism'.⁴⁴ All along imperialism has been one of the key issues 'on the other side' of liberalism, its Hobbesian face turned outward while its Lockean face looks inward. In the words of Michael Rustin, 'The "national" limits to democratic sovereignty in the modern world are devices for protecting economic privileges (of national labour forces as well as owning classes) against the claims which a more global democratic system would surely seek to enforce.'⁴⁵ The question of liberalism and imperialism should be considered in conjunction with the issue of liberalism and capitalism.

In Fukuyama's treatment, political liberalism as a theory of the state and *economic liberalism* are not clearly differentiated. The historical affinities of liberal ideology and international hegemony have been clearly charted by Wallerstein.⁴⁶ Hugo Grotius' *Mare Liberum* or the claim to freedom of the seas coincided with the Dutch position of world hegemony in the seventeenth century. In Britain the political moment of the 'free traders' of the Manchester School came in the mid-nineteenth century when the country was at the peak of its military, political, economic and financial advantage. Besides, there were *two* sides to free trade: free trade for British textile imports into India, tariffs for Indian textiles to Britain. The United States advocated the 'open door' policy during the era of US hegemony. Conversely, economic liberalism retreats at times of interstate rivalry or the absence of global hegemonic order. Where was liberalism in the age of empire when capitalist competition became interstate rivalry, when the western powers turned protectionist, when nationalism and chauvinism took the lead? Where was liberalism between the world wars when state intervention became institutionalized? Neither socialism nor capitalism exist any longer by their nineteenth century standards. If marxism is in crisis, so has been liberalism, by most accounts, from the 1870s onward. What about the 'strange death of liberalism' at the end of the nineteenth century? During the eras of monopoly capitalism, neo-mercantilism and state-led industrialization, of Keynesianism and the guided economies of the post-war era, where was liberalism? And in the authoritarian state-led industrialization of the NICs in East Asia and Latin America, where is liberalism?

Although the international domain remains largely outside the purview of political theory, political history reflects the vicissitudes of international affairs. The history of liberalism is a history of double standards and half truths. In this regard neo-liberalism is of one cloth with liberalism, witness the silences and exclusions of the IMF. It is a strange claim that, as Fukuyama would have it, the end of the century is witness to 'an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism'.⁴⁷ We have established that in the domestic

sphere, in the case of the US, by Fukuyama's own account, this victory means precious little – it doesn't even promise a future for America's 'ethnic' underclasses. Secondly we have established that liberal democracy is irrelevant to the international domain, which remains the shooting range of 'national interests'.

Liberalism's shortcomings include the focus on the individual – hence the neglect of the role of social movements; the exclusions of liberalism and the assumption of society as a homogeneous entity – hence the inability to deal with questions of gender, ethnicity, religion and cultural pluralism; the preoccupation with the nation state – hence the disregard for global dynamics; its ethnocentrism – hence the tendency towards universalizing its western logic. This means that we must look beyond liberal democracy towards different logics. While Fukuyama's focus is on ideas, we would do well to turn to social actors. While Fukuyama claims liberalism has exhausted the range of fundamental political options, the history of social movements points beyond liberalism: has the horizon of human emancipation really been exhausted by the ideas of the French and American revolutions?⁴⁸ If among the 'old' social movements, the national movements can be regarded as working out this logic, this is questionable for the worker movements, and still less clear for women's movements in their various stages of development.⁴⁹ Third World movements have introduced different emancipatory elements again – such as Gandhi's satyagraha and peasant movements. New social movements have introduced dimensions which give a voice precisely to the silences of liberalism, empower those excluded from its monologue, and transcend its national scope – such as identity politics, cultural pluralism, community, human rights, ecology and peace movements. Indigenous peoples' movements, which are usually not counted among the new social movements, on the one hand represent the asymptote of the nationalitarian logic (direction balkanization), while on the other, they introduce different political, cultural and ecological sensibilities.

The French and American revolutions were *national* revolutions and while the nation-state format has been fundamental to colonialism and post-colonialism, we have also gone beyond the era of the nations, witness the new international division of labour, multinational corporations, cross-border enterprise zones, common marketization in Europe and elsewhere, diaspora trails which criss-cross boundaries, the global character of concerns such as development, debt and ecology. These global concerns clearly transcend the horizon of the 'age of the democratic revolution'. The logic of '1848' retains relevance and momentum, as the growing significance of human rights indicates, but at the same time a different horizon has emerged, marked by the realities and the awareness of globalization. In this context, the old paradigms of either marxism or liberalism are no longer relevant *per se*. In a sense, the Gulf war demonstrated the limits of the nation state logic: while the war was fought in the name of national sovereignty, that of Kuwait, the Kurdish question exposes the limits and actual contingency of the principle of national sovereignty, that of Iraq.

For several reasons then the present juncture is not an era of the triumph of liberalism: because of the actual history of liberalism, the emancipatory dynamics of subaltern consciousness and new social movements, and the dynamics of globalization. To a considerable extent modern history is made by social movements, no longer in a national but in a global context, against the grain and in spite of liberalism.

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Notes

This paper has been given as a lecture to the Centre of Non-Western Studies, University of Leiden, June 1991, the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, Copenhagen, March 1992, and the Department of English, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, May 1992. I am grateful to Ron Hunnings and Bhikhu Parekh for alerting me to references.

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