

Degree Program in International Relations

Course of Comparative History of Political Systems

Fukuyama and The End of History:  
Perceptions and Criticisms in Italy  
between 1989 and 2001

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## Introduction

*“Sciocchezze. Io non ho mai predetto, sarebbe stata una stupidaggine, la fine degli Eventi. Chi mai, senza essere un folle, potrebbe dichiarare che smetteranno di succedere dei fatti?”*

(F. Fukuyama. “La storia marcia verso l’ultimo uomo”, intervista a G. Riotta *Corriere della Sera*. February 18, 1992)

“Freedom!” was the *Time's* title of the issue that came out on the occasion of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Only a short time before, Francis Fukuyama had published *The End of History?* in which he assumed that the end of bipolarity would affirm the triumph of liberal democracy. When the US political scientist - then deputy director of the US State Department’s policy planning staff - published his article in *The National Interest*, he could not have imagined how famous that sentence would become. But the succession of events drew the attention of many to that prediction. From then on, Fukuyama's words were echoed by the responses of academics and journalists around the world, so much so that in 1992 he published an extended version of his theory in the book *The End of History and the Last Man*.

On the prophecy of the *End of History* - less on that of the *Last Man* - an intense and multifaceted debate emerged worldwide. While the idea that liberal democracy and market capitalism represented humanity's last form of government resonated with the triumphalist mood of the post-Cold War era, it also attracted significant criticism and skepticism. Many accused Fukuyama of being too optimistic, and of not considering the challenges that might arise within the liberal democracies themselves. Then, as the 1990s progressed, countless articles claimed that “history was not over” or that “liberalism and capitalism had all but won”<sup>1</sup>. The criticism and debate surrounding Fukuyama's theory were so intense that the author himself re-explained and reiterated his thoughts several times.

More than thirty years after the publication of Fukuyama's article in *The National Interest*, the author's reflections and, even more, the debate around them are extremely pertinent. In the 1990s, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a widely shared sense of triumphalist optimism. While this was true in some respects, it was also true that there were many more cautious and skeptical scholars. It was precisely in that period that a debate opened

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<sup>1</sup> I have encountered the use of such phrases in several newspaper articles. See for example Mino Vignolo's article *La storia non finisce, corre*.

inspired by the idea that a profound historical watershed had arrived, in which Fukuyama's thesis was embedded.

My reasons for questioning how Francis Fukuyama was read and understood are based on the fact that the events of 1989-1991 generated consequences that are still visible today. With the end of bipolarity and détente, it was thought that a fracture point had arrived, leaving behind a troubled past and paving the way for a future in which political mediation would be minimized. However, over the years - especially after the 9/11 attacks and after the economic crisis of 2008 - that optimism began to fade to the current conclusion that history does not have an end but is rather a cyclical path. All this makes the debate around *The End of History and the Last Man* still very topical and interesting. The emergence of alternative theories to that of the end of history - such as Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* - and the dialectical confrontation between them, has marked the political and philosophical debate of the last thirty years.

However, the contrast between the various theories has been analyzed mainly in the American context. Although there are examples of dialogue with Fukuyama by intellectuals from other countries (such as Jacques Derrida in France), this has been much less studied in the Italian case. This is at least the case for the period between 1989 and 2001. In particular, the way in which Italian academics, journalists, and politicians have understood, translated, and discussed Francis Fukuyama's ideas has not received sufficient scholarly attention.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate and analyze how *The End of History?* first and *The End of History and the Last Man* later, were received and interpreted by academics, politicians, and - above all - journalists, with a specific focus on Italy. The questions that prompted this project were: “How was Fukuyama's thought received in Italy between 1989 and 2001?”, “Did the political and social context that the country went through in the 1990s influence these perceptions?”, “How did journalists and politicians comment on Fukuyama's words?”. This analysis will allow us to investigate the case of a country that during the 1990s was an exception in the panorama of liberal democracies. Not only did Italy see its party apparatus shaken to its foundations, but it also saw the disappearance of many of its historical parties (such as the PCI, the strongest communist party in the West). Through the answers to these questions, it will be possible to understand why the Italian setting provides an unusual lens for examining the significance of Fukuyama's arguments.

The Italian case is important because the debate on the end of history developed within the broader context of the dialectic between history and politics. At a time of crisis, many wondered what would become of politics and democracy. Moreover, it will be noted that the debate on the end of history was deeply intertwined with the evolution of the country's political environment. Through this analysis, we will find out how Fukuyama's words fit into this discourse, whether they played a key role or were not explored in depth.

To best introduce the reading of this dissertation, two clarifications are necessary. Firstly, it was decided to focus the analysis on the period between 1989 and 2001, before the fall of the Twin Towers. This choice is dictated both by the practical need to narrow the field of research to carry out the work as accurately as possible and by the assumption that 9/11 constitutes a kind of caesura in the debate on Fukuyama's thesis. The second clarification concerns the decision to focus the analysis on the Italian case. During the last decade of the 1990s, Italy went through a troubled historical period, marked by various internal crises and profound changes (from the political to the social context). For this reason, the aim of this paper is to understand if and how much the country's historical context influenced the ways in which Fukuyama's ideas were interpreted and commented on.

The dissertation is structured in four chapters. In the first chapter, Francis Fukuyama's thought is described and explained both in *The End of History?* and in *The End of History and The Last Man*. First, the differences and evolutions of the theory in the two works of 1989 and 1992 are underlined, and then it's discussed the revision work that the author has done in response to his critics (for example in the article *Second Thoughts: The End of History 10 Years Later*). Furthermore, to understand the motivations that led the author to theorize the end of history as it had been until then, the significant events that had taken place in world history up to 1989 are reviewed. Fukuyama himself began the article in *The National Interest* by stating "In watching the flow of events over the past decade or so, it is hard to avoid the feeling that something very fundamental has happened in world history"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it will be noted that the 1980s was a decade of significant transformations, with the end of the Cold War approaching, the rise of neo-liberal policies, and a series of political and economic changes around the world. All developments that, as we know today, prepared the ground for the great political and economic revolutions of the 1990s. These events of the last decade of the 20th century are described in the second chapter, with reference to economic globalization and its

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<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.



effects and technological advances and their impact on society. Then, in the third chapter, we move on to the actual analysis of the debate on Fukuyama's thesis. First, an overview of the debate on the End of History at the international level is sketched out, also considering the influence that the American political scientist's thinking had on both the US and other countries' foreign policy. The second and third paragraphs analyze more specifically the criticism of Fukuyama in three countries: the United States (the author's homeland), France, and the United Kingdom, with the latter two being treated in comparison to each other. For each of the three countries, the analysis focuses on the investigation of articles from a specific newspaper. Respectively, the *New York Times* for the US, *Le Monde* for France, and *The Guardian* for the UK were chosen.

Finally, the fourth and last chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the responses that *The End of History and the Last Man* received in Italy. Through research work covering both the academic, journalistic (especially that of *Corriere della Sera*), and political contexts, this chapter aims to discover whether the historical context of Italy in the 1990s influenced the reception of Fukuyama's thesis. Furthermore, by reading the opinions of academics - such as Norberto Bobbio - we will try to ascertain whether Fukuyama's optimism was shared and whether political orientation influenced the perceptions of these personalities. Since the historical period in question saw a shift from paper sources to computer databases, an important part of the research is carried out with the help of the Italian Senate Library, as well as with the support of the online archives of newspapers and academic magazines.

This last part aims to investigate the reaction of the political elite to Fukuyama's theory, trying to understand whether the collapse of the post-war party system affected them. The intention is to understand not only to what extent the crises of the late 20th century impacted perceptions but also whether they distracted the attention of Italian politicians, putting the Fukuyama debate in the background.

At the end of this thesis, it will emerge that in general, the historical, political, and social context of the late XX century influenced not only the author's thinking but also the debate and criticism surrounding it. It will be noted that although the countries examined - the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy - were facing peculiar situations in the period following the end of bipolarity, in each of these countries Fukuyama's assertion that somehow the West and liberal democracy had won provoked countless reactions. These reactions were different and focused

on different aspects of the end of history theory. Nevertheless, it will be found that there were some common elements in the debates on it.

## Chapter 1.

### Francis Fukuyama's Theory of the End of History and the Last Man

#### 1.1 Introduction to Fukuyama's theory: the intellectual background

Francis Fukuyama declared that history had come to an end in 1989. Ever since the publication of the article *The End of History?* in *The National Interest*, the author and his words have been the subject of a vast debate, so much so that only three years later - in 1992 - Fukuyama published an extended version of his theory in the book *The End of History and the Last Man*. *The End of History?* was published the same year that the Berlin Wall finally fell, thus when it seemed that somehow the West and liberal democracy had triumphed. Aware of the changes and the succession of events, Fukuyama wanted to provide a broader conceptual framework to distinguish between what was essential and what was accidental in world history<sup>3</sup>.

As society moved into the last decade of the 20th century - what Fukuyama wanted to make clear was that the world was witnessing the overwhelming victory of economic and political liberalism<sup>4</sup>. He believed that the global spread of liberal democracies and free-market capitalism of the West and its way of life could signal the end of humanity's sociocultural evolution and political struggle and become the last form of human governance because of the impending end of the Cold War and the resulting fading of possible alternatives to liberalism. The changes of the 1980s had disrupted the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries - China and the USSR - and led to the beginning of significant reform movements in both<sup>5</sup>. This was a reform process visible at every level of society, not only in high political circles but also in the sheer spread of consumer culture. Not surprisingly, towards the end of the decade, protest and reform movements began to undermine the communist regimes in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany.

Thus, at the heart of the theory on the End of History - later to become known as the "Fukuyama theory" - was the idea that humanity was witnessing 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. This meant

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<sup>3</sup>Amodio, Luciano. "'Fine Della Storia' Hegeliana o Post-Hegeliana? Considerazioni Sulle Tesi Di Fukuyama." *Politico (Pavia, Italy)* 58, no. 1 (1993): 229.

<sup>4</sup>Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>5</sup>Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

that the endpoint of humanity's ideological evolution had been reached, as well as the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human governance<sup>6</sup>. However, contrary to the assertions of some of Fukuyama's critics, this did not mean the end of the succession of fundamental historical events<sup>7</sup>. The proclaimed victory of liberalism was still unfinished on a real or material level. Nevertheless, on the ideal level liberalism had commonly established itself as the ideal to govern the world in a long-term perspective<sup>8</sup>.

It is important to emphasize that the idea of the End of History was not new. Karl Marx had previously been an important theorist of it. The German philosopher, who in turn had drawn on the words of Georg Wilhelm and Friedrich Hegel, thought that the path of historical evolution was a limited process set by the interaction of material forces and that it would only terminate if a communist utopia was created, which would ultimately resolve all historical tensions<sup>9</sup>. The Hegelian concept of history - as a dialectical process with a beginning, a middle, and an end - conceives the progress of humanity as a path interspersed with a series of stages, each of which corresponds to different concrete forms of social organization<sup>10</sup>. For Fukuyama, Hegel's insight lay in his observation that world history "ended" in 1806 because liberal democracy represented the "*end point of human ideological evolution*"<sup>11</sup>. This appropriation, along with the work of Alexandre Kojève, the prominent French interpreter who deserves the credit for resurrecting Hegel, provides Fukuyama with the anchor to offer his own political recommendations<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, Fukuyama's theory lays its theoretical foundations in Kojève's lectures and philosophical essays on the oppositional dynamics of the servant-master dialectic<sup>13</sup>, the core of Hegel's philosophical theory and Marx's economic philosophy<sup>14</sup>.

In an attempt to revive Hegel's thought away from the filters of Marxism, Fukuyama refers to the efforts of Alexandre Kojève, a notable modern theorist whose research focused on Hegel's

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<sup>6</sup> Held, David. *Book Notes -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama*. Vol. 41. Guildford: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>8</sup> Amodio, Luciano. "'Fine Della Storia' Hegeliana o Post-Hegeliana? Considerazioni Sulle Tesi Di Fukuyama." *Politico (Pavia, Italy)* 58, no. 1 (1993): 229.

<sup>9</sup> Juste, Oriol Farrés. "De Vuelta Al Fin De La Historia. Una Interpretación Ética De La Condición Posthistórica En Alexandre Kojève." *Pensamiento (Madrid)* 74, no. 280 (2018): 521-540.

<sup>10</sup> Cavalleri, Matteo. "'Pro Hegel Or Contra'. Critical Considerations about the use of the Concept End of History in F. Fukuyama." *Scienza e Politica* 31, no. 61 (2019).

<sup>11</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Juste, Oriol Farrés. "De Vuelta Al Fin De La Historia. Una Interpretación Ética De La Condición Posthistórica En Alexandre Kojève." *Pensamiento (Madrid)* 74, no. 280 (2018): 521-540.

<sup>13</sup> Alexandre Kojève is best known for his readings and interpretations of Hegel, which have profoundly influenced 20th-century philosophical and political thought. Among his most important contributions are the lectures and philosophical essays he gave and wrote from the 1930s onwards, focusing on the Hegelian servant-master dialectic.

<sup>14</sup> Amodio, Luciano. "'Fine Della Storia' Hegeliana o Post-Hegeliana? Considerazioni Sulle Tesi Di Fukuyama." *Politico (Pavia, Italy)* 58, no. 1 (1993): 229.

idea of the universal yearning for recognition. In revisiting Hegel and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Kojève emphasizes that as early as 1806 - with the defeat of the Prussian monarchy by Napoleon in the Battle of Jena - the philosopher from Stuttgart had proclaimed the end of history. Indeed, in the Battle of Jena, Hegel saw the victory of the ideals of the French Revolution and the imminent universalization of the state that incorporates the principles of liberty and equality<sup>15</sup>. According to Kojève's opinion, Hegel was right. While factors such as slavery and limited voting rights were still present, and the path was still long, on the other hand, the basic principles of the liberal democratic state could not be further improved. Consequently, the idea that history ends with 1806 - according to Kojève - is not wrong, because it was at that moment that the vanguard of humanity realized the principles of the French Revolution. In essence, Kojève saw Hegel's "end of history" thesis as the philosophical articulation of the irreversible establishment of the liberal democratic order, i.e. the optimal and final form of human political organization, which marks the apex of human social and political evolution<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, in the first edition of his book *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Kojève claimed that the end of history was not only already present but that Hegel was right in seeing the Battle of Jena as the end of history<sup>17</sup>. Based on this premise, the two World Wars should therefore be interpreted as an extension of the revolutionary principles<sup>18</sup>.

*The End of History?* as a premise derived from Hegel serves Fukuyama as a model for his grand theory that international politics has been transformed - domesticated - and that future conflicts, theorized as struggles for recognition, will take on new forms<sup>19</sup>. However, the American political scientist's references to the great theorists of the past have brought him numerous criticisms. For instance, some observers have questioned whether Hegel and the American democratic heritage can be credibly linked. Conversely, others have shown visible disquiet at the use of Kojève as an interpreter of Hegel because he defended tyranny as a constructive historical force.

Now, acknowledging the influence that Kojève's thought has on the work of Francis Fukuyama, it is important to emphasize that the thesis of the former U.S. State Department official is not

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<sup>15</sup> Tyutchenko, Daniil A. "The Influence of Hegelianism on the French Philosophy of the 20th Century: The Theories by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite." *Antinomii* 23, no. 3 (2023): 62-80.

<sup>16</sup> Juste, Oriol Farrés. "De Vuelta Al Fin De La Historia. Una Interpretación Ética De La Condición Posthistórica En Alexandre Kojève." *Pensamiento (Madrid)* 74, no. 280 (2018): 521-540.

<sup>17</sup> Knox, T. M. *KOJÈVE, A. -Introduction à La Lecture De Hegel (Book Review)*. Vol. 57. London, etc: Basil Blackwell Ltd., etc, 1948.

<sup>18</sup> Lutticken, Sven. "Posthuman Prehistory." *Third Text* 29, no. 6 (2015): 498-510.

<sup>19</sup> Cavalleri, Matteo. "'Pro Hegel Or Contra'. Critical Considerations about the use of the Concept End of History in F. Fukuyama." *Scienza e Politica* 31, no. 61 (2019).

limited to a simple neo-Kojévian interpretation of the meaning of history. Indeed, already in his 1795 essay *Perpetual Peace*, Kant believed that the end of history would include the end of warfare. He thought that eventually, the European republics would unite to form a unified, self-sufficient "civic commonwealth"<sup>20</sup>. This very point can be found in Fukuyama's thinking, according to which by the late 1980s the advanced democracies of the world had established a "Pacific union" that has changed human nature. During the 19th century, the trend in the philosophical environment was focused on a view of human history as a process with direction and meaning. Subsequently, this view diminished over the following century, giving way to a conception that sees human history as lacking a meaningful process. Francis Fukuyama's intent is precisely to rethink that history is directional and has an "end"<sup>21</sup>.

Fukuyama's main thesis was that, after a century of emergence and decline of fascist and communist regimes, enormous political turmoil and economic crises, of intellectual and practical contestation with Western-style economic and political liberalism, the world was returning to its starting point, namely the irrefutable triumph - "a shameless victory", in Fukuyama's words - of the Western liberal system<sup>22</sup>. According to him, it was a triumph of the "Western idea", made evident by the exhaustion of viable alternatives to Western liberalism. This triumph was shown, in the first place, by the spread of Western consumerist culture in the two most important countries of the "alternative world", China and the Soviet Union<sup>23</sup>. As Fukuyama correctly points out, during the 20th century, there were two major challenges to political and economic liberalism: fascism and communism<sup>24</sup>. Both could be subsumed under the common concept of anti- or aliberal regimes, in the political domain, and under the concept of collectivist systems in the economic domain (although communism, or Soviet socialism, was much more "collectivist" than fascism). The latter having been buried under the rubble of the Second World War, left communism, which - at the time Fukuyama was writing his Hegelian pamphlet - had not yet been finally buried. This memory is important: after all, in the second half of 1988 and the beginning of 1989, when Fukuyama was writing his speculative essay, Gorbachev was still struggling to implement his *glasnost* and *perestroika*, intended, as we know, not to bury communism, but to introduce market elements into its actual functioning,

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<sup>20</sup> Dupkala, Rudolf. "Reinterpretations of Kant's and Hegel's Philosophy in Fukuyama's Vision of Global Dominance of Liberal Democracy." *Annales Scientia Politica* 12, no. 1 (2023): 29-36.

<sup>21</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Elliott, Gregory. *Ends in Sight: Marx/Fukuyama/Hobsbawm/Anderson* Pluto Press, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

<sup>24</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3-18.

so that the new NEP under the command of a Communist Party reformist could ensure the continuity of the system and the empire; on the other hand, Deng Xiao-Ping's China showed, at that juncture, only 20 percent market system as the locus of the country's overall production and, as far as is known, the plutocracy of the CCP intends, to this day, to build a phantom "market socialism with Chinese characteristics"<sup>25</sup>.

Through an analysis of the political and economic evolution of the contemporary world, Fukuyama develops his theory of the End of History. According to him, most nation-states in the modern world have evolved historically through economic and political processes to have liberal constitutions and capitalism-based free markets<sup>26</sup>. Both liberalism and the free market have reached their full potential today. Their completion is a result of the historical process. Fukuyama concludes from this that liberal democratic principles have endured and come to be seen as the ultimate objective of history<sup>27</sup>. For Fukuyama, there is no other goal in the contemporary world. It must be said that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the tension for change and historicity seemed to have faded or died out<sup>28</sup>. Everything that happened after 1989 on a planetary scale, from the Gulf War to the ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia, from the dissolution of African states to the crisis in Japan, South America, or the countries of Eastern Europe, seemed incapable of transforming the social model that had gained hegemony on the planet at the end of the Cold War<sup>29</sup>. The idea that it was possible to build a different form of life, the idea that this possibility rested on a political theory, the idea that anything that can be encapsulated in the word Revolution could happen seemed to no longer exist<sup>30</sup>. If the 20th century had been a century traversed by two political forces vying for the domination of the masses by proposing mutually hostile models of the world, the same century was closing with a symbolic victory, even before the practical one: liberal democracy and the political-economic framework that defined it was the only option that was realistically possible<sup>31</sup>. The idea that a new world model could be realized was only defended by small and therefore irrelevant minorities.

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<sup>25</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>27</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Cladi, Lorenzo. *Before and After the Fall: World Politics and the End of the Cold War*. Vol. 98. OXFORD: Oxford Univ Press, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Held, David. *Book Notes -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama*. Vol. 41. Guildford: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

As is well known - and as we will explore later in this chapter - in the article published in *The National Interest* in 1989, there is a question mark in the title. A question mark that instead bangs into the title of the book published in 1992, when Fukuyama reworked it into *The End of History and the Last Man*. It is precisely on this that it is important to dwell. In fact, in the 1989 essay - when the USSR had not yet properly dissolved - Fukuyama did not make a peremptory assertion but raised a hypothesis, that of the presumed End of History. Although strongly based on historical facts, Fukuyama's analysis was essentially conceptual and did not pretend to formulate a definitive judgment, pointing to a “freezing” of possible forms of social, economic, and political organization<sup>32</sup>. At the time, the question mark at the end of the title embodied the fundamental question of his own argument, namely the possibility of credible alternatives to liberal market democracies.

On the one hand, it is certainly true that political alternatives to liberal democracy can always exist, as the springs of power respond largely more to human passions than to the mechanisms of production and distribution of real goods, and this is demonstrated at every moment in world history<sup>33</sup>. On the other hand, it is unlikely that the struggle for power in contemporary communities will lead to new types of global conflicts like those known since the Napoleonic era<sup>34</sup>. A crucial role in this is played by nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is undeniable that Realpolitik is no longer exercised in the same way since man has mastered nuclear power. Thanks to the most modern technological requirements, superiority is no longer exercised through the conquest of other peoples and territories, but through commercial strategies. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, the economic strategy of the powerful is truly international: the search for dynamic comparative advantages, rapid geographical movement of factors, rational division of markets, in short, a completed globalization of production and distribution circuits<sup>35</sup>. The most salient feature of this new world order is the growing interdependence of countries most integrated into the market economy. Consequently, a political alternative to Western liberalism does not seem, in any case, close to emerging. This does not mean that practical and real alternatives to bourgeois democracy do not exist, but that even where there is a non-liberal political domination system – as in the case of China – this does not constitute a model that can be voluntarily replicated by other political communities<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Hussain Raja, Shahid. "Capitolo 09: 'Fine Della Storia' Di Francis Fukuyama - Critica." In *Relazioni Internazionali*. United States: Babelcube Inc, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Romero, Federico. *Storia Della Guerra Fredda: L'Ultimo Conflitto Per l'Europa*. Vol. 30. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.



At this point, one might object that, at the time when Fukuyama wrote his essay, socialism had not yet effectively imploded and the Chinese had not yet completed their original recipe for the transition from socialism to capitalism (which occurred later, between 1991-92)<sup>37</sup>. However, already in 1989, in the eyes of the American political scientist, it was clear that the world was progressively unifying through a common culture, if not of abundance, at least of consumerism.

Bottom line, what Fukuyama argued was the predictability of an idea - liberalism - that had been conceived as early as the 18th century and slowly implemented after 1776, albeit with many difficulties<sup>38</sup>. Having established that there are no longer any possible alternatives to liberalism, Fukuyama asserts that there is no longer any possible ideological challenge to the philosophical, political, and economic hegemony of Western liberalism. The latter has clearly emerged victorious from the ideological contestations of the Cold War period, both ideological and practical.

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<sup>37</sup> Nolfo, Ennio Di. *Storia Delle Relazioni Internazionali*: III. Dalla Fine Della Guerra Fredda a Oggi Editori Laterza,.

<sup>38</sup> Held, David. *Book Notes -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama*. Vol. 41. Guildford: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.

## 1.2 Main Arguments of Fukuyama

The article *The end of history?* was published in *The National Interest* just as the old Soviet empire in Eastern Europe was entering its final stage of dissolution. At that moment, the history of the 20th century was coming "full circle", from the collapse of Western liberalism in the First World War to its imminent victory in the Cold War. It was not, therefore, the "end of ideology" announced by the modernization theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, discerning a convergence between industrial, capitalist, and socialist societies, but rather "an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism"<sup>39</sup>. This victory signified "the end of history as such: that is, the endpoint of humanity's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government". That said, although liberalism represented the best practicable economic and political framework, it was certainly not perfect. However, it provided the best framework for solving the remaining human ills that were soluble. With the defeat of fascism in the middle of the century and communism at its close, and given the inherent fragility of religion and nationalism as alternative poles of attraction, there were no serious - "historically worldly" - competitors still in the field<sup>40</sup>.

From the outset, the American political scientist's analysis of these changes was seen as an overly partisan statement of a neo-conservative view of world events. However, it is crucial to consider that Fukuyama was drawing on a very powerful tradition, to which many of his critics also adhered, especially from the Left<sup>41</sup>. The tradition from which Fukuyama draws is the one that holds that humankind is progressing and moving towards an endpoint where conflict and violence will cease. In its origins, this idea can be found in many religious systems and, in the West, has taken a particular form in Christianity; but in its modern version, and especially in Fukuyama's work, the idea of the end of history represents a radical break with all theistic visions of historical change. Fukuyama's ideas are profoundly secular, and the part of the tradition he most closely draws on is very closely related to modernity. This becomes increasingly clear following Fukuyama's dependence on three of the greatest contributors to

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<sup>39</sup> Nedelmann, Birgitta and Piotr Sztompka. *Sociology in Europe: In Search of Identity*, edited by Nedelmann, Birgitta, Piotr Sztompka. 1; Reprint 2011.; ed. Germany: De Gruyter, 2011; 1993;. doi:10.1515/9783110887440.

<sup>40</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>41</sup> Abbott, Philip. "'Big' Theories and Policy Counsel: James Burnham, Francis Fukuyama, and the Cold War." *Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 417-430.

the tradition of the end of history, who are also three of the most significant thinkers in the development of modernity: Kant, Hegel, and Marx<sup>42</sup>.

To understand Fukuyama's theory, it is essential to take into account the distinction between events and historical processes. He distinguishes between “history”, i.e. “the occurrence of events”, and “history”, i.e. “a single, coherent evolutionary process”<sup>43</sup>. The starting question, which the author answered through this distinction, was: “If the end of history really meant the end of events, why do things keep happening? Why didn't the world simply stop in 1989?”. To this question, Fukuyama replied that what had come to an end was “history” as an ideological narrative concluded with the establishment of democratic liberalism, while “history” as a sequence of events continued<sup>44</sup>. This is a fundamental distinction, which the author includes in the introduction to his book *The End of History and the Last Man* published three years after - in 1992 - the publication of the article in *The National Interest*. As can be seen - and as we have already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter - in 1992 Fukuyama presented the theory differently, starting with the changed title, where the initial question mark disappears<sup>45</sup>. In the initial article, Fukuyama analyzed the dominant socioeconomic landscape and explained it starting from the sphere of consciousness or ideas, embracing Hegelian notions and Kojève's legacy. While the bipolar system that had divided the world since the end of WWII was collapsing, Fukuyama noted that Western political and economic liberalism was emerging triumphant from that disintegration. Over the 20th century, liberalism faced two major challenges that had presented themselves as its alternatives: on the one hand, communism, and the other, fascism. While the latter had been defeated as an ideology after World War II, communism no longer represented a solid ideological alternative in 1989<sup>46</sup>. Nevertheless, even though the victory of liberalism had begun, it still faced some hostility, such as nationalism and fundamentalism. As for fundamentalism, only Islam presented a theocratic state as a political alternative, but it did not represent a significant threat, as the author believed that in 1989 it had little strength and legitimacy to take root anywhere and generate a systemic contradiction<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, nationalism had indeed generated major conflicts in the 20th century, but it

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<sup>42</sup> Ateeq, Muhammad. "an Understanding of Francis Fukuyama's Theory of 'End of History'." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 71, no. 1 (2023): 105-120.

<sup>43</sup> Binder, Guyora. *Post-Totalitarian Politics -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama / Civil Society and Political Theory by Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato*. Vol. 91. Ann Arbor: Michigan Law Review Association, 1993.

<sup>44</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Bowdon, Tom Butler. *50 Politics Classics* John Murray Press, 2022.

<sup>46</sup> Abbott, Philip. "'Big' Theories and Policy Counsel: James Burnham, Francis Fukuyama, and the Cold War." *Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 417-430.

<sup>47</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3-18.

did not in itself represent a contradiction with the liberal system. According to Fukuyama, only totalitarian and exclusionist doctrines could articulate an alternative ideology, while the rest of the national movements did not envisage socioeconomic changes divergent from the liberal model<sup>48</sup>. All of this constitutes an important point for understanding the evolution of Fukuyama's theory from how it was presented in 1989 to how it was subsequently reworked in 1992. Indeed, the book is a more developed continuation of the thinking presented in the 1989 article.

By the time the book was published, the decline of the Soviet Union and communism as a viable alternative to liberalism had taken place. Fukuyama's idea that history was over, in the sense that the world had reached a point where liberal democracy had proved to be the only viable form of political organization, therefore seemed plausible at the time, not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in the Soviet bloc countries. However, as the 1990s progressed, the occurrence of major events - such as the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda - seemed to devalue the author's thesis, giving his critics material to discredit him<sup>49</sup>. But much of the criticism stemmed from a misinterpretation of Fukuyama's use of the term "history". He had never claimed that great events would never happen again, but only that history understood as "a single coherent evolutionary process", as Hegel and Marx saw it, had reached its endpoint. Humanity had progressed to liberal society and capitalism, and it would not be possible to improve on this system that aimed to achieve material well-being while largely preserving the freedom of its members. According to Fukuyama, looking at history as a whole, a tendency for liberal democracy to spread far beyond the traditional terrain of Europe and North America was evident. Certainly, in the face of new forms of political organization - such as fascism, communism, or authoritarianism - liberalism had momentarily lost ground, but only to return after the dissolution of these political experiments. We have seen that in the 1992 book, Fukuyama develops and extends his theory, in particular to the End of History he adds the concept of the Last Man. To understand this concept, it is necessary to take a step back and return to the "First Man" that Hegel spoke of<sup>50</sup>. Whereas the First Man was the one who wanted to be recognized by other human beings and was willing to act against his own survival instincts, risking his life in battles for glory, the Last

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<sup>48</sup> Bowdon, Tom Butler. *50 Politics Classics* John Murray Press, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Juste, Oriol Farrés. "De Vuelta Al Fin De La Historia. Una Interpretación Ética De La Condición Posthistórica En Alexandre Kojève." *Pensamiento (Madrid)* 74, no. 280 (2018): 521-540.

Man is the modern man who leads a materially satisfying life and is not willing to risk anything. Nevertheless, Fukuyama argues that human beings are not only driven by economics but also by that irrational drive that Hegel called the “struggle for recognition”<sup>51</sup>. In his view, the criticality of communism lay precisely in its failure to recognize the uniqueness of the individual, as well as its inability to generate wealth as in capitalist systems<sup>52</sup>.

Concerning the combination of democracy, prosperity, and stability, in his analysis Fukuyama presents the hypothesis of a developing country presented with two alternatives: liberal democracy - and thus more political freedoms - or a bureaucratic authoritarian state that guarantees a rising standard of living but firmly maintains control over the population. Of the two, to prioritize economic growth, it is probably preferable to combine a liberal economy with an authoritarian state. Indeed, democracy is not automatically a means to national wealth, given the countless inefficiencies. On the other hand, an authoritarian state - where the welfare state is lacking and public deficits are low - has no limitations to focus on growth and can combine innovation and progress with social discipline<sup>53</sup>.

Now, the concept of the End of History is closely related to the idea of progress, of a positive direction of history. Intellectuals have often tended to advocate a certain pessimism of the universal history of mankind. In contrast, Fukuyama argues that virtue lies in the middle. One should be neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but look at the data and trends, which show an increasing curve in economic and political liberalization worldwide<sup>54</sup>. Critics - especially realists, as they like to call themselves - have often argued that proponents of the idea of progress are naive and impractical, that they do not consider the depth of humanity's inherent misery and suffering<sup>55</sup>. These realists argue for the importance of adaptation, presented as the most rational way to come to terms with the harshness of life. But Fukuyama is far from this view and, in both the '89 article and the '92 book, argues that the idea of progress is central to understanding the modern world. To reject the idea of progress is, in his view, to give up any realistic hope of understanding our present situation. On the contrary, realism, far from offering the only plausible way to act in the world, actually makes a fatal pact with forces already in decline. Realism is not the way of the future; it only offers a desperate link to a discredited

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<sup>51</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Elliott, Gregory. *Ends in Sight: Marx/Fukuyama/Hobsbawm/Anderson* Pluto Press, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Ateeq, Muhammad. "an Understanding of Francis Fukuyama's Theory of 'End of History'." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 71, no. 1 (2023): 105-120.

<sup>54</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem.

past<sup>56</sup>. Although an optimist, Fukuyama is far from naive. He recognizes that the horrific events of the XX century - such as the Gulag and the Holocaust - "have made us all deep historical pessimists"<sup>57</sup>. These cannot be ignored, but neither should they dominate our thinking to the point of excluding everything positive. Indeed, considering the long-term implications of these events, what emerges most dramatically is the failure of the ultimate goals of those who perpetrated them and the systems in whose name they were carried out<sup>58</sup>. What is most striking is not power and domination, but the weakness of supposedly strong states. During periods of political and military success, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union seemed invincible to their contemporaries, especially in liberal democracies. Yet, as events unfolded, both fascism and communism collapsed and are now largely discredited ideologies.

Although the demise of these systems occurred for different reasons, in both cases the basis was the loss of legitimacy and loss of confidence in both the ideology and the political leaders who attempted to perpetuate it<sup>59</sup>. This brings us to another fundamental idea of Fukuyama's thought: legitimacy. All governments depend for their existence on the recognition that they have a legitimate right to govern. This does not mean that this right must be recognized by all the governed, but rather that those who govern must have the support of at least the most powerful members of society<sup>60</sup>. However, when legitimacy is based on an ideology that excludes the majority of citizens from political decision-making - as in the Soviet Union - it may keep rulers in power for a considerable period but is inherently unstable<sup>61</sup>. As long as its policies succeed, it can maintain power, but when they fail, it will no longer have any public support to draw on. The internal contradictions that Fukuyama believes are always present in such political systems will become so powerful that they will cause their downfall<sup>62</sup>.

In making this analysis, Fukuyama uses the dialectical method<sup>63</sup>. He notes that undemocratic states under their internal contradictions inevitably collapse. It is true that external forces also often contribute to this collapse, but the decisive pressures always come from within<sup>64</sup>. For

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<sup>56</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>58</sup> Binder, Guyora. *Post-Totalitarian Politics -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama / Civil Society and Political Theory by Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato*. Vol. 91. Ann Arbor: Michigan Law Review Association, 1993.

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>60</sup> Held, David. *Book Notes -- the End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama*. Vol. 41. Guildford: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.

<sup>61</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Bowdon, Tom Butler. *50 Politics Classics* John Murray Press, 2022.

example, economic competition with the USSR and Western Europe indeed weakened the USSR but it was only the spark that ignited the Soviet economic-political system, leading it to a failure that had already been foretold by its internal structures<sup>65</sup>. Otherwise - and herein lies the triumph of the liberal system - Fukuyama states that liberal democracy lacks these kinds of internal contradictions, hence despite any challenges in the near term, its eventual success - much like the failure of all other options - is guaranteed.<sup>66</sup> At the heart of Fukuyama's theory - as much in the article *The End of History?* as in the book *The End of History and the Last Man* - is the idea that not only is history coming to an end, but that this end is positive<sup>67</sup>. Thus, mankind is moving beyond the conflicts and oppressions of the past towards an era of peace and freedom<sup>68</sup>. However, the triumph of liberal democracy is not only political-practical but also intellectual. Indeed, liberal ideology has established itself as the dominant ideology in the modern world, as the ultimate ideology<sup>69</sup>.

Besides the argument, put forward by Fukuyama, that the human race is moving beyond the conflicts and oppression of the past towards an era of peace and freedom, there is another equally important one. It is the argument that refers to political ideas<sup>70</sup>. Indeed, according to the author, intellectual accomplishment lies at the core of liberal democracy's victory. Today, liberal democracy is the most widely accepted worldview in the world<sup>71</sup>. More importantly, it has been recognized as the final ideology, the one that has triumphed in the end. Practical consequences have already flowed from this intellectual triumph and will continue to do so, but its central position is profoundly Hegelian: the role of ideas is primary in history, and material events, including political, scientific, and military events, follow ideas<sup>72</sup>. Ideas are the dominant force in the world that give order to social and political structures. What has come to an end is the history of political philosophy as a living matter. In this sense - for a Hegelian, the most important sense - history has come to an end<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup>Welsh, Jennifer M., Coherent Digital (Firm), and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm). *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century*. Toronto [Ontario]: House of Anansi Press, 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>67</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>69</sup> Bowdon, Tom Butler. *50 Politics Classics* John Murray Press, 2022.

<sup>70</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>71</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> Dupkala, Rudolf. "Reinterpretations of Kant's and Hegel's Philosophy in Fukuyama's Vision of Global Dominance of Liberal Democracy." *Annales Scientia Politica* 12, no. 1 (2023): 29-36.

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

We have repeatedly spoken of the victory of liberalism, but now the question arises as to what exactly Fukuyama is referring to when he speaks of liberalism. The phenomena he refers to are two, at once distinct and related: political liberalism on the one hand, and economic liberalism on the other<sup>74</sup>. The one that emerges from the end of history is a liberal state, which therefore recognizes and protects through the rule of law the universal rights of man, and a democratic one, i.e. one that exists only by the consent of the governed. Liberalism is defined primarily in terms of individual rights: civil, religious, and political<sup>75</sup>. The liberalism whose victory Fukuyama announces is one in which there is individual freedom for individuals and the role of the state is limited<sup>76</sup>. In this view, political liberalism and economic liberalism are mutually reinforcing. Economic liberalism is specifically defined in terms of the ideas of the market economy<sup>77</sup>. Ideas, in turn, support both the general intellectual defense of capitalism and the practical economic policies favored by governments in capitalist societies. There are two important consequences of the close identification between political and economic liberalism. First, the presence of liberal elements in oppressive societies like China. As the values of Western consumer culture spread around the world, the demand for a market economy that satisfies consumers grows stronger and, in turn, leads to demands for political liberalism. In Fukuyama's theory, consumer culture occupies an important place, as he sees the values associated with this culture as of fundamental importance for the acceptance of the market economy<sup>78</sup>.

In Fukuyama's thought, we find a close connection between science, technology, and democracy, highlighting how scientific progress supports capitalism and, indirectly, democracy<sup>79</sup>. Fukuyama offers two reasons for emphasizing the centrality of science. The first is that science, and the technology it produces provides a decisive military advantage to the states that possess it<sup>80</sup>. With this assertion, he is not promoting war but rather stating that the impetus of modern science is so great that governments cannot afford to ignore it, not least because potential enemy states will embrace the technology. Therefore, governments continue to fund scientific research, which in turn leads to further scientific advancement. Moreover, from a more positive perspective, the products of modern science and technology make

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<sup>74</sup>Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Clemens, Mario. *Francis Fukuyama, "Liberalism and its Discontents"*. Vol. 43 University of Victoria, 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>80</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.



people's lives more comfortable and secure<sup>81</sup>. With this, we can easily see the close relationship between scientific development and economic change. What Fukuyama is essentially saying is that scientific progress leads to capitalism. On one hand, this is clear and relatively straightforward, while on the other, understanding the connection between capitalism and democracy is more difficult. Thus, it is essential to understand the definitions of the terms "capitalism" and "democracy" to which the author refers.

Firstly, the form of capitalism that Fukuyama seeks to defend is decidedly closer to one where the market is largely free and unfettered. Regarding democracy, he primarily means a set of ideas and secondarily the institutions that embody them<sup>82</sup>. This second definition is more complex. In developing his theory of democracy, Fukuyama draws a close connection between democracy and culture, which leads him to argue that what he refers to as Anglo-Saxon liberal democratic theory has been deficient because it places reason and calculation above less tangible but more important forces such as passion and emotional commitment. This leads Fukuyama to the rather unusual view that Hegel is more important as a theorist of liberalism than Locke or Hobbes<sup>83</sup>. According to him, while the Anglo-Saxons see freedom in selfish terms, Hegel sees it in unselfish terms. In opposition to Hobbes and Locke, Hegel gives us an understanding of liberal society that is based on the selfless aspect of human nature and aims to preserve that aspect as the central idea of modern political endeavor<sup>84</sup>.

In short, Fukuyama rejects the idea of the contract central to Locke's political theory, seeing it as too limited a metaphor to form the basis of political life<sup>85</sup>. Hegel, earlier, had been highly critical of social contract theory because it led to an excessively individualistic understanding of society. In his view, society was held together not by the choice of its members but by the far deeper communal values that those members had inherited from their common past. Such values were initially not values at all in the sense of defining the final human virtue or good<sup>86</sup>. They were thought to serve just an instrumental purpose. They were habits that one needed to develop to lead a successful life in a liberal, peaceful society. Fukuyama argues that four cultural conditions help to support a stable democracy<sup>87</sup>. The first is a fairly homogeneous

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<sup>81</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Cavalleri, Matteo. "'Pro Hegel Or Contra'. Critical Considerations about the use of the Concept End of History in F. Fukuyama." *Scienza e Politica* 31, no. 61 (2019).

<sup>85</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>86</sup> Cavalleri, Matteo. "'Pro Hegel Or Contra'. Critical Considerations about the use of the Concept End of History in F. Fukuyama." *Scienza e Politica* 31, no. 61 (2019).

<sup>87</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

national, ethnic, and racial consciousness. Secondly, there must not be an exclusivist state religion. Democracy cannot function where people's primary social allegiance is to their religion. Thirdly, there is a need for a relatively equal society before democracy emerges. The fourth condition is the need for a healthy civil society. The concept of civil society has an important role in Hegel's political thought, but Fukuyama refers at this point to Tocqueville, who argued that democracy works best when developed from the bottom up rather than being imposed from the top down<sup>88</sup>.

Fukuyama does not claim that where these conditions occur, democracies will inevitably emerge<sup>89</sup>. They are not sufficient conditions; what they provide is an institutional framework in which democratic practices and ways of thinking can take root. In addition to these, there must also be a political will to ensure that the state is governed democratically.

All that has been said so far brings us back to the point that in Fukuyama's definition of democracy, ideas are of the greatest importance, and the institutions that embody them are only of secondary importance. Specifically, the author argues that capitalism and democracy are not mere by-products of economic development but values desired for themselves<sup>90</sup>. He rejects economic explanations of democracy, affirming that it embodies universal values to which people aspire. This explains why liberal democracy has succeeded, not only as the most successful political system in the modern world but also - more importantly - as the dominant political ideal. If it were merely the pragmatic by-product of economic forces, there would be no guarantee that its success would be anything more than transitory. For Fukuyama, the most important concept to understand when seeking to explain the rise of democracy is that of recognition<sup>91</sup>. By this term, he means the need that human beings have to be acknowledged and respected by others. In political terms, it is about the struggle for liberty and democratic rights. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel introduced the idea of a primitive man at the dawn of history<sup>92</sup>. This man, on the one hand, shares with animals certain basic natural desires (the desire for food, sleep, shelter, and, above all, the preservation of his own life), and on the other hand, differs from them as he can rise above his instincts and natural impulses and act freely. Moreover, he is a social being who needs to be respected by others. Recognition involves both

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<sup>88</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>89</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>91</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Juste, Oriol Farrés. "De Vuelta Al Fin De La Historia. Una Interpretación Ética De La Condición Posthistórica En Alexandre Kojève." *Pensamiento (Madrid)* 74, no. 280 (2018): 521-540.

these elements: the ability to act freely, and thus be a responsible moral agent, and the necessity to gain the respect of others for having chosen to act in an honorable way<sup>93</sup>. To have value, recognition must be hard-earned. Additionally, recognition must be genuine. If it is not genuine, it ceases to have any value beyond the superficial<sup>94</sup>. In this regard, Hegel also stated that the quest for genuine and valid recognition is hard<sup>95</sup>. For this reason, according to him, the most fundamental way a man can assert his worth and be recognized by others is by risking his life. Thus, the encounter of the first man with other men leads to a violent struggle in which each seeks to gain recognition from the other by risking his own life. This confrontation can lead to three different outcomes. Firstly, it can lead to the death of both combatants and thus no one is recognized. Secondly, it can lead to the death of one of the two. In this case, again, no one is recognized, not even the victor. Finally, the clash can end with one of the two surrendering, with one agreeing to submit to a life of servitude. Following this Hegelian discourse, Fukuyama asserts that one of the main factors that contributed to the creation of the modern liberal democratic society was the desire to be acknowledged as human beings with dignity and value<sup>96</sup>. Considering the rise of democracy and the struggle of oppressed peoples to achieve freedom and dignity, recognition is an entirely positive force<sup>97</sup>. However, when democracies become fully established, Fukuyama is acutely aware that the continuous desire for recognition will pose significant problems<sup>98</sup>. The most common way of trying to come to terms with recognition is to trivialize it<sup>99</sup>. However, such an approach is extremely dangerous because it ignores the dark side that is always present in recognition<sup>100</sup>. The question, then, is how to transform the power of recognition and harness it in such a dramatically different - and immeasurably better - society<sup>101</sup>. In this analysis, Fukuyama borrows the ideas of another important philosopher: Plato<sup>102</sup>. In his Republic, Plato argued that there are three parts of the soul or, as Fukuyama puts it in contemporary terms, three elements in human psychology. The first of these is reason, then there is desire, and finally, the third element is thymos. A precise translation of the Greek word thymos is not easy to render. On some occasions, it is translated

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<sup>93</sup> Dupkala, Rudolf. "Reinterpretations of Kant's and Hegel's Philosophy in Fukuyama's Vision of Global Dominance of Liberal Democracy." *Annales Scientia Politica* 12, no. 1 (2023): 29-36.

<sup>94</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>95</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>96</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>98</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>99</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>101</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

as “spiritedness”, at other times as dignity, courage, self-respect, or honor. According to Plato, thymos is identified as the part of the character that should be particularly well-developed in those who were charged with the defense of a just society. Fukuyama's use of this term is focused on the conception of men and women as motivated by economic and material concerns, by a sense of their dignity and worth, and by the desire to have that recognized<sup>103</sup>. It is this, he claims, which lies at the heart of the movement towards democracy<sup>104</sup>. However, the power of thymos brings dangers with it. The first issue regards the fact that many people not only desire recognition as equals but desire it as a means to affirm their superiority. This could lead to attempts to dominate or suppress groups in society that are regarded as inferior<sup>105</sup>. On the opposite side, there is also the risk of an attempt to impose complete conformity. Regarding these two opposing tendencies, Fukuyama coins two new terms: megalothymia as suppression and isothymia as conformity<sup>106</sup>. This distinction is crucial because the author identifies two major political forces of the modern world as exemplifying these two dangers<sup>107</sup>. Firstly, nationalism seems to be the “*transmutation of the megalothymia of earlier ages into a more modern and democratic form*”. Secondly, the “Marxist project” - as Fukuyama refers to it - is characterized by isothymia. According to him, Marxism seeks to promote an extreme form of social equality at the expense of liberty<sup>108</sup>. Having stated this, it might seem that Fukuyama's ideal is a liberal democratic society in which both megalothymia and isothymia have been abolished. Indeed, such a society would be the society of the last man<sup>109</sup>.

To understand the concept of the last man, it is necessary to take a step back and recapitulate Fukuyama's theses. The end of history prophesied the American political scientist, will open a “very sad time” for humanity<sup>110</sup>. “The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that invoked audacity, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation. The endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period there will be no art or philosophy, only the perpetual

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<sup>103</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>105</sup> Peet, Richard. "I. Reading Fukuyama: Politics at the End of History." *Political Geography* 12, no. 1 (1993): 64-78.

<sup>106</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>108</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>109</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>110</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

curation of the museum of human history”, Fukuyama stated at the end of his 1989 article<sup>111</sup>. This nostalgic vein may seem strange in comparison to the author's positivist tones, yet it is not unthinkable that the same advocate of liberalism recognizes at the same time that there are “fundamental tensions and weaknesses” within it<sup>112</sup>. According to Fukuyama, the most acute problem for liberal democracy is that while liberal states provide a framework of security from internal and external dangers, they are constitutionally incapable of offering guidance on what constitutes a good life<sup>113</sup>. So, there is a vacuum in liberal societies that can be filled with all sorts of things, some of which are far from being good or desirable<sup>114</sup>. Liberal societies, he argues, still have contradictions within them that “could still lead to their downfall”<sup>115</sup>. This leads him to raise another fundamental issue, central to the 1992 book: the problem of the Last Man<sup>116</sup>.

The thymotic element in man has always led him in the past to struggle against dangers and problems, and in so doing he gained the self-esteem that came through others' recognition of him<sup>117</sup>. We have already said that Fukuyama claims that at the end of history wars will cease. The question is: what will happen to men when they no longer need to struggle? The author clarifies that there are two possibilities<sup>118</sup>. The first one is that the last man will lose an essential aspect of his humanity, while the other possibility is that - without great challenges to face - this man will become dissatisfied and restless. In this second case, liberal democracy will be overthrown by people seeking to prove themselves in something akin to the original battle for recognition<sup>119</sup>.

In a certain sense, then, it seems that man needs injustice because it is from injustice that the highest aspects of his nature emerge<sup>120</sup>. However, the majority remain satisfied with the prevailing system. According to Fukuyama, the problem is that the government presents itself in a distant and impersonal manner, and people do not engage with it directly, adopting a passive role and thereby weakening democracy itself. For this reason, it is positive that people participate in associations, parties, unions, where they can move beyond their personal and

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<sup>111</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>113</sup> Bowdon, Tom Butler. *50 Politics Classics* John Murray Press, 2022.

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>115</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>116</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>118</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>119</sup> Ibidem

<sup>120</sup> Ibidem.

individualistic concerns and work for the community, receiving in return a sense of recognition. Nevertheless, the end of bipolarism and the victory of liberal democracy have led to a decline in community life<sup>121</sup>. This decline can lead to the risk of becoming the last men who are absorbed in themselves, no longer fight, and are satisfied with the state they are in. As mentioned above, this can also lead to the reemergence of the bloody struggles of early history. Another issue that liberal democracy faces is the prevailing relativism, a theory that holds that all values are relative and there is no dominant perspective to say what is better or worse. This tendency can weaken democracy, as it can undermine great values such as equality, respect, and freedom that support the socioeconomic system<sup>122</sup>. Having stated these internal weaknesses of liberal democracy, Fukuyama fails to provide possible answers<sup>123</sup>. Regarding personal life, the American political scientist advocates for a bit of megalothymia, which allows the last man to generate art<sup>124</sup>. However, megalothymia must be controlled and limited for the good of liberal democracy. According to Fukuyama, it is necessary to find the balance in this end of History between the pursuit of megalothymia and that of isothymia in man<sup>125</sup>. On the one hand, the man who is content with isothymia, the last man, would be worthy of contempt, living like an animal satisfied with the recognition of liberal democracy and material abundance. This last man, at the same time, would weaken the status quo itself, as he would be absorbed in himself and would not look after the proper functioning of democracy<sup>126</sup>. On the other hand, megalothymia can lead man to trample others with arrogance, and this can bring new, already-known hostilities to liberal democracy<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>122</sup> Ateeq, Muhammad. "an Understanding of Francis Fukuyama's Theory of 'End of History'." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 71, no. 1 (2023): 105-120.

<sup>123</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>124</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>125</sup> Abbott, Philip. "'Big' Theories and Policy Counsel: James Burnham, Francis Fukuyama, and the Cold War." *Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 417-430.

<sup>126</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>127</sup> Ibidem.

### 1.3 1980s: Historical and Philosophical Context

As Francis Fukuyama himself emphasized, understanding the reasons that led him to theorize the End of History cannot be separated from an analysis of the historical, philosophical, and cultural context of this decade. The American political scientist presented his theory on the End of History in a historical and philosophical context marked by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. At this time, a feeling of triumphalism was widespread - at least in the West - based on the belief that Western liberal democracies seemed to triumph as the dominant model of government. Between 1989 - the year of publication of *The End of History?* - and 1992 - when *The End of History and the Last Man* was published - the global geopolitical order changed radically, following a series of historic events. It was this historical context of rapid change, combined with the collapse of ideological alternatives to liberalism, that provided Fukuyama with the basis for his reflections on the direction of human progress and the nature of history.

The last two decades of the Cold War were marked by dramatic changes<sup>128</sup>. However, already since the 1960s, the configuration of the bipolar world has undergone significant transformations, with the two superpowers - the US and the USSR - facing difficult times. On the one hand, the US was suffering from the economic and political disruptions caused by the failure of the Vietnam War; on the other hand, the Soviet Union was suffering from poor grain harvests and more general economic problems. All around, meanwhile, the alliance blocs created during the first phase of the Cold War began to shift. Thus, as the 1970s progressed, more and more signs emerged - such as the 1973 oil crisis and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan - that suggested a complex interplay of cooperation and conflict between the two blocs. This complex balance between cooperation and conflict is even more evident if one divides the decade from 1979 to 1989 into two phases: the first - from 1979 to 1985 - in which there was an apparent resumption of bipolarity, and the second - from 1985 to 1989 - in which the resumption of détente became evident<sup>129</sup>.

The 1980s were years of intense and significant change, no coincidence then that they represent a crucial decade that laid the foundations for Francis Fukuyama's theory of the End of History. This period, marked by significant political, economic, and cultural changes, saw the

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<sup>128</sup> Di Nolfo, Ennio. *Storia Delle Relazioni Internazionali: III. Dalla Fine Della Guerra Fredda a Oggi* Editori Laterza,.

<sup>129</sup> Bange, Oliver and Poul Villaume. *Long Detente* Central European University LLC, 2017.

conclusion of a long cycle of ideological conflicts and the emergence of new global dynamics<sup>130</sup>. Historically, the 1980s are dominated by the evolution and decline of the Cold War. The competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, which had characterized much of the 20th century, began to see a turning point with Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985<sup>131</sup>. Gorbachev introduced the policies of *Glasnost* (transparency) and *Perestroika* (restructuring), aimed at reforming the Soviet political and economic system. These reforms, initially seen as an attempt to strengthen socialism, ultimately accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union, culminating in 1991<sup>132</sup>. Not only that, but the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union forced the United States into a deep rethinking of its national strategy in the face of what simultaneously emerged as a geopolitical revolution (the end of bipolarism) and an ideological revolution (the crisis of the communist perspective at the international level and the acclaimed triumph of liberalism). It is important to note that the US strategy of containing the USSR was part of a strategic framework that the United States had actually begun to build at least since the early decades of the 20th century<sup>133</sup>. This framework was based on the construction of a "world order" in which US interests would be promoted and protected through widespread adherence to the liberal principles cherished by the American power, and especially through the position of preeminence that the country would hold in the new international context. In this context, the existence of the Soviet enemy also served as a powerful element of justification: the US-led order was acceptable to Western allies partly because the alternative was Soviet domination<sup>134</sup>. Thus, the communist challenge simultaneously constituted a threat to the liberal order but also proof of the historical necessity of such an order. For smaller powers, beyond any neutralist aspirations, the real alternative seemed to be between US hegemony and Soviet domination.

When it came, the détente between the two superpowers materialized not only in a series of disarmament treaties - such as the 1987 INF Treaty, which eliminated medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe – but also in the disappearance of a possible alternative to liberalism<sup>135</sup>. Already during the 1970s, communist regimes - and communism in general as a global

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<sup>130</sup> Romero, Federico. *Storia Della Guerra Fredda: L'Ultimo Conflitto Per l'Europa*. Vol. 30. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2009.

<sup>131</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>132</sup> Kenez, Peter. *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to its Legacy*. 3rd/Third; ed. Cambridge University Press, 2016;2018;. doi:10.1017/9781316493267.

<sup>133</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>134</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>135</sup> Bange, Oliver and Poul Villaume. *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s-1980s*, edited by Bange, Oliver, Oliver Bange, Poul Villaume and Poul Villaume. 1st ed. Hungary: Central European University Press, 2017.



alternative - had shown signs of inevitable decline<sup>136</sup>. Many factors contributed to this negative spiral, starting with the evident inferiority of the Soviet alternative compared to the Western one in terms of development, economic well-being, and social justice. Indeed, among the main factors that led to the dissolution of bipolarity, the economic transformations that the world went through in the 1980s - with particular reference to the computer revolution - occupy a prominent position. Precisely in the face of such changes, the cumbersome and territorialized Soviet economic structure, dominated by backward and low-productivity state-owned enterprises, was unable to react in any way<sup>137</sup>. Together with these economic transformations, the growing interdependence and integration at the global level facilitated by new communication technologies, the emergence of new values and aspirations - such as human rights and individual freedoms, in contrast with the authoritarian model of communism - the influence of Western culture and consumption patterns - which eroded the ideological hegemony of the Soviet bloc - gradually led to the collapse of bipolarity and the establishment of a new international order during the 1980s and 1990s<sup>138</sup>. They led, one might say, to the victory of the liberal model discussed by Fukuyama.

The 1980s are significant not only because they marked the conclusion of the Cold War or at least the end of its last stages, but also because they saw an almost unheard-of level of rivalry and tension between the Soviet Union and the United States, the two primary players in the East-West confrontation<sup>139</sup>. Additionally, by the mid-1980s, some fundamental factors - such as the configuration of the international system post-WWII, the different threat perceptions that arose among former wartime allies, the poor material living conditions in Europe and most parts of Asia after the war, the process of decolonization, and the perception of the atomic age - underwent significant changes<sup>140</sup>. These four critical factors influenced the origins and evolution of the Cold War, but also the way it ended. Towards the mid-1980s, the fundamental leadership of Gorbachev was added to the radical changes in circumstances. He was able to realize the magnitude of these changes and to act based on this awareness. Gorbachev's main foreign policy concern was to put an end to the strategic arms race. The soviet leader understood that the approach based on military competition and the accumulation of nuclear

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<sup>136</sup> Kenez, Peter. *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to its Legacy*. 3rd/Third; ed. Cambridge University Press, 2016;2018;. doi:10.1017/9781316493267.

<sup>137</sup> Romero, Federico. *Storia Della Guerra Fredda: L'Ultimo Conflitto Per l'Europa*. Vol. 30. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2009.

<sup>138</sup> Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

<sup>139</sup> Di Nolfo, Ennio. *Storia Delle Relazioni Internazionali: III. Dalla Fine Della Guerra Fredda a Oggi* Editori Laterza,.

<sup>140</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

weapons was unsustainable and dangerous. He therefore sought to initiate a new course in Soviet foreign policy, focusing on détente and dialogue with the United States to reduce tensions and avert the risk of a nuclear conflict<sup>141</sup>. This change of course, albeit with hesitation and inconsistency, represented a crucial turning point in the history of the Cold War, paving the way for a gradual improvement in relations between the superpowers and the end of the confrontation. Gorbachev was driven to curb the arms race not only by economic reasons and the need to reduce the burden of military expenditures on the budget but also by the awareness of the dramatic technological changes that made war excessively destructive<sup>142</sup>. Thus, those same nuclear weapons that had led to an escalation of bipolarity became a valid reason for détente. Both in Moscow and in Washington, policymakers had recognized that the appeal of Marxism-Leninism for the Third World had faded, that the appeal of revolutionary nationalism was now a page in history books, and that the economies of socialist countries had fallen far behind free-market economies in terms of trade and investment<sup>143</sup>. It was clear, therefore, that communism was wavering in Europe and the rest of the world, and the global ideological struggle was fading away<sup>144</sup>.

At the end of World War II, Stalin had grounds for optimism, while Truman feared that communism would expand in Europe. However, by the 1980s, the political landscape, ideological discourse, and socioeconomic conditions had changed<sup>145</sup>. On the one hand, the welfare state, market economies, and democratic capitalism prevailed in Western Europe, while on the other hand, single-party government and planned economies had failed in Eastern Europe. Based on what has been outlined so far, the factor that more than any other made the crisis irreversible was the objective impossibility of reforming a system that had hitherto held itself together thanks to its “closed” character and above all to the deterrent power of the repressive apparatus and military force<sup>146</sup>. The moment Gorbachev’s reformism opened the first breaches in the system, seeking to introduce controlled doses of pluralism and renouncing

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<sup>141</sup> Romanelli, Raffaele. *Novecento: Lezioni Di Storia Contemporanea*, 2. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014.

<sup>142</sup> Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

<sup>143</sup> Puškov, Aleksej. *Da Gorbačëv a Putin. Geopolitica Della Russia* Sandro Teti Editore,.

<sup>144</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>145</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>146</sup> Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

the use of force against the satellite countries, the whole construction collapsed<sup>147</sup>. At the same time, the international balances that had emerged from the Second World War collapsed.

Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, democratic movements gained momentum, leading to the fall of several communist regimes. The first to benefit, and to a greater extent, was Poland, which had partly anticipated those changes. Already between 1980 and 1981, an independent trade union with a strong workers' base, and of declared Catholic inspiration, called *Solidarnosc* ("solidarity"), had been born and developed very rapidly in the country<sup>148</sup>. This independent trade union movement, succeeded in obtaining semi-free elections, marking the beginning of the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe. The events in Poland set off a chain reaction that, within a few months, between 1989 and 1990, would throw the entire system of "popular democracies" into crisis<sup>149</sup>. The first country to follow Poland on the path of reform was Hungary where, at the beginning of '89, the old Kádár, protagonist of the '56 repression, but also of the subsequent thirty years of relative prosperity and timid liberalization, had been deposed. Also in 1989, the most important decision, and the one with the most far-reaching consequences, was the removal of police controls and barbed-wire barriers at the border with Austria: for the first time, a breach was made in the iron curtain that had prevented the free movement of people between the two Europes for almost half a century. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that 1989 represents a particularly significant year, with historic events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, symbolizing the end of ideological and physical divisions between East and West.

Having analyzed the historical context of the Soviet Union, it is now necessary to take a look at the context on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In the United States, the last decade of the Cold War was dominated by the figure of President Ronald Reagan (in office from 1981 to 1989). It is no coincidence that this period is known among historians as the Reagan era.

Ronald Reagan's presidency (1981-1989) was characterized by a strongly anti-Soviet foreign policy and increased military spending, aimed at putting pressure on the Soviet economy. This included the positioning of nuclear missiles in Europe and the desire to equip the US with a strategic defense system, known as the "space shield"<sup>150</sup>. In this context, the figure of POTUS is crucial, not only because Reagan affirmed very popular values - such as unconditional

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<sup>147</sup> Puškov, Aleksej. *Da Gorbačëv a Putin. Geopolitica Della Russia* Sandro Teti Editore,.

<sup>148</sup> Romero, Federico. *Storia Della Guerra Fredda: L'Ultimo Conflitto Per l'Europa*. Vol. 30. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 2009.

<sup>149</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>150</sup> Ibidem.

patriotism, national strength, and individual power - but also because the 1980s was a time of critical decisions for Americans, a time of political upheaval and social values shift, the symbol of which was precisely the President<sup>151</sup>.

We have referred to the 1970s as a period characterized by a deep economic crisis due not only to the expense of costly social reforms but above all to the oil crisis of 1973, which led to the end of what has been called the “built-in liberalism” (Ruggie 1982) represented by the great economic development of the previous decades<sup>152</sup>. The 1980s can be contemplated as a period in which institutions tried to find a solution to those problems<sup>153</sup>. The presence of personalities like Reagan shows that it was a decade of the conservative right, a decade of reaction to the culture of the previous years. This allows us to introduce a new and fundamental issue that emerged in this period: that of individual political leadership as a response to the crisis that had hit the institutions. Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher are prime examples of this, with their ability to present themselves to the electorate. However, to focus only on their leadership abilities would be reductive. They became important because, although in different ways, they worked to reduce the role of the state and expand the boundaries of the market, initiating truly liberal-style reforms as opposed to the inaction created by social democratic governments in the UK and democratic governments in the US. This brings us back once again to the fundamental element presented by the 1980s: that of the triumph of liberal politics, especially in the economic field<sup>154</sup>. At this point, the two fundamental elements that emerge are political leadership on the one hand and the liberal market economy on the other<sup>155</sup>. These two elements must necessarily be considered within the broader international framework outlined above. In this context, so-called neo-liberalism was the dominant political and economic doctrine, considered the only possible solution<sup>156</sup>. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was the only possible alternative to Liberal Democracy, confirmed those convictions, so much so that Francis Fukuyama, in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992, wrote that free-market capitalism combined with liberal democracy could be a

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<sup>151</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>152</sup> Ruggie, John Gerard. "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order." *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 379-415.

<sup>153</sup> Wright, Jonathan and Steven Casey. *Mental Maps in the Era of Détente and the End of the Cold War 1968-91*, edited by Steven Casey, Jonathan Wright, Steven Casey and Jonathan Wright. 1st ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. doi:10.1057/9781137500960.

<sup>154</sup> Vinen, Richard. *Thatcher's Britain*. Simon&Schuster, 2009.

<sup>155</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>156</sup> Maier, Charles. *Changing Boundaries of the Political: Essays on the Evolving Balance between the State and Society, Public and Private in Europe*, edited by Maier, Charles S., Charles S. Maier Cambridge University Press, 1987. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139173605.

stable endpoint in human social evolution<sup>157</sup>. Precisely, the only available way to govern that would quickly spread throughout the world.

Now, the decade under examination here was not only fundamental from a historical and political point of view. Philosophically, the 1980s were a period of reflection and transition<sup>158</sup>. The end of grand ideological narratives, such as Marxism and fascism, gave way to a growing consensus around the values of liberalism and market capitalism<sup>159</sup>. The "end of ideologies" concept, popularized by Daniel Bell in the 1960s, found new resonance in this decade, with many intellectuals - as Fukuyama - seeing liberalism as the only system capable of ensuring individual freedom and economic prosperity<sup>160</sup>. Briefly, what Bell argued several years earlier was that the great ideologies of the 19th and early 20th centuries - such as Marxism, Fascism, and other totalizing ideologies - had lost their power to mobilize the masses and provide convincing answers to social and economic problems. According to him, not only had the great political ideologies reached a point of exhaustion, but intellectuals and political leaders themselves no longer found inspiration in these old systems of thought to solve contemporary issues<sup>161</sup>. Consequently, the American sociologist observed that pragmatism was becoming the prevailing *modus operandi* in Western societies. Politicians and thinkers preferred practical and immediate solutions rather than adhering to rigid ideologies. Although initially contested, Bell's theory was reassessed with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and, more generally, totalitarian ideologies at the end of the 20th century<sup>162</sup>.

Furthermore, in the field of political thought, the theory of liberal democracy as the pinnacle of political evolution took hold during the 1980s. Earlier in this analysis we mentioned the influence that thinkers such as Marx, Hegel and Kojève had on Francis Fukuyama's work. Now, in order to better understand the motivations that drove the American political scientist to see liberal democracy as the culmination of humanity's ideological evolution, it is crucial to mention the work of another American author: John Rawls, whose work continued to influence the philosophical debate in the 1980s. In his 1971 book *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls provided a philosophical basis for liberal democracy through his concept of "justice as fairness".

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<sup>157</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>158</sup> Maier, Charles. *Changing Boundaries of the Political: Essays on the Evolving Balance between the State and Society, Public and Private in Europe*, edited by Maier, Charles S., Charles S. Maier Cambridge University Press, 1987. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139173605.

<sup>159</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>160</sup> Bell, Daniel. "The End of Ideology Revisited—Part II." *Government and Opposition (London)* 23, no. 3 (1988): 321-331.

<sup>161</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>162</sup> Nedelmann, Birgitta and Piotr Sztompka. *Sociology in Europe: In Search of Identity*, edited by Nedelmann, Birgitta, Piotr Sztompka. 1;Reprint 2011.; ed. Germany: De Gruyter, 2011;1993;. doi:10.1515/9783110887440.

Undoubtedly, the two authors differ on several points. Regarding the philosophical perspective, for example, Rawls' approach is normative and theoretical (his theory of justice is a framework for evaluating social institutions and is rooted in the idea of justice as fairness), while Fukuyama's is historical and sociological (his theory is an analysis of the historical course and political progress, culminating in liberal democracy)<sup>163</sup>. Nevertheless, Rawls' influence is evident in the way Fukuyama sees liberal democracy as the political system that best promotes social justice and equality.

An additional approach to consider for understanding Fukuyama's thought is that of James Burnham. Although there are significant differences, several similarities in their methods of approach can be observed between the two. Firstly, both fuse the great theorists of the past - Machiavelli in Burnham's case and Hegel in Fukuyama's case - with the American tradition, managing to attract the attention of elites and influence the political debate<sup>164</sup>. The grand theories of Burnham and Fukuyama not only rely on great theorists but also on explanations of history that seek to embrace grand historical narratives. Burnham viewed history as a series of power struggles between elite groups, while Fukuyama saw history as the progressive realization of universal human rights through the struggle for recognition<sup>165</sup>. Both approaches offer a framework for understanding not only the past but also contemporary dynamics. Furthermore, both authors make substantial critiques of existing political practices. On the one hand, Burnham criticized American liberal democracy for its lack of realism and naive idealism, while on the other, Fukuyama criticized totalitarianism and totalitarian ideologies for their oppression of human rights and their inability to recognize the universality of human rights. Finally, both grand theories offer ambitious political advice. Burnham advocated a realistic approach to foreign policy based on elite competition, while Fukuyama advocated the spread of democratic liberalism as a means to achieve global peace and stability<sup>166</sup>.

To summarise what has been outlined so far, the historical and philosophical context of the 1980s created fertile ground for Fukuyama's theory of the End of History. The perception of a global triumph of liberal democracy and market capitalism, combined with disillusionment with ideological alternatives, supported the idea that history had reached an endpoint.

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<sup>163</sup> Mandle, Jon and Sarah Roberts-Cady. *John Rawls: Debating the Major Questions*, edited by Mandle, Jon, Sarah Roberts-Cady. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. doi:10.1093/oso/9780190859213.001.0001.

<sup>164</sup> McLaren, Patricia Genoe. "James Burnham, the Managerial Revolution, and the Development of Management Theory in Post-War America." *Management & Organizational History : M&OH* 6, no. 4 (2011): 411-423.

<sup>165</sup> Abbott, Philip. "'Big' Theories and Policy Counsel: James Burnham, Francis Fukuyama, and the Cold War." *Journal of Policy History* 14, no. 4 (2002): 417-430.

<sup>166</sup> Ibidem.

Fukuyama argued that with the fall of communism and the spread of liberal values, humanity had found the definitive form of socio-political organization, ending the grand ideological conflicts of the past. However, this vision was not without its critics. Many scholars and commentators questioned - and still question today - the linearity and universality of the historical progress proposed by Fukuyama, pointing to persistent global inequalities, regional conflicts, and the new challenges posed by terrorism and populist movements. Thus, the 1980s represent a period of complex transition, laying the foundations for the debate on the real implications of the end of history and the long-term sustainability of the liberal model.

In conclusion, the 1980s are crucial for understanding the context in which Fukuyama's theory emerged. It was a period of global transformations, characterized by a growing consensus towards liberalism and capitalism, but also by new issues and challenges that would continue to influence political and philosophical debate in the years to come<sup>167</sup>.

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<sup>167</sup> Maier, Charles. *Changing Boundaries of the Political: Essays on the Evolving Balance between the State and Society, Public and Private in Europe*, edited by Maier, Charles S., Charles S. Maier Cambridge University Press, 1987. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139173605.

## 1.4 Fukuyama's Review of the End of History

In the previous paragraphs, we discussed and analyzed the ideas behind Francis Fukuyama's theory on the End of History and the Last Man. In addition, we looked at the historical, political, and philosophical context that led him - first in the 1989 article and then in the 1992 book - to theorize and expand his thesis. Speaking generally, in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, events such as the fall of the Soviet Union and globalization dominated Western intellectual discourse, leading many to consider that period as the end of various eras and ideologies, including communism and modernity<sup>168</sup>.

Since Fukuyama first presented his theory to the world, he has repeatedly tried to go further by explaining what his reasons were. Ever since he declared in 1989 - note the question mark at the end of the title - that we had reached the End of History, those four words have haunted him. Fukuyama had made an initial attempt to go deeper with the publication of his book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992. Since then, he has written many other books but has never managed to shake off the fame due to that phrase that made him famous. Several times the author spoke about the end of the story and how it had been misunderstood or misinterpreted. Certainly, in recent decades the story has continued. The succession of events has not stopped. However, what the American political scientist was announcing was not the end of events, but the end of "history" as an ideological narrative<sup>169</sup>.

Between 1989 and 1992, it was clear that the West, or liberal democracy, had triumphed<sup>170</sup>. For this reason, Fukuyama and his theory have often been associated with the triumphalism that prevailed in some circles at the height of the Cold War<sup>171</sup>. Many have argued that he claimed that history had ended in 1989 with the triumph of the West. It is no coincidence, then, that Fukuyama is remembered as a celebrator of the victory of liberal democracy and an optimist that from then on everything would go swimmingly since there were no more ideological battles to fight<sup>172</sup>. But Fukuyama always insisted that he never said any of this. In fact, the author was speaking more broadly about the arc of history, regardless of subsequent events<sup>173</sup>.

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<sup>168</sup> Curtis, Jenefer. *After History? Francis Fukuyama and His critics*. The American Historical Review., (1995). 100(3).

<sup>169</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>170</sup> Welsh, Jennifer M., Coherent Digital (Firm), and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm). *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century*. Toronto [Ontario]: House of Anansi Press, 2016.

<sup>171</sup> Sibuh, Gebeyaw Tareke. "From the End of History to the End of Neo-Liberalism: From Fukuyama to Fukuyama." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 15, no. 4 (2021): 139-147.

<sup>172</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>173</sup> Holland, Tom and Francis Fukuyama. "After the End of History: A Conversation between Tom Holland and Francis Fukuyama." *The Spectator* (London. 1828) (2021).



He was not predicting any event but arguing about the prevailing pattern of politics in general, which had reached a point that left no plausible alternatives<sup>174</sup>. Liberal democracy was the final form that modern politics could achieve<sup>175</sup>. When he published the book in 1992, Fukuyama had essentially replaced Hegel in his origin story with another 19<sup>th</sup>-century German philosopher, Nietzsche, whose phrase “The Last Man” he added to the title “The End of History” to try to qualify it<sup>176</sup>. In recalling Nietzsche, he was trying to suggest that the end of history was not just good news, he was trying not to be triumphalist. Later, in 2006, in the second edition of his book, Fukuyama added some clarifications. In particular, he undertook to emphasize that his essay on the philosophy of substantive history was in fact ‘a theory of modernization that raised the question of where this process of modernization would eventually lead’<sup>177</sup>. His arguments were not in favor of a specifically American version of the end of history but in favor of an American hegemony<sup>178</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the American political scientist created a great stir, at least among a certain political and intellectual segment, by boldly proclaiming “the end of history”. Nevertheless, looking back at the period since 1989, we can say that basically, Fukuyama was right. Liberal democracy has continued to progress, to expand. So has capitalism been increasingly accepted<sup>179</sup>.

On several occasions, however, Fukuyama wanted to revisit and adapt the thesis that had made him famous in the 1990s. In an article entitled *Reflections on the End of History, five years later*, published in 1995, the author himself stated that he was aware that his words would be misunderstood. For this reason - Fukuyama continued - he had decided to expand the article published in *The National Interest* and make it into a book. The intention was precisely to correct the misunderstandings by presenting the topic in a much more extensive manner<sup>180</sup>. However, also in light of world events in the first half of the 1990s, the author again found himself having to clarify his arguments. In his 1995 article, he specifies that when reading his book, it was necessary to bear in mind that it consisted of two distinct parts: a first part of

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<sup>174</sup> Holland, Tom and Francis Fukuyama. "After the End of History: A Conversation between Tom Holland and Francis Fukuyama." *The Spectator* (London. 1828) (2021).

<sup>175</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>176</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>177</sup> Hussain Raja, Shahid. "Capitolo 09: 'Fine Della Storia' Di Francis Fukuyama - Critica." In *Relazioni Internazionali*. United States: Babelcube Inc, 2024.

<sup>178</sup> Sibuh, Gebeyaw Tareke. "From the End of History to the End of Neo-Liberalism: From Fukuyama to Fukuyama." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 15, no. 4 (2021): 139-147.

<sup>179</sup> Hussain Raja, Shahid. "Capitolo 09: 'Fine Della Storia' Di Francis Fukuyama - Critica." In *Relazioni Internazionali*. United States: Babelcube Inc, 2024.

<sup>180</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory :Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

empirical investigation of contemporary and historical events, and a second part of theoretical analysis in which he sought to evaluate contemporary liberal democracy. We must bear in mind that of these two parts, the most criticized was that of the empirical investigation<sup>181</sup>. Later in this work, we will see how various newspapers, when faced with important events, headlined with phrases such as “the story is not over”. That said, even the theoretical part was not spared by critics, particularly those who felt that Fukuyama had misinterpreted Hegel, Kojève, Nietzsche, or one of the other philosophers mentioned in the book<sup>182</sup>. The American political scientist is aware that the phrase “the end of history” constitutes the most misunderstood element of his ideas. These misunderstandings are mostly linked to a misinterpretation of this concept<sup>183</sup>. In proclaiming the end of history, in fact, Fukuyama was not stating - as we have repeatedly said - that there would be no more wars, struggles, or conflicts of any kind. Another criticism the author is keen to counter is the one that states that the reality of the post-Cold War world is not democracy, but virulent nationalism. However, as Fukuyama himself says, “According to this interpretation, everyone was euphoric in 1989 after the fall of the Berlin Wall, thinking that the world was becoming democratic and capitalist, but in reality, it was returning to a pre-modern world of tribalism and unbridled ethnic passions” and “these types of issues are not irrelevant to the argument, but they fundamentally miss the point of the phrase the end of history”<sup>184</sup>. Indeed, Fukuyama is keen to emphasize that his sentence referred to what should have been. It was - the author wrote in the 1995 article - a prediction, a normative statement based on empirical evidence. To illustrate this, he wrote “If the Soviet Union had entered an era of explosive double-digit growth in the 1970s and 1980s while Europe and the United States were stagnating, our view of the respective normative merits of capitalism and socialism would be very different. The normative argument, therefore, depends crucially and obviously on empirical evidence”<sup>185</sup>. To refute the criticism, Fukuyama elaborates and explains once again the reasons that led him to see liberal democracy as the preferable form of government<sup>186</sup>. To say that liberal democracy constitutes the “end of history” does not depend on the short-term progress or regression of democracy in the world in 1994 (or before that in 1989), but rather goes back to the principles of liberty and equality that underpinned the French

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<sup>181</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory :Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

<sup>182</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>183</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>184</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>185</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>186</sup> Holland, Tom and Francis Fukuyama. "After the End of History: A Conversation between Tom Holland and Francis Fukuyama." *The Spectator (London. 1828)* (2021).

and American revolutions. These principles represented - and represent - the end of a long process of ideological evolution; there isn't a better collection of substitute ideas that will eventually take their place<sup>187</sup>. This normative statement needs to be backed up by empirical facts. Indeed, looking at the flow of empirical events one can see the validity of Fukuyama's assertion. In 1807, there were only three functioning democracies, in 1939, there were 13, and in 1989, there were over 60<sup>188</sup>.

Also in this article, Fukuyama discusses the existence of "History" as a coherent and directional evolution of human societies, driven by economic modernization and scientific progress. Although this direction is not rigidly deterministic, democratic stability and economic progress are closely correlated<sup>189</sup>. Specifically, the advancement of the scientific method led to the start of an economic development process that affected almost all of humankind. The logic of this development process is determined by the progressive nature of scientific knowledge and its embodiment in technology through research and development<sup>190</sup>. Technology pushes all technological civilizations to structure themselves in specific ways if they want to achieve economic modernization and offers a standard view of production possibilities at any level of scientific understanding. Also from an empirical perspective, Fukuyama points out that stable democracies and high levels of industrial development are remarkably strongly correlated. That said, there is nothing necessarily linear and deterministic in saying that the progressive development of modern natural science broadly determines the process of economic modernization, which in turn creates a predisposition towards liberal democracy<sup>191</sup>. In any case, in the words of Fukuyama himself, "all it can do is give us some basis for hope"<sup>192</sup>.

The American political scientist goes on to discuss the difficulty of advancing a normative argument about the goodness of liberal democracy at the end of the twentieth century, especially after modern philosophy has sought to eliminate concepts such as metaphysics and natural law. Many modern and postmodern philosophers, such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, have criticized the possibility of philosophically founding moral values, thus leaving liberal democracy without a solid metaphysical foundation<sup>193</sup>. Fukuyama criticizes this position,

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<sup>187</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory :Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

<sup>188</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>189</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>190</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory :Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

<sup>191</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>192</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>193</sup> Ibidem.

highlighting how even postmodern thinkers, such as Richard Rorty, while upholding conventional liberal values, do not offer a philosophical justification for these values, considering them instead as mere products of the cultural and sentimental context<sup>194</sup>. He underscores the dangers of this vision, especially in non-liberal contexts, such as Nazi Germany or Serbia in the 1990s, where the cultural environment can negatively influence moral choices. Furthermore, Fukuyama discusses the idea of "postmodern liberalism," which is not based on universal principles such as natural rights, but rather on the exhaustion of all other ideologies. He criticizes this position, stating that it undermines the principles of equality on which liberalism is based and leaves society vulnerable to new fundamentalisms<sup>195</sup>. Finally, he expresses doubts about the ability of a postmodern society to defend itself from external threats and to sustain a political community in the long term without a solid foundation of shared values<sup>196</sup>.

In reflecting on the "crisis of modernity" and the difficulty of finding a solution, Fukuyama cites the debate between Leo Strauss and Alexandre Kojève. Both have approached the problem from opposing perspectives, with Strauss emphasizing the uncertainty of the empirical facts of history and Kojève offering an anthropological reading of Hegel, highlighting the role of recognition in human history. However, both philosophers deny the possibility of an original cognition or recognizable human goodness "by nature." The author also discusses the criticisms received from Tim Burns and Victor Gourevitch regarding his interpretation of Hobbes and Hegel. He argues that while Hegel offers a broader understanding of human motivation compared to Hobbes, they both share the principle that rights must be formal and not substantive<sup>197</sup>. Tocqueville, cited by Fukuyama, speaks of the "passion for equality" as a quest for equality of respect and dignity, rather than physical or economic equality<sup>198</sup>. Finally, to conclude this discussion, the author responds to criticisms of reductionism, defending the need for a theory of history that is not overly simplified. He admits that while one can be optimistic about the direction of history toward liberal democracy, it is not easy to be philosophically optimistic about its inherent goodness. He emphasizes the need for ongoing discussion on the

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<sup>194</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

<sup>195</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>196</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>197</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>198</sup> Ibidem.

choice of liberal democracy, as its superiority is no longer guaranteed by the presence of external enemies such as communism or fascism<sup>199</sup>.

As Francis Fukuyama himself had predicted in 1995, his attempt at clarification had not stopped the criticism and debate surrounding his theory on the End of History. So in 1999 - on the tenth anniversary of the publication of his article *The End of History?* in *The National Interest* magazine - he published a new article entitled *Second Thoughts: The End of History 10 Years Later*. In a couple of pages, the American political scientist reflects on the validity of his original hypothesis. Since the publication, critics from around the world have asked Fukuyama to revise and possibly retract his statement that history had come to an end, meaning history as the progressive evolution of human political and economic institutions towards liberal democracy and the market economy<sup>200</sup>. Fukuyama states that no event in the last ten years has really challenged his conclusion that modern society can only survive with a market-oriented economy and liberal democracy.

However, he acknowledges that the process of historical evolution did not end with socialism, but with democracy, and that this process is driven by two main forces: modern natural science and the struggle for recognition, which ultimately requires a political system that recognizes universal human rights. Looking at the past ten years, he discusses the economic crises in Asia and the apparent stagnation of democratic reforms in Russia, stressing that although these represent challenges, they do not constitute systemic threats to the prevailing liberal world order<sup>201</sup>. Even after the 1997-1998 crisis, he maintains that globalization is here to stay because no other growth model offers superior outcomes. The Asian development model, based on "soft" authoritarianism, has been deeply discredited by the events of the past ten years<sup>202</sup>. Fukuyama recognizes a key flaw in his thesis: there can be no end of history as long as modern science continues to develop. He foresees that innovations in biotechnology and the life sciences in the coming decades could lead to a fundamental alteration of human nature. At that point, one could consider that human history has truly come to an end, as a "post-human history" could begin. Finally, in his "second thoughts", he reiterates that those who were looking for the key to the "End of History" in the political and economic events of the past

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<sup>199</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later." *History and Theory :Studies in the Philosophy of History* 34, no. 2 (1995): 27-43.

<sup>200</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Second Thoughts: The End of History 10 Years Later." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1999): 40-42.

<sup>201</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>202</sup> Ibidem.

decade were on the wrong track<sup>203</sup>. The real challenge and real change will come from the scientific and technological revolutions that could radically transform the very essence of humanity<sup>204</sup>.

As we have repeatedly reiterated, in announcing the end of history Fukuyama was not also announcing the end of events and conflicts. To demonstrate this, in an interview by Nathan Gardels in 2006 - three years after the invasion of Iraq - titled *There Are No Shortcuts to the End of History*, the American political scientist reflected on the illusions and mistakes of American neoconservatives regarding the war in Iraq and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East. Fukuyama criticizes the idea that Iraq could easily transition from a dictatorship to a peaceful democracy, highlighting how this was a naïve vision on the part of the neoconservatives, who are usually skeptical about social engineering<sup>205</sup>. In the aforementioned article, he also discussed the negative consequences of the Iraq war, such as the creation of a "Shia Crescent" that has brought Baghdad closer to radical Iran and the possibility of a civil war<sup>206</sup>. He underlines how the American conviction of using force to promote democracy has been problematic, creating resentment and anti-Americanism.

The author observes that democracy, although part of an effective long-term policy, can worsen problems in the short term, as evidenced by the electoral victory of Hamas. However, he argues that the democratization of the Middle East is inevitable and necessary, even if it will be a long and bumpy process. Fukuyama emphasizes the need for a more political and less military strategy to address Islamism and the Middle East, suggesting the creation of multilateral institutions to promote stability and cooperation<sup>207</sup>. Finally, he concludes that there are no shortcuts to the end of history and that any policy aimed at promoting democracy must be opportunistic and realistic, respecting the limits of American power and the complexity of global dynamics<sup>208</sup>.

Just a few years later (in 2010), interviewed again by Nathan Gardels, Fukuyama expressed his considerations on the End of History twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Despite the time elapsed, he still maintains that liberal democracy remains the final form of government, even in the face of alternatives such as Iran or Chinese authoritarianism<sup>209</sup>. He states that no

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<sup>203</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>204</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>205</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "There are no Shortcuts to 'the End of History'." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2006): 35.

<sup>206</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>207</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>208</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>209</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The 'End of History' 20 Years Later." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 31-39.

other system of government that has emerged in the last twenty years seriously challenges liberal democracy, which offers citizens a higher level of prosperity and personal freedom<sup>210</sup>. Fukuyama acknowledges that there have been setbacks in democracy in some countries, such as Russia and Venezuela, and a sort of "democratic recession"<sup>211</sup>. However, he believes that the broader trend remains towards democracy.

The interview also discusses the confrontation between Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington, known for his thesis of the "clash of civilizations"<sup>212</sup>. Fukuyama does not deny the importance of culture but argues that democratic values and human rights have become universal, adopted by societies with different cultural traditions such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. The American political scientist explores the difference between Westernization and modernization, observing that modernization can include an effective state, urbanization, and economic growth without necessarily adopting a Western liberal culture<sup>213</sup>. He emphasizes three key components of political modernization: an effective state, the rule of law, and political accountability. According to him, these components are necessary for true modernization and to avoid a more efficient form of tyranny. Finally, Fukuyama discusses the role of religion in modernization, stating that although modernization is often associated with secularization, religion can coexist with modernity. He cites the United States as an example of a highly religious society that is thriving scientifically and technologically. He concludes by stating that without democratic accountability, it is difficult to achieve good governance and that, despite short-term successes under authoritarian regimes, such as in China, long-term prosperity and the security of citizens require the rule of law and accountability<sup>214</sup>.

In light of what has been said so far, it is correct to affirm that - after the publication of *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992 - the work of Francis Fukuyama has generated a wide debate among academics, politicians, and intellectuals<sup>215</sup>. The central idea of the book, which proposed liberal democracy as the final point of the ideological evolution of humanity, has been the subject of numerous criticisms and discussions. Because of the many criticisms raised and the debate that has emerged over the years, Fukuyama has responded to the criticisms and refined his theory. The author has acknowledged that liberal democracy is not inevitable or irreversible and that there are stable authoritarian alternatives. However, he has continued to

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<sup>210</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>211</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The "End of History" 20 Years Later." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 31-39.

<sup>212</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>213</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>214</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>215</sup> Curtis, Jenefer. *After History? Francis Fukuyama and His critics*. The American Historical Review., (1995). 100(3).

argue that, in the long run, liberal democracy remains the form of government best able to meet fundamental human needs, including those of recognition and dignity. Furthermore, the American political scientist has acknowledged that his book has been interpreted in an excessively optimistic way. He has stressed that his thesis did not imply the cessation of conflicts or challenges to democracy, but rather that liberal democracy represents a theoretically superior and desirable model<sup>216</sup>. Regarding the role of cultural and national identities, he has placed greater emphasis on the need for a strong and inclusive national identity to support a functioning liberal democracy. He has stressed that the lack of such identity can lead to political crises and the growth of populism.

In general, over the years Fukuyama has responded to criticism by clarifying his position and acknowledging the complexities of his arguments. Specifically, he reiterated that the end of history does not mean the end of events or problems, but rather the end of major ideological alternatives to liberal democracy<sup>217</sup>. However, he emphasized that liberal democracy requires constant maintenance and that its supporters must be vigilant against internal and external threats. In conclusion, while Fukuyama acknowledged the limitations and challenges to his thesis, he maintained the position that liberal democracy represents the best available political system, though not necessarily the only or inevitable historical outcome.

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<sup>216</sup> Curtis, Jenefer. *After History? Francis Fukuyama and His critics*. The American Historical Review., (1995). 100(3).

<sup>217</sup> Ibidem.



## Chapter 2.

### The political and social context from 1989 to 2001

#### 2.1 The international scenario: the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The historical, economic, and social context is fundamental to understanding Francis Fukuyama's work. In the previous chapter, we analyzed the climate and changes of the 1980s and how these influenced the author, leading him to formulate his theory on the End of History. Now, the purpose of this paper is not limited to the analysis of Fukuyama's theory alone; it also aims to look at the criticism and perceptions of the academic, political, and journalistic community regarding this theory. The period under analysis covers the years from 1989 - the year Fukuyama published his article in *The National Interest* - to 2001, thus covering the last decade of the XX century. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Fukuyama published his book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992, only three years after publishing his article in *The National Interest* and only one year after the fall of the Soviet Union. In these few years, from 1989 to 1992, a series of fundamental events are concentrated. The cruciality of these years is related both to the fact that a decisive page in world history ended and to the fact that the configuration of the post-Cold War world still defines international geopolitical arrangements today. In the context of the end of bipolarity, the importance of the figure of Gorbachev is inescapable.

At least initially, Western leaders did not grasp the novelty of Gorbachevism<sup>218</sup>. Nevertheless, towards the end of the 1980s, this opinion began to change. The Soviet leader devoted himself to numerous trips abroad, weaving a dense network of relationships with the leaders of the rest of the world. Thus, in the late 1980s, Gorbachev had better relations with the leaders of the opposing camp than with those of the socialist bloc, by whom he was considered a traitor to the cause<sup>219</sup>. In this respect, indeed, the Kremlin had given up holding together its external empire. On the verge of bankruptcy, Moscow lacked the economic resources to support its satellites. When the final crisis of the Eastern European bloc broke out in 1989, the Soviet Union did not react, so on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, symbolizing the division of the world into two blocs. The fall of the Berlin Wall paved the way for a difficult transition

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<sup>218</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>219</sup> Ibidem.

period for the former satellite states of the Soviet Union<sup>220</sup>. With the collapse of the old regimes, these countries faced challenges related to converting the production apparatus into a market economy, which led to the closure of many state-owned enterprises and a consequent rise in unemployment. The fall of the old regimes also brought an end to the certainties that had guaranteed stability and social security for decades, albeit within the framework of backward and stagnant economies<sup>221</sup>. Politically, the return to democracy led to the immediate proliferation of political forces, both old and, more often, new. The loss of its external empire further weakened the already ailing Soviet Union. Thus, after 1989, internal centrifugal forces within the Union gained strength. The USSR's crisis worsened between 1990 and 1991, coinciding with the deteriorating economic situation. Gorbachev tried to mediate between liberalizing forces and pressures from the hardline faction of the party, alternating between concessions and repressive measures, and proposing a new federative pact that would grant more autonomy to the Soviet republics.

This fragile balance, however, collapsed in August 1991, when a group of high-ranking Soviet officials attempted a coup to halt the reform process. The coup failed due to strong public opposition and a lack of support from the armed forces. The failure of this attempted coup helped sweep away the remnants of the old communist power and further accelerated the crisis of central authority, exacerbated by the failure of economic reforms and the difficulty of circulating goods within the Union<sup>222</sup>. Independence movements within the USSR became increasingly pressing, so much so that - even though Gorbachev tried to block these movements by proposing a new union treaty to ensure at least the USSR's existence as a military entity and an international political actor - on December 21, 1991, in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, representatives of eleven republics (out of the fifteen that were part of the USSR) created a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and decreed the dissolution of the Soviet Union<sup>223</sup>.

As we know, the collapse of the Soviet Union led Francis Fukuyama to argue that with it, the last ideological alternative to liberalism had been eliminated. After all, fascism collapsed, communism was imploding, and even China would soon embrace liberalism, moving towards representative government, a free market, and consumer culture<sup>224</sup>. Of course, Fukuyama

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<sup>220</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>221</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari; GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>222</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>223</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>224</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

noted, small states might seek their own path or undertake alternative government experiments, but "the common ideological heritage of humanity" would be under relentless liberalism<sup>225</sup>. The formal dissolution of the Soviet Union took place on 25 December 1991, following the formal resignation of Gorbachev as its president. The end of the Soviet system of power, however, did not only bring freedom and democracy to Eastern Europe<sup>226</sup>. In fact, during the 1990s, almost all the territories of the former Union experienced serious difficulties caused by the transition to a market economy and instability due to political fragmentation increased. At the same time, these instabilities led to the rise of various nationalisms. In the territories of the former USSR, independence movements were born, or resurrected, and conflicts arose over the possession of disputed territories (some of which still plague these territories today). Not even the people's democracies were spared the difficulties; one need only think of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia<sup>227</sup>. In the latter, where the crisis of the one-party regime threw off the balance between the nationalities on which the country had relied since the end of World War II, the process of disintegration was particularly bloody. Not coincidentally, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the consequent ethnic conflicts and wars represent one of the most tragic and complex events in post-Cold War Europe<sup>228</sup>.

Moreover, these events led to the fragmentation of a multi-ethnic state into several independent countries and widespread violence characterized by war crimes and ethnic cleansing. Already following the first free elections, held in 1990, centrifugal forces within the Yugoslav territories had increased<sup>229</sup>. On one side, Croatia and Slovenia - the most economically developed - saw the victory of autonomist parties, while in Serbia the neo-communist nationalists of Milosevic won. Consequently, when Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia declared independence in 1991, the federal Yugoslav government - controlled by the Serbian component - accepted the accomplished fact of Slovenian and Macedonian independence but reacted harshly to the similar initiative of the Croatian Republic. This resulted in a brutal war between Serbian and Croatian nationalisms, marked by systematic ethnic cleansing operations. The following year, in 1992, following the independence of Bosnia - which comprised a population of Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, and Catholic Croats - the conflict widened and intensified. Here, the episodes

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<sup>225</sup> Runciman, David. "Fukuyama on History: The End of History and the Last Man (1992)." In *Confronting Leviathan*. United Kingdom: Profile, 2021.

<sup>226</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>227</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis/ Lamberti, Nicoletta. *La Guerra Fredda: Cinquant'Anni Di Paura e Di Speranza* Mondadori, 2017.

<sup>228</sup> Petraskevičius, Vladislavas. "The Dissolution of the Soviet Union." In *The Paradox of Marxist Economics*, 319-329. Switzerland: Springer, 2023.

<sup>229</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis/ Lamberti, Nicoletta. *La Guerra Fredda: Cinquant'Anni Di Paura e Di Speranza* Mondadori, 2017.

of violence were numerous, but the most striking was surely that of Srebrenica, where about 8,000 Muslim civilians were slaughtered by Serbian militias amid the inaction of the UN troops sent there to enforce a truce<sup>230</sup>. The peace agreement between Serbia and Croatia was signed in Dayton, USA, in the winter of '95, while the war with Croatia had meanwhile ended with Serbia's defeat the previous summer. However, peace in these territories was still distant, with political tensions very present in the states of the former Yugoslavia<sup>231</sup>. In 1998, another hotspot of tension developed in Kosovo, an autonomous region within Serbia inhabited by an Albanian population, where an independence guerrilla movement had developed. Here too, the repression was bloody, but this time Serbia's defeat led to the end of Milosevic's dominance<sup>232</sup>.

The nearby Albania also experienced turbulent events during this period, where the transition to democracy was initially accompanied by a severe economic crisis and rebellion movements. Regarding the Russian Federation - the principal successor state of the USSR - here too the challenges were numerous<sup>233</sup>. Under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, Russia embarked on a transition to a market economy through policies of liberalization and privatization. These policies led to a drastic reduction in the standard of living for many citizens, unemployment, and an increase in social inequalities. The period was also marked by significant political instability and internal conflicts, such as the First Chechen War (1994-1996)<sup>234</sup>. In addition to political problems, the post-dissolution situation was exacerbated by the economic and social crisis. The economic crisis dated back several years. Already during the 1980s, as economic stagnation worsened, the USSR had fallen behind the developed capitalist states of the West<sup>235</sup>. Soviet leaders had attempted to revitalize the economy but were confronted with the inherent internal contradictions of the socialist economic model<sup>236</sup>. When, after 1991, the leadership of the newly formed Russian Federation fell to Yeltsin, his attempt to accelerate the transition process towards capitalism and a market economy reopened the economic crisis<sup>237</sup>. The crisis reached its peak in 1998, further weakening the already precarious position of Yeltsin, who soon after resigned, paving the way for Vladimir Putin's rise to power. After winning the

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<sup>230</sup> Barros-Duchêne, Laurence de and Laurence de Barros-Duchêne. *Srebrenica: Histoire d'Un Crime International*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996.

<sup>231</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis/ Lamberti, Nicoletta. *La Guerra Fredda: Cinquant'Anni Di Paura e Di Speranza* Mondadori, 2017.

<sup>232</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>233</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis/ Lamberti, Nicoletta. *La Guerra Fredda: Cinquant'Anni Di Paura e Di Speranza* Mondadori, 2017.

<sup>234</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>235</sup> Petraskevičius, Vladislavas. "The Dissolution of the Soviet Union." In *The Paradox of Marxist Economics*, 319-329. Switzerland: Springer, 2023.

<sup>236</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>237</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

presidential elections in 2000, Putin began his long presidency, which would be characterized by attempts to restore efficiency to the state's machinery and to revitalize the economy<sup>238</sup>.

As is widely recognized, the fall of the USSR had repercussions not only on the former states of the Union but also internationally. The year 1991 marked a historical turning point with far-reaching international implications<sup>239</sup>. The period following the end of the Cold War was a time of political, military, and economic tensions for both the Western and Eastern blocs. For the United States, the fall of the Soviet Union marked victory in the Cold War, consolidating the country's position as the world's only remaining superpower<sup>240</sup>. This position allowed the US to exert global influence. However, at least initially this role negatively burdened the US economy which, like most economies in the industrialized West, was experiencing some difficulties<sup>241</sup>. It was with the election of Bill Clinton in 1992 that the US took over the role of hegemonic power. Indeed, the new president, just over forty years old, sought to give American foreign policy a 'progressive' sign and to relaunch the image of the United States not only as a guarantor of world equilibrium but also as a defender of democracy in every part of the planet<sup>242</sup>. The following years saw an improvement in the country's economic situation, with the budget deficit narrowing and unemployment falling below 5%. In general, what followed the end of bipolarity was a period of economic growth and relative stability for the US<sup>243</sup>.

At the European level, the impact of the end of the Cold War was also felt in those countries that had not been under the aegis of the Soviet Union<sup>244</sup>. Already in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall had turned the spotlight back on the German question in the context of the European integration process<sup>245</sup>. Immediately after the fall of the Wall, political leaders from both East and West began negotiating the terms of reunification, reaching an agreement on the Unification Treaty on 31 August 1990. On the whole, the fall of the symbol of the Cold War was greeted with enthusiasm in Europe, although German reunification worried Community governments, particularly the French government, which was concerned that a united Germany would upset the European balance<sup>246</sup>. Nevertheless, none of the EC members could oppose reunification, which was now inevitable. In fact, reunification was officially proclaimed on 3

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<sup>238</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>239</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>240</sup> Brooke-Smith, James. *Accelerate! A History of the 1990s*. London, England: The History Press, 2022.

<sup>241</sup> Bergamini, Oliviero. *Storia Degli Stati Uniti* Editori Laterza,.

<sup>242</sup> Romanelli, Raffaele. *Novecento: Lezioni Di Storia Contemporanea*, 2. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014.

<sup>243</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>244</sup> Laschi, Giuliana. *Storia Dell'integrazione Europea*. Le Monnier Università, 2021.

<sup>245</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>246</sup> Ibidem.

October 1990 and East Germany, united with West Germany, automatically became part of the European Community and NATO. The issue of German reunification is extremely important, as it paved the way for the former Soviet satellites in Central and Eastern Europe to approach the Union<sup>247</sup>.

The last decade of the 20th century had opened with a series of radical changes in the international and European arena, in the face of which Europe - and in particular the members of the European Community - sought to conceive and set up a new international role for itself. Western Europe faced several challenges as a result of the significant shifts in the global economic structures and power dynamics that had developed by the end of the XX century. However, often the great changes made did not correspond to an adequate political and institutional capacity for implementation<sup>248</sup>. So, also to respond to these issues, the twelve member countries of the European Community - which became 15 in 1995 - decided to give new impetus to the integration process. Already starting from the international crisis of 1989, the Union had encouraged the reform programs of the Central and Eastern European countries - also known as the CEEC - given their accession to the Community<sup>249</sup>.

These programs had the purpose of supporting the economic and social transition of the CEECs, to prepare them to participate in the European integration process<sup>250</sup>. In particular, the main objectives included political dialogue, freedom of trade and free movement, and economic, financial, and cultural cooperation. Even more importantly, in 1993 at the European Council in Copenhagen, the criteria for accession to be applied to the states applying to join the EU were established. To join the Union, three fundamental requirements were set: stable institutions that would guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the protection of minorities; a functioning market economy and the ability to withstand competitive pressure and market forces acting within the Union; the ability to take on the commitments associated with accession (the *acquis communautaire*), including the acceptance of the objectives of political, economic and monetary union<sup>251</sup>. The consequences of this enlargement were numerous, both in terms of benefits and challenges<sup>252</sup>. First and foremost, the enlargement

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<sup>247</sup> Laschi, Giuliana. *Storia Dell'integrazione Europea*. Le Monnier Università, 2021.

<sup>248</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>249</sup> Cavallaro, Maria Elena e Giordano, Filippo Maria. *Dizionario Storico Dell'Integrazione Europea* Rubbettino Editore, (2018).

<sup>250</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>251</sup> Blanke, Hermann-Josef and Stelio Mangiameli. *The Treaty on European Union (TEU): A Commentary*. New York [etc.]: Springer, 2013.

<sup>252</sup> Cavallaro, Maria Elena e Giordano, Filippo Maria. *Dizionario Storico Dell'Integrazione Europea* Rubbettino Editore, (2018).

helped to politically and economically stabilize the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, reducing the risk of regional conflicts. From an economic perspective, the integration into the European single market stimulated economic growth in the new member states, improving living standards and reducing economic disparities. Finally, the democratic institutions of the former Soviet countries also benefited, with the promotion of the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. As for the challenges, the economic differences between the old and new EU members certainly created difficulties in terms of cohesion and economic integration. Additionally, the enlargement also impacted internal migration - noting that the Schengen agreements had been adopted in 1995 - with many citizens of the new members moving to the wealthier EU countries in search of work, creating social and political tensions. More broadly, the governance of the Union also faced difficulties, made more complex by the greater diversity of national interests and the more difficult decision-making process<sup>253</sup>. In conclusion, the reunification of Germany and the enlargement of the European Union to the former USSR member states were historic processes that profoundly influenced European geopolitics<sup>254</sup>. While German reunification brought significant challenges and opportunities for Germany and Europe, the EU's eastward enlargement helped to stabilize and integrate Eastern Europe, promoting peace, prosperity, and democratic values. However, both of these developments have entailed significant challenges that continue to shape the political and economic landscape of the continent<sup>255</sup>.

Now, any attempt to analyze or at least summarise all the events, policies, and geopolitical challenges that took place during the 1990s would be reductive. From the Gulf War, which began on 2 August 1990 and ended on 28 February 1991, through the adoption of the NAFTA<sup>256</sup> agreement in 1993, to the introduction of the euro in 1999, the 1990s were hectic years in many aspects. We mentioned earlier that the United States had emerged from the end of the Cold War somewhat victorious. In the 1990s, the United States, remaining the sole superpower, possessed unchallenged economic, political, military, and cultural superiority and enjoyed widespread prosperity thanks to almost a decade of rapid growth. Nevertheless, the country was not without its internal contradictions and fractures, such as the so-called culture wars unleashed by conservatives already in the late 1980s<sup>257</sup>. The contradictions of those years were also due to a

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<sup>253</sup> Cavallaro, Maria Elena e Giordano, Filippo Maria. *Dizionario Storico Dell'Integrazione Europea* Rubbettino Editore, (2018).

<sup>254</sup> Romanelli, Raffaele. *Novecento: Lezioni Di Storia Contemporanea*, 2. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>256</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement.

<sup>257</sup> Brooke-Smith, James. *Accelerate! A History of the 1990s*. London, England: The History Press, 2022.

growing social inequality, which was, however, made less obvious by the ongoing economic prosperity. Since the end of bipolarity, liberal capitalism had emerged victorious with the United States, which - as evidenced by the country's economic growth - seemed to have solved the problems associated with cyclically alternating phases of growth and stagnation<sup>258</sup>. Indeed, the decade was characterized by a long phase of economic expansion, fuelled by several factors: technological innovation, rising productivity, and the rise of the digital economy. We will see in the next section how information and communication technologies, in particular, became the driving force behind the economy, with the spread of the internet and the emergence of numerous technology companies that would define the global economic landscape and fuel globalization. Thanks also to this phase of economic expansion, the unemployment rate dropped significantly during the decade. More generally, between 1993 and early 2000, the United States went through one of the biggest economic booms in the country's history<sup>259</sup>.

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<sup>258</sup> Brooke-Smith, James. *Accelerate! A History of the 1990s*. London, England: The History Press, 2022.

<sup>259</sup> Bergamini, Oliviero. *Storia Degli Stati Uniti* Editori Laterza,.



## 2.2 Economic Globalization and Its Effects

Between 1989 and 2001, the world experienced a period of rapid economic and geopolitical transformation, fueled by the expansion of economic globalization. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the consolidation of the liberal system marked the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of global economic integration. This process of globalization has accelerated economic growth in many parts of the world but has also created new inequalities and social and political tensions. The term globalization became widespread and entered common usage starting in the 1980s. This term refers to the international integration of markets and the internalization of production and consumption, the intensification of exchanges between countries and peoples of the world, as well as the institutions and values that govern these phenomena.

When discussing globalization, the historical period typically referenced is the 1990s, when the Iron Curtain definitively fell, opening new channels of communication, circulation, and trade between the states of the two blocs. Specifically, the years between 1990 and 2000 were characterized by unprecedented growth in international trade and capital flows<sup>260</sup>. In reality, as many scholars have pointed out, the entire contemporary age - starting as early as the Restoration - has had globalization as a distinctive feature, albeit with different aspects<sup>261</sup>. Already with the rise of European nation-states and their global projection during the age of imperialism, there was a transfer of cultural models and administrative tools rooted in the national historical tradition. Later, with the end of World War II and the rapid bipolarization of the world, globalization took on different characteristics compared to the past. Specifically, during this period, we can speak of two globalizations, both from an ideological-cultural perspective and from an economic standpoint. Subsequently, during the 1980s, a reversal of trends was observed.

Even before the end of the Cold War dismantled the barriers to capital movements in the communist world, the Reagan administration in the USA and Margaret Thatcher's government in Britain had initiated liberal policies of strong market deregulation that reduced the role and capacity of public institutions to intervene in domestic economies. This process extended,

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<sup>260</sup> Anderson, Edward, and Samuel Obeng. "Globalisation and Government Spending: Evidence for the 'Hyper-globalisation' of the 1990s and 2000s." *The world economy*. 44, no. 5 (2021): 1144–1176

<sup>261</sup> Rogari, Sandro. *L'Età Della Globalizzazione: Storia Del Mondo Contemporaneo Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. Quarta ed. Milano: UTET Università, 2023.

albeit with varying impact and degree, to all industrialized Western countries, leading to the onset of privatizations and the dismantling of state ownership, reversing the trend of political intervention in the economy that, barring pauses or interruptions due to political contingencies, had persisted since World War I. Moreover, on the international stage, the establishment of the WTO in 1995 aimed to achieve the complete removal of customs barriers with the creation of a global free market. The international context that encouraged optimism in this regard was the access to markets of so-called transition countries, namely those that had been part of the Soviet Union or former members of the Warsaw Pact. The new trend in the process of globalization had already begun in 1973 - the year of the oil crisis - when the growth trend that had driven the United States since 1950 came to a halt<sup>262</sup>.

The abrupt interruption of this positive curve had its cyclical causes in the explosion of the oil shock. Still, it also depended on long-term causes, such as the massive entry of baby boomers into the labor market, the crisis of the overly cultivated "conventional" Keynesian model, and the resulting emergence of a massive federal deficit<sup>263</sup>. It was precisely during those years that the vision promoted by the Chicago School took hold, with Milton Friedman championing the doctrine of trade liberalization and free capital flows as the only formula capable of ensuring development and the advancement of democratization processes. Thus, globalization - understood in the most modern sense of the term - began to take root as early as the mid-1970s, driven by the free movement of capital and deregulation. The first sign that the curve was beginning to rise again and that inflationary dynamics had reversed came at the beginning of 1980 when the rise in interest rates also marked the start of a new era for financial derivatives, particularly those used for rates and currencies<sup>264</sup>.

In the same year, the election of Ronald Reagan added other fundamental elements to the monetarist strategy (Friedman's): the fiscal revolution, the resurgence of tensions in the Cold War context, and the rediscovery of religion as a factor deeply influencing politics and the economy<sup>265</sup>. Under Reagan's presidency, globalization was also linked to the idea that the Soviet Union would not exist forever, and indeed, it was necessary to accelerate its dissolution to give rise to the new global era of the United States<sup>266</sup>. The former actor's vision was highly ideological, combining very different plans. Nevertheless, Reagan was the best interpreter of

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<sup>262</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La globalizzazione dalla culla alla crisi : una nuova biografia del mercato globale*. Altreconomia, 2014.

<sup>263</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>264</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>265</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>266</sup> Ibidem.

that political line known as “fusionism”, within which the different factions of the American right found a synergistic place, overcoming the fractures between foreign policy visions and domestic policy positions, between economics and morality, which had characterized previous conservatism<sup>267</sup>. The Reagan administration also strongly emphasized religious appeals and the idea of a profound moral regeneration that had to come through cutting waste, stimulating savings, and drastically increasing production. During these years, the core values were individualism, work, self-sufficiency, and charity, all values aimed at promoting the dismantling of the State and its interventions, especially at the welfare level<sup>268</sup>. In the 1980s, and even more so following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the liberalization of international trade was followed by a period of quick growth and intensification in international trade and finance. We have already discussed earlier in this paragraph the influence that the Reagan administration had on this process. Simultaneously, in Great Britain, financial markets began to develop at an extraordinarily rapid pace<sup>269</sup>.

Two additional elements further fueled this development: on the one hand, the transformation of multinational corporations with centralized management and global dispersion into transnational enterprises; on the other hand, the growth of emerging economies (particularly the East Asian countries, the so-called Asian Tigers)<sup>270</sup>. Regarding financial markets, it is worth noting that the acceleration of international circulation impacted financial capital even before goods. The spread of Information Communication Technologies allowed for the awareness of investment and speculation opportunities in currencies and stocks, and the real-time transfer of vast amounts of capital across markets, which reached an unprecedented level of integration. Now, while this rapid circulation of financial capital had significant benefits, it also led to various monetary and financial crises - especially during the 1990s - due to the inability of individual countries' monetary authorities to withstand the force of international speculation<sup>271</sup>. However, the need to find a solution to these crises also stimulated a political response, fostering the creation or strengthening of supranational institutions capable of facing the power of the markets. In general, a crucial role in all of this was played by digital tools. These tools -

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<sup>267</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La globalizzazione dalla culla alla crisi : una nuova biografia del mercato globale*. Altreconomia, 2014.

<sup>268</sup> Gitlin, Martin. *The Reagan Era*. 1st ed. Ann Arbor: Cherry Lake Publishing, 2021.

<sup>269</sup> Rogari, Sandro. *L'Età Della Globalizzazione: Storia Del Mondo Contemporaneo Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. Quarta ed. Milano: UTET Università, 2023.

<sup>270</sup> Osterhammel, Jürgen, Dona Geyer, and Niels P. Petersson. *Globalization: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.

<sup>271</sup> Ibidem.

as we will see in the next paragraph - facilitated the integration of markets as well as material goods.

As for the global expansion of trade, this increased significantly during the last decade of the 20th century. The growth affected all types of goods. Firstly, the reduction in transportation costs, with large oil tankers, container ships, or air transport, made long-distance trade of low-value goods economically viable. Secondly, improved preservation techniques, such as refrigeration, freezing, and deep-freezing, facilitated the trade of perishable goods, so that every product - from fruit to seafood - could circulate simultaneously in all markets. Along with the intensification of trade, the production and consumption of goods also increased, taking on an increasingly global dimension. Regarding consumption, a digression is necessary. As mentioned, the process of globalization intensified following the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of bipolarism, the Soviet Union, and the only possible alternative to liberalism, the United States had emerged, in a certain sense, victorious<sup>272</sup>. For this reason, some scholars have argued that - having originated in the USA - globalization is synonymous with Americanization<sup>273</sup>. This means that, after the end of ideological conflicts and the triumph of Western liberal values, the American way of life also assumed a global dimension. However, interpreting globalization solely as a transformation inspired and encouraged by Americans, or more generally by the West, would be too simplistic. Such transformation does not automatically imply Americanization or Westernization, primarily because all processes of cultural or institutional transfer, diffusion, and cross-fertilization require a significant amount of local cooperation and adaptation, which results in the transformation during the transfer of what is being transmitted<sup>274</sup>.

This brings us to highlight another point, fundamental to Francis Fukuyama's vision of history. In the author's interpretation, globalization is a total process of integration that affects all aspects of the social life of humanity as a whole. Undeniably, the key to this integration was the spread of the Internet, which made possible the interconnection between people, even those very distant from one another. Consequently, foreign material and cultural goods were traded and spread globally everywhere. A concrete example of the impact that liberalization and globalization have had is represented by a particular good: coffee. After oil, coffee is the most exported commodity worldwide. For the most part, this good is produced in Central and Latin

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<sup>272</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>273</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>274</sup> Osterhammel, Jürgen, Dona Geyer, and Niels P. Petersson. *Globalization: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.

America, especially in Brazil, where control of this market has long been in the hands of about 20 large international companies, only one of which is Brazilian<sup>275</sup>. Starting in 1990, the liberal policy adopted by the government - trade liberalization, privatizations, and freezing of bank deposits - increased the market concentration of coffee in Brazil, leading to a growing presence of large agricultural enterprises (mainly foreign) in the country and, consequently, to the impoverishment of small farmers<sup>276</sup>. Globalization, with outsourcing and wage reduction, has had an extremely strong impact on the labor market, where factors such as the lack of employment contracts, legal subjectivity, and worker recognition have eroded the systematic organization of globalized labor<sup>277</sup>. Additionally, the relocation of industries to non-urbanized areas - especially in developing countries - has led to production systems where the workforce has remained partly agricultural<sup>278</sup>. In these systems, individuals were limited to producing for widespread commercial circuits, devoid of regulations<sup>279</sup>.

At this point, regarding the intensification of trade, it is important to emphasize that not only legal trade was affected, but also illegal trade. In fact, during the last decade of the 20th century, there was an intensification of drug trafficking, money laundering, and the trafficking of organs and human beings. Within the framework of the informal economy, the connection between trafficking and conflicts has also been exacerbated by the grave environmental degradation that is plaguing many of the world's poorest regions. In the absence of genuine policies of welcome and integration on the part of the developed capitalist countries, desertification, the construction of massive infrastructure projects, and natural disasters have resulted in millions of environmental refugees seeking new destinations<sup>280</sup>. These refugees have altered the socio-demographic balances of vast areas and accelerated the destruction of various local frameworks, creating unstable exchange systems that are always at risk of violent outbursts. Nevertheless, the integration of markets and the digitization of production also brought with it other consequences, fostering the deindustrialization of more advanced countries, leading to a

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<sup>275</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia, 2014.

<sup>276</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia, 2014.

<sup>277</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>278</sup> Anderson, Edward, and Samuel Obeng. "Globalisation and Government Spending: Evidence for the 'Hyper-globalisation' of the 1990s and 2000s." *The world economy*. 44, no. 5 (2021): 1144–1176.

<sup>279</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia,.

<sup>280</sup> Nayyar, Deepak. "Globalisation, History and Development: A Tale of Two Centuries." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 30, no. 1 (2006): 137-159.

drastic reduction in workers in the secondary sector of the economy, and accentuating the relocation of production processes to countries where labor costs were significantly lower<sup>281</sup>.

As the process of globalization accelerated, the so-called informal economy spread, leading to the dissolution of the institutionalized structures of the state and the market. The growth of the illicit drug economy is an example of how structural adjustment programs, the decline of the terms of trade, and extensive privatizations have eroded social structures and broadened the sphere of the unlawful and informal<sup>282</sup>. The "more valuable" cultures have found space, beginning with opium, where the collapse of export prices drove entire economies to their knees due to the degradation of the terms of trade<sup>283</sup>. Undoubtedly, the spread of these illegal economies has had - and still has - strong social consequences on local communities. First of all, the increase in crime and violence and, consequently, in social and family degradation, aggravate the situation of the affected communities. The institutions also suffer the impact of illegal activities due to the increase in corruption and political instability. Finally, with the illegal economy taking an ever-increasing share of the market, the legal economy itself is also damaged. Illegal activities can in fact distort and damage the legal economy, diverting resources and labor and fueling phenomena such as money laundering. An important mention in the analysis of the impact of globalization should be given to the oil market. Indeed, the already observed decline in the terms of trade for many developing and indebted nations was exacerbated by the unusual decline in oil prices that took place throughout the second half of the 1980s and for a large portion of the following decade<sup>284</sup>. On the one hand, this decrease has been functional to globalization itself - making trade and movement of goods less costly, essential for production relocation - on the other hand, the low level of oil prices represents an anomaly, since in industrial economies the growth of oil prices had been a structural factor in their development<sup>285</sup>.

The new arrangements brought about by globalization at the international level have also strongly impacted migration processes - especially from underdeveloped and developing countries towards more advanced ones - and conflicts<sup>286</sup>. For example, the significant exodus

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<sup>281</sup> Rogari, Sandro. *L'Età Della Globalizzazione: Storia Del Mondo Contemporaneo Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. Quarta ed. Milano: UTET Università, 2023.

<sup>282</sup> Anderson, Edward, and Samuel Obeng. "Globalisation and Government Spending: Evidence for the 'Hyper-globalisation' of the 1990s and 2000s." *The world economy*. 44, no. 5 (2021): 1144–1176.

<sup>283</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia,.

<sup>284</sup> Osterhammel, Jürgen, Dona Geyer, and Niels P. Petersson. *Globalization: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.

<sup>285</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia,.

<sup>286</sup> Romanelli, Raffaele. *Novecento: Lezioni Di Storia Contemporanea*, 2. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2014.

from the poorer Arab countries to those that produce oil is one of the prominent elements that has characterized and continues to characterize the Middle East<sup>287</sup>. Concerning conflicts, it is important to bear in mind that throughout history, wealth and resources have been distributed unequally, drawing deep fault lines, frictions, and conflicts. However, in the era of globalization, the gap between rich and poor countries tends to grow - even more so between rich and poor within the same country - thus leading to an increase in internal and external tensions<sup>288</sup>. It is important to recall an important point that we have already previously discussed in this paragraph. From the point of view of geopolitical power relations, the term globalization was born in the context of American hegemony in the 1990s. Nonetheless, this decade saw the definition of civil, intrastate, and interreligious conflicts. The traditional model of war between states no longer applies; instead, there are endless conflicts driven by armed groups, military corps, rebel troops, and more or less "governmental" armies that recruit and attack civilians<sup>289</sup>. This is because it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between military and civilian forces in such situations.

As a consequence, these battles become physiological, to the point that in the last decade of the twentieth century, several conflicts have "stabilized"<sup>290</sup>. Conflicts have regionalized and spread as they have grown chronic, frequently following religious fault lines. These have frequently been battles linked, in a broader sense, to acts of terrorism, and they have been fought using, once more in very wide shapes, the instruments of "international policing" or the right to humanitarian intervention<sup>291</sup>. As a result, conflicts have aided in the already occurring dissolution of state authority in many parts of the world<sup>292</sup>. This authority has also been weakened by the fact that many post-colonial states are patrimonial and dictatorial, and the international community hardly ever recognizes these forms of government as legitimate<sup>293</sup>. In these situations, it is unavoidable that all traces of the formalized economy - which involved regulated markets and "official" monetary instruments - will be eliminated, except aid that frequently took the form of valuable currency that the few recipients hoarded in secure locations<sup>294</sup>. As a result, a vast black market has developed in many regions, where weapons

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<sup>287</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>288</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>289</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>290</sup> Rogari, Sandro. *L'Età Della Globalizzazione: Storia Del Mondo Contemporaneo Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. Quarta ed. Milano: UTET Università, 2023.

<sup>291</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>292</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia,.

<sup>293</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>294</sup> Anderson, Edward, and Samuel Obeng. "Globalisation and Government Spending: Evidence for the 'Hyper-globalisation' of the 1990s and 2000s." *The world economy*. 44, no. 5 (2021): 1144–1176.

quickly turned into the most valuable goods, capable of valorizing the circuits where the primary export goods have been introduced<sup>295</sup>. In this way, wars have preserved the typical structure of poor economies, to which the great international institutions had recommended that they specialize in a small number of export goods and purchase the remainder on the global market<sup>296</sup>.

What has been stated so far leads us to analyze an additional point: that of terrorist organizations. As a consequence of the globalization process and the expansion of the informal economy, numerous terrorist networks have rapidly spread, combining their presence in various territories with the engagement in illegal trafficking capable of providing substantial funding<sup>297</sup>. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, secular universal ideologies - such as communism - had lost ground, leaving more room for religions and mystical beliefs<sup>298</sup>. A primary example of this is the rise of jihadism<sup>299</sup>. This phenomenon fits well within the framework of the globalized world, as the drive for Holy War (jihad) transcends state borders, aiming to reunify the Islamic territory, which ultimately has to align with the global community<sup>300</sup>.

In light of what has been said so far, it is evident that the term globalization constitutes both a process of integration into the world economy and a development strategy based on rapid integration with the world economy<sup>301</sup>. Three different economic manifestations of the global phenomenon can be identified: international trade, international investment, and international finance. Not only that, this phenomenon can be also associated with increasing economic openness, growing economic interdependence, and deepening economic integration across the world<sup>302</sup>. However, it is not only trade flows, investments, and financial flows that take on a global dimension, but also information, technology, and cultural traditions. Borders become blurred, and the degree of interdependence between countries - especially industrialized ones - grows increasingly higher. It is important to emphasize that when it comes to interdependence, there is a situation where the benefits of a connection and the costs of separation are more or

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<sup>295</sup> Rogari, Sandro. *L'Età Della Globalizzazione: Storia Del Mondo Contemporaneo Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. Quarta ed. Milano: UTET Università, 2023.

<sup>296</sup> Volpi, Alessandro. *La Globalizzazione Dalla Culla Alla Crisi: Una Nuova Biografia Del Mercato Globale* Altreconomia, 2014.

<sup>297</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>298</sup> Welsh, Jennifer M., Coherent Digital (Firm), and Canadian Electronic Library (Firm). *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration, and Geopolitics in the Twenty-First Century*. Toronto [Ontario]: House of Anansi Press, 2016.

<sup>299</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>300</sup> Caracciolo, Lucio and Adriano Roccucci. *Storia Contemporanea* Le Monnier Università, 2017.

<sup>301</sup> Nayyar, Deepak. "Globalisation, History and Development: A Tale of Two Centuries." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 30, no. 1 (2006): 137-159.

<sup>302</sup> Ibidem.



less equal for both countries<sup>303</sup>. Thus, a disparity emerges in developing countries, where the degree of interdependence is much lower. In this case, the benefits and costs between developed and developing countries are unequal, resulting in a situation of dependence of the latter on the former.

In conclusion, what emerges from this analysis of globalization is that it is not a phenomenon that is easy to quantify. Speaking about this phenomenon by making exclusive reference to its economic and financial aspects is reductive, since - as we have seen - it is a process that includes much broader aspects, such as migration, conflicts, and traditions. Consequently, while on the one hand, it is correct to use this term generically, referring to a series of structures and interactions of global scope; on the other hand, it is essential to consider globalization as a historical movement not limited to the 1990s alone. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that it is not an autonomous process, but a phenomenon in which States - but also companies, groups, and individuals - play a fundamental role, in building global connections.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibidem.

## 2.3 Technological Advancements and Their Impact on Society

The 1990s of the 20th century were marked by countless changes. In light of the developments discussed in the previous paragraph, during these years the process of globalization accelerated and took on completely new characteristics, also thanks to the technological revolutions that had a profound and lasting impact on contemporary society. Digital technologies emerged, transforming the way people communicate, work, entertain, and interact. In short, what happened was that the industrialized world was swept by a wave of technological innovations comparable to the one that, a century earlier, had shaped the second industrial revolution. Indeed, just as in the 19th century, a series of technological advancements affected the world, leading to the emergence of new productions and the opening of new fields of activity. The crucial point was electronics, which had already been at the foundation of some fundamental discoveries in telecommunications systems at the beginning of the century<sup>304</sup>. Then, at the end of the 20th century, with significant advances in computing, the fusion of computing and electronics led to unprecedented progress<sup>305</sup>. It is no coincidence that among the most significant advancements of the 1990s were the development and spread of the Internet, the birth of the World Wide Web, the miniaturization of electronic devices, and the explosion of mobile telephony. All of these developments, together with the process of globalization, paved the way for new economic and social paradigms, and a new cultural landscape.

The boom in digital technology had already begun in the 1970s, but the real breakthrough came later - in the 1990s to be precise - when the Internet became widespread. Although the invention of the Internet dates back to the 1960s as a network used primarily in the academic and military spheres, by the end of the 20th century it had become a publicly accessible technology, constituting one of the most significant technological advances of the turn of the century<sup>306</sup>. The digital technology industry was initially born in the United States, specifically in California, and then quickly spread to Asia, where it found fertile ground<sup>307</sup>. Soon, this technology invaded all the major manufacturing sectors, from the automobile to the household appliance sector, from watches to mobile phones. About telephony, it is worth emphasizing the impact this key innovation had globally. Not only did telephones accelerate the process of

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<sup>304</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>305</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>306</sup> Brooke-Smith, James. *Accelerate! A History of the 1990s*. London, England: The History Press, 2022.

<sup>307</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

globalization, but they also contributed to changing the forms of communication and interpersonal relations. Thus, this set of innovations profoundly transformed the system of mass communication. The credit for making the Internet accessible to everyone goes to Tim Berners-Lee who invented the World Wide Web. This hypertext system allowed users to surf the Internet through web pages connected by links<sup>308</sup>. Thanks to this invention, the Internet grew by leaps and bounds in just a few years, becoming an indispensable tool for communication, commerce, and information for all intents and purposes. The innovation spread with an unthinkable speed for other information tools or other kinds of consumption. Furthermore, this breakthrough had a significant and multifaceted impact on society; four years after it was launched, in 1995, the Net had 50 million linked users<sup>309</sup>. Since then, the number of users has gradually expanded, initially in North America and Northern Europe and later in the recently industrialized countries<sup>310</sup>.

More significantly, this invention is credited with democratizing information access by making an unprecedented amount of data available to individuals worldwide<sup>311</sup>. The World Wide Web has also had an impact on education, allowing for the sharing of educational information and distant learning. Tim Berners-Lee's invention was also fundamental when considering another technological phenomenon that spread during the same years: the personal computer<sup>312</sup>. Indeed, during the last decade of the 20th century, advances in processing power, cost reduction, and ease of use opened up the use of these devices to a much wider public. The impact of these advances was not only limited to society, but also extended to industry and business, and scientific research<sup>313</sup>. These changes, which revolutionized the forms of Internet use and introduced new possibilities for public participation, led to the revolutionary invention of social networks<sup>314</sup>. The birth of the latter - i.e. open sites where everyone can create personal networks of contacts - made it easier to exchange messages, thoughts, and multimedia materials. Again, as with the World Wide Web and mobile phones, it was individuals who benefited, being given access to new forms of communication. As mentioned earlier, a further important technological advance in the 1990s was the development and spread of mobile telephony. Although mobile

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<sup>308</sup> Berners-Lee, Tim. *Weaving the Web: The Original Design and Ultimate Destiny of the World Wide Web*. Harper San Francisco, 2000.

<sup>309</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>310</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

<sup>311</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>312</sup> Ceruzzi, Paul. *A History of Modern Computing*. MIT Press, 2003.

<sup>313</sup> Evans, David, & Schmalensee, Richard. *Windows 95 and the Evolution of the Personal Computer Industry*. Stanford University Press, 2002.

<sup>314</sup> Sabbatucci, Giovanni and Vittorio Vidotto. *Storia Contemporanea: Dalla Grande Guerra a Oggi*. [Nuova riv]. ed. Vol. 66. Roma;Bari;: GLF Editori Laterza, 2019.

phones had already been put on the market in the previous decade, these products were large and very expensive, and therefore not accessible to a large section of the population<sup>315</sup>. They only became accessible to the mass public in the 1990s, thanks to the miniaturization of electronic components, which made it possible to drastically reduce their size. There is no doubt that the impact that the development of mobile telephony has had on society has been considerable. Firstly, thanks to this technological advance, the way people communicated with each other was revolutionized, as communication became instantaneous and mobile<sup>316</sup>. In addition, it paved the way for the development of mobile applications, which helped transform sectors such as information, entertainment, and commerce.

In light of the technological advances mentioned so far, it is important to consider their consequences. Firstly, important advances were made in the field of computerization, which became more and more widespread<sup>317</sup>. The sectors affected by this computerization were many, from healthcare to finance to entertainment. For instance, in healthcare, the use of information technology improved the management of medical information, facilitating access to patient data and improving the efficiency of medical care. In the last decades of the 20th century, the world entered a phase of growing economic and financial integration, but the role of these advancements was fundamental in driving globalization<sup>318</sup>. We have already discussed in the previous paragraph the impact of this phenomenon on the economic, commercial, and financial spheres; what is important to emphasize here is the role of technological and digital innovation in these sectors. Looking at the case of finance, for example, the adoption of electronic systems allowed for the automation of transactions and gave rise to new financial instruments such as derivatives, with a profound impact on global markets<sup>319</sup>. The growing integration of markets was not, in itself, a novelty; it was the improvement in transportation and communication systems that made exchanges faster and more efficient. The countries that benefited most from these advancements were certainly the more developed ones, with companies beginning to operate on a global scale thanks to production and distribution that spanned multiple continents<sup>320</sup>. However, developing countries also benefited, as it became easier for workers

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<sup>315</sup> Agar, Jon. *Constant Touch: A Global History of the Mobile Phone*. 1; Revis and updat; ed. London: Icon Books Ltd, 2013.

<sup>316</sup> Smith, Helen Lawton and Saverio Romeo. *Mobile Communication and Society-A Global Perspective by Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernandez-Ardevol, Jack Linchuan Qiu, and Araba Sey*. Vol. 97. Malden, USA: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

<sup>317</sup> Brynjolfsson, Erik, & McAfee, Andrew. *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.

<sup>318</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>319</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>320</sup> Friedman, Thomas, L. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

and businesses to participate in the global market, opening up new opportunities but also exposing them to new challenges, such as global competition and outsourcing<sup>321</sup>.

Now, considering the technological and information revolution that took place during the 1990s, it is important to take into account the impacts and consequences it brought about, which continue to this day. On a social and cultural level, what emerged as a result of this revolution is the so-called network society<sup>322</sup>. This network society was created in the context of the new economy that emerged at the end of the 20th century. Specifically, it was an economy based on three main elements: Informationalism, Globalization, and Networking<sup>323</sup>. We have already partially discussed the first two in the previous paragraph, and the term Networking remains to be analyzed. This new economy was characterized as networked because - within the framework of the technological advances of the 1990s - productivity and competition were generated and played out in a global network of interaction among corporate networks. Furthermore, information became a product of the industrial process by creating a new technological paradigm centered upon new, more potent, and adaptable information technologies<sup>324</sup>. Having said this, there is no doubt that forms of economic organization develop in a surrounding context of cultures and institutions.

Consequently, the networked characteristic of the global economy of the 1990s influenced a wide range of spheres beyond commodities and finance alone. Thanks to technological advances, not only did the field of economic activity expand, but state forms of organization, local customs, and traditions also spread on a global scale. What emerged was a new economic, social, and political paradigm, organized around a system of networks. The computer revolution at the end of the 20th century brought with it the spread of the logic of networking, which fundamentally altered the functioning and outcomes of the processes of production, experience, power, and culture. The reference to the network society becomes even clearer when considering that it was created against the backdrop of globalization. In fact, through the network, the intensity and frequency of interaction between different countries increases, and physical, social, economic, political, and cultural distance narrows.

Furthermore, the social structure based on networks is a highly dynamic and open system, more inclined towards innovation. It is important to highlight that this network system represents an

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<sup>321</sup>Friedman, Thomas, L. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

<sup>322</sup> Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1996.

<sup>323</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>324</sup> Ibidem.

appropriate tool for the capitalist economy, which is an economy based on innovation, globalization, and decentralized concentration<sup>325</sup>. On a social level, networks are functional in a system that aims to transcend space and annihilate time, but they can have drastic effects. Indeed, the morphology of the network is also a source of dramatic reorganization of power relations, considering that the control of these networks is a privileged instrument of power<sup>326</sup>. The logic is rather simple: those who control the networks hold the power and have the ability to shape, guide, and redirect societies. The fusion of digital technologies and social evolution has produced new materials on which social structure operations can now be carried out. Thus, the social structure itself is shaped by this material foundation, which is integrated into networks and shapes the prevailing social processes.

It is important to consider that the digital revolution of the late 20th century was led by those countries - such as the United States - that were already at the forefront of technology<sup>327</sup>. As a result, the inequalities and power imbalances caused by the digital revolution have manifested themselves rapidly. The inequality provoked by the digital age manifested itself at two different levels: individual and national. At the individual level, people with more skills and knowledge have enjoyed a distinct advantage in terms of employment, social networks, and economic progress; while at the national level, the gap between countries with technological skills and those without has become ever wider<sup>328</sup>. Indeed, the unequal distribution of technology and resources has led less developed countries to become increasingly dependent on more powerful countries.

In conclusion, the transformations brought about by the digital revolution have profound ramifications, ranging from social and political structures to education, and even the economy. The spread of the internet, mobile phones, and PCs has radically changed every aspect of society, shaking the foundations of modern life. The most affected by these changes have been poorer countries, but also those segments of the population — within Western democratic nations — that had less access to new technologies. However, what emerges from the considerations made thus far is that while inequality, human health, and individual freedoms have been negatively influenced by the digital revolution, the positive aspects cannot be overlooked.

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<sup>325</sup> Sassen, Saskia. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New Press, 1998.

<sup>326</sup> Friedman, Thomas, L. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

<sup>327</sup> O'Lemmon, Matthew. *The worst mistake 2.0? The digital revolution and the consequences of innovation*. AI & Soc 39, 2024.

<sup>328</sup> Ibidem.

## Chapter 3.

### The international debate on Fukuyama's thought

#### 3.1 International Criticism and Debates.

Fukuyama's theory - first presented in the 1989 essay *The End of History?* and later developed in the 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* - was centered on the assumption that with the end of East-West bipolarism, Western liberal democracy had definitively won the ideological battle, establishing itself as the acme of human political development. Inevitably, Francis Fukuyama's assertions aroused intense debate, attracting criticism from numerous journalists, politicians, and intellectuals around the world. In the first chapter of this work, we have already seen how important criticism and interfacing with his critics were for the author. He himself revisited, or rather, reworked his thesis, publishing articles such as *Reflections on the End of History, 5 years later*. Indeed, Fukuyama has always tried to maintain a dialectical relationship with his critics.

In analyzing the debate and criticism that developed around the US political scientist's theory, it is worth emphasizing that his arguments were presented at a historical moment of great uncertainty at the international level. After almost half a century of bipolar tensions, the Cold War had ended, opening a series of questions about the future of international relations. The authors and scholars who attempted to answer these questions and make predictions about the future were innumerable. Therefore, it is not surprising that there were many reactions to *The End of History and Last Man*, both from right-wing and left-wing parties. That said, Fukuyama's theory has influenced American and European foreign policy since 1989. Undoubtedly, since the book's publication in 1992, there have been many events that have undermined the author's main points, yet many politicians continue to be inspired by Fukuyama's perspective, demonstrating the importance of this work<sup>329</sup>. However, many journalists and intellectuals saw nothing more than an apology for American foreign policy in Fukuyama's words and accused him of being too partisan. This was partly influenced by his role in the US administration as Deputy Director of the US State Department's policy planning staff.

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<sup>329</sup> Jackson, Ian and Jason Xidias. *An Analysis of Francis Fukuyama's: The End of History and the Last Man*. 1st ed. Milton: Routledge, 2017. doi:10.4324/9781912282135.

Among the various criticisms by which the author was invested, one of the most relevant is certainly that of Samuel P. Huntington, who in *The Clash of Civilizations* accused his former Harvard student of failing to understand the proper functioning of world politics<sup>330</sup>. Specifically, Huntington warned of the danger of heralding the absolute triumph of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, Fukuyama did not intend to announce the end of history as a succession of events, he argued that history as a single coherent evolutionary process had reached its endpoint. Consequently, many criticisms pointing out that history had not ended were based on erroneous interpretations of the author's thoughts. Regarding Huntington and his critique, in 1999 the American political scientist published a direct response in *The National Interest* titled *Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle*. In this article, the author states that his former professor was wrong to underestimate how economic development and technological change may dissolve the boundaries between civilizations and foster a universal consensus of political values within developed countries<sup>331</sup>.

Beyond the academic debate, Fukuyama's arguments represent an important reference point for policymakers. The intellectual confrontation between the former Harvard student and Samuel P. Huntington thus constituted a debate of a political nature, as the question was whether, in the post-Cold War world, there would be Fukuyama's *pax democratica* or Huntington's clash of civilizations<sup>332</sup>. *The Clash of Civilizations* and *The End of History and the Last Man* represent two diametrically opposed visions regarding the direction of the post-bipolar world. The theories of both authors were widely discussed – even beyond the debate between the writers themselves – becoming paradigmatic in understanding the global dynamics that were taking shape following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of geopolitical bipolarism. The comparison between Francis Fukuyama's theory and that of Samuel P. Huntington is crucial, as they attracted particular attention in international politics, especially to explain global developments after 1989.

The post-bipolar worldview presented by the Harvard professor in the 1993 essay *The Clash of Civilizations?* was very different from that of the theorist of the End of History. Indeed, Huntington criticized Fukuyama's optimism, arguing that the end of the Cold War would not

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<sup>330</sup> Fukuyama studied political science at Harvard University with Samuel P. Huntington.

<sup>331</sup> Mansfield, Harvey, E. O. Wilson, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Robin Fox, Robert J. Samuelson, Joseph S. Nye, and Francis Fukuyama. "Second Thoughts: The Last Man in a Bottle." *The National Interest* 56, no. 56 (1999): 16-33.

<sup>332</sup> Kurtz, Stanley. "The Future of 'History' Francis Fukuyama Vs. Samuel P. Huntington." *Policy Review (Washington, D.C.)* no. 113 (2002): 43-58.



bring an era of peace and universal consensus; on the contrary, what he foresaw was a new beginning characterized by a return to cultural and civilizational identities<sup>333</sup>. With the fall of the Soviet Union (1991), a feeling of self-celebration had spread in the West, based on the belief that the universalization of Western liberal democracy was possible. Fukuyama catalyzed this sentiment in his *The End of History and The Last Man*. Otherwise, Huntington considered Fukuyama's idea to be a “euphoria at the end of the Cold War”, which erroneously and arrogantly proclaimed the victory of Western liberalism<sup>334</sup>. Moreover, Huntington warned against the idea of liberal "universalism", as he believed that other civilizations – such as the Islamic one - would not accept Western values and would fiercely defend their own cultural identities<sup>335</sup>.

From this initial analysis, it is easy to understand why the clash between the two authors' visions was so intense. This intellectual confrontation indeed reflected two opposing perspectives on the future of the world. On one side, Fukuyama imagined a world in which liberal democracy would spread progressively and without limits, while on the other, Huntington was skeptical about the possibility of global convergence around universal political values and argued that cultural differences would fuel new conflicts<sup>336</sup>. That said, it is important to emphasize that this debate was not just theoretical, but had concrete repercussions on international policies as well. A concrete example is the fact that Huntington's clash of civilizations theory was often cited to justify US policies after the attacks of September 11th, 2001<sup>337</sup>. Indeed, many US politicians and analysts have interpreted Islamic terrorism as a manifestation of the tensions between civilizations, consequently adopting an interventionist approach.

In every debate, there are always two sides to the coin, the supporters on one side and the detractors on the other. There is no doubt that to a large extent, the success of Fukuyama's thesis was due to the historical moment when the article was published in *The National Interest*. The political and historical juncture was instrumental in attracting to the End of History the fame it still enjoys today. Moreover, thanks in part to the author's links with the Bush administration<sup>338</sup> - both father and son - and with the neo-conservatives, the End of History thesis received a lot

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<sup>333</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>334</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>335</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>336</sup> Kurtz, Stanley. "The Future of "History" Francis Fukuyama Vs. Samuel P. Huntington." *Policy Review (Washington, D.C.)* no. 113 (2002): 43-58.

<sup>337</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>338</sup> Fukuyama worked in the US administration during the presidency of George H. W. Bush and then George W. Bush.

of attention from the press<sup>339</sup>. As a result, the thesis had a strong media impact, giving rise to various opinions and comments in several newspapers.

Nevertheless, with the passing of the years, Fukuyama has repeatedly revised his theory, always in a dialectical relationship with his critics. Of the various criticisms that hit Fukuyama, at least initially (immediately after the publication of the article in 1989) a large part was of a personal nature, thus relating to the author himself<sup>340</sup>. The general response was to dismiss him as a capitalist ideologue and to see him only as an advocate of American supremacy, especially under the Bush administration. More generally, the responses to the author's thesis came from a variety of national and international contexts and, to keep things simple could be divided into three groups: those who responded by recognizing the philosophical and political implications of the debate that Fukuyama had started, those who connected the thesis to the background of change that followed 1989, and lastly, those who voiced criticism of the author<sup>341</sup>. Despite a great deal of criticism, Fukuyama became well-known throughout the world and sparked a lot of intellectual, political, and historical debate. He maintained that his popularity came from providing an unparalleled account of the facts and that a large portion of the criticism resulted from misinterpreting his ideas. While acknowledging that both left and right critics agreed to the debate, Fukuyama believed that none of the objections had been actually decisive. In addition to foretelling the end of the Cold War, Fukuyama's thesis was influential because it embodied the spirit of those years and offered a philosophical and sociopolitical interpretation of world events.

One of the points on which some critics focused was the alleged anti-democratic content of Francis Fukuyama's ideas<sup>342</sup>. These critics argued that, since liberal democratic society is characterized by staggering inequalities, it was incorrect to see the liberal democratic state as the highest conceivable form of political organization. Moreover, they accused the American political scientist of having no interest in bridging the gap between rulers and the ruled, between elites and non-elites. Now, while it is undeniable that Fukuyama wrote a clear defense of liberalism, the meaning he attributed to this term was that of a liberalism driven by economists, where social equality, economic liberty, and justice prevail<sup>343</sup>. However, Fukuyama's

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<sup>339</sup> Israel Sanmartin, Sanmartin. *El Debate Historiográfico Sobre El Fin De La Historia De Francis Fukuyama*. 1;New;New; ed. Vol. 64. Oxford: Peter Lang Group, 2020.

<sup>340</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>341</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>342</sup> McCloskey, Deirdre Nansen. "Fukuyama Was Correct: Liberalism is the Telos of History". Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, vol. 139(2–4), pages (2019): 285-303.

<sup>343</sup> Ibidem.

conception of liberalism was not only misinterpreted. For example, Marc F. Plattner of the National Endowment for Democracy correctly saw Fukuyama's theory as a methodical discussion of the issues and viewpoints facing liberal democracy, based on both contemporary political science and classical political philosophy<sup>344</sup>. This highlights a crucial and cohesive idea in the End of History, which is that questions of war, peace, and legitimacy demand a deeper level of examination than only political, military, or economic considerations.

In analyzing the debate and criticism that has developed around Fukuyama's theory since 1989, what emerges is that very often - in the light of subsequent events - the author was rebutted that history was not over at all. While some opponents of Fukuyama's work regarded it as merely reiterating his foolish defense of liberal triumphalism, others saw it as validation of the author's prophecy of the end of history in the events that followed. Concerning the former - "the detractors" - it should be emphasized that this type of interpretation tends to ascribe Fukuyama's thought to the period of the end of the Cold War alone. From this viewpoint, even all the re-analysis and re-elaboration work done by the American political scientist in the years following the publication of *The End of History and the Last Man* is seen simply as an elaboration of his theory. However, this view may mislead, as it would be more correct to see Fukuyama's theory as something that fits retrospectively into a broader theory of political development. When Fukuyama stated that liberal democracy represented the end of history, he was not also stating that historical events would cease to occur after this end. Moreover, he did not claim that the end of history would lead to the cessation of all human conflicts. Indeed, many critics - some by their own admission - did not fully understand what Fukuyama had said<sup>345</sup>. By announcing the end of history, Fukuyama declared the material and progressive conceptual dominance of liberal democracy and capitalism over alternative political and economic structures.

The American political scientist's comments have been backed up by several arguments from others who believe his idea to be a credible assertion. First of all, the first piece of evidence put up by advocates is that, both materially and ideologically, the globe has become more democratic and capitalist since 1989<sup>346</sup>. As Fukuyama himself stated, no plausible alternative to liberalism has emerged. Conversely, even the most prominent modern autocrats who oppose

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<sup>344</sup>Jackson, Ian and Jason Xidias. *An Analysis of Francis Fukuyama's: The End of History and the Last Man*. 1st ed. Milton: Routledge, 2017. doi:10.4324/9781912282135.

<sup>345</sup>Rutar, Tibor. *Rational Choice and Democratic Government: A Sociological Approach*. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021;2022;. doi:10.4324/9781003172574.

<sup>346</sup>Ibidem.

liberal democracy, like China and Russia, cannot provide a viable substitute for democratic capitalism. Democracies undoubtedly face internal vulnerabilities and difficulties, but historically speaking, they have shown to be more stable from an economic and geopolitical standpoint. Therefore, geopolitics appears to favor democracy over dictatorship<sup>347</sup>.

The validity of Fukuyama's theses is further demonstrated by the fact that, since its publication, *The End of History and the Last Man* has influenced the thinking and actions of the political elite in the West. We have already mentioned the connection between Francis Fukuyama and the Bush administrations, but there is another important political figure who was heavily influenced by the author's ideas: Tony Blair<sup>348</sup>. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2007, Tony Blair was a neoliberal firmly committed to the free market and economic liberalization in general. Thus, there is a rather strong connection between Fukuyama's ideas and the historical events that occurred after his publications. Indeed, in a speech to the Labour Party, Tony Blair stated that after the end of the Cold War, there was “a moment to seize”<sup>349</sup>. In this sense, the British Prime Minister expressed his hope for a future of harmony and interdependence among nations. Blair seemed to be supporting Fukuyama's theory that liberal democracy was the only workable form of governance and that history - or the moment as he put it - was over<sup>350</sup>.

Beyond the former British Prime Minister, the impact of Fukuyama's theory on the political elite was particularly strong within neoconservative circles<sup>351</sup>. It must be noted that, during the 1990s, the American political scientist supported certain aspects of neoconservatism. However, the belief held by some critics that Fukuyama's ideas served as a sort of manifesto for neoconservative thought is misleading<sup>352</sup>. Notably, following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the author distanced himself from this political current<sup>353</sup>. While on one hand, the author himself acknowledged having identified as a neoconservative, on the other, he admitted that some political actions taken in the name of this movement were grave mistakes<sup>354</sup>. Fukuyama

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<sup>347</sup> Rutar, Tibor. *Rational Choice and Democratic Government: A Sociological Approach*. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Routledge, 2021;2022;. doi:10.4324/9781003172574.

<sup>348</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>349</sup> Cowley, Jason. "Forward, to the Union of Humanity.(Interpreting the U.S Terrorist Attacks through Immanuel Kant, Francis Fukuyama and Tony Blair)." *New Statesman* (1996) 130, no. 4559 (2001): 23-23.

<sup>350</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>351</sup> Ateeq, Muhammad. "an Understanding of Francis Fukuyama's Theory of 'End of History'." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 71, no. 1 (2023): 105-120.

<sup>352</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>353</sup> Rhodes, Fred. *After the Neocons America at the Crossroads*. London: IC Publications Ltd, 2006.

<sup>354</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

specifically said that those responsible for the planning and execution of the invasion of Iraq had neglected to consider the fact that social engineering, even at the level of regime change or state-building, is inherently flawed in some manner and always has unintended repercussions<sup>355</sup>. Furthermore, he thought it extremely risky to assume that, as had happened with the fall of communism in the Soviet Union and the establishment of stable democracies in Eastern Europe, democracies would quickly develop in the Middle East<sup>356</sup>. The author of *The End of History and the Last Man* believed that the approach to rebuilding civil society in post-war Iraq by Bush and his officials - fundamentally based on the idea that it would be a relatively simple matter for the government that would replace Saddam Hussein's regime - was a failure<sup>357</sup>. Fukuyama contends that it is a difficult task for the state to establish the power and authority necessary to ensure democratic accountability and the rule of law. Therefore, he believed that democracy could not be imposed from outside but rather had to develop naturally from inside a society's history and culture<sup>358</sup>. This does not imply that Fukuyama was opposed to the rule of law and democratic accountability; rather, he continues to share the neo-conservative view on the vital issue of liberal democratic principles' universal applicability<sup>359</sup>. Instead, the idea that the Iraq War was a "bad war" was the main point of contention in their discussion and his disagreement with them<sup>360</sup>. In a March 2006 interview with the Sunday Times, Fukuyama acknowledged the influence his ideas had on former British Prime Minister Tony Blair<sup>361</sup>. He said that although military action in the former Yugoslavia had been inevitable, it was not inevitable in Iraq. In that context, he observed: "That's why this whole thing has been such a terrible disappointment. It turned out to be exactly the opposite", thus underlining his opposition to the concept of pre-emptive war and the imposition of democracy from above<sup>362</sup>.

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<sup>355</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*. Yale University Press, 2007.

<sup>356</sup> Ateeq, Muhammad. "an Understanding of Francis Fukuyama's Theory of 'End of History'." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 71, no. 1 (2023): 105-120.

<sup>357</sup> Williams, Howard, David Sullivan, and E. Gwynn Matthews. *Francis Fukuyama and the End of History*. Second ed. Vol. 57 University of Wales Press, 2016.

<sup>358</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*. Yale University Press, 2007.

<sup>359</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>360</sup> Baxter, Sarah. "I was a Neocon. I was Wrong." Sunday Times (London, England : 1931) (2006): 5-5.

<sup>361</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>362</sup> Ibidem.

### 3.2 The United States' Perspective

The publication of the article *The End of History?* in 1989 and the subsequent book *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992 by political scientist Francis Fukuyama sparked an intense academic, political, and media debate. Fukuyama argued that, with the end of the Cold War and the triumph of Western liberalism, humanity's ideological evolution had reached its peak with liberal democracy as the "final form of human government". It was therefore inevitable that various newspapers would soon begin publishing articles titled "Is History over?" or "Is Fukuyama right?". Indeed, the author's bold vision elicited varied responses from the press, which, over the years, has provided contrasting analyses, critiques, and interpretations of his work. This heated debate did not develop only in the United States - the author's homeland - but also extended well beyond, to places like the United Kingdom, France, and Italy.

Regarding the United States, one of the first areas of discussion that deserves mention is that of opinion magazines, specifically *The National Interest*, where the original 1989 article was published. This magazine played a crucial role in promoting the debate, also publishing articles by authors opposed to Fukuyama<sup>363</sup>. For example, in 1993, it was *The National Interest* that published Samuel P. Huntington's article titled *The Clash of Civilizations?* which constitutes one of the most well-known responses to Fukuyama's article, representing an alternative perspective on the future of international relations<sup>364</sup>. Concerning the debate that opened in *The National Interest*, it is worth noting that the journal became the venue for an intense intellectual exchange, opening one of the most important and influential debates in the recent history of political thought and international relations<sup>365</sup>. It is no coincidence that, besides Huntington, many intellectuals intervened in the confrontation with Fukuyama by publishing articles in the journal.

Without a doubt, the analyses of Charles Krauthammer and Irving Kristol deserve a mention. The former, while recognizing the value of Fukuyama's work, questioned the idea that history had reached an endpoint, suggesting instead that political and ideological challenges would continue<sup>366</sup>. The latter, on the other hand, argued that liberalism was not sufficient to guarantee

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<sup>363</sup> Israel Sanmartin, Sanmartin. *El Debate Historiográfico Sobre El Fin De La Historia De Francis Fukuyama*. 1;New;New; ed. Vol. 64. Oxford: Peter Lang Group, 2020.

<sup>364</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011.

<sup>365</sup> Bloom, Allan, Pierre Hassner, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Stephen Sestanovich. "Responses to Fukuyama." *The National Interest* no. 16 (1989): 19-35.

<sup>366</sup> Israel Sanmartin, Sanmartin. *El Debate Historiográfico Sobre El Fin De La Historia De Francis Fukuyama*. 1;New;New; ed. Vol. 64. Oxford: Peter Lang Group, 2020.

long-term stability and security and that a more pragmatic and less optimistic view of global politics was needed<sup>367</sup>. The debate with Krauthammer (a well-known columnist and Pulitzer Prize winner) brings us to a crucial point: that of the debate with the neoconservatives (or *neocons*, as Fukuyama likes to call them)<sup>368</sup>. In fact, while Fukuyama was against the imposition of democracy from above, Krauthammer's vision was strongly focused on the promotion of democracy and freedom throughout the world, often through military intervention. Not only that, even concerning the war in Iraq, Krauthammer's thinking was extremely distant from that of Fukuyama, having been one of its main supporters. Indeed, the Pulitzer Prize winner considered the 2003 invasion of Iraq an essential part of the war on terror and the spread of democracy in the Middle East and firmly believed that intervention could bring about positive change in the region<sup>369</sup>. Moreover, Krauthammer saw history as an arena of constant confrontation between ideologies and powers and was particularly critical of the idea of *pax democratica* - according to which democracies tend not to go to war with each other - advocated by Fukuyama<sup>370</sup>.

Regarding Irving Kristol's role in the debate on *The National Interest*, his approach was more oriented toward political theory and philosophy than that of Krauthammer. While recognizing liberalism as a more developed ideology, Kristol believed that the victory of liberalism did not mark the end of historical development<sup>371</sup>. The End of History idea, as he points out, is too rigid and leans towards a linear sociology which is a simplistic view of very complex societies<sup>372</sup>. Kristol was of course one of those who faulted Fukuyama on his approach which was considered to be highly idealistic<sup>373</sup>. In his view, there were fundamental internal contradictions or external threats which means Western liberalism cannot be the answer to all the problems in the world<sup>374</sup>. His attention was on the political realism of imperfect and complicated societies and their political systems. Kristol's view of history was of cycles constantly turning towards conflicts and their resolution, and not of linear progress finishing at an endpoint of political maturation<sup>375</sup>. Furthermore, Kristol believed that liberalism required constant defense and adaptation, as it would not simply be universally adopted. For this reason,

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<sup>367</sup> Bloom, Allan, Pierre Hassner, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Stephen Sestanovich. "Responses to Fukuyama." *The National Interest* no. 16 (1989): 19-35.

<sup>368</sup> Krauthammer, Charles. "In Defense of Democratic Realism." *The National Interest* 77, no. 77 (2004): 15-25.

<sup>369</sup> Rosen, Gary. *The Right War?: The Conservative Debate on Iraq*, edited by Rosen, Gary. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005;2009;. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511509896.

<sup>370</sup> Krauthammer, Charles. "In Defense of Democratic Realism." *The National Interest* 77, no. 77 (2004): 15-25.

<sup>371</sup> Kristol, Irving. "The Neoconservative Persuasion." *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 8, No. 47, 2003.

<sup>372</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>373</sup> Kristol, Irving. "American Conservatism 1945-1995." *The National Interest*, No. 41, Fall 1995, pp. 3-16.

<sup>374</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>375</sup> Ibidem.

it is not difficult to understand his reasons for seeing Fukuyama's vision of the final triumph of liberal democracy as an underestimation of the reactionary forces and potential failures within democracies themselves.

In addition to the periodical *The National Interest*, Fukuyama's theory found numerous places for discussion and disputation. These included both newspapers, such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, and other magazines, such as the *Atlantic*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The New Republic*. The latter, in particular, still constitutes one of the most active fora for discussion of Francis Fukuyama's theories. Of the many interventions published in *The New Republic*, one in particular cannot be overlooked: that of sociologist and political theorist Alan Wolfe. Like Irving Kristol, Wolfe was one of the critics of Fukuyama's optimistic and teleological view that liberal democracy represents the end point of humanity's ideological evolution<sup>376</sup>. In the 1989 essay *The Opening of the American Mind*, Alan Wolfe shared his thoughts on Fukuyama's excessive tendencies, emphasizing how the theorist of the End of History was too idealistic and had a too simplistic approach. Moreover, in Wolfe's opinion, history is too complicated to be simply reduced to a single flat trajectory whose apex is reached with the rise of liberalism<sup>377</sup>. Consequently, according to him, Fukuyama's view - that history develops toward a certain end, with liberalism seen as the endpoint of human civilization's evolution - would reduce the complexities of historical and political dynamics to a single path, overlooking the crucial cultural, religious, and national differences that favor divergent political paths<sup>378</sup>. While Wolfe acknowledged that liberalism had achieved significant results in individual freedoms and economic development, he also argued that these may not necessarily be adopted worldwide<sup>379</sup>. Indeed, the sociologist from *The New Republic* claimed that liberal democracy is not an inevitable progression and that human history evolves under multiple uncertain and unexpected vicissitudes<sup>380</sup>. According to him, liberalism itself is fraught with contradictions and challenges that are hard to ignore, such as persistent disparities in wealth distribution, political marginalization, and crises related to multiculturalism<sup>381</sup>.

In the aftermath of the dismantling of the Soviet Union, widespread triumphalism over the victory of liberalism was fuelled by the prospect that some of the former Soviet states,

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<sup>376</sup> Wolfe, Alan. "The Opening of the American Mind." *The New Republic*, 1989.

<sup>377</sup> Wolfe, Alan. "Francis Fukuyama and the End of History: The Clash of Cultures." In *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation*, University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>378</sup> Wolfe, Alan. "The Opening of the American Mind." *The New Republic*, 1989.

<sup>379</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>380</sup> Wolfe, Alan. "Francis Fukuyama and the End of History: The Clash of Cultures." In *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation*, University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>381</sup> Ibidem.



including Russia, would choose democracy and abandon the authoritarian institutions of the communist era. However, the more the 1990s progressed, the more events such as the war in Yugoslavia seemed to belie Fukuyama's words. The continuing occurrence of events - the end of which Fukuyama had not announced - gave impetus to critics of the End of History and attracted the attention of many journalists. In the US context, an important place for analysis and discussion were the pages of the *New York Times*, which, during the 1990s, published reviews, opinion articles, and commentaries offering a variety of perspectives on Fukuyama's thesis, both for and against. Indeed, immediately after the publication of *The End of History?* a cascade of articles responding to and analyzing the author's words began.

The first article under analysis was published on August 27, 1989, under the title *How the West Is Winning* and discussed the emerging debate on the imminent end of the Cold War, as well as Francis Fukuyama's proposal regarding the end of history<sup>382</sup>. This first article already set out to analyze the reactions to the US political scientist's thesis by various experts and critics, who wondered whether his statement was not too premature or simplistic and too politically oriented. It must be said that the *New York Times* is generally considered a liberal-oriented newspaper, which has historically supported progressive policies on social, economic, and foreign policy issues. Fukuyama, on the other hand, has for much of his career been associated with neo-conservative positions, from which he nonetheless broke away after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He criticized the neoconservative Republican POTUS George W. Bush and his administration's policies after the 9/11 attack and, later, in the 2008 presidential elections supported the Democratic candidate Barack Obama. That said, in the article *How the West Is Winning* Fukuyama was portrayed as a bold thinker who attempted to draw an ideological balance sheet of modern history. At the same time, however, the author was criticized for his reductive view of the future of global dynamics, as the challenges to liberal democracy and capitalism remained numerous.

On the same day, the *New York Times* also published another article, written by Richard Bernstein, in which a critical analysis of Francis Fukuyama's essay was made<sup>383</sup>. In the article *Judging 'Post-History'*, Bernstein examined the theory proposed by the American political scientist, pointing out how it had generated both enthusiasm and skepticism. What is important to emphasize about Bernstein's analysis is that he underlined how Fukuyama was not

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<sup>382</sup> New York Times. "How the West Is Winning," *New York Times*, 27 agosto 1989, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index, pg. E5.

<sup>383</sup> Bernstein, Richard. "Judging 'Post-History,' The Theory to End All Theories: What Will..." *New York Times*, August 27, 1989.

suggesting the end of historical events or conflicts, but rather the absence of credible ideological alternatives to liberal democracy. In doing so, while emphasizing that human history is too complex and dynamic to be reduced to a single narrative of liberal triumph, Bernstein recognized the intellectual value of Fukuyama's theory<sup>384</sup>. Along the same lines was the thought of another Times columnist, Amy Hackett, who on September 10, 1989, published an article entitled *While History Is Conflict, the End Is Not Yet*<sup>385</sup>. Examining Fukuyama's words, Hackett questioned the idea that the historical conflict could really be over. While the defeat of communism as a dominant ideology was imminent, history was inherently characterized by ongoing conflicts and complex political and social dynamics that would continue to shape global societies<sup>386</sup>. Thus, according to Hackett, although liberalism had reached a predominant level in various parts of the world, history was far from over, and ideological and political conflict would continue to be a prevailing force in international relations<sup>387</sup>.

Of a completely different tone, however, is the article *The Suslov Lament* written by Russell Baker, which commented on Fukuyama's theory through sharp satire<sup>388</sup>. Specifically, through the figure of Mikhail Suslov - a Soviet ideologue - Baker suggested that the proclamation of the End of History could represent a sort of definitive closure for thinkers who were supporters of past ideological theories<sup>389</sup>. Baker's article differs from those previously analyzed as it essentially constitutes a piece of political satire. The author used the metaphor of Suslov, known for his firm adherence to the principles of communism, to represent the figures and movements that refused to accept that their time had come to an end<sup>390</sup>. Moreover, Baker's analysis saw Fukuyama's announcement of the End of History as a form of arrogant Western triumphalism that did not take into account the complexities and challenges that liberal democracies would continue to face. By doing so, Baker was implicitly suggesting that the end of the Cold War would not automatically resolve all global tensions and conflicts, nor would it guarantee eternal peace or universal stability<sup>391</sup>.

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<sup>384</sup> Bernstein, Richard. "Judging 'Post-History,' The Theory to End All Theories: What Will..." New York Times, August 27, 1989.

<sup>385</sup> Hackett, Amy. "While History Is Conflict, the End Is Not Yet." New York Times, August 22, 1989.

<sup>386</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>387</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>388</sup> Baker, Russell. "The Suslov Lament." New York Times, August 29, 1989.

<sup>389</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>390</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>391</sup> Ibidem.

A further analysis that needs to be taken into account to understand how Fukuyama's thesis was received in the US intellectual and academic context is the one made by James Atlas in his article *What Is Fukuyama Saying?: And to Whom Is He Saying It?* published on October 22, 1989<sup>392</sup>. Unlike other columnists, Atlas not only explored the content of Fukuyama's statements but also the context in which they were made and the intended audience. Through a careful analysis of Fukuyama's language, Atlas noted that the author's choice of terms and academic references may have been designed to reinforce his authority among intellectuals and politicians<sup>393</sup>. In his view, Fukuyama's thesis - at a time when international politics was witnessing the end of bipolar competition - would have influenced US foreign policy and global strategies but would have remained distant from the reality of ordinary people facing everyday political and social problems<sup>394</sup>.

Finally, the analysis of the positions of the *New York Times* columnists cannot disregard the article *In Quest of a Post-Cold War Plan* written by Thomas L. Friedman<sup>395</sup>. The article in question is particularly relevant since it was published on November 17, 1989, only a few days after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In light of the facts, Friedman reflected on the geopolitical implications of the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the inevitable reorganization of the global political landscape, emphasizing the need for a new approach to international politics after the end of bipolarity<sup>396</sup>. In contrast to Fukuyama's thinking, Friedman called for reflection on the need not to consider the victory in the Cold War as an endpoint, but rather as the beginning of a new chapter in international relations<sup>397</sup>. While Friedman agreed with Fukuyama that the collapse of communism constituted a fundamental change, he also suggested that the new global order might prove more problematic than many had expected. This is evident if one looks at an article by Flora Lewis - *Where Did the Optimism Go?* - published on December 11, 1993, four years after the fall of the Wall and two years after the official end of the Soviet Union<sup>398</sup>. Lewis's article, in fact, pointed out how the initial enthusiasm for a new era of global peace and prosperity had gradually faded, as the political reality of the following years had shown that global tensions and ideological challenges had not disappeared. Citing examples of ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and economic instability in different regions of the world, Lewis argued that instead of witnessing a uniform spread of liberal democracy, a phase of uncertainty

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<sup>392</sup> Atlas, James. "What Is Fukuyama Saying?: And To Whom Is He Saying It?" *New York Times Magazine*, October 22, 1989.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>395</sup> Friedman, Thomas L. "In Quest of a Post-Cold War Plan." *New York Times*, November 17, 1989.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>398</sup> Lewis, Flora. "Where Did the Optimism Go?" *New York Times*, December 11, 1993.

and fragmentation had opened up<sup>399</sup>. Consequently, according to Lewis, Fukuyama's vision had been too optimistic and had not taken into account the complexities and resistance that liberal democracies would encounter in their attempt to expand globally.

In light of the above analysis of the *New York Times* articles, we can state that Fukuyama's thesis aroused considerable academic and philosophical interest. In general, columnists recognized the revolutionary scope of the End of History and also acknowledged that this thesis was capable of provoking intense debate. Nevertheless, while the thesis was seen as a significant contribution to the post-Cold War discourse - especially at a moment in history when the world was trying to understand what the new global dynamics would be - many criticized Fukuyama for his alleged liberal "triumphalism" and his seemingly deterministic view of history. This criticism was based on the perception that Fukuyama was too optimistic about the ability of liberal democracy to emerge as a dominant system worldwide without considering the complexities and contradictions within this political system.

The importance of Fukuyama's thesis in the academic and political debate of the 1990s was widely recognized. However, the strong emphasis on the triumph of liberal democracy as the pinnacle of human evolution aroused mixed feelings both from the different political factions and within the factions themselves. Many critics and intellectuals belonging to the American right-wing environment greeted Fukuyama's words with enthusiasm, seeing in them a confirmation of the triumph of Western liberal democracy. Indeed, there is no doubt that his theory served as a sophisticated defense of many of the 1980s catchphrases of the main Western governments, especially those of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Not only that, the political message in Fukuyama's pages also reinforced the vision of the New Neo-liberal Right, which, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, proclaimed the end of socialism and the victory of the free market. However, Fukuyama's arguments were read and analyzed - and criticized - by a broad spectrum of political opinions. We have seen, for example, how Charles Krauthammer and Irving Kristol - belonging to the American neo-conservative milieu - while recognizing the importance of Fukuyama's words, harbored doubts as to whether liberalism was indeed the end point of the world's ideological evolution. Actually, it is not surprising that Fukuyama's words have been opposed by many, since in *The End of History and the Last Man* the author addresses a wide range of political, economic, sociological, and cultural issues.

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<sup>399</sup> Lewis, Flora. "Where Did the Optimism Go?" *New York Times*, December 11, 1993.

In conclusion, while some saw the End of History thesis as an important starting point for discussing future political and ideological evolution, others questioned its validity and universal applicability, pointing out that history was, in fact, far from having reached its “end”.

### 3.3 France and the United Kingdom: A Comparison of Two Perceptions

Fukuyama's thought profoundly influenced the post-Cold War political and intellectual debate. So much so that several Western political leaders, not only in the United States, were influenced by the author's words. While this was most evident in the United Kingdom, where Tony Blair embraced the author's ideas, in France, it was more difficult for Fukuyama's thoughts to influence government policy. To understand the reasons why the theory of the End of History was perceived differently in France and the UK, it is necessary to look at the political, economic, and social situation of these two countries during the 1989-2001 historical period.

First, for France - where these were the years of first Mitterrand and then Chirac - it was a period of remarkable historical, social, and political transformations<sup>400</sup>. The fall of the Berlin Wall had a strong impact at the international level, but especially at the European level, where it influenced the configuration of the European Community. Indeed, this event reopened the question of German reunification, an issue that would open new perspectives for the European integration process. France, which had played a prominent role in this process from the outset, had always been doubtful about Germany's entry into the European Community, influenced by a mixture of historical, economic, and strategic considerations<sup>401</sup>. In this regard, it is important to note that Franco-German relations had been historically confrontational, especially after the two world wars as rivalry and mutual distrust intensified<sup>402</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that with the end of the Cold War and the prospect of German reunification, French concerns about potential German dominance had resurfaced. Since assuming office in 1981, François Mitterrand - the first socialist president - has worked to end the Cold War by limiting the influence of the USSR and the US, primarily by promoting peace, stability, and integration throughout Europe. President Mitterrand, while officially supporting German reunification, worked to ensure that this process was accompanied by a further strengthening of European integration, to bind the reunified Germany to a common European project<sup>403</sup>. Mitterrand's efforts resulted in the push for the European Union and the creation of the single currency, instruments designed precisely to ensure a balance of power in Europe. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and the Schengen Convention in 1990 brought about the goal of a

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<sup>400</sup> Gomez Pardo, Julian. *Histoire De France, Volume 4: Époque Contemporaine (1914 à Nos Jours)* Ellipses, 2022. doi:10.14375/NP.9782340065994.

<sup>401</sup> Laschi, Giuliana. *Storia Dell'Integrazione Europea* Le Monnier Università, 2021.

<sup>402</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>403</sup> Gomez Pardo, Julian. *Histoire De France, Volume 4: Époque Contemporaine (1914 à Nos Jours)* Ellipses, 2022. doi:10.14375/NP.9782340065994.

closer political union in Europe. Nonetheless, the French people's concerns about a potential German rule persisted. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Maastricht Treaty, which established a unified European market, was only narrowly approved in the September 1992 referendum due to the perception among many voters that it represented a renunciation of French sovereignty<sup>404</sup>. When the European single market debuted in 1993, the government had to conform to European rules, meaning having less discretion over what actions to take. Social discontent continues to proliferate at all societal levels, feeding resentments. Furthermore, the seemingly unabated increase in unemployment throughout these years made the *précarité* (fragility) that was already present - of which structural job insecurity was an inherent part - even worse.

From a social point of view, the years from 1989 to 2001 were marked by increasing diversity, largely exacerbated by the challenge of integrating immigrant communities, mostly from former French colonies<sup>405</sup>. This important social issue opened a growing debate in the country on multiculturalism, national identity, and the secularity of the state. Indeed, increased immigration has brought with it significant challenges for social and cultural integration. Frequently, immigrant communities were concentrated in urban suburbs - the *banlieues* - where living conditions were difficult and characterized by a combination of poverty, unemployment, and poor educational opportunities<sup>406</sup>. These *banlieues* - symbols of social inequality and integration difficulties - were often the scene of urban violence and clashes with the police, highlighting the social malaise and frustration of young immigrants, who were often victims of discrimination and lacked economic prospects<sup>407</sup>.

Already in 1989, a “trivial” incident - three Muslim girls were expelled from school for refusing to remove their headscarves - had triggered a heavy controversy, introducing the problem of integration into French society<sup>408</sup>. Some had seen this gesture not only as a religious action but also as a gesture of defiance against French *laïcité*, which forbade religious symbols in state schools<sup>409</sup>. This position was also supported by the magistrates of the *Conseil d'Etat*, who banned evident religious symbols from classroom<sup>410</sup>. This debate on the veil in schools arose at a particular time. Since the first half of the 20th century, France had been a destination for

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<sup>404</sup> Bergin, Joseph. *A History of France*. London, England: Macmillan Education UK, 2015.

<sup>405</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>406</sup> Gomez Pardo, Julian. *Histoire De France, Volume 4: Époque Contemporaine (1914 à Nos Jours)* Ellipses, 2022. doi:10.14375/NP.9782340065994.

<sup>407</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>408</sup> Bergin, Joseph. *A History of France*. London, England: Macmillan Education UK, 2015.

<sup>409</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>410</sup> Ibidem.

migratory flows; and as long as those entering the country were unmarried males who had no intention of putting down roots in the country, no particular problems arose. However, by the mid-1970s - with the arrival of the economic recession - it had become apparent that settlement migration had replaced labor migration<sup>411</sup>. Therefore, when the headscarf incident occurred in 1989, there were many second-generation French Muslims who were reaching adulthood and felt treated as second-class citizens.

In terms of the political situation, these were years marked by power transitions, economic crises, social tensions, and the evolution of the country's role in the European Union and the international context. Especially domestically, the government was facing a difficult economic situation, with high levels of unemployment and the need to implement economic reforms<sup>412</sup>. These economic difficulties, combined with the aforementioned social tensions and the perception of a loss of national sovereignty due to European integration, fueled discontent among some sections of the population, contributing to the rise of the *Front National* (extreme right-wing party led by Jean-Marie Le Pen)<sup>413</sup>. At the same time, Mitterrand began to lose popularity during the 1990s, mainly due to economic and social problems. Following the economic crisis of the 1970s, a restructuring effort had been initiated, which had given the French economy a new impetus<sup>414</sup>. Nevertheless, the economic recovery had not been accompanied by the reabsorption of the unemployment that had formed during the crisis years, which had actually increased (between 1991 and 1995, the unemployment rate in the country was 11.1%)<sup>415</sup>. François Mitterrand remained in office until 1995, but following the 1993 legislative elections, the Socialists appeared so delegitimized that a right-wing triumph in the 1995 presidential contest seemed certain. Not surprisingly, in the 1995 elections, Jacques Chirac won from the French political right. During Chirac's presidency, the high unemployment rates, combined with an unstable economy and rising inflation, prompted the government to adopt austerity policies. Austerity was not only aimed at reducing the budget deficit and stabilizing the economy but was also necessary to fulfill the Maastricht Treaty criteria<sup>416</sup>. However, Prime Minister Alain Juppé's attempt to stabilize the state's economic situation by reducing the costs of the French social security system - which had grown steadily

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<sup>411</sup> Bergin, Joseph. *A History of France*. London, England: Macmillan Education UK, 2015.

<sup>412</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>413</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>414</sup> Gomez Pardo, Julian. *Histoire De France, Volume 4: Époque Contemporaine (1914 à Nos Jours)* Ellipses, 2022. doi:10.14375/NP.9782340065994.

<sup>415</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>416</sup> Bergin, Joseph. *A History of France*. London, England: Macmillan Education UK, 2015.



since the end of the IIWW - aroused strong opposition<sup>417</sup>. Juppé's proposal to reduce benefits for civil servants aroused strong opposition, with a wave of strikes paralyzing much of the country for several weeks in November-December 1995<sup>418</sup>. As a result, Juppé was forced to withdraw his more ambitious proposals, seriously undermining the credibility of the government<sup>419</sup>.

Across the Channel, in the United Kingdom, the situation was no different, albeit for different reasons and contexts. Indeed, in the years between 1989 and 2001, the country faced a major transition period, with the decline of Thatcher's conservatism, the rise of New Labor, profound economic transformations, and social changes<sup>420</sup>. If for France the fall of the Wall had opened the question of reviewing its role in the European integration process, for Britain - one of the main allies of the US - it was a question of reviewing its foreign policy and role in NATO. Indeed, the United Kingdom participated in the military campaign known as "Desert Storm" in January 1991 in opposition to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which had invaded Kuwait, a nearby state<sup>421</sup>. The Gulf War came to a conclusion at the end of February with the capitulation of Saddam Hussein and the restoration of Kuwait's complete sovereignty, spearheaded by the United States and conducted under UN auspices. Despite the "positive" outcome, the British government faced criticism for its involvement in the first Gulf War, particularly from the population, who organized a sizable anti-war campaign<sup>422</sup>.

Moreover, at the national level, the last decade of the 20th century had opened with a transfer of power from Thatcher - who was leaving government after ten years - to John Major<sup>423</sup>. The new prime minister attempted to undertake a less confrontational government than Thatcher's approach but was faced with a growing economic crisis that weakened the government. When Major succeeded Thatcher in 1990, many observers predicted that he would bring in a more inclusive and moderate administration characterized by dialogue and confrontation with the executive<sup>424</sup>. Actually, Major garnered some support in the initial phases and was able to maintain some cohesion within the executive before Thatcher's polarizing influence became apparent within the party.

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<sup>417</sup> Popkin, Jeremy D. *A History of Modern France*. 5/Fifth;5th; ed. Oxford: Routledge, 2020. doi:10.4324/9781315150727.

<sup>418</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>419</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>420</sup> Flowers, Sherman. "History of the United Kingdom (1945–present)." In *History of the United Kingdom*. India: World Technologies, 2012.

<sup>421</sup> Guazzaloca, Giulia. *Storia Della Gran Bretagna* Le Monnier Università, 2015.

<sup>422</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>423</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>424</sup> Ibidem.

The last decade of the 1990s opened in the UK with a new bad season for the British economy and a virulent upswing in unemployment. Major intended to follow Thatcher's lead in terms of economic policy, prioritizing the control of inflation, privatization, and increased efficiency in public services<sup>425</sup>. However, the economic downturn had driven the pound's value so low that, on September 16, 1992 - a day that the British would always remember as "Black Wednesday" - the government was compelled to declare its intention to leave the European Monetary System. Major saw the humiliation of the devaluation as the start of the end of his tenure as Prime Minister (in the 1997 elections he was defeated by Tony Blair, the Labor Party candidate)<sup>426</sup>.

From a social point of view, as in France, the United Kingdom went through a period marked by worsening economic and social inequalities. The difficult conditions of the British economic and social system were due to the neo-liberal policies of the previous decade, which had led to increased privatization and deregulation, but also to a decrease in social protection for the working classes<sup>427</sup>. Among the most urgent problems was growing unemployment, which was especially bad in Scotland and northern England's industrial regions where Thatcher's government's initial factory and mine closures had left lasting effects<sup>428</sup>. Furthermore, racial tensions and criminality in impoverished metropolitan areas were on the rise, and a growing social polarization reflected the overall economic downturn. Riots and a general feeling of unease were prevalent in cities including London, Manchester, and Birmingham, and were stoked by a reduction in public services and the impression of rising inequality<sup>429</sup>. While John Major had struggled to respond to the needs of British society, the rise of Tony Blair and New Labor at the end of the decade marked the beginning of a new era for Britain, as the new Prime Minister seemed more capable of solving the country's problems.

Thus, politically, the historic turning point came in 1997 when the Labor Party candidate Tony Blair was elected<sup>430</sup>. The new Prime Minister managed to win over the traditionally conservative electorate and lead the country into a new era of economic prosperity and social reform through a modernization of British politics<sup>431</sup>. Indeed, as early as 1997, when he came to the government, Blair showed that he could take advantage of the public's growing

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<sup>425</sup> Guazzaloca, Giulia. *Storia Della Gran Bretagna* Le Monnier Università, 2015.

<sup>426</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>427</sup> Flowers, Sherman. "History of the United Kingdom (1945–present)." In *History of the United Kingdom*. India: World

<sup>428</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>429</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>430</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>431</sup> Flowers, Sherman. "History of the United Kingdom (1945–present)." In *History of the United Kingdom*. India: World

dissatisfaction and weariness with the Conservative leadership. This was made abundantly clear after Princess Diana passed away on August 30, 1997, in a vehicle accident in Paris<sup>432</sup>. Blair demonstrated, once again, his exceptional capacity for understanding the emotions of common people and handling unforeseen circumstances.

Considering what has been said about the historical, social, and political context of France and the UK, we now come to the analysis of the debate and criticism of Francis Fukuyama and his thesis on the End of History.

In France, Fukuyama's theory provoked heated debate. This was partly due to the fact that France was a country with a long philosophical and intellectual tradition. One of the most influential French intellectuals critical of Fukuyama's thesis was Jacques Derrida, the philosopher known for developing the theory of deconstruction, who devoted part of his *Spectres of Marx* to a comparison with Fukuyama. Basically, Derrida perceived the theory of the End of History as a manifestation of what he called the “metaphysics of presence”, i.e. the idea that there is a definitive and stable conclusion to human history<sup>433</sup>. In his view, Fukuyama's vision was problematic not only because it oversimplified the complexity of history and its dynamics, but also because it ignored the continuous possibilities of discontinuity and difference<sup>434</sup>. In the immediate post-1989 period, it seemed possible to think that geopolitical conflicts were diminishing, and that liberal democracy had defeated all opposition. Derrida himself, though critical of Fukuyama, commented on *The End of History and The Last Man* saying: “The book is not as bad or as naive as one might think because of the frenzied exploitation that exhibits it as the best ideological example of victorious capitalism in a liberal democracy that has finally arrived at the fullness of its ideal”<sup>435</sup>. However, the French philosopher argued that Fukuyama's belief in the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy and the implicit assumption that history could be reduced to a single teleological narrative closed the space for “otherness” and “difference”<sup>436</sup>. In his view, the message conveyed mainly by the Western media that saw “the death of Marxism as the end of history” was misleading<sup>437</sup>. On the contrary, Derrida argued that the end of communism did not imply the end of Marxism as a critique of capitalism, and indeed, argued that the “ghosts” of Marxism would continue to

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<sup>432</sup> Guazzaloca, Giulia. *Storia Della Gran Bretagna* Le Monnier Università, 2015.

<sup>433</sup> Derrida, Jacques. "Spectres de Marx." Galilée, 1993.

<sup>434</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>435</sup> Glendinning, Simon. *Europe: A Philosophical History Part 2: Beyond Modernity*. 1st ed. Vol. 1 Routledge, 2021. doi:10.4324/9780429507427.

<sup>436</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>437</sup> Derrida, Jacques. "Spectres de Marx." Galilée, 1993.

haunt post-Cold War societies, challenging the idea of a definitive world order based on liberal democracy<sup>438</sup>.

Beyond Derrida's view, in general, the French press - including those closer to the intellectual circles of *Le Monde* - had a complex reaction to Fukuyama's thesis. Some were relieved that bipolarity was coming to an end and that a new global order may emerge, but others were less tolerant, viewing Fukuyama's thesis as a triumph of the West that would ignore ongoing tensions and inequality around the world.

Between 1989 and 2001, *Le Monde's* articles often discussed these tensions, warning readers of the End of History, in particular of the risk of ignoring newly emerging problems, including the rise of nationalism, ethnic conflicts, and globalization issues. The first article - written by Paul Fabra and entitled *Pas de "fin de l'histoire" pour la dette* - under analysis, was published on October 10, 1989, only a month before the fall of the Berlin Wall<sup>439</sup>. With particular reference to the issue of public debt, Fabra claimed that contrary to what Fukuyama had proposed regarding the stabilization of political ideologies with the triumph of liberal democracy, certain economic issues would remain unresolved, continuing to influence global dynamics<sup>440</sup>. Like the *New York Times* columnists - whom we saw in the previous section - Fabra saw Fukuyama's vision as too simplistic, arguing that the world would face complex challenges that would challenge the idea of global ideological and political stability.

Shifting the emphasis from the economic implications to the cultural and psychological ones was André Fontaine's article *Après l'histoire, l'ennui?*, where the author emphasized the cultural and psychological consequences of living in a post-historical era<sup>441</sup>. According to Fontaine, in the post-historical era, the absence of ideological conflicts could have led to an apathetic and meaningless society, a kind of existential boredom that would have led humanity, deprived of major ideological challenges, to live in a state of stagnation<sup>442</sup>. The article in question offers a new point of view compared to those we have seen so far. In fact, Fontaine wondered about the consequences of the End of History not only from a political point of view but also from an existential one. Unlike others, Fontaine did not necessarily see Fukuyama's hypothesis as utopian but rather questioned the possible psychological pitfalls that this "end" might bring<sup>443</sup>.

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<sup>438</sup> Glendinning, Simon. *Europe: A Philosophical History Part 2: Beyond Modernity*. 1st ed. Vol. 1 Routledge, 2021. doi:10.4324/9780429507427.

<sup>439</sup> Fabra, Paul. "Pas de fin de l'histoire pour la dette." *Le Monde*, October 10, 1989.

<sup>440</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>441</sup> Fontaine, André. "Après l'histoire, l'ennui?" *Le Monde*, September 27, 1989.

<sup>442</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>443</sup> Ibidem.

Bertrand Le Gendre's analysis in the article *La politique en apesanteur : Le déclin des idéologies, le recul du politique* also emphasized the future questions that the decline of traditional ideologies would open<sup>444</sup>. However, Le Gendre's analysis dwelt more on the political aspect, in particular on the question of the withdrawal of politics in a post-ideological context. Agreeing with Fortaine, the author argued that the fall of the great ideological narratives - such as communism and fascism - had left an empty space in the global political landscape, leading to a kind of political apathy and a feeling of stasis in social and political progress<sup>445</sup>. In the past, ideologies had driven mass political movements, but with the fall of the Soviet Union and the global adoption of liberal democracy and capitalism, the political debate seemed to have flattened out<sup>446</sup>. While acknowledging the decline of the great ideologies, Le Gendre disagreed with Fukuyama on the question of the victory of liberal democracy. In fact, rather than seeing the situation as a triumph of liberalism, he suggested that humanity was entering a political era “*en apesanteur*”, i.e. lacking direction and purpose, characterized by widespread apathy<sup>447</sup>.

The latter viewpoint matched that held by Pierre Drouin in his article *Ramsès 90: la fin d'une époque*, in which he pointed out that the end of communism did not necessarily mean the end of global conflicts or tensions, but rather the beginning of a new phase<sup>448</sup>. This thesis is also supported by another article published in *Le Monde* in June 1993, entitled *Sarajevo et la fin de l'Histoire*<sup>449</sup>. In this article, Fukuyama's theses were questioned, especially considering the brutality and chaos generated by the ethnic and nationalist conflicts that had ravaged the former Yugoslavia<sup>450</sup>. According to the author, the violent and destabilizing realities of the war in Bosnia showed that, contrary to what Fukuyama had predicted, ethnic, religious, and nationalist tensions could still trigger devastating wars<sup>451</sup>. Consequently, although Fukuyama correctly predicted the decline of totalitarian ideologies, at the same time he underestimated the persistence of other conflict factors - such as ethnic and religious identity - that could still challenge the liberal world order<sup>452</sup>.

André Fontaine, in his article *La résistance obstinée des Etats-nations* of January 1995, also stated that despite predictions of a global convergence towards a homogeneous political order,

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<sup>444</sup> Le Gendre, Bertrand. "La politique en apesanteur." *Le Monde*, October 25, 1989.

<sup>445</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>446</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>447</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>448</sup> Drouin, Pierre. "Ramsès 90: la fin d'une époque." *Le Monde*, October 16, 1989.

<sup>449</sup> *Le Monde*. "Sarajevo et la fin de l'histoire." *Le Monde*, June 15, 1993.

<sup>450</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>451</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>452</sup> Ibidem.

political and cultural realities showed a strong resilience of national identities and state sovereignties<sup>453</sup>. Stressing the limitations of Fukuyama's vision, Fontaine argued that the actual political dynamics - in the post-Cold War world - were much more complex and nation-states continued to resist the forces of globalization, politically, culturally, and economically<sup>454</sup>.

Considering the *Le Monde* articles analyzed so far, we can observe that Fukuyama's thesis on the End of History was generally received critically and with a certain amount of skepticism by the French press. In particular, the columnists questioned the idea that liberal democracy actually represented the apex of ideological evolution, and that history could really "end". While acknowledging Fukuyama's ability to stimulate a broader philosophical and political debate, in general, the authors of *Le Monde* pointed out that his vision did not consider the cultural diversity and geopolitical dynamics of the post-bipolar world.

Now, to extend the analysis of the debate around the End of History to a broader context in the European landscape, it is good to consider how this thesis was received in another country: the United Kingdom. In the British context, the reception of *The End of History and the Last Man* generated intense debate, reflecting the complex political and intellectual dynamics of the time. As was to be expected, Fukuyama's thesis was welcomed by the British conservative press, especially concerning the idea that liberal democracy had triumphed over its ideological opponents. In particular, *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* recognized that this view was consistent with the dominant conservative ideology in Britain, especially at a time when the country had just experienced a decade of Thatcherite policies, characterized by the promotion of the free market, deregulation, and the reduction of state's intervention in the economy. Moreover, the idea that democratic liberalism was the final form of government was seen as a confirmation of the success of Western policies, including the values of individual freedom, capitalism, and the rule of law.

Despite this positive reception, the conservative press did not fail to express reservations and doubts about some of the implications of Fukuyama's thesis, such as the concern about the long-term implications of such a view. *The Spectator*, for example, questioned the idea that the triumph of liberalism was definitive and irreversible, pointing out the possibility that old ideological conflicts could be replaced by new conflicts based on ethnic, religious, and nationalistic issues.

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<sup>453</sup> Fontaine, André. "La résistance obstinée des États-nations." *Le Monde*, January 20, 1995.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibidem*.

One of the British intellectuals who stood out in the debate was John Gray, a philosopher and political theorist known for his critique of modern liberalism, who attacked Fukuyama's thesis in his book *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (1998)<sup>455</sup>. According to Gray, Fukuyama's theory was nothing more than an expression of excessive optimism and Western “triumphalism” that underestimated the complexities of the post-Cold War world<sup>456</sup>. In contrast to Fukuyama, Gray argued that history was far from over, as economic globalization would not lead to a consolidation of liberal democracy, but to growing inequality and a series of political and social crises<sup>457</sup>. Essentially, global capitalism would not unify the world under a liberal order, but would instead exacerbate divisions, leading to new forms of authoritarianism and ethnic and religious conflicts<sup>458</sup>.

The reactions of the British press to Francis Fukuyama's theory of the End of History reflected a wide range of opinions: from those closer to the conservatism that had characterized Fukuyama himself, to the more critical ones such as that of John Gray. That said, to outline an analysis that considers both newspapers with a political orientation closer to Fukuyama's and those with a historically left-wing editorial line, we will analyze a series of articles published in *The Guardian*.

The first article under scrutiny, published on September 24, 1989, under the title *Stopping history can't stop time*, immediately shows where the criticism of *The Guardian*'s columnists fit into the debate on the End of History<sup>459</sup>. Indeed, the author - Neal Ascherson - criticized Fukuyama's idea that history would reach its climax with the triumph of liberalism, suggesting that even if history was “over”, time would continue to flow<sup>460</sup>. Taking a similar line to that of Fontaine - whom we have seen above - Ascherson proposed a critique that focused on the possible consequences of a post-historical world, highlighting the risk of intellectual and social stagnation. In general, Ascherson's article reflected the thinking of part of the British intellectual community, which saw Francis Fukuyama's words as a form of intellectual complacency - an illusion - that could lead to political and social apathy.

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<sup>455</sup> Gray, John. *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. Granta Books, 1998.

<sup>456</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>457</sup> Gray, John. *History Bites Back: Francis Fukuyama Believes the Key to Making Failing States Successful is to Remodel them on Western Lines. Not so, Says John Gray. it is through Reforms Consistent with their Own Traditions that Countries such as China and Russia have Attained their Present Status*. Vol. 133 *New Statesman*, Ltd, 2004.

<sup>458</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>459</sup> Ascherson, Neal. "Stopping History Can't Stop Time." *The Observer*, September 24, 1989, 15. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>460</sup> Ascherson, Neal. "Stopping History Can't Stop Time." *The Observer*, September 24, 1989, 15. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

The idea that events would continue, defying any vision of a final and definitive world order, was also shared by Simon Hoggart in his article *US Hawks Learn to Live with Russians as Good Guys*<sup>461</sup>. According to Hoggart - in the post-Cold War world - the process of reaching the End of History was far from simple, especially considering that the reluctance of US anti-Soviets to see the USSR as a potential partner was rooted in decades of distrust and hatred<sup>462</sup>.

Following Fukuyama's assertion that, with the end of bipolarity, the inevitable outcome of historical progress would be the imposition of liberal democracy as the final form of human governance, an intense debate developed. Many intellectuals and academics were skeptical about the establishment of liberalism as the last stage of humanity's political evolutionary process. This can be seen in the article *The End: Not with a Bang but a ?* by James Atlas, as well as in the various articles cited earlier in this work<sup>463</sup>. Atlas' critique revolved around the idea of the unpredictability and complexity of human history and suggested that Fukuyama's emphasis on the triumph of liberal democracy overlooked the persistent problems and inequalities within democratic societies themselves<sup>464</sup>. Indeed, while acknowledging the relevance of Fukuyama's vision, the columnist for *The Guardian* declared himself skeptical that the end of the Cold War meant the beginning of an era of lasting peace and stability. Specifically, Atlas did not share Fukuyama's view that liberal democracy was the only and last way forward. On the contrary, he questioned whether, especially in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, new models of governance would develop<sup>465</sup>. The perplexities of *The Guardian* columnists and, more generally, of many left-wing intellectuals were based on an important historical observation, namely that each previous era had perceived itself as the last phase of an evolutionary process, only to be disproved by the arrival of new challenges and radical changes.

Nevertheless, in an article also published in *The Guardian* entitled *The End of Hysteria?*, Francis Fukuyama defended himself against such criticism by stating that "the notion that history can come to an end should surprise only those unfamiliar with the Hegelian-Marxist tradition"<sup>466</sup>. Moreover, while recognizing that on some points he could have expressed himself

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<sup>461</sup> Hoggart, Simon. "US Hawks Learn to Live with Russians as Good Guys." *The Observer*, October 1, 1989, 11. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>462</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>463</sup> Atlas, James. "The End: Not with a Bang but a ?" *The Guardian*, November 4, 1989, 25. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>464</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>465</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>466</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of Hysteria?" *The Guardian*, December 15, 1989, 23. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.



more clearly, Fukuyama emphasized that in proclaiming the triumph of liberalism, he had also not claimed that this process would be simple and automatic<sup>467</sup>. On the contrary, the author of *The End of History* recognized that there were criticalities in the liberal democratic system and that the democratic revolution was far from complete. However, although incomplete, according to Fukuyama this revolution was indeed taking place and this had to be recognized<sup>468</sup>. This defense of his thesis by Fukuyama also continued in another article published on September 7, 1990, under the title *Forget Iraq - History IS Dead*<sup>469</sup>. Here, addressing the criticism that had been leveled at him, the author reiterated his post-historical worldview, pointing out that even events such as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait did not prove his thesis wrong<sup>470</sup>. Indeed, in proclaiming the End of History - as we have repeated several times in this work - Fukuyama was not also affirming the end of events or conflicts, so the case of Kuwait did not refute his theory. The fact that the world had come to the end of ideological evolution could coexist with the presence of geopolitical challenges, since these did not change the structure of the international system, nor did they lead to the collapse of the solidity of the liberal system<sup>471</sup>.

As was to be expected, even after these clarifications by Fukuyama, the criticism did not stop. For instance, in the article *The End of Individualism?: Commentary*, Nicholas Boyle declared himself perplexed by the optimism shown by the American political scientist<sup>472</sup>. According to Boyle, the victory of Western liberalism and the disappearance of important rival ideologies - such as communism - could have led to an alternative model of collectivism or conformism, with globalization and dominant political structures contributing to the end of individualism<sup>473</sup>. Consequently, the emergence of conformity would lead to the suppression of diversity and individual autonomy, with serious consequences for society, thus calling into question whether the End of History could really represent progress for humanity<sup>474</sup>.

Now, the end of individualism is only one of the points on which criticism of Francis Fukuyama's thought was based. Many Guardian columnists - such as Michael Ignatieff in

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<sup>467</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of Hysteria?" *The Guardian*, December 15, 1989, 23. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>468</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>469</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Forget Iraq - History IS Dead." *The Guardian*, September 7, 1990, 23. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>470</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>471</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>472</sup> Boyle, Nicholas. "The End of Individualism?: Commentary." *The Guardian*, October 15, 1991, 22. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>473</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>474</sup> Ibidem.

*History is not ready for the dustbin* and Keith Thomas in *Shaking the Bars of History* - did not believe that history was over, or that it was even approaching its end<sup>475476</sup>. According to these authors, although liberal democracy was certainly the dominant system of government, Fukuyama's attempt to reduce history to a single, linear trajectory was too reductive and did not consider a whole series of issues. First of all - as stated by other authors seen above - liberal democracies were not perfect; on the contrary, they entailed innumerable problems, such as economic inequalities, political alienation, and social tensions<sup>477</sup>. Secondly, global factors - such as nationalism, ethnic conflicts, and cultural differences - made the future of history highly uncertain, challenging the idea that liberalism represented the only possible way forward<sup>478</sup>. While the collapse of communism and the apparent triumph of Western liberalism could represent an intellectual justification for the dominance of liberalism, - warned Malise Ruthven in the article *Gentle into history's good night?* - were not to be seen as an indisputable truth<sup>479</sup>. Particularly, what worried Ruthven was that governments, proud of the triumph of liberalism, might adopt Fukuyama's thinking literally and stop recognizing and addressing the new threats that might emerge<sup>480</sup>. Certainly, in the years immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the idea of an End of History appeared attractive to political leaders and the public alike, yet liberal democratic societies still had to be prepared for future crises. According to a number of columnists, these critical issues were not even that far off and hypothetical. For instance, John Gray in January 1995 published an article entitled *Cold Sun Rises at the End of the Cold War*, in which he argued that since the fall of the Wall, various signs of fragmentation and conflict had manifested themselves<sup>481</sup>. According to Gray, not only had Fukuyama failed to consider the complexities present in global political practice - and thus the tensions between different states - but he had also overlooked the contradictions within states themselves, such as ethnic, religious, and cultural contradictions<sup>482</sup>. Thus, the adoption of a single political-economic

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<sup>475</sup> Ignatieff, Michael. "History Is Not Ready for the Dustbin." *The Observer*, March 1, 1992, 23. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>476</sup> Thomas, Keith. "Shaking the Bars of History." *The Observer*, March 1, 1992, 63. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>477</sup> Ignatieff, Michael. "History Is Not Ready for the Dustbin." *The Observer*, March 1, 1992, 23. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>478</sup> Thomas, Keith. "Shaking the Bars of History." *The Observer*, March 1, 1992, 63. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>479</sup> Ruthven, Malise. "Gentle into History's Good Night?" *The Guardian*, March 5, 1992, 24. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>480</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>481</sup> Gray, John. "Cold Sun Rises at the End of the Cold War." *The Guardian*, January 20, 1995, 20. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

<sup>482</sup> Gray, John. "Cold Sun Rises at the End of the Cold War." *The Guardian*, January 20, 1995, 20. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

model could not solve the numerous problems present at the national and international levels, hence demonstrating that history was far from over<sup>483</sup>.

To summarize what has emerged from *The Guardian* articles analyzed so far, what is easily discernible is the widespread skepticism that permeated the columnists' thinking. In general, the criticisms reflected feelings of concern about the persistence of global conflicts and inequalities and a return to cynical geopolitical practices. While many had been euphoric after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this sentiment soon evaporated in the face of the complex reality of international and national relations. Events such as the invasion of Kuwait and ethnic conflicts within the nations themselves made it clear that the post-bipolar phase was not one of global peace and cooperation. Consequently, Fukuyama's optimism in proclaiming the supremacy and stability of liberal democracy had been misplaced.

Comparing what emerged from this analysis in *The Guardian* with the debate that developed in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, we can state that in both cases the columnists were wary of Fukuyama's vision of the End of History. Nevertheless, the criticism focused on slightly different aspects. On the one hand, *The Guardian* articles highlight more the practical and political contradictions of Fukuyama's thesis, emphasizing geopolitical tensions and persistent challenges to liberal democracy; on the other hand, the approach of the *Le Monde* columnists is based on a more theoretical and philosophical analysis.

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<sup>483</sup> Gray, John. "Cold Sun Rises at the End of the Cold War." *The Guardian*, January 20, 1995, 20. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

## Chapter 4.

### The Perception of Fukuyama's Theory in Italy (1989-2001)

#### 4.1 Media Coverage and Public Opinion

In Italy, Francis Fukuyama's theory on the End of History stimulated the analysis and criticism of various intellectuals, academics, and journalists. A careful analysis shows that in the Italian context, the reception of *The End of History and The Last Man* was complex, with opinions reflecting not only the political nuances but also the cultural and historical concerns of the country, which in the 1990s was experiencing the crisis of the First Republic and the collapse of the parties that had dominated the political landscape since the end of the IIWW.

Probably one of the most important contributions to the defense of Francis Fukuyama's ideas in Italy is by Gianfranco Pasquino. Italian political scientist, politician, and professor emeritus of Political Science at the University of Bologna, Pasquino signed the *Preface* to *The End of History and the Last Man* in the Italian edition. Pasquino stated that in the years following the publication of *The End of History and The Last Man*, many journalists, commentators, and political scientists had lashed out at Fukuyama's words, often claiming loudly that the author was wrong because history was not over at all, forgetting the second part of the title “the Last Man” (and consequently an important part of Fukuyama's theory)<sup>484</sup>. During his career, beyond just the *Preface* to Fukuyama's book, he has always sarcastically denounced the mistakes - above all - of journalists who headline “history is not over, as Fukuyama claimed”. Pasquino's clarifications were intended to bring to the attention of the columnists that ever since the publication of *The End of History?* in 1989, Fukuyama had not claimed the end of events, but rather that the history of the contrast between the victorious liberal democracies and the collapsed communism was over. Thus, Pasquino invited a careful reading of the American political scientist's words. According to him, in fact, Fukuyama was aware that history, as the unfolding of events, was far from over. Rather, what Fukuyama intended to explain was that with the fall of communism, a specific historical path had actually come to an end: the end of an alternative ideology to liberalism, by now the only possible form of political organization<sup>485</sup>.

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<sup>484</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. “Prefazione”. In *The End of History and The Last Man*. DeA Planeta Libri, 2020.

<sup>485</sup> Ibidem.

According to Pasquino, Fukuyama's work was articulated in two fundamental theses<sup>486</sup>. On the one hand, the idea that history ended with the end of the opposition, of the ideological war between Western liberal democracies and Soviet communism. On the other, the thesis that saw as a consequence of the victory of liberal democracies, the possibility for human beings to use all their freedom to realize themselves. On this second point, Pasquino emphasized that Fukuyama was not praised for the disappearance of contradictions in the civilized world (East/West, Liberalism/Communism, etc.)<sup>487</sup>. Rather, Fukuyama was concerned that humanity would not seize the opportunities opened by the end of history<sup>488</sup>. Indeed, if the victory of the ideals of liberal democracies had marked the end of history, that same end opened the possibility of other developments, both positive and negative<sup>489</sup>. One of these developments concerned the very often overlooked second part of the title: *The Last Man*. Pasquino emphasized the importance of this second part of the *End of History*, concerning the potential and tasks of men empowered by liberal democracies<sup>490</sup>. As stated by Fukuyama himself, the end of history would bring a sad time, in which there could be the risk that men would take a passive role - says Pasquino "that they would not take advantage of opportunities" - hence weakening democracy itself<sup>491</sup>. Thus, there was the risk of becoming Last Man, of reaching a stage in human evolution where humanity lost its capacity to aspire to something greater, becoming instead apathetic, lacking high ambitions and content with a life of security and comfort. This ability of Fukuyama to question the possible outcomes of liberalism's triumph was, according to Pasquino, a great merit of the author.

Moreover, responding to the criticism of those who had seen Fukuyama as an optimist and a triumphalist, Pasquino emphasized how the author had considered the existence of the challengers of liberal democracies, such as nationalisms and fundamentalisms. Simply, according to the American political scientist, those challenges to liberal democracy were politically, culturally, and geographically limited in their activity. This was because, unlike communism, they did not have a universal vocation capable of endangering the triumph of liberalism. By his own admission, Gianfranco Pasquino stated that he had initially attributed to Fukuyama an underestimation of the many remaining enemies of liberal democracies, particularly religious fundamentalisms<sup>492</sup>. However, after a careful re-reading of *The End of*

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<sup>486</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. "La storia (in)finita spiegata al Professor Giulio Sapelli". Domani, October 13, 2021.

<sup>487</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>488</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>489</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. "Prefazione". In *The End of History and The Last Man*. DeA Planeta Libri, 2020.

<sup>490</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>491</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>492</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. "La storia (in)finita spiegata al Professor Giulio Sapelli". Domani, October 13, 2021.

*History and The Last Man*, he realized that in fact, the American political scientist was fully aware of the fundamentalist threat to liberal democracies<sup>493</sup>. A threat that indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s, appeared embryonic, geographically limited, and confined<sup>494</sup>.

Regarding the discourse on the end of history and the triumph of liberalism, in Italy perceptions were varied, often influenced by political orientation. One contribution that cannot be overlooked was undoubtedly that of Norberto Bobbio, a philosopher of law with a contrasting view to that of Francis Fukuyama. A crucial point in Bobbio's thinking concerned the idea that the collapse of the communist system did not mark the end of the left in general, but only “of a historically well-defined left”<sup>495</sup>. As a result of this assertion, the philosopher stood in stark contrast to the celebrants of liberalism, namely those who saw in the collapse of the Soviet Union the definitive triumph of freedom that entailed “the burying of every left and the affirmation of the limitless right to inequality”<sup>496</sup>. The communist system was seen as the historical implementation most compatible with left-wing ideals, so after the collapse of the USSR, many celebrators of liberalism saw in the End of History the ultimate triumph of the principles commonly considered as characteristic of the right<sup>497</sup>. According to Bobbio, these included Fukuyama's vision. A perspective that in the opinion of the philosopher of law had to be considered as right-wing, considering that Fukuyama saw the end of the Soviet empire and the total victory of capitalism and liberalism as the endpoint of history. In contrast to Fukuyama, Bobbio saw the conclusion of the conflict between the liberal order and communism as not the end of the history of the left. Not by chance, he stated that “as far as the future of the left is concerned, humanity has by no means reached the end of history but is perhaps only at the beginning”<sup>498</sup>.

Bobbio believed that Fukuyama's thought provoked some left-wing writers - already struggling with the collapse of the Soviet bloc - a series of perplexities and afterthoughts<sup>499</sup>. This was because Fukuyama's thesis questioned the very means and end of the left - understood by Bobbio as the struggle for equality - through two arguments. The first of these concerned the idea that history did not progress through a process of equalization of nonequals, but on the contrary, through the individual or collective struggle for supremacy; while the second assumed

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<sup>493</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. “La storia (in)finita spiegata al Professor Giulio Sapelli”. Domani, October 13, 2021.

<sup>494</sup> Pasquino, Gianfranco. “Prefazione”. In *The End of History and The Last Man*. DeA Planeta Libri, 2020.

<sup>495</sup> Bobbio, Norberto. *Destra e Sinistra: Ragioni e Significati Di Una Distinzione Politica* edigita, 2023.

<sup>496</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>497</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>498</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>499</sup> Ibidem.

that the aspiration of men was not equality, but superiority, through competition and victory over the enemy. This was because Fukuyama's thesis questioned the very means and end of the left - understood by Bobbio as the struggle for equality - through two arguments<sup>500</sup>. The first of these concerned the idea that history did not progress through a process of equalization of nonequals, but on the contrary, through the individual or collective struggle for supremacy; while the second was based on the assumption that the aspiration of men was not equality, but superiority, through competition and victory over the enemy<sup>501</sup>. However, Bobbio saw Fukuyama's arguments as one-sided and simplistic, as they did not consider the actual complexity and contradictory nature of history. This was especially true for the argument that the engine of history was not the struggle for equality (of the left) but the struggle for superiority.

To sum up, he believed that Fukuyama's prediction - that with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the USSR, historical ideologies would end, leading to the triumph of democratic liberalism - was misleading. Indeed, the dichotomy between left and right was still relevant, especially concerning the distribution of resources and social justice. In line with his political realism, Bobbio did not accept Fukuyama's vision of the End of History as an inevitable and final victory of liberal democracy<sup>502</sup>. Seeing history as an open-ended process, full of conflicts and contradictions that could not be easily resolved or overcome, he saw democracy as a dynamic process, not a stable and unchanging condition. Therefore, Bobbio argued that if actually in the great race for world supremacy communism had not won, contrary to Fukuyama's expectations, the desired universalization of Western liberal democracy would most likely not have occurred<sup>503</sup>. On the Italian intellectual scene, a line in some respects similar to Norberto Bobbio's, was that of Ernesto Galli della Loggia. In commenting on Fukuyama's thesis on the End of History, Galli della Loggia considered the American political scientist's view unconvincing, although he recognized his importance for the considerations on the post-bipolar world<sup>504</sup>. Indeed, according to him, the irreversible crisis of communist regimes and, in this sense, the victory of liberalism, did not in itself imply the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final and conclusive form of government<sup>505</sup>. In Galli della Loggia's view, the final triumph of liberalism - that is the end of history - could not be

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<sup>500</sup> Bonetti, Paolo. "Breve Storia Del Liberalismo Di Sinistra. Da Gobetti a Bobbio." *Il Pensiero Politico* 48, no. 3 (2015): 569.

<sup>501</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>502</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>503</sup> Bobbio, Norberto. "Ma questo è un incubo. Ne valeva la pena?". *La Stampa*, October 25, 1989.

<sup>504</sup> Galli della Loggia, Ernesto. "Lo stesso errore dei marxisti". *La Stampa*, October 25, 1989.

<sup>505</sup> Ibidem.

announced. In a nutshell, Fukuyama had made the mistake - already made earlier by Marxists - to think that with the victory of his ideas history was destined to stop, to end<sup>506</sup>. A wrong reasoning, because even when something is perceived as definitive, it is just a transition as any<sup>507</sup>.

Beyond the analysis of Norberto Bobbio, it is necessary to emphasize that *The End of History and the Last Man* opened in Italy a debate, especially in newspapers with a more progressive political orientation and those with a moderate line. Newspapers such as *Corriere Della Sera* and *La Stampa* devoted many articles to the analysis and criticism of Fukuyama's theory. Generally speaking, in analyzing the words of the American political scientist, what most Italian intellectuals and journalists noted was that after the end of the Cold War, the world had continued to be shaken by events that belied Fukuyama's predictions. Indeed, influenced by the Italian historical and, above all, political context, these authors noted that while communist antagonism had disappeared, it had been replaced by fundamentalism and populism<sup>508</sup>. This showed that history and conflict had not come to an end but had been transformed. The idea that conflicts had been transformed had already been put forward by Samuel P. Huntington, who - in response to Fukuyama - had argued that future wars would not be fought between countries, but between different cultures<sup>509</sup>.

The one between Huntington's and Fukuyama's vision constitutes one of the most heated and best-known debates on the future of international relations in the post-Cold War world. On the one hand, Huntington's basic proposition was that post-Cold War conflict would occur because of cultural differences rather than ideological differences<sup>510</sup>. Whereas during the Cold War conflicts had occurred between the capitalist West and the communist bloc - therefore on ideological grounds - in the future they were more likely to occur between major civilizations<sup>511</sup>. On the other hand, according to Fukuyama, humankind had attained the pinnacle of its intellectual development with the emergence of Western liberal democracy following the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991 and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the ultimate form of human governance<sup>512</sup>. It is precisely in this debate between

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<sup>506</sup> Galli della Loggia, Ernesto. "Lo stesso errore dei marxisti". *La Stampa*, October 25, 1989.

<sup>507</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>508</sup> Mennitti, Domenico. "Editoriale. Introduzione". *Ideazione*, settembre/ottobre 1999.

<sup>509</sup> Moosa, Imad A. "Western Supremacy: The Views of Huntington, Fukuyama and Ferguson." In *The West Versus the Rest and the Myth of Western Exceptionalism*, 203-227. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023.

<sup>510</sup> Moosa, Imad A. "Western Supremacy: The Views of Huntington, Fukuyama and Ferguson." In *The West Versus the Rest and the Myth of Western Exceptionalism*, 203-227. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023.

<sup>511</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>512</sup> Ibidem.



*The End of History?* and *The Clash of Civilisations?* that an important reflection by an Italian columnist for *Il Mulino*, Lucio Leante, fits in<sup>513</sup>.

In his article entitled *Il contagio occidentale e lo scontro delle civiltà*, Leante noted that a push towards the westernization of other civilizations dominated the end of the 20th century<sup>514</sup>. However, according to him, this was not a new phenomenon, as encounters and clashes of civilizations had always appeared throughout history, especially that between the West and the rest. This perception of novelty was due to the fact that, during the Cold War period, the conflict between civilizations had been obscured and often removed by the global conflict between two political, economic, and social ideologies: the liberal and the communist. With the end of bipolarity, these conflicts had re-emerged, as demonstrated, for example, by the Yugoslav conflict or the outbreak of ethnic and “micronational” conflicts at the local level<sup>515</sup>. According to Leante, the West had to realize that its cultural hegemony was by no means a foregone conclusion, indeed it continued to elicit reactions from non-Westerners. Consequently, the prediction by personalities like Fukuyama of the global triumph and planet-wide spread of liberal democracy was too rash<sup>516</sup>. In his view, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there had been resistance to westernization from other civilizations, especially Islam<sup>517</sup>. Nevertheless, even if the process of spreading liberal democracy met with resistance, it continued to profoundly influence other civilizations.

Another Italian columnist Ugo Stille also commented on the dispute between Fukuyama and Huntington. In his article *E la storia ricomincia. Ora la lotta è tra civiltà* published in the *Corriere della Sera*, Stille described Fukuyama's theory of the End of History as excessively triumphalist<sup>518</sup>. According to him, in reality, what emerged from the end of the Cold War was a world in turmoil, in which diverse and heterogeneous forces were at work, each seeking its own specific identity<sup>519</sup>. Taking a line closer to Huntington's thinking, Stille argued that the central theme in the last decade of the 20th century was the struggle between the forces of modernization and those of tradition. In other words, he felt that the question of the future - whether or not the non-Western would accept the process of Westernization - was still open<sup>520</sup>. Furthermore, Stille believed that this conflict between the forces of modernization and tradition

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<sup>513</sup> Leante, Lucio. *Il contagio occidentale e lo scontro delle civiltà*, Il Mulino, 1998.

<sup>514</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>515</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>516</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>517</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>518</sup> Stille, Ugo. "E la storia ricomincia. Ora la lotta è tra civiltà." *Corriere della Sera*, October 15, 1993.

<sup>519</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>520</sup> Ibidem.

was already explicit in the area of Islam, where the spread of rapid Muslim fundamentalism posed serious difficulties for the West and Islam itself. Having said that, although he was critical of Fukuyama's thesis, he believed that Huntington's thesis was not an exact science either. Nonetheless, even with all the inaccuracies and strains, he believed that Huntington had had the merit of questioning the relationship between the West and non-West after the fall of communism<sup>521</sup>. The perception that Fukuyama had not considered the persistent conflict between West and non-Occidentals, specifically in the area of Islam, was also shared by Massimo Cacciari. Former mayor of Venice and very active Italian opinion writer, Cacciari was from the beginning very critical of Fukuyama, considering that the End of History no more than an "extravagant theory"<sup>522</sup>. For Cacciari, the vision that Fukuyama had of the primacy of Western humanity was a summary vision, since it was not possible to affirm with certainty that the Western model could not suffer catastrophes and upheavals<sup>523</sup>.

Looking at the Islamic case, what emerges is that in the Italian intellectual panorama, many thought it impossible to assume that liberal democracies would triumph, especially considering the re-emergence of regional conflicts and the problems caused by mass migration. For example, in an article published in the *Corriere della Sera*, entitled *La Storia non finisce, corre*, Mino Vignolo pointed out that, in the years following the end of the Cold War, Europe's political leaders would be faced with the threats of instability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, particularly the issue of migration flows<sup>524</sup>.

Concerning these misinterpretations of Fukuyama, Arrigo Levi wondered whether it was not better to speak of the return of history more than of the end of the story<sup>525</sup>. Indeed, according to Levi, with the end of communism, the second great ideological conflict after Nazifascism, had disappeared. These ideological conflicts had simplified and hidden all other conflicts, i.e. "had temporarily removed all other political passions, they ended up making history forget us all"<sup>526</sup>. So, Fukuyama was not to be criticized heavily because simply, influenced by the two totalizing ideologies, he had ended up limiting history to those two realities alone<sup>527</sup>. According to Levi, Fukuyama's theory was not to be rejected: the era of ideologies was indeed over, but

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<sup>521</sup> Stille, Ugo. "E la storia ricomincia. Ora la lotta è tra civiltà." *Corriere della Sera*, October 15, 1993.

<sup>522</sup> Padovani, Gigi. "La storia continua nonostante Fukuyama." *La Stampa*, October 21, 2001.

<sup>523</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>524</sup> Vignolo, Mino. "La Storia non finisce, corre." *Corriere della Sera*, November 24, 1989.

<sup>525</sup> Levi, Arrigo. "La storia non è finita: riparte nel Duemila." *Corriere della Sera*, April 12, 1996.

<sup>526</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>527</sup> Ibidem.

not history as a whole because it returned to real history made up of crises, conflicts, and irrational instincts<sup>528</sup>.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the question of German reunification, which had long been shelved, had resurfaced in a disruptive manner<sup>529</sup>. This question brought back several urgent and unavoidable issues in the old continent, not only within Germany itself but also in the context of European integration<sup>530</sup>. It was with this in mind that Barbara Spinelli considered Fukuyama's assertion that history was over, reduced to a uniform economic activity, to be far from the truth<sup>531</sup>. Spinelli emphasized that the entire European Community had been built on the idea of "a perpetually weak, divided Germany", but with the fall of the Wall and the end of the USSR, the question of reunification put the German question back on the table for European rulers<sup>532</sup>. As a result, Fukuyama's predictions about the end of history had proved naive, since the process of European integration on the one hand, and the fragmentation process in Yugoslavia on the other, showed how the end of the bipolar confrontation had reopened a whole series of questions<sup>533</sup>. Not least the one concerning the future of the old continent.

Many Italian intellectuals and journalists - like Lucio Colletti - criticized Fukuyama judging his vision as Eurocentric, since all his reference authors (Marx, Hegel, Kojève) came from the old continent. In this regard, Colletti argued that the view of history as a series of events tending towards an ultimate end - that is, it is a unitary and oriented process - was typical of Christianity<sup>534</sup>. This "Christian philosophy" was later taken up by Hegel and Marx (two of Fukuyama's points of reference)<sup>535</sup>. For Hegel, history had realized its ultimate end and therefore ended, without also ending the course of events. Whereas, for Marx, the ultimate end of history moved into the future, i.e. communist society. According to Lucio Colletti, with the collapse of Soviet communism, one would have expected this type of philosophy of history to come to an end<sup>536</sup>. However, Francis Fukuyama's book disregarded this prognostication, since it presented a thought that was still committed to the directionality of history, to the fact that history was a unitary process with the ultimate goal of a liberal democratic society. Colletti believed this vision of liberal democracy as a superior political system was irrational, as one

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<sup>528</sup> Levi, Arrigo. "La storia non è finita: riparte nel Duemila." *Corriere della Sera*, April 12, 1996.

<sup>529</sup> Ippolito, Luigi. "Ordine mondiale? Fantasie. E caos della frammentazione è la regola del presente." *Corriere della Sera*, July 23, 1992.

<sup>530</sup> Spinelli, Barbara. "Fukuyama 'Abbiamo vinto e ora?'" *La Stampa*, February 28, 1992.

<sup>531</sup> Spinelli, Barbara. "Prima l'Europa e poi la Germania." *La Stampa*, November 10, 1989.

<sup>532</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>533</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>534</sup> Colletti, Lucio. "La Storia è finita, signori si scende." *Corriere della Sera*, April 4, 1992.

<sup>535</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>536</sup> Ibidem.

could not consciously believe that there would be no possible alternatives to liberalism in the future<sup>537</sup>.

In the debate around the theory of the End of History, one of the most prolific contributions has been that of Gianni Riotta in *Corriere Della Sera*. Riotta's contribution is particularly important because, in the period between 1989 and 2001, he followed the debate around Fukuyama's thought. For example, in the article *La storia marcia verso l'ultimo uomo*, Riotta interviewed the End of History theorist and described the criticism leveled at him as “vulgar”<sup>538</sup>. As early as 1992, Riotta recognized that Francis Fukuyama and his theses had become part of mass culture<sup>539</sup>. This was in large part due to the broad debate that had developed - both in the US and Europe - around Fukuyama for having “predicted the end of history on the eve of the unification of Berlin and the end of communism”<sup>540</sup>. As a consequence of this prediction, Riotta observed that in 1992 - the year of the presidential election - American culture and politics found it difficult to relate to the author's thinking. This was as true for conservatives like Bush, closer to Fukuyama himself, as it was for democrats and progressives. Moreover, struggling with post-Cold War management, in the 1990s the Americans would follow a line in foreign policy that reaffirmed their supremacy. It was no coincidence that *America sola superpotenza* was the title of another article written by Gianni Riotta in the aftermath of the *New York Times*' publication of a secret Pentagon document on US intentions in the emerging new world order<sup>541</sup>. According to Riotta, this document represented “the triumph of traditional geopolitics based on military supremacy” and rejected the ideas of collective internationalism that emerged following the fall of the Berlin Wall<sup>542</sup>. Consequently, Riotta believed that Fukuyama, as well as the historian Paul Kennedy, would criticize the Pentagon and the Washington government for their hegemonic aspirations<sup>543</sup>.

Gianni Riotta recognized the importance of Fukuyama's theory and the merits of the author he called “the last champion of conservative liberalism”. However, he did not entirely agree with the American political scientist's prediction that liberal democracy would establish itself as the final form of government. Riotta was particularly skeptical of the stability of liberal democracies. According to him, after the Cold War, a difficult political season - both

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<sup>537</sup> Colletti, Lucio. "La Storia è finita, signori si scende." *Corriere della Sera*, April 4, 1992.

<sup>538</sup> Riotta, Gianni. "La storia marcia verso l'ultimo uomo." *Corriere della Sera*, February 18, 1992.

<sup>539</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>540</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>541</sup> Riotta, Gianni. "America sola superpotenza." *Corriere della Sera*, March 9, 1992.

<sup>542</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>543</sup> Ibidem.

internationally and domestically - would begin, as globalization and its social and economic consequences had the potential to create new tensions and undermine the triumph of liberalism<sup>544</sup>. In other words, according to Riotta, it could not be correctly stated that liberal democracy was the last stage of history and that there would be no more conflicts in the future. Undoubtedly, in the 1990s, it was observed that democrats were on the rise; however, even though there were forms of democracy in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Taiwan, the free debate - associated by Westerners with democracy - was still opposed<sup>545</sup>. This showed, in Riotta's thinking, that different cultures, different religions, and communities would find their way to tolerance and free coexistence through different paths. Therefore, according to him, the political world would never be homogeneous<sup>546</sup>.

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<sup>544</sup> Riotta, Gianni. "Con le nuvole nere la storia non finisce". *Corriere della Sera*, August 29, 1998.

<sup>545</sup> Riotta, Gianni. "Democrazia. Troppi paesi a libertà vigilata". *Corriere della Sera*, January 22, 1998.

<sup>546</sup> Ibidem.

## 4.2 Political Reactions and Implications

In discussing Italian political reactions to Francis Fukuyama's theory of the End of History, the sentence that Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis uttered in October 1989 following a UN assembly is emblematic: *“La fine di questa storia, ma per favore di fini della politica e della storia ho fatto già in tempo a vederne un paio”*<sup>547</sup>.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the Italian government led by Giulio Andreotti was faced with a sudden change in the course of international relations as they had been shaped since the end of the Second World War. Concerning the End of History and the triumph of liberal democracy as a political system, Andreotti expressed his perplexity, warning against the danger of considering the historical process concluded<sup>548</sup>. It is no coincidence that at a conference in Rimini in August 1990, the Prime Minister said: *“We know that there is no such thing as a model that can be taken from the outside and taken to any parallel and any meridian”*<sup>549</sup>. In particular, what Andreotti emphasized was that both Italy and the rest of the world would have to face serious criticalities after the collapse of the bipolar order, so indulging in triumphalism could be risky<sup>550</sup>. While Andreotti, on the one hand, viewed the fall of the Wall favorably from a domestic perspective, he was also concerned about the international consequences of the collapse of an order - the bipolar order - that had characterized the European continent for half a century. Despite its negative aspects, the East-West balance greatly contributed to ensuring Europe a long period of peace and stability<sup>551</sup>. Therefore, at an early stage, in contrast to the attitude taken by the British and French leaders, the Italian government expressed its concerns about the chaos and instability that would arise in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular around the question of defining borders, as well as about the future of the USSR<sup>552</sup>.

Indeed, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Italy had been immersed in the bipolar mechanism defined by the opposition between the United States and the Soviet bloc. Italy had adapted successfully to this system; its participation in the European Community and NATO offered it protection, a position on the global chessboard, and a voice in international trade and

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<sup>547</sup> Riotta, Gianni. "De Michelis si confessa 'Ecco come agirà l'Italia'." *Corriere della Sera*, October 1, 1989.

<sup>548</sup> Andreotti, Giulio. "Politica e Libertà". Rimini Meeting, August 31, 1990.

<sup>549</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>550</sup> Varsori, Antonio. *L'Italia e La Fine Della Guerra Fredda: La Politica Estera Dei Governi Andreotti (1989-1992)*. Vol. 786. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, Spa, 2013.

<sup>551</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>552</sup> Ibidem.

diplomacy<sup>553</sup>. Nevertheless, the old certainties began to crumble with the end of the Cold War, both internationally - Italy needed to establish a foreign policy line that would allow it to handle global crises and not isolate it from its Western allies - and domestically<sup>554</sup>. Moreover, the collapse of bipolarity brought about several crises in the nation, which may have given birth to domestic ones that overthrew the previous Italian political order but did not result in the creation of viable alternatives<sup>555</sup>.

As Fukuyama himself pointed out in *Political Order and Political Decay*, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Italy was hit by a wind of change. First, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism as a legitimizing ideology, Italian communists had lost their ties with Moscow<sup>556</sup>. This inevitably led the party, which had already been facing internal crises, to disband in 1991 and be replaced by the new *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS). The justification for the *Democrazia Cristiana*'s (DC) prolonged domination, which by that point had soaked the entire nation into crime and corruption, was also called into question by the fall of the Soviet Union and the PCI that followed<sup>557</sup>. Moreover, with the outbreak of the *Tangentopoli* scandal and with the Cold War no longer backing conservative and corrupt politicians, the DC ceased to be a pillar of Italian politics and, by 1994, collapsed<sup>558</sup>.

It is important to point out that the book *The End of History and The Last Man* was published in 1992, a year in which not only the member states of the European Community were discussing the Maastricht Treaty, but also in which Italy was facing a whole series of crises (from the *Tangentopoli* scandal to the Mafia massacres). Indeed, the political, social, and economic context of Italy in those years heavily influenced the perception that members of the political class had of Fukuyama's theory. Among them, Massimo D'Alema (who would become secretary of the PDS in 1994) was critical of Francis Fukuyama. It is important to remember that D'Alema came from an intellectual background deeply rooted in Marxism and later democratic socialism, so it is not surprising that his view of Fukuyama's theory was skeptical and critical. While acknowledging that, following the events of 1989-1991, Italy and the international context had profoundly changed, D'Alema argued that history was by no means

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<sup>553</sup> Andreatta, Filippo. "Italy at a Crossroads: The Foreign Policy of a Medium Power After the End of Bipolarity." *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Mass.) 130, no. 2 (2001): 45-65.

<sup>554</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>555</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>556</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*. paperback publish in 2015 ed. London: Profile books, 2015.

<sup>557</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>558</sup> Ibidem.

over and that the American political scientist's prediction was too simplistic<sup>559</sup>. Although, according to D'Alema, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a liberation, as it opened up - albeit uncertain - new perspectives for the left, the perception that the end of history had been reached in the 1990s, the triumph of liberal democracy was an illusion<sup>560</sup>. Fukuyama theorized that with the West's victory in the Cold War, an era would open in which liberal democracy and market democracy would establish themselves as universal models. However, different interpretations of that historical period had to be considered equally. For instance, that of Samuel P. Huntington who had grasped how the end of ideological opposition would not lead to a unified world, but to the re-emergence of conflicts and fracture lines, as happened in the Balkans where there was a civil and religious war that left 300,000 dead<sup>561</sup>. The secretary of the PDS shared Huntington's view, namely that the disappearance of ideologies would lead to conflict between civilizations<sup>562</sup>. He believed that Fukuyama was wrong, history was not over because large sections of the population remained excluded, which risked leading to new social conflicts.

D'Alema's criticism of Fukuyama was a criticism that focused more on the fact that with the collapse of the system of Eastern European socialist countries, an era in which the spread of liberalism would become an irreversible trend would open<sup>563</sup>. Hence, Fukuyama theorized that with the end of communism, the world would be unified under the hegemony of capitalism and liberal democracy. The dominance of the market would not only end social conflict but create the conditions for the best of all possible worlds. Additionally, capitalism and the market economy would have provided basic necessities and ensured the wise distribution of resources, while national particularisms and diverse cultures would have gradually been homogenized by economic and technological advancement, uniting the world around the cultural model of Western capitalism. However, D'Alema's view was that these predictions were far from reality, liberalism and capitalism continued to generate inequalities. In D'Alema's thought, to claim that liberal democracy had won over all other systems was premature, especially in a world still marked by conflict and economic inequality. The problem with Fukuyama's vision lay precisely in this uncritical view of capitalism. Indeed, the development of capitalism without rules and dominated exclusively by the logic of profit and market mechanisms generates

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<sup>559</sup> D'Alema, Massimo. "Comments Presented at the Second World Congress on Marxism: Beijing, PRC, 5–6 may 2018." *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 1 (2019): 13-17.

<sup>560</sup> De Angelis, Alessandro. "Rimpiango il Pci, non l'URSS". HuffPost, November 7, 2019.

<sup>561</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>562</sup> Chirico, Annalisa. "Un mondo diviso che ha bisogno di sovranità". *Il Foglio*, March 2, 2020.

<sup>563</sup> D'Alema, Massimo. "Comments Presented at the Second World Congress on Marxism: Beijing, PRC, 5–6 may 2018." *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 1 (2019): 13-17.



unsustainable contradictions, and produces instability and risks of war<sup>564</sup>. The idea of the PDS secretary was that the social and economic challenges of the post-Cold War world required new political responses and that the left - the Italian left - had to find a way to adapt to the changes in the post-bipolar world to carve out a role for itself in the political scenario<sup>565</sup>. While capitalism prevailed at that historical moment, it was still capable of generating contradictions and inequalities that would require innovative political responses<sup>566</sup>. Especially in the Italian and European context, D'Alema believed that it was necessary to find a more inclusive and fairer model of development than the liberal one, to create a stronger and socially fairer Europe.

In the landscape of the Italian left, in addition to that of D'Alema, another voice rose: that of Luciano Violante, who served as President of the Chamber of Deputies from 1996 to 2001. Violante's view of Francis Fukuyama's theory was that the author was fundamentally mistaken, as the fall of the Berlin Wall did not represent the concluding moment of humanity's political evolution<sup>567</sup>. Without a doubt, the failure of the last of the totalitarian systems (communism) and the revelation of its crimes had stripped anti-democratic ideologies of their appeal, allowing for the spread of liberal democracy and capitalism (which in turn had produced greater economic growth and increased well-being)<sup>568</sup>. However, according to Violante, it was already evident a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall that Fukuyama's prediction of the end of history had been disproven; rather, an extremely complex phase in the history of humanity had begun<sup>569</sup>.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Western democracies believed themselves to be infallible, as the intertwining of capitalism and democracy appeared to be the only desirable future for humanity. However, with the disappearance of the necessity to compete with the Soviet system, which had functioned as an external constraint, the issue of the relationship between rules and the market emerged<sup>570</sup>. According to Violante, the problem was that this relationship had become asymmetric: on one side, the market and capitalism had become global, while on the other, democracy had remained local. Simultaneously, the push for globalization and militarism had emptied the democratic process, which had shifted from a

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<sup>564</sup> D'Alema, Massimo. "Comments Presented at the Second World Congress on Marxism: Beijing, PRC, 5–6 may 2018." *Critical Sociology* 45, no. 1 (2019): 13-17.

<sup>565</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>566</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>567</sup> Violante, Luciano. *Democrazie Senza Memoria*. Einaudi, 2017.

<sup>568</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>569</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>570</sup> Ibidem.

dynamic system for the civilization of societies to a mere technique of governance<sup>571</sup>. This had led governments, according to Violante, to set aside costly rights (particularly social rights)<sup>572</sup>. In this sense, he emphasized that the simple victory of liberal democracy proclaimed by Fukuyama did not automatically guarantee respect for human rights and social justice. On the contrary, numerous injustices could still arise in democratic societies, making it essential to monitor the state of liberal democracies constantly. On this last point, Violante based his call for the Italian left to renew its commitment to protecting civil rights, social justice, and economic equality<sup>573</sup>.

At the end of the 20th century, the series of events that had transformed the landscape of international relations was generally read with a sense of triumphalist optimism. The prospect that, for the first time, democratic liberalism was unrivaled led many intellectuals and politicians to wonder what the future would hold. In the Italian context of the 1990s, this question was particularly pressing, especially considering that in the first half of the decade, the country had experienced a series of innumerable crises. Not least because of the crisis of the party system and the commonly known First Republic, many wondered whether Italy was a liberal democracy in crisis. On the concept of the crisis of liberal democracy, it is important to note that Francis Fukuyama had already considered it in *The End of History and The Last Man*. Although Fukuyama believed that liberal democracy had established itself as the best possible system of government, believing that with it the problem of man's desire for recognition had been fundamentally solved, he wondered whether such recognition could prove entirely satisfactory<sup>574</sup>. According to the American political scientist, the assertion of identity politics constituted one of the main threats to which modern democracies were exposed. By this, Fukuyama was referring especially to nationalist and populist movements, to which he attributed the ability to interpret the need for identity recognition of many sections of society, giving rise to the perception that these - as a group - were neglected and harmed by the political class<sup>575</sup>.

More generally, populism is seen as an appeal to “the people” against the existing power structure and prevailing beliefs and values<sup>576</sup>. Despite the differences between populisms (both

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<sup>571</sup> Violante, Luciano. *Democrazie Senza Memoria*. Einaudi, 2017.

<sup>572</sup> Violante, Luciano. “Come curare la democrazia”. Fondazione Leonardo, October 14, 2022.

<sup>573</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>574</sup> Iagulli, Paolo. *Fukuyama e la crisi della democrazia liberale: avevamo rimosso il thymós?*. Prospettiva Persona, Speciale “Democrazia Inclusiva” (2020).

<sup>575</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>576</sup> Muller, Jan-Werner. *What is Populism?*. 1st ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2016. doi:10.9783/9780812293784.

right-wing and left-wing), the central idea of populism is the claim to speak or act on behalf of the people - defined as “ordinary people” and the “silent majority” - against an elite that has usurped political power in an undemocratic manner<sup>577</sup>. During the second half of the 20th century, especially in Europe and North America, the phenomenon of populism waned, except for a few notable cases<sup>578</sup>. One case among all was Silvio Berlusconi's success in Italy in the March 1994 elections (which marked the final transition from the First to the Second Republic). Now, it should be noted that Silvio Berlusconi has never explicitly expressed an opinion on Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and The Last Man*<sup>579</sup>. Nevertheless, it could be said that in some ways Berlusconi incorporated certain of the implications of the End of History theory into his rhetoric. As an entrepreneur, he promoted strong support for market capitalism and liberal democratic institutions and presented himself as the standard-bearer of a new political course that marked the end of old ideologies (especially communism) and the affirmation of politics based on liberal principles. A fervent supporter of economic liberalism (based on the belief that the free market and competition are the best tools to generate economic growth and welfare) Berlusconi presented himself as a liberalist politician, intent on reducing taxes and reforming and downsizing the role of the state on a business model following corruption scandals<sup>580</sup>. Furthermore, *il Cavaliere* - as he was nicknamed by many - promised Italians a new economic miracle and supported globalization, in which he saw an opportunity for the country to expand its markets and improve competitiveness<sup>581</sup>.

It is interesting to note that it was Francis Fukuyama himself who pronounced on Berlusconi's personality. The American political scientist referring to *il Cavaliere* said: “For some time now, I have believed that when future historians look back at politics at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they will place the blame for the collapse of Western civilization on the shoulders of one man, Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi”<sup>582</sup>. According to Fukuyama, Berlusconi had the merit of having invented an approach to politics that has been widely imitated throughout the world, namely the ability to combine media and political power<sup>583</sup>. However, according to the American political scientist, the descent of *Forza Italia* and *il Cavaliere* was a tragedy for

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<sup>577</sup> Muller, Jan-Werner. *What is Populism?*. 1st ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2016. doi:10.9783/9780812293784.

<sup>578</sup> Fusaro, Carlo. *L'ascesa del populismo in Europa. Italia, la terra promessa*. Forum Costituzionale, August 26, 2019.

<sup>579</sup> Note that no sources emerged in the research carried out for the following analysis.

<sup>580</sup> Pombeni, Paolo. *Storia dei partiti italiani. Dal 1948 a oggi*. Il Mulino (2016).

<sup>581</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>582</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. “Silvio Berlusconi and the Decline of Western Civilization”. American Purpose, March 1, 2021.

<sup>583</sup> Ibidem.

Italy, which could and should have used the collapse of the old party system to renew the political life of the country in general<sup>584</sup>.

Fukuyama's reflections on Berlusconi and populism in general do not contradict what he expressed in *The End of History and The Last Man*. As is well known, according to the American political scientist, liberal democracy represents the culmination of mankind's ideological evolution and the ultimate form of government among men<sup>585</sup>. However, in this ultimate form of government, there is one aspect - that of identity politics - that must be taken into account. By identity politics, the author means a politics driven by the search for equal recognition by those groups that have been marginalized by their societies. The risk is that this desire for equal recognition easily slides into a claim not of equality but of group superiority. Which is precisely a fundamental part of the story of populism. In the context of this reflection, the concept of the Last Man comes into play. On the one hand, liberal democracies have effectively ensured peace and prosperity, but on the other hand, they have also been the domain of Last Men, who “spend their lives in the relentless pursuit of consumerist satisfaction, but who have nothing within themselves, no higher goal or ideal for which they are willing to strive and sacrifice”<sup>586</sup>. According to Fukuyama, this life will not satisfy everyone. Some will not accept becoming “undifferentiated members of a universal and homogeneous state, each equal to the other [...] because for them [...] the life of rational consumption will eventually become boring” and furthermore “they will want to have ideals to live and die for, even though the greatest ideals will already have been substantially realized on earth”<sup>587</sup>.

The American political scientist believes that this is precisely the contradiction that liberal democracy has not yet resolved<sup>588</sup>. A contradiction that populist (as well as nationalist) leaders have well understood, having realized that as important as material self-interest is, human beings are also driven by other and different motivations that are fundamentally related to identity<sup>589</sup>. This does not imply that liberal democracies are finished, it is simply that in order

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<sup>584</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*. paperback publish in 2015 ed. London: Profile books, 2015.

<sup>585</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>586</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. 1st ed. London: Profile, 2018.

<sup>587</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>588</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>589</sup> Iagulli, Paolo. *Fukuyama e la crisi della democrazia liberale: avevamo rimosso il thymós?*. Prospettiva Persona, Speciale “Democrazia Inclusiva” (2020).

to cope with populist politics, it is necessary to work towards an inclusive and non-divisive identity<sup>590</sup>.

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<sup>590</sup> Iagulli, Paolo. *Fukuyama e la crisi della democrazia liberale: avevamo rimosso il thymós?*. Prospettiva Persona, Speciale “Democrazia Inclusiva” (2020).

### 4.3 The Italian context: from the First to the Second Republic

During the last two decades of the 20th century, Italy went through a major socio-economic transformation. The post-war scenario, characterized by a poor, predominantly rural, patriarchal, religious, and class-oriented society had disappeared, leaving room for a freer, economically dynamic, rapidly modernizing, and more individualistic society<sup>591</sup>. The political events of republican Italy during the 1990s should be placed in a broader international framework. Already 1989 had been a crucial year on a global level, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall marking the beginning of the end of the Cold War and, consequently, the beginning of a new era in international relations<sup>592</sup>. In Italy, the government led by Giulio Andreotti - formed in the summer of '89 - was confronted with this event, i.e. the initial phase of a series of international changes that would mark the period between the autumn of '89 and the beginning of '92<sup>593</sup>. After all, in the immediate post-war period, the Republic was born in a very specific context, fitting in and carving out its own space within an international system marked by bipolarity<sup>594</sup>. The collapse of the Wall brought with it a series of consequences both internationally and nationally, which go far beyond the policies that led to the reunification of Germany. Quickly, a series of chain reactions were set in motion that led to the final demise of what had been the Eastern Bloc.

In Italy, the “*Pentapartito*” coalition led by Andreotti struggled to manage such an extraordinary phase, partly because of repeated ministerial instability and internal frictions within the governing majority<sup>595</sup>. Indeed, the collapse of the Wall and the bipolar system were for Italy the prelude to seeking a new position in the international scenario<sup>596</sup>. Paradoxically, Italy was the only nation in Western and Atlantic Europe in which the end of Soviet communism and US-USSR bipolarity influenced the political system, contributing to the implosion of the founding parties of the Republic<sup>597</sup>. In particular, the collapse of the East-West division had a significant impact on the Italian Communist Party (PCI), which transformed into

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<sup>591</sup> Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *Storia Dell'Italia Contemporanea: 1943-2023*. Nuova ed. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, Spa, 2024.

<sup>592</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>593</sup> Bedeschi, Giuseppe. *La Prima Repubblica, 1946-1993: Storia Di Una Democrazia Difficile*. Vol. 308. Rubbettino Editore, 2013.

<sup>594</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>595</sup> Vidotto, Vittorio e Salvatori S., Paola. *Atlante Del Ventesimo Secolo 1969-2000: I Documenti Essenziali* Editori Laterza, 2011.

<sup>596</sup> Bedeschi, Giuseppe. *La Prima Repubblica, 1946-1993: Storia Di Una Democrazia Difficile*. Vol. 308. Rubbettino Editore, 2013.

<sup>597</sup> Vidotto, Vittorio e Salvatori S., Paola. *Atlante Del Ventesimo Secolo 1969-2000: I Documenti Essenziali* Editori Laterza, 2011.

the Democratic Party of the Left in 1991<sup>598</sup>. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union, the last secretary of the party Achille Occhetto - during a congress in November 1989 - expressed the intention to abandon the old name and create a new party that would explicitly and definitively sever all ties with the communist tradition<sup>599</sup>. The decline of the PCI had already begun in the final years of Berlinguer's leadership, intensifying in the second half of the 1980s due to the inability of the communist leaders to understand the economic and social transformations. Occhetto's leadership thus faced not only profound changes in Italian society but also the dissolution of real socialism (the USSR)<sup>600</sup>. Consequently, the decision to dismantle the old party and establish a new one became inevitable.

The disappearance of the Soviet Union (1991) and the PCI inevitably had repercussions on the Italian party system as a whole. Indeed, the very existence of the Communist Party had in the past favored the governing parties (*Democrazia Cristiana* and the *Partito Socialista Italiano*<sup>601</sup>. DC and PSI), directing a large section of the electorate towards more moderate, non-communist parties. These parties had “occupied” civil society by dividing up all offices, even constructing and imposing a convoluted system of bribes in all public works contracts<sup>602</sup>. The mostly statist Italian system had enabled the parties to exert enormous control over society for the purpose of partition, where waste was the norm and where merit barely mattered in the selection of candidates for the various offices<sup>603</sup>. To this must be added the complete discretion of the parties and their leaders in the handling of public funds. This process of decomposition of the power system previously hinged on the convergence of the DC and PSI, was accentuated during the 1990s<sup>604</sup>. The consequence of such a crisis in the political system was a decline in consent and interest in the parties on the part of the population. As an indication of the population's intolerance of the party landscape, in 1991, in the referendum promoted by Mario Segni on the elimination of multiple preferences in elections, 95% of voters supported the end of multiple preferences<sup>605</sup>. In this scenario, the *Lega Nord* - born from Umberto Bossi's idea to merge six

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<sup>598</sup> Jones, Erik and Gianfranco Pasquino. *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by Jones, Erik, Gianfranco Pasquino. 1;First;First; ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015;2016;. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669745.001.0001.

<sup>599</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>600</sup> Salvadori, Massimo L. *Storia d'Italia: Il Cammino Tormentato Di Una Nazione, 1861-2016* Einaudi, 2018.

<sup>601</sup> Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *Storia Dell'Italia Contemporanea: 1943-2023*. Nuova ed. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, Spa, 2024.

<sup>602</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>603</sup> Richards, Michael D. and Paul R. Waibel. *Twentieth-Century Europe: A Brief History, 1900 to the Present*. Fourth ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2023.

<sup>604</sup> Bedeschi, Giuseppe. *La Prima Repubblica, 1946-1993: Storia Di Una Democrazia Difficile*. Vol. 308. Rubbettino Editore, 2013.

<sup>605</sup> Ibidem.

regionalist movements - gained more and more support. The *Lega* simultaneously presented itself as a populist movement with strong propaganda against political corruption and as a xenophobic movement with a violent anti-Southern polemic and the wildly improbable project of a future secession of the so-called Padania from the Republic<sup>606</sup>.

Thus, there were many signs that the Italian political framework had reached a critical point close to rupture. Exacerbating the signs of the impending political catastrophe in the nation was the behavior of the President of the Republic Francesco Cossiga<sup>607</sup>. President Cossiga's harsh words, which started in 1990 and got constantly stronger, indicated the attrition that was currently plaguing Italian politics. After a protracted dispute, in November 1991, Cossiga threatened once again to use the forces of order against the *Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura*<sup>608</sup>. This led to an open conflict between the state's powers, with the judiciary officially going on strike in protest on December 3rd<sup>609</sup>.

In 1992, the “*Tangentopoli*” scandal, which rocked a political system that was by then unaccountable, corrupt, and inefficient, worsened this already dire condition<sup>610</sup>. The “*Mani Pulite*” investigation behind the scandal was conducted by the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office affecting all the governing parties and bringing to light the endemic spread of corruption in many political and business circles, as well as the systematic illicit financing of parties<sup>611</sup>. The effects of the investigations were devastating, with the secretaries of all government parties being implicated and prosecuted, along with many other public administrators. Among them, socialist Bettino Craxi and Christian democrat Giulio Andreotti were also put on trial. While the latter was first sentenced to prison but was later exonerated on appeal, the former was sentenced to prison but fled into exile in Tunisia, where he lived until his death<sup>612</sup>. Generally speaking, the abrupt and unexpected surge of corruption investigations and prosecutions in Italy - between 1992 and 1994 - resulted in a series of major shocks that fundamentally altered the political landscape of Italy<sup>613</sup>. In less than two years, the political elite was cut down to size, the nation's leading parties vanished or split into smaller groups,

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<sup>606</sup> Bedeschi, Giuseppe. *La Prima Repubblica, 1946-1993: Storia Di Una Democrazia Difficile*. Vol. 308. Rubbettino Editore, 2013.

<sup>607</sup> Vidotto, Vittorio e Salvatori S., Paola. *Atlante Del Ventesimo Secolo 1969-2000: I Documenti Essenziali* Editori Laterza, 2011.

<sup>608</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>609</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>610</sup> Jones, Erik and Gianfranco Pasquino. *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by Jones, Erik, Gianfranco Pasquino. 1;First;First; ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015;2016;. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669745.001.0001.

<sup>611</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>612</sup> De Santa Olalla Saludes, Pablo Martín. "Italy: From Tangentopoli to the New Party System." *Miscelánea Comillas* 74, no. 145 (2017): 443-479.

<sup>613</sup> Ibidem.



and the electoral and party financing systems were significantly changed through a popular referendum<sup>614</sup>. In short, overwhelmed by these events, the First Republic collapsed.

*Tangentopoli* marked the end of the “Republic of parties” that had characterized post-war Italy<sup>615</sup>. Although it was not the institutions that failed, almost all political subjects and parties - which had been the protagonists in the life and history of the republic - were affected by the *Mani Pulite* investigation, leaving room for new players to emerge on the Italian political scene (among them *Forza Italia* led by businessman Silvio Berlusconi)<sup>616</sup>. The DC and the PSI, which had been the two parties on which the system of government had been based since the early 1960s, were practically wiped out. While the DC tried, unsuccessfully, to survive the *Tangentopoli* earthquake by changing its name to *Partito Popolare*; the PSI, already weakened by the loss of consensus in the previous years, could not withstand the wave of scandals and dissolved within a few years.

The extent of the transformations that had swept through Italian politics since 1992 was evident at the 1994 elections<sup>617</sup>. *Democrazia Cristiana*, which had dominated Italian politics since the end of World War II, split into three smaller parties, paving the way for the great victory of *Forza Italia* (formed in 1993 by media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi)<sup>618</sup>. In a context frayed by scandals and judicial investigations, Berlusconi was able to intercept the large majority of the former socialist and former *Democrazia Cristiana* electorate. The surprising victory of *Forza Italia* in 1994 - only a year after its foundation - can be explained by looking at the political context of those years. While it is true that Berlusconi possessed a television empire - an important means of communication with the electorate - to explain his rise only in these terms would be reductive<sup>619</sup>. In fact, through promises of renewal and a strong personalization of politics, the leader of *Forza Italia* was able to fill the political vacuum that had opened in the center and had to be filled in some way<sup>620</sup>.

Economically and socially, Italy was marked by the problems of public accounts, growth, employment, and the future of the welfare state. Since the 1960s, the performance of the Italian

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<sup>614</sup> De Santa Olalla Saludes, Pablo Martín. "Italy: From Tangentopoli to the New Party System." *Miscelánea Comillas* 74, no. 145 (2017): 443-479.

<sup>615</sup> Jones, Erik and Gianfranco Pasquino. *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by Jones, Erik, Gianfranco Pasquino. 1;First;First; ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015;2016;. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669745.001.0001.

<sup>616</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>617</sup> Bedeschi, Giuseppe. *La Prima Repubblica, 1946-1993: Storia Di Una Democrazia Difficile*. Vol. 308. Rubbettino Editore, 2013.

<sup>618</sup> Jones, Erik and Gianfranco Pasquino. *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by Jones, Erik, Gianfranco Pasquino. 1;First;First; ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015;2016;. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669745.001.0001.

<sup>619</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>620</sup> Ibidem.

economy has been erratic, with periodic accelerations and slowdowns<sup>621</sup>. It was evident that there were inconsistencies: on the one hand, Italy was one of the largest industrial countries in the world; on the other hand, public services and public administration were in rather inadequate condition<sup>622</sup>. While the industrial sector had achieved good results, the country lagged behind in the most high-tech sectors, such as aeronautics, fine mechanics, and informatics.

The weak point of the Italian economic system was certainly the *Mezzogiorno*, whose productive apparatus was clearly lagging behind the North and Centre<sup>623</sup>. Unemployment in the southern regions was already at very high levels when the *Cassa del Mezzogiorno* was abolished in 1992, having failed to promote an adequate use of public resources for productive investments<sup>624</sup>. The presence of mafia-like organizations magnified the enormous obstacles to economic and civil development in the South. Mafia branches had been present in Italy since the IWW, but by the 1980s the clans had extended their power from the distribution of narcotics to the ability to influence political power in acquiring contracts, tenders, and hidden financing. The last decade of the 20th century opened with a strong resurgence of mafia attacks on the State: a long series of attacks on exponents of the underworld, the most striking of which was the attack on magistrate Giovanni Falcone on 23 May 1992<sup>625</sup>. Falcone's murder had a very strong impact on public opinion not only because of the way it was organized (a bomb was placed under a section of the Palermo-Punta Raisi highway) but also because of the State's inability to stop mafia violence.

The crisis due to the difficulties in fighting the mafia aggravated an economic system already deeply marked by the scandals of *Tangentopoli*, instability, and stagnation. Indeed, since the beginning of the 1990s, the Italian economy has been in a state of crisis, characterized by growing imbalances in both public finance and foreign relations. In particular, the Italian production apparatus appeared structurally weak and was in a position of significant inferiority both in the context of the European Community and, more generally, internationally. Italy's distancing from the most advanced EU countries concerned economic development and the quality of infrastructure, particularly in the electricity sector, where there had long been a considerable deficit of domestic resources. In a phase in which development and international

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<sup>621</sup> Salvadori, Massimo L. *Storia d'Italia: Il Cammino Tormentato Di Una Nazione, 1861-2016* Einaudi, 2018.

<sup>622</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>623</sup> Gentiloni Silveri, Umberto. *Storia Dell'Italia Contemporanea: 1943-2023*. Nuova ed. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, Spa, 2024.

<sup>624</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>625</sup> Ibidem.

competition were increasingly based on the growth of the tertiary sector and its interrelation with industrial structures, the criticalities of the Italian economy were further reducing the general efficiency of the economic system. Therefore, it was clear that Italy had to adapt its production apparatus and business management to the new conditions of the world market and the increasingly intense pace of innovation as soon as possible.

Thus, during the 1990s Italy was faced with the challenge of profoundly reforming its economy to respond to a series of internal and external pressures. Among the main external factors was undoubtedly the increasing acceleration of the European integration process, culminating with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (a treaty that imposed strict economic criteria to access the future single currency). The decisions taken at Maastricht were fundamental since - after the signing of the treaty - it became necessary in Italy to reduce the inflation rate to the community average and to make the ratio of public debt to gross domestic product converge with that of the other CEE countries<sup>626</sup>. Specifically, the Maastricht criteria imposed stringent limits on the levels of inflation, public debt, fiscal deficits, and interest rates, requiring member states to make considerable economic and financial adjustment efforts<sup>627</sup>. In this context, the Italian government implemented a series of austerity measures and structural reforms precisely intending to reduce the public deficit and stabilize the economy<sup>628</sup>. Despite the efforts to get the public accounts back on track, many doubted that Italy would be able to meet the treaty criteria, but with the formation of Romano Prodi's government in May 1996, the measures to fulfill the obligations gained new momentum<sup>629</sup>. A process of privatization and liberalization of public businesses was started to increase efficiency and competitiveness while attempting to lessen the state's influence on the economy<sup>630</sup>. Important industries including transportation, telecommunications, and energy were progressively opened to private competition, breaking with the post-war economic paradigm that was typified by a significant state involvement<sup>631</sup>.

Despite the cost of unpopular economic maneuvers, the governments succeeded in consolidating the public accounts and bringing the country within the parameters decided in Maastricht. While bringing Italy within the Maastricht constraints, these measures had a major negative impact on employment and economic growth, which sparked a contentious discussion

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<sup>626</sup> Castronovo, Valerio. *Storia Economica d'Italia: Dall'Ottocento Al 2020*. New revis and enlarg ed. Torino: Einaudi, 2021.

<sup>627</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>628</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>629</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>630</sup> Jones, Erik and Gianfranco Pasquino. *The Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics*, edited by Jones, Erik, Gianfranco Pasquino. 1;First;First; ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015;2016;. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199669745.001.0001.

<sup>631</sup> Ibidem.

about the social effects and efficacy of the austerity and liberalization policies in place at the time<sup>632</sup>. First of all, also due to the growth of the tertiary sector, there was a change in the composition of the labor force by area of production. For instance, the percentage of workers in the agricultural sector was 6.6% compared to 13.3% in 1981, while the rate of workers in the industrial sector fell from 37.2% to 32%. Simultaneously with the shifts in the labor force composition, there was a noteworthy upward social mobility dynamic. However, this did not mean that class differences had disappeared, rather they had only become more complex and invisible. Even if it enabled most Italians to see an increase in their household income and the emergence of a new, wealthy middle class, the economic restructuring that resulted from the growth of wealth throughout the 1980s and 1990s undermined the employment bases of the working class. Furthermore, the implementation of austerity measures, the reduction of the welfare state, and the privatization of businesses have led to a rise in social inequality. This has primarily affected the poorer segments of society and the South, which has consistently demonstrated lower levels of development than the North. In the South, unemployment levels were three times higher than in the North and more than double those in the Centre. Apart from a persistent disparity, *Mezzogiorno's* disadvantages could be attributed to the fact that there were fewer export-oriented businesses that could withstand declines in domestic demand and a greater number of state workers who were negatively impacted by the public sector's contraction.

Those who suffered most from the impact of unemployment were women and young people. Even when they did manage to find work, it was typically in part-time or fixed-term positions, which became more common once employers began offering more flexibility in the workplace in the middle of the 1990s. A notable feature of the Italian labor force since the late 1980s has been the substantial influx of foreign workers. This added to the rise in irregular, frequently unlicensed employment, particularly in the agriculture sector. Moreover, the increasing demand for workers for low-level jobs, which many Italians were no longer willing to take, led to the use of foreign labor. For example, most immigrant women worked as domestic servants, while men's jobs were more varied, ranging from low-level positions in industry, construction, and services in the North to agriculture in the South.

The percentage of foreign workers had already increased since the 1970s when Italy had transformed from an emigrant exporting nation to a destination nation. This also influenced

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<sup>632</sup> Castronovo, Valerio. *Storia Economica d'Italia: Dall'Ottocento Al 2020*. New revis and enlarg ed. Torino: Einaudi, 2021.

government policies, which - as shown by the growth in consensus of parties like the *Lega Nord* and populist parties in general - became more openly racist and xenophobic. The media also contributed to fuelling these racist sentiments by associating violent crimes with foreign nationals. Inevitably, in this context, Italians' concerns and prejudices focused on issues of race and racism, influencing the political proposals of the new parties that emerged after the upheavals of 1992-1994.



## Conclusion

*The End of History?* was published the same year that the Berlin Wall finally fell, thus when it seemed that somehow the West and liberal democracy had triumphed. Francis Fukuyama believed that the global spread of liberal democracies and free-market capitalism of the West could signal the end of humanity's sociocultural evolution. That is, he thought that due to the imminent end of the Cold War and the consequent disappearance of possible alternatives to liberalism, the political struggle would end, and liberal democracy would become the last form of human government. From the outset, the American political scientist's analysis of changes on the international stage was seen as an overly biased statement of a neo-conservative view of world events. Not surprisingly, the author's work was met with a cascade of criticism. Fukuyama himself said in this regard "My hypothesis has been criticized from every conceivable point of view"<sup>633</sup>.

The aim of this dissertation was to investigate and analyze the debate around Francis Fukuyama's thought, looking in particular at the Italian case. The decision to focus the work on Italy was dictated by the fact that this country, deeply influenced by the ideological battles of the 20th century, offered a unique and complex reception to Fukuyama's thesis. Furthermore, it was interesting to conduct a more in-depth study into the opinions that Italian politicians and intellectuals formed concerning the theory of the end of history since there was a scarcer material on the influence of Fukuyama's theory in the Italian context. Through research and analysis of articles from Italian newspapers and magazines in the period between 1989 and 2001 (in which consultation with the archives of the Italian Senate Library was crucial), two important factors emerged. First, in Italy Fukuyama's theory was received with a combination of intrigue, skepticism, and criticism, reflecting the complex political and social transformations that took place in the country during that period. Secondly, Italian responses to *The End of History and the Last Man* were profoundly influenced by the nation's transition from the First to the Second Republic, the collapse of traditional political parties (PCI, PSI, and DC), and the emergence of new political movements such as the *Lega Nord*.

In the 1990s, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union were perceived as epochal events that would reshape the global political landscape, confronting the country with the need to carve out a role for itself on the international chessboard. While it is true that this

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<sup>633</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

climate of uncertainty for the future of international relations was widely shared, it is also true that in Italy instability affected the future of the country itself. As a country with a strong tradition of left-wing thinking and a complex relationship with liberal democracy (given its fascist past), it was inevitable that this had an impact on Fukuyama's theory view.

When Fukuyama's book was published in 1992, Italy was experiencing serious internal crises, causing less press attention to the author compared to countries like France and England. Academically, Fukuyama's words provided a cue for discussions on the future of the country, history, and politics (see for example the discourse of Bobbio and Leante). However, unlike the US case, a dialectical discussion with Fukuyama has not developed in Italy. The most explicit case of a confrontational relationship with the author that emerged from this analysis is that of Gianni Riotta. Within the Italian journalistic community, Riotta played a significant role, writing numerous articles - between 1989 and 2001 - discussing Fukuyama's theory, often directly challenging the author. The fact that the academic and journalistic community gave less space to a confrontation with Fukuyama's ideas does not mean that they did not recognize his merit or importance. It is simply that the numerous discourses that were open in Italy at the time - on globalization, on the process of European integration, on the state - required more attention.

Even the political personalities of the time gave less space in their debates to the theory of the end of history. If this is true, for instance, in the case of Silvio Berlusconi (who paradoxically professed to be a staunch supporter of market capitalism and liberal democratic institutions), the same cannot be said for figures such as Massimo D'Alema, Luciano Violante, and Giulio Andreotti. These prominent Italian figures confronted Fukuyama's theory, often questioning its assumptions and implications. D'Alema, for example, criticized the idea that liberal democracy had definitively triumphed, emphasizing the continuous social and economic challenges that contradicted the notion of the end of history; whereas Violante highlighted the dangers of assuming that the victory of liberal democracy would automatically guarantee social justice and the protection of human rights.

Therefore, as expected, not only did members of the Italian political class - probably because they were caught up in the country's impending problems - pay less attention to Fukuyama's words, but even when they did, in most cases, they were members of the left-wing political scene.



Through this analysis, it was possible to understand the extent of the impact of the country's political context on the debate of the end of history. The Italian case is peculiar because, although often academics, journalists, and politicians did not refer directly to Fukuyama, they nevertheless questioned and dealt with similar issues (such as the future of liberal democratic institutions, economic globalization, and the end of ideologies).

In the Italian context of the 1990s, the question of what the future would hold was particularly pressing. This was both because of the crisis of the party system and the commonly known First Republic and because of the rise in the country of a phenomenon that was fading away elsewhere: populism. In this regard, the peculiarity of the Italian case has been recognized by Francis Fukuyama himself. The American political scientist noted in 1990s Italy those contradictions that - as he said in *The End of History and the Last Man* - liberal democracy had not yet resolved and that populism had grasped, gaining popularity.

This research has shown that Fukuyama's predictions of the triumph of democratic liberalism have generated an intense global debate. Specifically, looking at the cases of the US, France, and the UK, it was noted that the author was frequently accounted to be too optimistic and to have not considered the complexities and resistance that liberal democracies would encounter in their attempt to expand globally. One of the most frequent criticisms was that events such as the invasion of Kuwait and the war in Yugoslavia proved Fukuyama wrong and that history was not over.

Moreover, it turned out that much of the criticism stemmed from a misinterpretation of Fukuyama's use of the term "history". He had never claimed that major events would never happen again, but only that history understood as "one coherent evolutionary process" - as Hegel and Marx saw it - had reached its endpoint. In this regard, looking at the various articles in the *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, and *The Guardian* that were analyzed, it was also noted that the debate rarely focused on the second part of the book: that of the Last Man. Fukuyama has been accused of being only an optimist and a defender of the Western model, but it must be remembered that he himself had concerns about the future of the world.

According to Fukuyama, liberal democracies have problems within themselves, the most pressing of which concerns the fact that liberal states, while providing a framework of security from internal and external dangers, are constitutionally incapable of offering guidance on what constitutes a good life. This leads to a vacuum in liberal societies that is sometimes filled with elements that are far from good or desirable. A case illustrating this can be found in the 1990s

Italy. Indeed, Italian populism is an example of how liberal societies still have contradictions within them that “could still lead to their downfall”<sup>634</sup>. This shows once again the peculiarity of the Italian case in the debate on *The End of History and the Last Man*.

Finally, the last element that must be emphasized concerns the relationship between Fukuyama and his critics. Due to the many criticisms raised and the debate that ensued over the years, Fukuyama responded to the criticism and refined his theory. The author recognized that liberal democracy was not inevitable or irreversible and that there were stable authoritarian alternatives. Not by chance, already in the last passage of *The End of History?* in 1989, he stated: “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”<sup>635</sup>. Nevertheless, the American political scientist continued to argue that, in the long run, liberal democracy would remain the form of government most capable of satisfying basic human needs, including those of recognition and dignity.

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<sup>634</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *End of History and the Last Man*. 1;New; ed. New York: Free Press, 2006.

<sup>635</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.



## **List of abbreviations**

CCP, Chinese Communist Party

CEEC, Central and Eastern European countries

CIS, Commonwealth of Independent States

DC, Democrazia Cristiana

EC, European Community

EU, European Union

INF, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement

NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NEP, New Economic Policy

PC, Personal Computer

PCI, Partito Comunista Italiano

PDS, Partito Democratico della Sinistra

POTUS, President of the United States

PSI, Partito Socialista Italiano

UK, United Kingdom

US, United States

USSR, Sovietic Union

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