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INTRODUCTION

A Democratic Age

SPEAKING AT THE CONFERENCE held by the Congress of Cultural Freedom in West Berlin in June 1960, the highly influential French political philosopher Raymond Aron (1905–83) reflected on the democratic stabilization that he believed had occurred in Europe, west of the Iron Curtain, since the Second World War.[1] Compared with the destructive struggles of ideology, class, and ethnicity that had marked the first half of the twentieth century in Europe, Aron argued that a new form of industrial society had emerged in the fifteen years since the war, characterized by representative democratic institutions and guarantees of personal freedom. Stability was not, of course, guaranteed. As he readily admitted, the recent collapse of the Fourth Republic in France in 1958, and its replacement by the presidential Fifth Republic headed by Charles de Gaulle, demonstrated that there was no determinism to the process whereby socio-economic modernization led to political stability. And yet what Aron termed the *démocraties stabilisées* or *pacifiées* that had taken root in Western Europe since the Second World War were more than the by-product of the political immobilism imposed on Europe, west and east, by the Cold War. In Aron's view, they marked the coming of age of a new model of Western European government and society, which had not so much resolved the divisions of the past as rendered them obsolete through a combination of economic prosperity, effective governmental action, and social compromise. Just as nobody would seriously imagine a renewed Franco-German war, so the political conflicts between the extremes of communism and fascism had been transcended by a hegemonic democracy. Given the broad agreement that he believed now existed regarding the essential nature of the political system, Aron argued that debate within the Western democracies had shifted to essentially secondary issues, such as the role the state should assume in economic policy-making, and the relative priorities to accord to goals of equality and liberty.[2]

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[1] Raymond Aron, "Les institutions politiques de l'occident dans le monde du XXe siècle," in *La démocratie à l'épreuve du XXe siècle*, by Aron, A. Schlesinger, G. Arciniegas, A. K. Brohi, M. Berger and F. Bondy (Paris, 1960), 11–15.

The location, the event, the date, and the individual are all essential elements for understanding Aron's thesis of the democratic stabilization of Western Europe. Nowhere in Europe were the shadows of the Second World War and of the Cold War more present than in the western half of the divided former capital of Germany. West Berlin had become during the Soviet-imposed blockade of 1948 an exceptional place, where the ruins of the capital of Hitler's Third Reich and the present-day reality of the Cold War partition of Europe—as expressed by Berlin's four zones of Allied military occupation—appeared to be projected, as it were, on to the topography of the city.[3] West Berlin became, in the loaded language of the time, an outpost of freedom, juxtaposed starkly against the Soviet military occupation of eastern Germany and the institutions of the Communist German Democratic Republic established in East Berlin from 1949. During the 1950s, the Cold War tensions had receded somewhat from Berlin, but they would return suddenly and dramatically a year after Aron's speech, when in August 1961 the Soviet and East German authorities abruptly ended free passage between the Soviet-controlled east of the city and the three zones of West Berlin. The Berlin Wall, which divided East and West Berlin in the most stark manner possible, rapidly became both the dominant physical symbol of the Cold War partition of Europe, and, during the tense military and diplomatic stand-off that followed its construction, the most likely stimulus to full-scale conflict between the opposing camps.[4] Appearance did not entirely match reality. Whatever the fears of a military confrontation between the Soviet and American forces based in the city, the closing off of the porous frontier between the Soviet-controlled sector of Berlin and the west of the city removed an anomaly and contributed to the pervasive stabilization that characterized the Cold

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[2] Raymond Aron, "Institutions politiques de l'occident," 11–42. See also his very similar argument in "La société industrielle et les dialogues politiques de l'occident," in *Colloques de Rheinfelden*, by Aron, G. Kennan, and R. Oppenheimer (Paris, 1960), 9–38.

[3] J. Evans, *Life among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (Basingstoke, UK, 2011).

[4] P. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford, 2011).

War within Europe during the 1960s.[5] In the context of the time, however, the crisis of 1961 gave new force to the image of Berlin as the pre-eminent Cold War city: the place where east and west, and more especially the political and cultural systems that they represented, confronted each other with implacable directness.[6]

It was therefore no accident that West Berlin was chosen by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) as the location of its 1960 conference. The CCF established itself as the quintessential institution of Cold War liberalism.[7] Its inaugural conference had also been held in the city at the post-war peak of the Cold War in June 1950, assembling an eclectic array of prominent western intellectuals in defence of the values of cultural and intellectual freedom and to protest against the oppression of artists, writers, and scientists in Soviet-controlled Central and Eastern Europe. Funded from the outset by the CIA through a variety of front organisations, the CCF was one of the key institutions of an American cultural diplomacy that sought to assert the values of individual liberty as a means of countering the appeal exercised by Communism in the immediate post-war years over many western intellectuals. Yet, though its propagandistic purposes always remained close to the surface, the success of the CCF's initial conference, as well as the broader progression of the Cold War, led to an evolution in the purposes and character of the Congress. The emergency atmosphere of the early years—rallying all like-minded intellectuals in the defence of freedom—gave way to a broader role for the CCF as a forum for an influential phalanx of predominantly liberal American and European intellectuals concerned as much with analysing the nature of contemporary western society as with denouncing the horrors of the totalitarian east. The CCF established its headquarters in Paris and with the help of its American backers funded a number of high-profile intellectual magazines as well as organizing cultural festivals and conferences during the 1950s.

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[5] L. Freedman, "Berlin and the Cold War," in *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances*, ed. J.P.S. Gearson and K. Schake (Basingstoke, UK, 2002), 1–9.

[6] P. Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–1949* (Cambridge, UK, 2007), 8.

[7] The CCF has generated a substantial historical literature. See notably P. Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme: Le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris, 1950–1975* (Paris, 1995); P. Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York, 1989); F. S. Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 1999); G. Scott-Smith, "The 'Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century' Festival and the Congress for Cultural Freedom: Origins and Consolidation, 1947–52," *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (2000): 121–43, and "The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Constructing an Intellectual Atlantic Community," in *Defining the Atlantic Community: Culture, Intellectuals and Politics in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, ed. M. Mariano (New York, 2010), 132–45.

The most significant of these was the conference that it held in Milan in 1955. Entitled "The Future of Freedom," this event—in the organisation of which Aron played a leading role—reflected strongly the new orientation of the Congress. Almost dismissive of the challenge presented by the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, it looked rigorously to the future, analysing how technological developments, socio-economic modernization, and the rapid growth in industrial productivity were generating a new form of society in which conflicts of ideology would be replaced by issues of economic policy and social planning. The seductive thesis of "an end of ideology," advanced by the American liberal intellectual Daniel Bell in his book of the same name, published in 1960 and derived in part from his presentation to the Milan conference, caught the intellectual mood of the resurgent liberalism of the later 1950s. The notion of ideologies as self-contained world views based on abstract principles appeared at odds with the realities of the new world generated by the economic growth of the post-war era, which was almost literally concreting over the legacies of Europe's traumatic past. These ideas, somewhat simplified from Bell's formulation of them, became the leitmotif of the CCF's activities and provided an obvious theme for the Congress's next major conference, held in West Berlin in 1960.[8]

This Berlin conference marked the apogee of the Congress's influence. Compared with the similar event the CCF had held in the city ten years earlier, its tone was self-consciously superior, even celebratory. The CCF was now a well-established and prestigious organization, and the conference was attended by 213 participants from across the globe, including an impressive range of European intellectuals.[9] The host city had changed too: while the West Berlin of 1950 had been tangibly dominated by the ruined buildings of its wartime destruction, and by the material hardships exacerbated by the blockade imposed by the surrounding Soviet forces, the West Berlin of 1960 was a very different city. The ruins that remained had now become symbolic relics of the city's past, while the modernist architecture of its reconstruction expressed the prosperity and increasing self-confidence of the Federal Republic. West Berlin was no longer a beleaguered outpost but a "showcase of the west," as personified by the city's vivid cultural life and cosmopolitan character.[10] Its mood was personified too by the city's highly visible young mayor, Willy Brandt, whose election in 1957 had symbolized the victory of a self-consciously modernizing tendency within the German Socialist Party, the SPD. Strongly if discreetly supported by the American authorities, Brandt saw himself as a symbol of the new progressive mood in German politics, focused more on the challenges of creating a prosperous future than on loyalty to the Marxist heritage of the SPD. Brandt addressed the CCF conference, expounding his social-democratic politics of social reform, support for liberal freedoms, and marked anti-communism.[11]

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[8] D. Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, IL, 1960). See also Bell's retrospective comments (dedicated to the memory of Aron) on the publication of his book and its origins in the Milan conference in D. Bell, "The End of Ideology Revisited," *Government and Opposition* 23 (1988): 134, as well as G. Scott-Smith, "The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the End of Ideology and the 1955 Milan Conference: 'Defining the Parameters of Discourse,'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 37 (2002): 437–55, and T. B. Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte: Herbert Marcuse und die Denksysteme im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg, 2010), 567–76.

[9] Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 379–80. M. Hochgeschwender *Freiheit in der Offensive?: Der Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen* (Munich, 1998), 528–34, gives a figure of 221 participants from 48 countries.

Above all, the political context had changed. Given the brutal suppression by Soviet forces of the uprising against Communist rule in Hungary in 1956 and the daily stream of citizens choosing to leave East Germany through the open door of Berlin to move to West Germany, the urgency of countering the appeal of Communism had receded. Instead, Aron's speech gave rise to a wide-ranging debate among the participants about the evolution of western society. Not all agreed with Aron's analysis; and the declaration issued by the Congress in Berlin was notable for the way in which it looked outside of the ideological frontiers of Europe. It paid as much attention to deploring attacks on freedom in Castro's Cuba and apartheid South Africa as it did to the more familiar cause of the persecuted intellectuals in the totalitarian states of the east.[12]

The timing of Aron's speech was therefore also very important. Though he was unaware of it, 1960 marked a point of transition from a European-oriented definition of democratic politics to the more globalized forms of democracy that emerged over the subsequent decade. Moreover, what seemed at the time to be the almost miraculous process whereby Europe had escaped from cycles of military warfare, economic instability, and political conflict to enter a new era of prosperity and peace was to prove to be merely a brief interlude in Europe's continuing conflicts. If Western Europe was enjoying a democratic peace in 1960, this was a peace achieved at the expense of the denial of those same democratic freedoms to the populations of the post-fascist dictatorships of Spain and Portugal and the Soviet-controlled states of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as those who remained the disenfranchised subjects of Europe's colonial empires. And yet, even as Aron was speaking in Berlin, violent events elsewhere in Algeria, Congo, and many of the colonial territories in between presaged the impending demise of those empires, and with them of the Eurocentric structures of power—military, economic, political, and cultural—that had provided the basis of modern Europe's global ascendancy. Moreover, though the Soviet Union of Khrushchev no longer inspired the same fears within Europe as had that of Stalin ten years earlier, Communism was far from being a spent force. The success of Communist revolutions in China in 1949 and, over the subsequent years, in Indochina, Cuba, and many other areas of the non-European world effectively destroyed any prospect of a global hegemony of western democratic values, and gave a new and unpredictable energy to the political conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s in the post-colonial world.

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[10] P. Broadbent and S. Hake, eds., *Berlin: Divided City, 1945–1989* (New York, 2010), 113; C. Mesch, *Modern Art at the Berlin Wall: Demarcating Culture in the Cold War Germanys* (London, 2008), 36–48.

[11] B. Marshall, *Willy Brandt* (London, 1990), 31–42; S. Krause "*Neue Westpolitik*: The Clandestine Campaign to Westernize the SPD in Cold War Berlin, 1948–1958," *Central European History* 48 (2015): 79–99.

[12] Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 381–87. The texts of the papers given at the conference in the session based around Aron's speech were republished, in German translation, in Kongress für kulturelle Freiheit, *Die Bewährung der Demokratie im 20. Jahrhundert: Das Seminar von Berlin* (Zurich, 1961).

Even within the walled garden of post-war Western Europe, the muffled conflicts of ethnicity, gender, and social class that had been apparent to those who chose to listen to them in the 1950s would give way within a few short years to the much more contested politics of the later 1960s. From the protest marches on the streets of Paris and many other major European cities (including West Berlin) to the civil-rights campaigns in Northern Ireland and numerous strikes and factory occupations of the 1960s and early 1970s, Western Europe would return all too rapidly to many of its old habits of ideological conflict, state repression, and social and political violence that Aron had regarded as having been vanquished in 1960. The CCF itself was one of the first victims of these changes. The public revelation of its CIA funding in 1966–67 led to a rapid decline in the Congress's public influence, and within a few years to its liquidation. In truth, the Congress had by the end of the 1960s outlived its intellectual heyday. The combination of anti-communism, liberalism, and social-democratic planning that had provided the oxygen of its intellectual development during the 1950s appeared outmoded in the much more polarized intellectual climate of the subsequent decade, in which the emergence of an anti-American

New Left and a much more individualist neoliberalism of the right eroded the consensus that the post-ideological CCF had proclaimed.[13] Aron, too, was obliged to accept that times had changed. In a much less confident book entitled *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente*, which he published in 1977, Aron admitted, in a tone that was part defiant and part reflective, that many of his predictions of 1960 had proved to be misplaced. Though he remained convinced more than ever of the superiority of liberal freedom over the state socialism of the USSR and of Communism's western fellow travellers, he feared that the resurgence of social and political conflict in Western Europe marked a return to the violence that he had witnessed as a young man in Germany. Moreover, he warned that what he regarded as the abandonment by many intellectuals of liberal values might lead to a wider "loss of legitimacy" on the part of the democratic regimes.[14]

Thus, viewed even through the prism of his own hindsight, Aron's comments in 1960 must inevitably appear inadequate, if not wilfully complacent. His perspective was that of a privileged French intellectual, deeply rooted in the anti-communist mentalities and networks of the era, who passed over in silence the manifold inequalities of class, race, and gender that disfigured the democracies of Western Europe. Indeed, his statement that Europe had arrived at some form of political and social consensus rested on a disregard not only for the millions of Western Europeans who continued to vote for Communist parties, but also for the many millions more who, through unemployment, economic migration, and the structural inequalities that limited access to housing, education, and welfare, were experiencing the costs of Western Europe's supposed "miracle years."[15] Europe did not become a democratic society in or after 1945, and Aron's perspective, like that of many subsequent historians, was based far too exclusively on the experiences of a white, educated bourgeoisie who were the principal beneficiaries of post-war economic and social change. In more strictly political terms too, Aron's central assumption that the political regimes of Western Europe were indeed democratic must be relativized. The democratic refounding of Europe in 1945 did bring an unprecedented stability and uniformity to the politics of the western half of the continent. But the democracy it inaugurated was always circumscribed by the stability it sought to achieve and the interests it was constructed to serve. By creating a top-down democratic order that eschewed the governmental weakness and parliamentary instability associated with Europe's previous experiments with democracy, the architects of post-1945 European democracy limited opportunities for popular control of rulers and for expressions of dissent at the same time as they enhanced the freedom of action of state officials. The consequence, as its critics in 1968 would declare, was a "formal democracy," founded on the regular rituals of parliamentary elections and negotiation with a range of interest groups, but from which the people, and something of the noise and vibrancy inherent to a pluralist democratic culture, was at times strangely absent.[16]

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[13] Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive?*, 535–47; Coleman, *Liberal Conspiracy*, 219–34.

[14] Raymond Aron, *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente* (Paris, 1977), 13–29. See also p. 297.

[15] The concept of the "miracle years" owes much to H. Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949–1968* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).

This does not mean that Aron's comments in 1960 were without value. He was of course not the only figure in the twentieth century to have declared that the conflicts of the past had given way to a new era of harmony.[17] His view, moreover, was shared at the time by many others, from a wide diversity of backgrounds and opinions, who felt that Europe had passed over a watershed of experience after 1945 that rendered many of the errors of past dreams newly visible and invested the democratic process with a new sobriety.[18] Aron, besides, was no apologist for the established order. During his long intellectual career from the 1930s to the 1980s, he acquired a distinguished reputation within France and beyond, both as a public intellectual and as the author of important works of political philosophy and sociology. Above all, he worked hard. He had a deep familiarity with Marx's ideas at a time when many preferred to feign such a knowledge. He was highly cosmopolitan, and had read the work of many German, English, and American intellectuals when many of his fellow Parisian intellectuals remained confined within their exclusively francophone intellectual culture. And, in an age of humanist generalization, he recognized that an understanding of contemporary society demanded a training in economic theory and quantitative sociological methods. His wide-ranging expertise led him to be occasionally trenchant in his criticism of those intellectuals, such as his nemesis and exact contemporary Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he regarded as motivated more by romantic dreams than by careful analysis. But he was similarly forceful in his attitude towards successive French governments, notably in his denunciation of the purposes and conduct of the Algerian War, and of the policies of de Gaulle.

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[16] Re. "formal democracy," see pp. 272–73.

[17] The obvious comparison is with Francis Fukuyama's essay, initially published in the immediate aftermath of the revolutions of 1989, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992). But one might equally well think of the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917: J. Bergman, *The French Revolutionary Tradition in Russian and Soviet Politics, Political Thought, and Culture* (Oxford, 2019).

[18] V. Depkat, *Lebenswenden und Zeitenwenden: Deutsche Politiker und die Erfahrungen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2007).

Aron readily acknowledged, too, the flaws of modern democratic structures, commenting on one occasion that "Modern society . . . is a democratic society to be observed without transports of enthusiasm or indignation."[19] Indeed, it was this relativism that, in the view of his most enthusiastic recent disciple, Tony Judt, made him such a distinctive figure. Politics, Aron insisted, required facing up to hard truths; it "is never a conflict between good and evil, but always a choice between the preferable and the detestable."[20] If this led him on occasions, as during the upheavals in Paris in May 1968, to side with the established order, it gave him the courage also to stand up to authority when it made the wrong choices. Above all, he presented himself as a self-consciously moderate pragmatist, in the tradition of de Tocqueville. At a time when many European intellectuals were certain most of all of the rectitude of their views, Aron preferred to be right about his facts. His preoccupation with empirical knowledge and with what Judt termed the "uncomfortable minutiae of political and economic reality" was also redolent of the empirical mentality of the post-war years, when ideological rhetoric was giving way to a cult of the objective (and preferably statistical) fact.[21] But it also gave Aron's work a seriousness and a durability denied to those of many of his contemporaries. His concept of the modern industrial society was, again, very much a product of its time, reflective of the assumptions of an era when all societies, regardless of their cultural heritage or political label, appeared to be converging towards a common model of modernity. But, whatever its undoubted limitations, it marked the emergence of a new spirit of social analysis that sought to investigate the internal fabric of societies. Aron was, by general reputation, a cold writer; and for him that was also a form of praise.[22] He saw himself as a *spectateur engagé*, whose self-conscious distancing from the passions of the moment did not disguise his firm but disabused support for pluralist and democratic values. Like

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[19] Quoted in T. Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago, 1998), 163.

[20] Quoted in A. Craiutu, "Thinking Politically: Raymond Aron and the Revolution of 1968 in France," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, ed. V. Tismaneanu (Budapest, 2011), 126–29. Aron's emphasis on realism was particularly apparent in his comments on the French war in Algeria: Raymond Aron, *La tragédie algérienne* (Paris, 1957), i–iii.

[21] Judt, *Burden of Responsibility*, 26. See also A. Craiutu, "Raymond Aron and the Tradition of Political Moderation in France," in *French Liberalism from Montesquieu to the Present Day*, ed. R. Geenens and H. Rosenblatt (Cambridge, UK, 2012), 271–90.

[22] N. Roussellier, "Raymond Aron," in *Dictionnaire des intellectuels français*, ed. J. Julliard and M. Winock (Paris, 1996), 85–87.

FIGURE 1. Raymond Aron circa 1960. Jean-Louis Swiners/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images

many others—perhaps most notably Henry Kissinger—who shared his Jewish background and who had lived through the upheavals of the 1930s and the war years, Aron was always aware that worse regimes than democracy existed; but he was also unconvinced that any better regime was possible.[23]

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This book is therefore intended as an attempt to take seriously Aron's thesis of a democratic stabilization of Western Europe by exploring the nature and development of democracy, as well as its limitations, in Europe between the end of the Second World War and the political and social upheavals of the later 1960s and early 1970s. The stability and uniformity of the regimes of parliamentary democracy that established themselves across the western half of Europe after 1945, from Norway to Sicily, were a remarkable phenomenon, and all the more so given the chaotic instability of political regimes that had been evident in many areas of Europe since the First World War. In that respect, 1945 was the moment when the music stopped, and Western Europe acquired a certain stability, and even predictability. The linked chain of elections, parliaments, and governments established itself with such emphasis after the Second World War that any alternative, especially one that stepped outside the conventions of parliamentary democracy, came to seem to almost all non-Communist political figures of the post-war era heretical, or indeed illegitimate. As a parliamentary commission set up during one of Belgium's many post-war governmental crises commented succinctly in 1945, "outside of democracy, there lie only adventures, miseries, and dangers" (hors de la démocratie parlementaire, il n'est qu'aventures, misères et périls).[24]

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[23] Re. Aron, see notably Judt, *Burden of Responsibility*, 137–82, and B. Anderson, *Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political* (Lanham, MD, 1997), as well as his substantial but personally unrevealing memoirs: Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: Cinquante ans de réflexion politique* (Paris, 1983). Re. Kissinger, see J. Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), esp. 16–51.

This comment, on the part of a committee composed of parliamentarians, was self-interested, but the attitude it expressed was one with which many would have come to concur. Important sources of conflict remained, most notably across the durable fault line between Christian and liberal or socialist conceptions of democracy. But Western European politics did converge during the post-war years on a particular way of doing democracy: national and local elections, conducted under a simple principle of one (male and female) citizen one vote, chose the people's representatives, who, assembled in the parliaments and council chambers of Europe, voted on projects of legislation proposed by governments composed of the elected representatives of one, or generally more, political parties. Alongside this electoral sovereignty, however, the increasingly complex dossiers of social and economic legislation obliged governments to work with, and in some cases to devolve responsibility to, a range of socio-economic interest groups, including trade unions and farmers' and employers' organizations. Democracy, consequently, became less a matter of victory or defeat than a process of continuous negotiation. Civil servants, elected politicians, the representatives of interest groups, and an expanding penumbra of expert advisors constituted an increasingly homogeneous if at times rather aloof culture of government, from which the people themselves were largely absent. It was also, however, a world where decisions accorded, more often than not, with the logics of a rational pragmatism, and with the constraints imposed by respect for the rule of law. Compared with the rowdy assemblies of the past, democracy had become more professional and also more serious.

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[24] Chambre des représentants, "Rapport au nom de la commission" [March 1945], cited in M. Conway, *The Sorrows of Belgium: Liberation and Political Reconstruction 1944–47* (Oxford, 2012), 251.

This was also a model of democracy that endured. In the roughly twenty-five-year period from 1945 to the upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s, the only changes of regime that occurred in Europe were the demise of the Fourth Republic in France in 1958 and the military coup that overthrew the Greek parliamentary regime in 1967, before being reversed in 1974. Neither, however, generated a durable alternative to the political status quo in Europe, which increasingly found its transnational expression in the consolidation and subsequent expansion of the institutions of European cooperation and integration. Notions of a "consensual democracy"—consensual in its principles as well as in its methods of decision-making—became increasingly current by the 1960s, reflecting the widespread sense that Western Europe had arrived at a fixed definition of its political identity.[25] This consensus was, of course, always more limited than it appeared. But the very fact that such a phrase could be used demonstrated how much had changed in Europe since the Second World War: democracy was something on which the people of Western Europe felt themselves to be largely agreed.[26]

The rather sudden transition of mid-twentieth-century Western Europe to this democratic age has seemed so obvious that it has, at least until recently, evaded substantial historical analysis.[27] In part, the reasons for this relative neglect lie in the politics of more recent decades. The twofold reshaping of European politics that followed the regime changes in central and eastern Europe in 1989 and the attacks by Islamic militants on the United States in 2001 and associated acts of violence that occurred in a number of European cities over the following years gave a new intensity to the association of Europe and democracy. This was evident in the celebration of the "return" of the hitherto Soviet-controlled territories to Europe and to democracy after 1989, as well as in the democratic legitimation that underpinned the projection of European power (albeit under an American logistical and diplomatic aegis) to the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and the other European frontier wars of the early twenty-first century. It has been reinforced too by the internal politics of Europe. The popular disaffection that has enveloped in recent years the project of European unity, the emergence of movements of right-wing populism hostile to a political elite perceived to be too remote from the real concerns of the people, and the politics of austerity provoked by the monetary crisis of the euro have all, in different ways, provoked a diffuse but wide-ranging debate about the shortcomings of Europe's democratic culture. In this way, 1945 has become one of the mythic foundations of the European present: a moment when Europe incontestably made a change for the better, and when the causes of democracy, of Europe, and of social progress were for once aligned.[28]

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[25] N. Elder, A. H. Thomas, and D. Arter, *The Consensual Democracies?: The Government and Politics of the Scandinavian States*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1988), 9–28.

[26] C. Maier, "Democracy since the French Revolution," in *Democracy: The Unfinished Journey 508 BC to AD 1993*, ed. J. Dunn (Oxford, 1993), 145; P. Buton, *Une histoire intellectuelle de la démocratie* (Paris, 2000), 143.

[27] M. Conway, "The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1973," *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004): 67–88.

By linking 1945 with the politics of the present day, this interpretation has acted as an obstacle to historical understandings of the era that followed the Second World War. Far from receding further away—and soon beyond the memory of living Europeans—the establishment of democratic institutions in the states of Western Europe after 1945 has become part of a continuous present. The shortcomings of such an account—most obviously its marked western bias—matter less than the way in which it has tended to deprive Europe's mid-century reconstruction of its distinctiveness as a period of complex historical change. The perception that—in the phraseology of numerous university courses and associated textbooks—"Europe since 1945" forms part of a single historical span, linking the Europe of the twenty-first century with the immediate aftermath of the demise of the Third Reich, imposes a teleological framework and flattens historical perspectives.[29] Above all, it renders too easy the transition from fascism to democracy. The possibility that anything other than parliamentary democracy—communism, a resurgence of fascism, authoritarian dictatorship, or simply political chaos—could have followed the death of Hitler disappears all too rapidly from view.

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[28] C. Crouch, *Post-Democracy* (Cambridge, UK, 2004), 6–8.

[29] Re. the use of the formula "Europe since 1945," or its equivalents, see notably W. Laqueur, *Europe since Hitler* (London, 1970); M. Fulbrook, ed., *Europe since 1945* (Oxford, 2001); and R. Wegs and R. Ladrech, *Europe since 1945*, 4th ed. (New York, 1996). For a valuable corrective to these teleologies, see T. Buchanan, *Europe's Troubled Peace: 1945 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Chichester, UK, 2012).

This perception of 1945 as a fixed frontier, when a certain history ended and the Europe of the present began, has been reinforced, too, from the other end, by the imposing energy with which European historians have addressed the causes and character of the exterminations, atrocities, mass violence, and civil wars that swept across Europe, partly under Nazi control but also at times entirely beyond it, during the 1930s and early 1940s. The much more sophisticated interpretation that this historical work has generated of what it has become conventional in France to term the *années noires* has had the consequence of contrasting, implicitly or explicitly, the collective violence of the years leading up to 1945 with the more peaceful and democratic character of the era that followed.[30] The more that historians have explored the horrors of the pre-1945 period, the more they risk reducing what happened in Europe subsequently to a contrast between the wartime panoramas of death camps and ruins, and the consumer products of post-war prosperity. And yet, as historians have demonstrated, the continuities of politics, of state policies, and simply of experience across the dividing line of 1945 were substantial. The idea of a "zero hour"—a *Stunde Null*—in Germany or indeed anywhere else in Europe when the military battles of the Second World War came to an end is a myth, but one that has remained with us, dividing the twentieth-century history of Europe into two distinct but also rather unequal halves.[31]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, historical work undertaken on the years after 1945 has often focused on the way in which the legacies of the war years jutted into the history of the subsequent decades. The idea that the post-war period was precisely that—post-war—has been reflected not only in the uncompromising title of one of the most successful historical accounts of Europe after 1945,[32] but also in the large body of historical literature that in recent years has examined how Europeans, collectively and individually, came to terms with, or evaded, the legacies of the mass killings, civil wars, and forced migrations that had occurred over the previous years.[33] Histories of public memory and commemoration, as well as of the more private discourses of suffering, bereavement, and loss, have demonstrated that much of the apparent optimism of the post-war years rested on conspiracies of silence and the construction of highly selective accounts of the war years that occluded the complicity of public authorities and individual citizens in many of the darker actions of the preceding years. Only from the 1960s onwards did Western European societies gradually develop the means, and perhaps the collective confidence, to confront more directly the legacies of this traumatic past.[34]

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[30] P. Lagrou, "De l'histoire du temps présent à l'histoire des autres: Comment une discipline critique devint complaisante," *Vingtième siècle* 118 (2013): 101–19.

[31] Histories that seek, with differing degrees of success, to transcend this mid-century divide include M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1998); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (London, 1994); and D. Bloxham and R. Gerwarth, eds., *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, UK, 2011).

[32] T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005).

[33] Examples of such an approach include R. Bessel and D. Schumann, eds., *Life after Death. Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s*

At the same time, this post-war paradigm has its natural limits. Europe did change, and in fundamental ways, after 1945. People moved, and moved on; and, as a consequence of high rates of post-war fertility and substantial immigration from beyond the post-war borders of Western Europe, the people changed too. Societies also changed in shape and spirit, partly as the consequence of economic growth and partly because of the emergence of new ways of living and of a more individualized culture of consumerism. All of these developments served to distance Europeans from their wartime past, at the same time as integrating them into new generational or gendered identities. The statistical teleologies of ever hastening change, economic growth, and social modernization presented in many histories of post-war Europe do, however, convey only a partial truth, and this is particularly so with regard to the political history of the era. The numbers of fridges or cars owned by Europeans, the number of foreign holidays they took, or even more obviously relevant data such as the percentage of students continuing to higher education or the audiences of television news programmes, can go only so far in explaining the character of post-war democracy. Western Europe did indeed, as a consequence of such changes, become a very different place to live in, especially for those fortunate enough to have the means to participate in the new forms of consumerism; but the frameworks of political life, such as national frontiers, state institutions, parliaments, and parties, tended to lag behind the rather pell-mell pace of these wider social changes.

The challenge in understanding the particular mid-century democracy that took shape after 1945 is therefore to approach it on its own terms, neither as simply defined by the past—even when that past was

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(Washington, DC, 2003); P. Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge, UK, 2000); R. G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

[34] For an influential statement of this process, see H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA, 1991).

as overwhelming as that of the Second World War—nor as simply the political vessel of Western Europe's post-war socio-economic modernization. The inauguration of the new democracy was on the whole muted. The Europe of 1945 had little of the euphoria of 1848, and democracy was viewed, especially by those in positions of authority, with a mentality of caution. Many of those who played an influential role in the construction of democracy after 1945 remained scarred by their personal experiences of the pre-war and wartime years, notably the traumas of military conflict, loss of family members, and displacement and exile. This was especially so of the influential cadre of exiles from Germany and elsewhere in central Europe, who had found wartime refuge in North America, and whose service in the Allied military and civilian bureaucracies often exercised a strong influence over the models of government that they sought to implement on their return to Europe.[35] For figures such as these, the re-establishment of the institutions of democracy—in particular free elections and the inauguration of parliaments—symbolized the recovery of freedom and of self-government. But the governing spirit of these returning exiles, as well of many of those who had lived through the events of the war years within Europe, was one of disabused sobriety. They did not want to return to the past but escape it, by forging a new model of democracy that would provide stable parliamentarism and effective government.

Consequently, the sovereignty of the people was emphasized less than the re-establishment of legitimate governance and the construction of a legal framework. The people would indeed rule, but their rule would be primarily indirect: by electing their representatives, both to parliaments and to the socio-economic organizations that assumed a prominent role in post-war politics, the people would in effect give the initial impetus to a process that would then be carried forward by those best qualified to address the increasingly technical challenges of government. In contrast to the people's democracies established in the east and advocated by the Communist parties of the west, the democracies of the post-war era were designed to be institutions of an orderly and inclusive liberty, symbolized by the centrist orientation of the major political forces—in much of Europe the Christian and Social Democrats—and by the succession of short-lived and rather anonymous governing coalitions in which they participated.

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35. On the post-war influence of exiles from Germany and Austria, see notably C. Bailey, *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow: German Visions of Europe, 1936–1950* (New York, 2013), esp. 1–18; U. Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Emigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ, 2014).

This was a democracy that also remained influenced by the ghosts of its own past. Democracy was not a new form of government in 1945, but one embedded in a complex and highly contested past. Competing national narratives of democracy interlaced with the diverse and often contradictory intellectual heritages of republican, liberal, socialist, and Catholic interpretations of democracy as they had developed across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There was therefore no agreed definition of democracy, and no shared perception of Europe's democratic past. The French Revolution of 1789 and its many successors across Europe during the nineteenth century had polarized Europeans into different ideological camps, while memories of more recent democratic experiences—such as those of the Weimar Republic, the interwar Austrian Republic, the French Third Republic, or the pre-Fascist parliamentary regime in Italy—were dominated by civil strife and their subsequent collapse into authoritarian and fascist rule. Democracy did not therefore have a good reputation among Europeans in 1945; and many of them feared that a return to democratic government would lead all too quickly to a resurgence of the violent social and political mobilizations on left and right that Aron had observed in Germany in the interwar years.[36] Though the war years might have provided an education as to the failings of fascism and communism, the path towards a viable new democracy was far from apparent. The project of building post-war democracy was thus an exercise in cautious improvisation, as Western Europeans moved tentatively forward, seeking above all not to repeat the errors of the past.

This hesitant rebirth of democracy has begun in recent years to find its historians, who have explored the diverse paths by which during the war years and their aftermath European political leaders, administrators, and particular communities of intellectuals came to find a home in democracy. Some could claim a prior commitment to democratic values, or were real converts to the cause; but most were figures who were drawn to democracy, less because of its fundamental legitimacy than because of the failure of other ways of imagining and, more especially, of managing the challenges and tensions of a modern society. Democracy was, in that respect, less a new beginning after 1945 than the place where European politics had ended up.[37]

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[36] Raymond Aron, *Mémoires*, 72–76.

[37] See, notably, S. A. Forner, *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal: Culture and Politics after 1945* (Cambridge, UK, 2014); H. Chapman, *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge, MA, 2018); N. B. Strote, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New

Despite this welcome recent interest in the political complexities of the immediate post-1945 era, the wider history of democracy in twentieth-century Europe has struggled to acquire a clear identity. There remains a tendency on the part of historians and others to regard democracy as the default modern historical regime, at least in the western territories of Europe. It is thus not democracy but its opposites that appear to require historical explanation. Studies of anti-democrats—or, perhaps more accurately, of those who had very different understandings of democracy, most notably communists and fascists—have therefore outweighed considerably in their number and scholarly impact studies of democrats in the historiography of the European twentieth century. This has also encouraged a somewhat ahistorical conception of the modern evolution of democracy, whereby democracy is regarded as the political regime to which states revert when the specific conditions that generate anti-democratic alternatives abate. Such an approach has a number of shortcomings, but perhaps one of the most pervasive is the way that it tends to assume too great a similarity, or family resemblance, on the part of different democratic regimes. Other political traditions may come in different ideological and national forms, but democracy, it is assumed, is always essentially similar—one democratic regime differing from another only in terms of how inclusive or otherwise is its conception of democracy. Thus, the democracy of the modern era is foreshortened to a unitary story of its gradual expansion from the debating society of the male notable world of the mid-nineteenth century to the universalism and socio-economic diversity of the late twentieth century.[38]

Such an approach minimizes the importance of the multiple variants of democracy that have contested for ascendancy in Europe across the era of its modern development. Democracy as an ideal—or indeed as a peril to be held at bay—was rooted in many of Europe's political traditions of left and right; and the points of divergence were often more visible, and more tangibly felt, than the similarities. These were not simply struggles for political or electoral ascendancy, but also deeply felt conflicts over ownership of the concept of democracy, which reflected the seriousness with which

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Haven, CT, 2017); J. Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

[38] G. Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (New York, 2002). See also the perceptive points made in U. Jakobsen, "Inventions and Developments of Democracy: The Approach of Conceptual History," *European Political Science* 9 (2010): 316–17.

the advocates of these different ideological camps had contemplated and matured “their” definitions of democracy.[39] In addition, however, a *longue durée* history of democracy—which emphasizes its (literally) progressive unfolding over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—neglects the ruptures, or indeed jump cuts, in its history. Democracy is never ready-made; and it acquires its shape not through grand declarations but through practice within real political contexts.[40] The power of the state, the shape of the society it sought to rule, the influence of historical legacies and of national identities, and the ability of political parties to insert themselves as the intermediaries between individuals and groups of citizens and the process of government were all factors that defined the shape of Europe’s modern democratic regimes. There were continuities in that process—more especially the durable connection that developed between certain national identities and democratic values—but there were also important discontinuities. Wars, economic crises, and the development of the structures of a mass society were all forces outside the internal dynamics of democracy that impinged upon its structures, its mentalities, and its very existence.

There is, therefore, a need for a more complex but also a more historically specific account of the contexts in which democracy has developed. With the stimulating exception of Margaret Lavinia Anderson’s study of the practice of democracy in the German Empire prior to 1914,[41] the question of what made some democracies work and others fail in modern Europe has remained largely the domain of political scientists. This has resulted in much interesting research, notably in the form of comparative studies of the social and political conditions underpinning the divergent fortunes of democratic regimes in interwar Europe.[42] Foremost among these are the works of Gregor Luebbert and Michael Mann, both of which go well beyond the level of questions of institutional organization in exploring why some democracies endured while others were swept away by the political and economic upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s.[43] Socioeconomic structures, the legacies of wars, the disruptive impact of ethnic conflicts, and the transmission belts by which popular grievances were transferred into the policies of parties and parliaments have all come to form prominent elements of the way in which political scientists, but also historians of the extreme right in interwar Europe, have analysed why so few of the parliamentary regimes established after the First World War still existed some twenty years later.[44] Central to such work is a recognition that democracy was not always the author of its own successes, or indeed failures. Democratic regimes are by definition more open to societal influences than their more authoritarian alternatives; and their viability throughout the modern world has depended on their ability both to assert their authority over that society and respond effectively to the expectations of the population.

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[39] This is the theme of the collection of articles edited by Tom Buchanan and myself and published as a special issue in *European History Quarterly* 32 (2002). See also the comments in A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford, 2009), 219–20.

[40] See the reflections in K. Owen, *Political Community in Revolutionary Pennsylvania* (Oxford, 2018), 1–18.

[41] M. L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

[42] D. Berg-Schlosser and J. Mitchell, eds., *Conditions of Democracy in Europe 1919–39: Systematic Case Studies* (Basingstoke, UK, 2000); G. Capoccia, *Defending Democracy: Reactions to Extremism in Interwar Europe* (Baltimore, MD, 2007).

Little of that methodology and historical specificity has, however, filtered into studies of the period following the Second World War. Too often the victory of democracy after 1945 continues to be explained largely in terms of a dictatorship of its origins: the defeat of Nazism, along with that of the other authoritarian regimes of New Order Europe, combined with the victory of the Allied powers, is assumed to provide a sufficient explanation of what came next.[45] One of the principal ambitions of this book is therefore simply to make the emergence of democracy in post-1945 Western Europe appear more historically complex, and also more open-ended. The limits of what was politically possible in Europe after the defeat of the Third Reich and the division of the continent into territories dominated by Germany's former opponents had certainly narrowed. The violent demise of Hitler's empire, so soon after its forces had overthrown many of the pre-existing state structures in Europe, created an intimidating vacuum of state power and of constitutional structures in many areas of

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[43] G. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (New York, 1991); M. Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge, 2004). See also T. B. Müller and A. Tooze, eds., *Normalität und Fragilität: Demokratie nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg, 2015).

[44] J. Osmond, *Rural Protest in the Weimar Republic: The Free Peasantry in the Rhineland and Bavaria* (New York, 1993); K. Passmore, *From Liberalism to Fascism: The Right in a French Province, 1928–1939* (Cambridge, UK, 1997); R. Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism: Henry Dorgères's Greenshirts and the Crises of French Agriculture, 1929–1939* (New York, 1997).

[45] See, for a characteristic example of such an approach, S. Berstein, "La seconde guerre mondiale et les fondements d'une démocratie libérale rénovée," in *La démocratie libérale*, ed. Berstein (Paris, 1998), 689–729.

Europe. Consequently, the former wartime Allies were obliged, with differing degrees of enthusiasm, to act as the arbiters of the political future. In the east, this excluded, after the demise of the multi-party regime in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, the option of a pluralist political democracy; while in the west, it led by the end of the 1940s to the establishment of a de facto ban on Communists occupying positions of significant power in national government. Yet, within Europe's limited sovereignty in the immediate post-war years, there remained a considerable margin of manoeuvre in terms of the democracy that emerged. The "long reconstruction" of Europe—to borrow the framework applied to France by Herrick Chapman—was a process rather than an event, which stretched forward to the end of the 1950s, but which also drew on the legacies of forms of state action and socio-economic intervention initially developed in the interwar years.[46]

This medium-term perspective diverts attention away from the moment of democratic transition at the end of the war to the larger questions of why democracy endured in Western Europe after 1945, and more especially why it assumed specific forms. One fruitful, and indeed essential, means of approaching such questions is through the prism of individual national experiences. There have been a number of high-quality studies of individual regimes—most notably those of Jean-Pierre Rioux on the French Fourth Republic, Paul Ginsborg on the Italian Republic, and Mary Hilson on the Scandinavian states[47]—all of which well convey the complexity of post-war politics, in which the path that eventually emerged was only one among a diverse spectrum of possibilities. But these studies also raise the familiar problem in European history of national frames of reference. By taking as their subject the nation-state, they convey almost unconsciously the idea of a multiplicity of *Sonderwegen*—distinct paths—that all flowed into the common sea of Western European democracy that had come into existence by the 1960s. The democratization of post-war Europe was, however, from the outset a phenomenon that transcended nation-state frontiers. The Allied occupation of Europe, the pace of post-war economic growth, and the increased intensity of transnational intellectual and cultural exchanges created a political culture of newly porous national frontiers, in which democracy was as much (Western) European as it was national. Indeed, by melding together concepts of European identity with a certain set of democratic values, the politics of the post-war era became itself a site of "Europeanization."[48]

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[46] Chapman, *France's Long Reconstruction*, esp. 4–16. See, for broadly similar approaches, P. Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Post-war Era* (Princeton, NJ, 2010); Greenberg, *Weimar Century*, 5–11; K. K. Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, NJ, 2016).

[47] J.-P. Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* (Cambridge, UK, 1987); P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943–1988* (London, 1990); M. Hilson, *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945* (London, 2008).

It is therefore necessary to go beyond the national in explaining how and why democracy became the regime of choice of most Western Europeans in the twenty-five years following the Second World War.[49] This explains why I have chosen to adopt a deliberately rather European approach to the subject matter of this book, leaving to one side some of the forms of national specificity that continued to define democratic structures and experience, while emphasizing the broader factors of state power, intellectual culture, social class, and other components of social identity that framed how democracy was conceived, structured, and experienced across Western Europe. However, this raises unavoidable questions about the external frontiers and internal contours of that Europe. One of the more surprising outcomes of the Second World War was the way in which it gave birth to a smaller Europe. The partition imposed by the Cold War was supplemented by the loss after 1945 of territories, notably to the south and east of the European continent, that had formerly been closely tied to Europe. Instead, a smaller and more bonded Western Europe emerged, reinforced by economic integration, transnational institutions, and a shared understanding of democracy. This Europe excluded until the 1970s the authoritarian dictatorships of Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal, even if economic migration, cultural influences, and the tentative emergence of proto-democratic forms of organization long prefigured the institutional transformations that followed the final collapse of the two regimes.[50] Somewhat more ambivalent was the relationship between the core of Western Europe that came into being during the 1950s and the territories to its north. The integration of the Nordic states (including Finland) followed its own dynamic, while Ireland and Britain became semi-detached from mainstream European processes of integration as the consequence of the decision of most British post-war leaders to prioritize their international and transatlantic connections. This was formally reversed by the entry of the United Kingdom (and Ireland) into the European Communities in 1973, but it came too late to efface the differentness of British democracy—the so-called Westminster model—and more profoundly the temper of British society from that of the other states of Western Europe.

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[48] M. Conway and V. Depkat, "Towards a European History of the Discourse of Democracy: Discussing Democracy in Western Europe, 1945–60," in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches*, ed. Conway and K. K. Patel (Basingstoke, UK, 2010), 132–56.

[49] I owe the phrase "regime of choice" to Alexander Groth. See his stimulating essay *Democracies against Hitler: Myth, Reality and Prologue* (Aldershot, UK, 1999), 352.

[50] J. Grugel and T. Rees, *Franco's Spain* (London, 1997), 74–93.

The structure of this book reflects these internal fault lines. Its principal focus is the interlocking structure of Western European states that emerged during the decade following the Second World War, while discussing the other states of Europe—including the United Kingdom—largely in terms of how they impinged on this Western European process. In many respects, Western Europe was an entirely new entity; the consequence of the abrupt amputation of much of central and eastern Europe that was brought about by the Great Power partition in 1945.[51] But it proved to be a resilient reality. Western Europe outgrew its Cold War origins, developed its own institutions and identity, progressively emancipated itself from the constraining structures of American control, and across the final decades of the twentieth century drew into its sphere of influence the newly democratic states of the Mediterranean south and its north-European neighbours, and, most strikingly, succeeded in reabsorbing after 1989 the former state-socialist regimes to the east with the confidence of an act of recolonization.[52]

Democracy was essential to this victory of the West. What had begun as a pragmatic choice became not only the dominant institutional system but also exerted a much wider influence over the terms of intellectual debate, the relations of power within society, and perhaps most profoundly the ways in which Europeans related to one another and thought of themselves. This explains why the book ranges beyond the political. Much of the literature on democracy, especially that written within social-science paradigms, tends to be unduly self-limiting in its conception of democracy as a political system. In contrast, the approach that I have adopted might seem to run the opposite risk of being overly inclusive. I draw somewhat indiscriminately on themes from political, socio-economic, and cultural history in order to present a more holistic account of post-war democracy. In doing so, I have been concerned to explore what Till van Rahden, writing about post-Nazi Germany, has termed "democracy as a way of life."[53]

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[51] See pp. 147–49.

[52] M. Conway, "Democracies," in *Europe's Postwar Periods—1989, 1945, 1918: Writing History Backwards*, ed. Conway, P. Lagrou, and H. Rousso (London, 2019), 124–27.

[53] T. van Rahden, "Clumsy Democrats: Moral Passions in the Federal Republic," *German History* 29 (2011): 489. Van Rahden acknowledges his debt to Sidney Hook: S. Hook,

His analysis of how German society, and more especially its elites, gradually came to feel at ease with a form of government and social values that they had not in any substantive sense chosen has a wider relevance for Western Europe. Much of the success of post-war democracy, at least until the 1960s, lay in its success in reconciling its erstwhile social and ideological opponents. The grievances of particular regional and social constituencies, such as middle-class groups and farmers, who had been to the fore in the anti-democratic movements of the interwar years were addressed, while the centrist logic of post-war electoral politics was reinforced by an inclusive process of government in which almost everybody could feel that they had some share of power. Oppositional cultures of left and right consequently lost much of their vitality, as political parties and more especially their electorates discovered the material and other advantages of participating in the democratic political system rather than fulminating against it from the outside.

The need to go beyond the regimes themselves and to explore how they became embedded in the social textures of post-war Europe also implies avoiding an approach based on questions of institutional structure. The approach of historians to political regimes has often been implicitly architectural. Terms such as the "making," "foundations," and "construction" of regimes proliferate, reflecting a recognition that in the twentieth century the durability of regimes often depended on the structures of power by which they could enforce their rule over their sometimes recalcitrant citizens. That was true, too, of the democratic regimes of post-war Europe, which benefited from the increased resources, technology, and professional skills available to modern state authorities to discipline and, when necessary, confront their citizens. The inequality of power between governments and their opponents in post-war Europe was, from the end of the 1940s, more emphatic than at any other period in Europe's modern history, thereby rendering redundant the forms of mass protest and insurgency that had been commonplace in previous eras. Europeans, in that sense, had little choice but to be citizens, however they might seek to circumvent or evade particular forms of state regulation. But in their large majority they also came to perceive advantages in compliance. The governments of post-war Western Europe were the source of various forms of

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"Democracy as a Way of Life," in *Tomorrow in the Making*, ed. J. N. Andrews and C. A. Marsden (New York, 1939), 42–44. Hook subsequently attended the CCF conference in Berlin in 1960.

financial assistance, such as welfare payments and economic subsidies, as well as a rapidly expanding range of benefits in kind, including education, housing, infrastructure projects, and employment. In order to fund these ambitious programmes of provision, governments demanded an ever-greater share of private income in the form of taxation. But the quiescence of most citizens lay in their confidence—aided by the increases in living standards generated by economic growth—that government was giving them more than it was costing them.

The benefits of democracy were not, however, equal. Europe remained after the war emphatically a class society, and one in which the resources of the state were used to reinforce these class differences. The expansion in welfare provision, much of it channelled by the state through semi-autonomous institutions, addressed some of the more flagrant causes of poverty and destitution in European societies; but it left largely untouched the entrenched inequalities of wealth, property, and access to education. Indeed, by institutionalizing these inequalities through income-related pensions, subsidies for higher education, and the pervasive economic protection of small businessmen, middle-class professionals, and commercial farmers, the governments of the post-war era often did more to reinforce class differences in European societies than to erode them.[54] This was not accidental. Government after 1945 was above all a middle-class business, which reflected the social recruitment of political elites, and the increasing professionalization of state bureaucracies. It also matched the interests of their electors. The ascendancy of parties of the centre-right in post-war Europe was the consequence of the greater success of these parties in appealing to an increasingly individualistic and, it should be remembered, in its majority, female electorate, who appeared concerned less by questions of ideology than by the family economy and the effective provision of public services. To differing degrees, the democracies of post-war Western Europe rested on a social alliance of middle-class, lower-middle-class, and rural electors, from which the working class was largely excluded. Workers assumed much of the burden of the post-war reconstruction of Europe, but participated only modestly in its benefits. Their wages lagged behind increases in productivity, while the participation of trade unions in a politics of corporatist negotiation with employers and the state brought them only modest benefits.

This social landscape also helps to explain what is often described as the conservatism of the post-war democracies. In party-political terms, this was undoubtedly so: when Aron gave his speech in West Berlin in 1960, the left, astonishingly, formed part of the ruling governmental coalitions in only three European states—Norway, Sweden, and Austria—while elsewhere, and most notably in all of the states of the newly founded European Economic Community, regimes or coalitions of the centre-right dominated.[55] This imbalance owed much to a combination of particular parliamentary circumstances, but it also reflected what appeared to be a broader crisis of the Socialist left at the end of the 1950s: Communism was visibly on the wane, while the non-Communist Socialist parties, outside of Scandinavia, struggled to construct programmes that would appeal to a sufficiently broad coalition of electors. With time, this would change, as a new generation of social-democratic leaders, such as Brandt in Germany, came to the fore. But in other ways, too, the temper of the post-war era appeared conservative. The ascendancy of the nuclear family, the priority that governments and citizens alike accorded to moral propriety, and the capitalist character of the post-war economies moulded a public discourse that asserted the values of the mainstream over those of dissident minorities. Post-war Western Europe may well have been more democratic, but it was not obviously more pluralist.

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[54] See below, pp. 227–31.

In so far as it provides a corrective to the easy assumption that projects of democratization always come from the political left, this conservatism provides a useful means of approaching post-war democracy. Indeed, viewed in a longer perspective, one of the most remarkable features of the period after 1945 lay in the historic reconciliation of political forces of the right, most notably political Catholicism, with parliamentary democracy.[56] The evolving project of democracy in Western Europe was not, however, tied to a political colour. Rather, it marked the ascendancy of a constellation of state structures and of political, economic, and social forces that found their centre of gravity in a form of democracy, as well as a discourse about democracy, that for all their evident inadequacies marked an emphatic turning point in modern Europe's political wars. This ascendancy would not endure: by the end of the 1960s, a wide variety of political and social movements would criticize, often virulently, the multiple failings of the post-war democratic model. In doing so, too, they adopted

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55. D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), 189.

56. I have discussed this process in M. Conway, introduction to *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918–1965*, ed. T. Buchanan and Conway (Oxford, 1996), 28–33, and "The Age of Christian Democracy," in *European Christian Democracy: Historical Legacies and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. T. Kselman and J. Buttigieg (Notre Dame, IN, 2003), 43–67.

a new democratic language, articulating concepts of a more participatory and pluralist democracy that would prove to be influential over the final decades of the twentieth century. Such critiques, however, serve less to question the democratic character of the post-war era, than to demonstrate its contingent character. Democracies, more than other forms of political regime, do not endure indefinitely; they reflect the realities of their time.

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