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The Fate of the State

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The State, which since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) has been the most important and most characteristic of all modern institutions, is dying. Wherever we look, existing states are either combining into larger communities or falling apart; wherever we look, organizations that are not states are taking their place. On the international level, we are moving away from a system of separate, sovereign, states toward less distinct, more hierarchical, and in many ways more complex structures. Inside their borders, it seems that many states will soon no longer be able to protect the political, military, economic, social, and cultural life of their citizens. These developments may lead to upheavals as profound as those that took humanity out of the Middle Ages and into the Modern World. Whether the direction of change is desirable, as some hope, or undesirable, as others fear, remains to be seen.

In this article the state of the state will be discussed under five headings. Part I looks at the state's declining ability to fight other states. Part II outlines the rise and fall of the welfare state. Part III examines the effects of modern technology, economics, and the media. Part IV focuses on the state's ability to maintain public order. Finally, Part V is an attempt to tie all the threads together and to see where we are headed.

Part I. The Declining Ability to Fight

The principal function of the state, as that of all previous forms of government, has always been to fight other states, whether defensively in an attempt to defend its interests or offensively to extend them. Usually a state that was unable to do this was doomed to disappear. The best it could hope for was to lead a sort of shadowy existence under the protection of some other state, as Lebanon, for example, does under Syrian tutelage; even that existence was likely to be temporary.

Conversely, the need to fight other states has played a critical role in the development of the state's most important institutions.[1] This includes the government bureaucracy, whose original function was to levy taxes for the purpose of waging war; the note-issuing state bank, an early 18th-century invention designed specifically to help pay for Britain's military effort during the wars against Louis XIV; and of course the regular armed forces. In most states, the latter continued to take up the lion's share of expenditure until well into the 19th century.[2]

Driven largely by the need to fight other states, the power of the state expanded from 1700 on. The number of bureaucrats (the word itself is an 18th-century neologism) multiplied, and the amount of statistical information at their disposal increased, as did the share of GDP that was extracted by government. Technology drove war, and war, technology. International competition intensified until, during the second half of the 19th century, it reached the point where much of the world had been turned into an armed camp. Each of the so-called great powers was looking anxiously over its shoulder at all the rest to see which one was the most threatening, and which one, being less so for the moment, could be drawn into an alliance.

Most important of all, the French Revolution led to the nationalization of the masses and, with that, to a drastic change in the role of the state in the popular consciousness. Hobbes, Locke, and many of their 18th-century successors saw the state simply as an instrument for maintaining public order and permitting a civilized life; to quote a rhyme by Alexander Pope: "Over government fools contest/What is best administered is best." Now it became an end unto itself, an earthly god in whose honor festivals were celebrated, monuments erected, and hymns composed and sung.[3] It was a vengeful god who, according to his greatest prophet, Georg Hegel,[4] fed on blood and periodically demanded the

sacrifice of hundreds of thousands if not millions--for their own highest good, needless to say. In retrospect, nothing in the history of the modern state is more astonishing than the willingness, occasionally even eagerness, of people to fight for it and lay down their lives for it.

The climax of these developments was reached during the years of total war between 1914 and 1945. Acting in the name of the need to protect or extend something known as the national interest, states conscripted their populations and fought each other on an unprecedented scale and with an unprecedented ferocity. Nor was it merely a question of soldiers killing each other in the field. At the grand strategic level, both 1914-18 and 1939-45 were conducted by attrition; this gave states time to mobilize not only troops but civilians (including women and children) as well, putting them to work in fields and factories. Under the direction of such figures as Walter Rathenau in Germany, David Lloyd George in Britain, Georges Clemenceau in France, and Bernard Baruch in the United States, the state assumed control over finance, raw materials, transportation, labor (including professional qualifications and wages), and even the calorie intake of their citizens. Most of these controls were demolished after 1918, only to be reinstated on an even greater scale after 1939.

Thanks to the unprecedented mobilization of demographic, economic, industrial, technological, and scientific resources, the two World Wars together, and each separately, dwarfed all the armed conflicts that had taken place in the past. More important to our purpose, mobilization warfare accelerated--if it did not create--technological progress.[5] All through World War II in particular, tens of thousands of scientists were engaged in research and development, producing devices that ranged from radar to the electronic computer and from the jet engine to the first ballistic missiles. The climax arrived on 6 August 1945 when the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima, killing an estimated 75,000 people.

At first, nuclear weapons were thought to have put unprecedented military power in the hands of the state; after a few years, though, it began to be realized that they did not so much serve the objectives of war as put an end to it.[6] As the power of nuclear weapons grew--from 20,000 kilotons in 1945 to 58 megatons in 1961--and their numbers increased, wherever they made their appearance large-scale interstate war came to a halt. First the superpowers; then their close allies in NATO and the Warsaw Pact; then the USSR and China; then China and India; then India and Pakistan; then Israel and its Arab neighbors. Much as they hated each other, they each in turn saw themselves with their horns locked and unable to fight each other in earnest.[7]

Without exception, what large-scale interstate wars have taken place since 1945 have been waged either between or against third- and fourth-rate military powers. The Korean War, which originally was simply a civil war between the two parts of a country split into half; the five (or six depending on the way one counts) Arab-Israeli wars; the three Indian-Pakistani wars; the Chinese-Indian War; the Chinese-Vietnamese War; the Falklands War, so small that it is often referred to as a campaign; the Iran-Iraq War; the Gulf War; and most recently, the war between Ecuador and Peru--all these serve to prove the point. Since 1945 no two first-rate states, meaning such as were armed with nuclear weapons, have fought each other; by some accounts they have not even come close to fighting each other.[8]

Even more striking than the marginalization of the belligerents was the declining scale on which war was waged. Though the world's population has almost tripled since 1945, and though its ability to produce goods and services has increased many times over, both the size of armed forces and the number of the major weapon systems with which they are provided now amount to only a fraction of what they were in 1945. For example, the forces mobilized by the coalition in the Gulf were just one-seventh of the size of those deployed by Germany for its invasion of Russia in 1941. In most places the shrinking process is still under way. Not a day passes without some new cuts being announced. And in the face of the potential for nuclear destruction, there is not much chance of the mass forces of World War II being rebuilt in any kind of foreseeable future.

Part II. The Rise and Fall of the Welfare State

As the state lost its ability to expand at its neighbors' expense--a handicap confirmed by the Charter of the United Nations, which, as the most subscribed-to document in history, prohibits using force to annex territory--it turned its energies inward. It lies in the nature of a bureaucratic construct that it should seek to control and regulate everything; in so doing it created the welfare state.

The beginning of the story is in the period 1789 to 1830. First came the French Revolution, which, exported across the length and width of Europe, broke up the ancient feudal and ecclesiastic institutions; by atomizing society, it put the state in a much stronger position than ever before. Next came the industrial revolution. Starting in Britain, it brought with it economic freedom, unbridled capitalism (including its worst manifestations--a total lack of planning, widespread poverty, and inhumane exploitation), and the invisible hand. The influence of such figures as Adam Smith and Friedrich List caused one nation after another to dismantle internal and external economic controls and switch to free trade; with the Manchester School firmly in control, during the first half of the century the motto was *laissez faire*.

After 1850 or so, the prevailing mood began to change. One reason for this was a number of inquiries, some of them official, that were launched into the state of the working class and that brought to light the often shocking conditions in which working people lived.[9] Another was the military competition mentioned in the previous section; with the most important states increasingly dependent on mass armies consisting of conscripts and reservists, their rulers felt they could no longer afford to neglect the populations that provided those armies. Finally there was the steady, if often stormy, movement toward democratization and the rise in many countries of socialist parties. The former made it necessary, in the words of one English parliamentarian, "to educate our masters." The latter attracted a growing number of voters and openly threatened violent revolution unless something was done to improve the lot of the masses.

Be the exact reasons what they may, the first Factory Acts were passed in Britain during the 1840s over howls of protests by the owners and their spokesmen. The laws' purpose was to put limits on working hours--initially those of women and children--and to institute at least some safety controls. Imitated by many countries, originally the new laws only applied to a few industries considered particularly dangerous, such as mining. Later they were extended to others such as textile and metalworking plants. Among the last to be reached were agriculture, domestic service, and small-scale light industry, particularly in the form of sweatshops. These were affected, to the extent that they were affected at all, only during the early years of the 20th century.

Once the state had begun to supervise the conditions of labor--including the establishment of labor exchanges, another early 20th-century development--it soon sought to do the same for education and public health. The pioneer in the former field was Prussia; following beginnings made in the reign of Frederick the Great, something like universal--although, as yet, not free--elementary education was achieved in the years after 1815 when Prussia became a much-imitated model and educators from all over the world flocked to see how it was done.[10] In the rest of Europe the real push was provided by the war of 1870-71. The French in particular looked for an explanation; unable to agree on the causes of the defeat, in the end they pointed a finger at the schoolmaster. Around 1900 the "utopian vision"--the phrase used by the British Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb--of universal elementary education had been achieved in all the most advanced countries.

Advances in public health were made necessary by urban growth and were initially decentralized. In Britain, Germany, and to a growing extent the United States, laws were enacted that entrusted the task of providing better sanitation, better disease controls, to local authorities and municipalities; they also took over from the church and private charitable organizations by providing at least some hospitals for the indigenous ill. In the most advanced countries, ministries of health were established during the first two decades after 1900. Their task was to supervise those countries' entire health systems, including both medical practice and training; in addition, many of them also provided various programs, such as inoculation and prenatal care, that were compulsory, free, or both.

Like state-run education, state-run welfare was originally a German invention.[11] The 1880s found Bismarck worried about the progress of the Social Democratic Party. This caused him to institute the so-called "Revolution from above" and the world's first schemes for unemployment, accident, sickness, and old age insurance. Between 1890 and 1914 his example was followed by others through much of Western Europe and Scandinavia. Seen from this point of view, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was anything but an anomaly; instead it was simply an attempt to grab one particularly backward country by the neck, institute universal welfare at a single stroke, and extend state control to the point where civil society itself almost ceased to exist. Only the United States, with its tradition of free enterprise and rugged individualism, resisted the trend and, as a result, found itself lagging behind. In the land of the dollar it took the Great Depression and 13 million unemployed to make first the New Deal and then social security during the 1930s.

Still, what really made the modern welfare state was World War II. As had already been the case during World War I,

governments took responsibility for running many aspects of their citizens' lives, including even the number of inches of hot water they were allowed to put in their tubs; but this time they did so with no intention of giving up their power after the war had ended. In one developed country after another, extensive health programs covering the entire population--as under the British National Health System which served as the model for many others--were established. To this were added a vast variety of ancillary programs, such as free or subsidized meals for children and the elderly, cheap housing, vocational training and retraining, and education. The latter often led to free education up to, and in some instances including, the university level.

These developments led to a huge increase in the number of bureaucrats per population and per square mile.[12] By the end of the 1950s the number of ministries, which during the state's formative years in the 17th and 18th centuries had usually stood at four, had risen to something nearer 20 in most countries. To the minister of justice, the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of war, and the minister of the treasury (sometimes, a first or prime minister as well), were added ministers for interior affairs, police, agriculture, transportation, communications, education, health, labor, welfare, trade and industry, aviation, energy, and tourism. Some countries thought it necessary to have a special minister responsible for the infrastructure. Others considered they could not do without one for sport and leisure, whereas during the 1970s and 1980s many cabinets came to include a portfolio for ecological matters and women's affairs.

To pay for these programs and these ministries, it became necessary to raise taxes--particularly direct ones--until, in countries such as Britain and Sweden, marginal rates of income tax could reach 90 percent and more. Taxation, though, was only part of the solution. The nationalization of industry had been demanded by socialist parties ever since the time of the *Communist Manifesto*. The way ahead had been shown in Britain by the creation of the Electricity Board in 1926; next, France during the premiership of Leon Blum (1936-37) nationalized its arms industry. Following World War II, in one European country after another entire sectors of the economy were taken out of private hands and put into those of the state.[13] The exact identity of the industries in question varied. Often they included mass transportation such as sea, air, and rail; telecommunications, energy, banking, insurance, mining (particularly for coal and oil), and critical branches of manufacturing such as steel, shipbuilding, aviation, and military equipment. Initially it was hoped that the profits of these industries would be made to work for the community at large rather than for their shareholders alone. In practice it did not take long before many of them, run on electoral principles rather than business ones, turned into albatrosses that were grossly overstaffed, incurred enormous losses, demanded vast subsidies, and hung like chains around the state's neck.[14]

In retrospect, the turning point in the history of nationalization and the welfare state came during the second half of the 1970s. Until then the trend toward greater state control had been increasing steadily. Even in the United States, always a latercomer in such matters, "big government" made its debut during the 1950s; in the 1960s the Kennedy and Johnson administrations declared "war on poverty" and presided over a vast expansion of various social programs.[15] Then, in one country after another a reaction set in. It was motivated partly by the immense losses attributable to many nationalized industries; partly by the drastic increase in unemployment--and consequently in the cost of insuring against it--brought about by the oil crisis; and partly by the desire to cut the burden of taxes, which was regarded as stifling economic enterprise. On top of all this the welfare state had become a victim of its own success. The more it sought to help disadvantaged groups such as the aged or single parents, the larger the number of those who claimed the benefit of its services and the greater also the addition to the national debt.[16]

By this time the naive belief in the virtues of an "impartial" state bureaucracy that had inspired political scientists from Hegel to Max Weber[17] was long since dead. Instead of representing rationality, bureaucracy was coming to be seen as its antithesis; instead of being an instrument of social progress, it was now perceived as an obstacle to change of any kind.[18] During the late 1970s there emerged a number of political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan whose goal, loudly professed, was to roll back the power of the state. "Standing on one's own feet" and "getting government off our backs" became the rallying cries under which some of the most important states set out to dismantle themselves; even though, in many places, progress--if that is the correct term--was greater in words than in deeds.

All through the 1980s the movement back to the 19th century gathered momentum. Late in the decade it was given a tremendous boost by the collapse of the USSR. For 70 years, communism had provided an alternative model in which

the state, for all its manifold and perceived shortcomings, claimed to have eliminated the worst forms of poverty and promised security from the cradle to the grave; now the system's sudden demise left East Bloc states naked and their respective civil societies poorer than ever. Not only was laissez faire capitalism able to reemerge as the only way toward a better future, but it no longer felt obliged to apologize for its seamier sides, such as gross inequality, ever-present insecurity for both employers and employees, and the colossal waste resulting from the business cycle on the one hand and unplanned development on the other. To the contrary, many of the advocates of the new supply-side economics regarded those features as potentially useful tools toward the all-important goals of low inflation and steady economic growth.

As the last years of the century approached, not even those countries that were loudest in their praise of capitalism had made significant progress in reducing their bureaucracies, much less in cutting taxes as a percentage of GDP.[19] On the other hand, in virtually all countries some of the juicier morsels of the economy had been sold off and others deregulated, to say nothing of the cuts that, with or without the aid of inflation, were effected in the real value of numerous social programs including, not least, the quality of education. The homeless people appearing on the streets of cities everywhere offered visible proof of the fact that the post-World War II trend toward a narrowing of social gaps had been reversed; it became a matter of policy for the state to take more and more but give less and less. No wonder that loyalty to it--as manifested most clearly in the willingness to do conscript service and fight if necessary--declined.[20] In the United States under the Carter Administration, even the attempt to register young males for an eventual call-up met with opposition.

Part III. Modern Technology, Economics, and the Media

Meanwhile, and often going almost unnoticed, technology also had performed an about-face. The role played by print in the establishment of the state cannot be overestimated; after all, where would any government be without forms? Next, the telegraph and the railways enabled states to bring their populations under control and to cast their networks over entire countries, even continents.[21] Nor were rulers satisfied when the time it took to travel from the capital to the provinces (for example, from Paris to Bordeaux or Toulouse) was reduced from weeks to days or hours. The role of technologies such as telephones, teleprinters, computers (first put to use in calculating the results of the US census), highways, and other systems of transportation and communication was even greater than that of their predecessors. Without them it would have been impossible for the state to contemplate the task that it had undertaken since the beginning of the 19th century: to impose its control over every part of society from the highest to the lowest and almost regardless of distance and geographical location.

From the beginning, though, much of modern technology bore a Janus face. On the one hand it gave governments the tools with which to dominate their countries and populations as never before. On the other it tended to transcend national borders, crossing them and turning them into obstacles to domination. This was because, unlike its pre-1800 predecessors, much of modern technology can operate only when, and to the extent that, it is grouped into systems. A plough, a hammer, a musket, or a ship can do its job even in the absence of others of its kind; but an individual railway station--or a telegraph apparatus, or a telephone--is simply useless on its own. In such systems what matters is the network of tracks, or wires, or switchboards, that connects each unit with countless others. Even more crucial is the central directing hand which, sorting out routes and priorities, enables them to communicate with each other at will, in an orderly manner and without mutual interference.

As the history of both telegraphs and railways shows, most of the early technological systems were launched by private entrepreneurs. However, in most countries the demand for economic efficiency or military effectiveness soon caused them to be taken over by governments. Either this was done by way of outright ownership, through nationalization and the establishment of a state monopoly, or else by means of regulations designed to ensure that they would be available in wartime. Still, there were limits to the extent that governments could control this technology without at the same time reducing its cost-effectiveness. A railway net designed exclusively for meeting the needs of a single country--such as the broad-gauged one constructed by Imperial Russia and later passed to the USSR--provided some protection against invasion but also acted as a barrier to Russian trade with other countries. The same applies to various attempts to build autonomous electricity grids, highway systems, or telephone networks, to say nothing of fax machines and computers.

In theory each state was free to exercise its sovereignty and build its own networks, ignoring those of its neighbors and refusing to integrate with them. In practice it could do so only by incurring a tremendous technological and economic cost. The current plight of North Korea is a perfect case in point; the price of isolation was inefficiency and an inability to maximize the benefits of precisely those technologies that have developed most rapidly since 1945--communication (including data processing) and transportation. Conversely, in order to enjoy those benefits, states had to integrate their networks with those of their neighbors. What is more, it was necessary for them to join the international bodies whose task was to regulate the new technologies on behalf of all. The first such body was the International Railway Committee, which traces its origins to the 1860s. A century later they numbered in the hundreds, and the only way for any state to avoid becoming entangled in their coils was to doom itself to something like a pre-industrial existence.

These technological developments brought about a decisive change in the nature of the global economy.[22] The interwar period had been characterized by attempts to build self-contained empires; now, the most successful states were those which, like Germany and Japan and South Korea, were most integrated into the world market. By and large the more one exported and imported--in other words, maximized one's comparative advantage--the greater one's economic success. As more and more stock exchanges were opened to foreign investors and capital, a greater and greater percentage of a state's assets, and those of its citizens, was likely to be located beyond its borders. Conversely, inside those borders more and more wealth was likely to be controlled by persons and corporations based elsewhere. During the 1980s economic statistics began to recognize the change by separating GNP from GDP. Generally the gap between the two provided a good index for the economic performance of any particular country; for example, 40 percent of all Japanese goods are now being produced outside Japan.

Another blow to state control implicit in the shift toward a global economy was that governments gradually lost their grip over their own currencies. If a nation was to participate in international trade, its currency had to be convertible, as free as possible from administrative controls. But freedom from administrative controls put it at the mercy of the international market. Gone were the days when, as during the period 1914-1939, most governments tried to create closed monetary systems and lay down the value of their currencies by fiat. Gone, too, were the Bretton Woods agreements which lasted from 1944 to 1971 and which pegged the various currencies to a US dollar which was itself pegged to gold.[23] Governments did not lose all influence over their currencies; they still controlled the money supply as well as interest rates. Nevertheless, the values of these currencies became subject to wild fluctuations that were often beyond the power of central banks, or even combinations of central banks, to regulate. Their inability to do so put a premium on hedging, on holding at least some of one's assets in foreign currency. The merry-go-round leading to less and less government control continued.

Finally, the unprecedented development of electronic information services seems to mark another step toward the coming collapse of the state. Traditionally no state has ever been able to completely control the thoughts of all its citizens; to the credit of the more liberally-minded among them, it must be added that they never even tried. Though the invention of print greatly increased the amount of information that could be produced, the ability to move that information across international borders remained limited by the need to physically transport paper, as well as by language barriers. The first of these problems was solved by the invention of radio. The introduction of television, which relies on pictures instead of words, to a large extent eliminated the second. During the 1980s cable and satellite TV, as well as videotape, became widely available and capable of providing near-instant coverage of events on a global scale. With the advent of computer networks and the consequent democratization of access to information, the battle between freedom and control was irretrievably lost by the latter, much to the regret of numerous governments.

Though the role of the various information services in the collapse of the former Eastern Bloc cannot be measured, it was certainly very large.[24] Indeed, even as these lines are being written, the future of Russia and its fellow republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States will be determined partly by the way the media will represent developments inside them. Conversely, states such as China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are imitating the late East Germany, doing what they can to prevent their populations from being corrupted by these developments. The social, economic, and technological price that these states pay for their self-enforced isolation is considerable. In the long run, their struggle almost certainly will be hopeless.

Part IV. Maintaining Public Order

As governments surrender or lose their hold over many aspects of the media, the economy, and technology, and as public ownership as well as welfare programs stagnate or retreat, one of the principal functions still remaining to the state is to protect its own integrity against internal disorder. Thus the question that must be asked is whether they have been successful in this task; is it being mastered, and can they be expected to accomplish it in the future?

So far this article has concentrated on the developed countries. However, at this point it is useful to invert the order, starting our survey with undeveloped ones. It is a characteristic of many traditional societies that the right to resort to violence, instead of being monopolized by an all-powerful state, is diffused in the hands of family heads, tribal chieftains, feudal noblemen, and the like, each of whom is responsible for policing his own subjects and for fighting off challenges by the rest. Conversely, the extent to which so-called Third World countries have succeeded in demolishing other organizations and concentrating violence in their own hands is one very good index of their progress toward modernization.

To look at many developing countries today, that progress has been either slow or nonexistent. As a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly* has pointed out,[25] in much of sub-Saharan Africa the state has already collapsed, often before it was able to properly establish itself. Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan, and Zaire all have been torn by civil war or, at the very least, disorder on a scale that approximates it. On the Mediterranean littoral the position of Egypt and Algeria is scarcely better, confronted as those states are by the formidable challenge of Islamic fundamentalism, which in recent years has led to the deaths of thousands and which shows no sign of abating. Meanwhile, in the southern extremity of the continent, it is touch and go whether South Africa will be able to make progress toward a peaceful multiracial society or be torn apart by the war of all against all.

From Japan to Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, some Asian states have been enormously successful in maintaining internal order and protecting the lives and property of their residents. Not so others such as Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, India, Iran, Iraq, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and, most recently, Pakistan; all of these are now confronted with a loss of control that ranges from riots and clashes between opposing gangs to full-scale civil war. China, too, is not immune. It is true that the coastal regions are making unprecedented economic progress; however, Beijing does not seem to be capable of dealing either with the 30-year-old Tibetan uprising or with the challenge of Muslim separatists in the undeveloped far west of the country. Against this background much of the Chinese leaders' opposition to liberalization may be attributed to the fear--which is certainly not unfounded--that the outcome may be anarchy of the kind that all but destroyed China between 1911 and 1949.[26]

Finally, in Latin America the ability of the state to guarantee internal law and order has, given the lack of a proper technological infrastructure and the immense gaps between rich and poor, always been in doubt. While some parts of the continent, such as Chile, are making good progress toward modernization, many others are clearly lagging behind and may be becoming less orderly rather than more. To adduce just two examples that have made headlines during the last few months, the government of Mexico has lost control over the southern part of the country, whereas that of Brazil is even now using the army in an attempt to reconquer its own former capital of Rio de Janeiro. In still other places it is the druglords who exercise de facto power. In countries where repeated assassinations of public officials take place, there can be no expectation for the rule of law or the kind of stability necessary for economic growth.

What makes these facts all the more disturbing is that, so far from remaining limited to Third World countries, the disorder seems to be spreading. The chaos that overtook Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Georgia, Moldavia, Tajikistan, and Yugoslavia following the collapse of communist rule is well known; current conditions in these countries resemble those of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) more than they do anything that we would expect from a well-ordered modern state. Nor, to judge by the experience of Spain in the Basque country and of Britain in Northern Ireland (to say nothing of the recent Tokyo poison gas attack and the Oklahoma City bombing), does it appear that First World countries are in principle immune to threats of this kind. Many of them are challenged by organizations which, whatever their goals, are capable of commanding fanatical loyalties and unleashing them against the state; these organizations, incidentally, often take better care of their members than the state does.

Attempting to deal with nongovernmental organizations resorting to violence, many modern states have found themselves in a quandary. On the one hand their most important weapons and weapon systems--including not just nuclear ones but most conventional ones as well--are clearly too powerful and indiscriminate to be of much use

against those groups. On the other hand, should they use the terrorists' own methods against them, there exists the clear danger that they will turn into terrorists themselves. Under these circumstances many First World governments have chosen to diddle. They counter the challenge without much resolution and pretend that since the number of casualties is often smaller than that which results from ordinary motor traffic, the problem is merely a nuisance. Others have given way and decentralized, as Spain did in the case of Catalonia; or else they are even now preparing to share control over some of their provinces with others, as are the British in Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, from the White House to 10 Downing Street, the residences of presidents and prime ministers as well as entire government quarters have been transformed into fortresses. Private security has turned into a growth industry par excellence; in the United States alone it is said to employ 1.6 million people (as many as the number of active troops) and to cost \$52 billion a year, far more than all US police departments combined.[27] Feeling themselves exposed, more and more individuals and corporations are either renting protection or setting up their own. While one does not want to exaggerate the problem, unquestionably all of this is symptomatic of the state's faltering ability to hold on to its monopoly over violence--or, in plain words, to protect its citizens' lives and property.

Part V. The Outlook

At a time when new states are being born almost daily, paradoxically the fate of the state appears sealed. The growth in numbers may itself be a sign of decay; what everybody has is worth little or nothing. Furthermore, far from safeguarding their hard-won sovereignty, most new states do not even wait until they have been properly established before they start looking for ways to integrate with their neighbors. A good example is provided by that unique political construct, the Commonwealth of Independent States. Another is the eventual Palestinian state. Its leaders are even now talking of cooperation with Israel, Jordan, and Egypt--in fact with anyone who can help them transcend the limits of their own people's small size.

Contrary to the fears of George Orwell in *1984*, modern technology, in the form of nuclear weapons on the one hand and unprecedented means for communication and transportation on the other, has not resulted in the establishment of unshakable totalitarian dictatorships. Instead of thought control we have CNN and, which many regimes consider almost as dangerous, Aaron Spelling; instead of unpersons, Amnesty International. The net effect has been to make governments lose power in favor of organizations that are not sovereign and are not states.

Some of these organizations stand above the state--for example, the European Common Market, the West European Union, and, above all, the United Nations, which since the Gulf War has begun to play a role akin to that of the medieval popes in authorizing or prohibiting a state from waging international war. Others are of a completely different kind, such as international bodies, multinational corporations, the media, and various terrorist organizations some of which can barely be told apart from gangs of ordinary criminals. What they all have in common is that they either assume some of the functions of the state or manage to escape its control. All also have this in common: being either much larger than states or without geographical borders, they are better positioned to take advantage of recent developments in transportation and communications. The result is that their power seems to be growing while that of the state declines.

To sum up, the 300-year period that opened at Westphalia and during which the state was the most important organization in which people lived--first in Europe, then in other places--is coming to an end. Nobody knows the significance of the transition from a system of sovereign, territorial, legally equal states to one that takes greater cognizance of the new realities; it is likely to be eventful and, as is already the case in many places, quite possibly bloody. Still, it is worth recalling that the state's most remarkable products to date have been Hiroshima and Auschwitz; the former could never have been built by any organization but a state (and the most powerful one, at that), whereas the latter was above all an exercise in bureaucratic management.[28] Whatever the future may bring, it cannot be much worse than the past. For those who regret and fear the passing away of the world with which we are familiar, let that be their consolation.

NOTES

1. Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

2. For some figures see P. Flora, ed., *State, Economy and Society in Western Europe, 1875-1975* (London: 1983) vol. 1, part iv, p. 441; also Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 153.
3. See, e.g., George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975); also E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, Calif.: 1976).
4. See Steven B. Smith, "Hegel's Views on War, the State, and International Relations," *American Political Science Review*, 77 (September 1983), 624-32.
5. See above all Vannevar Bush, *Modern Arms and Free Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949).
6. One of the first to perceive that nuclear weapons would limit war was Bernard Brodie in *The Absolute Weapon* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ., 1946). The best discussion of nuclear doctrine from 1945 to the Reagan years--when attention shifted to disarmament--is Lawrence Friedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
7. For the way nuclear weapons limited interstate war, first between major powers and then increasingly among the rest, see Martin van Creveld, *Nuclear Proliferation and the Future of Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1993).
8. McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: the Political History of the Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 616.
9. The most famous inquiry, albeit a non-official one, was Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (St. Albans: 1972; originally published 1844).
10. For the rise of the public education system in Germany, see K. A. Schleunes, *Schooling and Society: The Politics of Education in Prussia and Bavaria, 1750-1900* (Oxford: 1989); for an international perspective on its role in building the modern state P. Flora, "Die Bildungsentwicklung im Prozess der Staaten und Nationenbildung," in P. C. Ludz, ed., *Soziologie und Sozialgeschichte* (Opladen: 1972).
11. See P. Flora and A. J. Heidenheimer, eds., *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America* (New Brunswick: 1981); M. Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State* (London: Batsford, 1974); and E. Berkowitz and K. McQuaid, *Creating the Welfare State: The Political Economy of the Twentieth Century Reform* (Lawrence, Kans.: 1988).
12. For example, France in 1610 had some 25,000 officials, one per 80 in the population. The United States in 1972 had one in 13, a sixfold increase, most of it taking place after 1870.
13. For the state of Britain's nationalized industries during the 1960s, see Graham L. Reid and Kevin Allen, *Nationalized Industries* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: 1970; also, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970).
14. For the British side of the story, see R. Kelf-Cohen, *British Nationalisation 1945-1973* (London: Macmillan, 1973).
15. For the creation of the American welfare state, see Roger A. Freeman, *The Growth of American Government: A Morphology of the Welfare State* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1975); also N. and B. Gilbert, *The Enabling State: Modern Welfare Capitalism in America* (New York: 1989).
16. The crisis of the welfare state is discussed, for example, in John Logue, "Will Success Spoil the Welfare State?" *Dissent* (Winter 1985). C. Leaman, *The Collapse of Welfare Reform: Political Institution, Policy and the Poor in Britain and the US* (Lanham, 1986).
17. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: 1952; originally published

1821), pp. 188f; Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittiche (New York: 1976; originally published 1923), pp. 48ff.

18. In the United States, attacks on bureaucracy started with the Hoover Commission Report (Washington, D.C., 1949) and proceeded through J. Landis's *Report on the Regulatory Agencies to the President Elect, US* (Washington D.C., 1960). However, so long as prosperity lasted little was done.

19. For some comparative figures on various countries see *Economist*, 4 September 1993, p. 103.

20. In the Gulf, US strategy was almost entirely dictated by the need to avoid casualties: Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: the Inside Story of the Conflict of the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), passim.

21. See H. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Toronto: 1975).

22. For a good introduction to these problems see Beth V. and Robert M. Yarbrough, *The World Economy, Trade and Finance* (3d ed.; Fort Worth, Tex.: 1994).

23. For the origins, rise, and fall of the Bretton Woods system see M. D. Bordo and B. Eichengreen, eds., *A Retrospective on the Bretton Woods System: Lessons for International Monetary Reform* (Chicago: 1993),

24. Exclusive of East Germany--where 15 million people regularly watched West German television--Western radio stations such as RFE, VOA, BBC, and DW claimed to have almost 100 million regular listeners in 1989.

25. R. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, pp. 44-76.

26. Interestingly enough, the language of warlordism is already making a comeback; see A. Waldon, "The Warlord: Twentieth Century Chinese Understanding of Violence, Militarism and Imperialism," *American Historical Review*, 96 (October 1991), 1073-1100.

27. Figures from B. Jenkins, "Thoroughly Modern Sabotage," *Worldlink* (March-April 1995), 16. For two works on the origins and nature of private security in the United Kingdom see N. South, *Policing for Profit; The Private Security Sector* (London: 1982); and I. Will, *The Big Brother Society* (London: 1983).

28. For the effort involved in building the bomb see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986); for the Holocaust as an exercise in bureaucracy above all, Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).

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