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## Understanding Tyranny and Terror: From the French Revolution to Modern Islamism

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### Abstract

*While tyranny has existed in all eras, modern democracies now face a millenarian version that seeks to impose by revolutionary force a monolithic collective in which all individual liberties will be submerged. Beginning with the Jacobin Terror of 1793, it has continued through Bolshevism, Nazism, Maoism, the Khmer Rouge, and today's international Jihad. Terrorists are tyrants in waiting. They are not motivated by poverty or lack of opportunity, but by the vision of a coming collectivist utopia that will annihilate the West. Before democracies can fight tyranny effectively, they have to name it for what it is and understand what drives its adherents.*

Across the world, we are witnessing both a heroic struggle for democracy and the disturbing strength of tyrannical regimes and movements. Whether it is civil war in Syria, Russian aggression, or the threat of ISIS, democracy and tyranny are in a dead heat.

While American forces are now engaged against Jihadism in the Middle East, self-identified Muslim terrorists are conducting brutal attacks on American soil. Yet President Barack Obama, while condemning “terror” in general terms, avoids the term “Islamist terrorism” and even assures us that ISIS, which aims to establish a worldwide Caliphate, “is not Islamic.”<sup>1</sup>

How should the West respond? Do we understand the nature of these adversaries?

Democracies seem to undergo periodic bouts of amnesia in being able to identify tyranny. Secretary of State John Kerry expressed his bewilderment at Vladimir Putin's aggression by terming him a throwback to “the nineteenth century.”<sup>2</sup> Once we take off our rose-colored End of History glasses, we will see that Putin is a figure from every century. The progress of history, if such a thing exists, has plainly not rid us of tyranny. The genocidal horrors of the past century's totalitarianism, far exceeding anything in the 19th, are surely proof of that, along with today's Islamist aspirants to a worldwide Caliphate.

In fact, believing in the progress of history may actually contribute to the spread of tyranny itself not only because it lulls us into thinking that tyranny is fading away, but because all of the worst totalitarian regimes, after all, have claimed that they were on the right side of history, bringing a better world

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for us all in the future through conquest and mass murder in the present.

To defend democracy, we need to recover from our temporary amnesia about the greatest and most resilient enemy of democracy: tyranny. This essay provides an antidote to that amnesia. It will identify the three broad categories of tyranny alive in today's world and then explain how the psychology of terrorism is driven by the vision of a coming utopian collective whose main features emerge with the Jacobin Terror of 1793 and continue through Bolshevism, Nazism, Third World Socialism, and today's Jihadism. It is of crucial importance in making sense of terrorism to understand that terrorists are tyrants in waiting: Terrorist movements are tyrannical movements bent on utopian genocide.

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## It is of crucial importance in making sense of terrorism to understand that terrorists are tyrants in waiting: Terrorist movements are tyrannical movements bent on utopian genocide.

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Our belief in the progress of history toward a benign democratic outcome, combined with powerful trends in contemporary social science rooted in the very success of liberal democracy itself, makes us forget about tyranny. Once we wake up to the fact that, contrary to these views, tyranny is a permanent feature of the human landscape that no amount of Western-style economic prosperity or individual liberty will make fade away, the world around us will not change, but we will see it in a different way, alive to the continuing threat to liberty that is posed by tyranny and ready to combat it.

### Millenarian Tyranny

Three main types of tyranny have emerged from the history of the West. They are not absolutely distinct from one another, but they do stand out as separate kinds.

The first may be called “garden variety” tyrants, at once the oldest and still the most familiar type. These are men who dispose of an entire country and society as if it were their personal property, exploiting it for their own profit and pleasure and to advance their own clans and cronies. Examples from history abound, ranging from Hiero of Syracuse and the Emperor Nero to General Franco of Spain, the Somozas of Nicaragua, Saddam Hussein, and Bashar al-Assad.

The second type is the tyrant as reformer. These are men who are driven to possess supreme honor, wealth, and power unconstrained by law. They are not mere hedonists and wealth-seekers. They really want to improve their society and people through the constructive exercise of their untrammelled authority. Examples include Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, the Tudors, and such “enlightened despots” as Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Frequently, they are perceived not as tyrants, but as champions of the common people.

The third type of tyranny—and the one of most interest to us—is millenarian. These rulers are content neither to be mere garden-variety tyrants nor to be reforming tyrants who make constructive improvements. They are driven by the impulse to impose a millenarian blueprint on the world that will bring about a society of the future in which the individual is submerged in the collective and all privilege and alienation will forever be eradicated.

The French Revolution began in 1789 as a Lockean revolution patterned on the Glorious and American Revolutions. It was led by students of the Enlightenment like Lafayette and Talleyrand who were bent on establishing the rights of man, limited government, and economic opportunity. In 1793, however, the Jacobins, led by Robespierre, turned it into a Rousseauian revolution aiming to return to an alleged Golden Age of pure collective equality without private possessions or individual self-interest, to be achieved through the destruction of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie and anyone else who was loyal to them.

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1. Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on ISIL,” The White House, September 10, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1>.
  2. John Kerry, “Interview with George Stephanopoulos of ABC’s This Week,” U.S. Department of State, March 2, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/03/222722.htm>.
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This was the first millenarian tyranny. After Robespierre, the league of millenarian tyrants includes Stalin, Hitler, Chairman Mao, Pol Pot, and today's Jihadists.

The gruesome paradox of their revolution is that the coming world of perfect harmony requires prodigious excesses of mass murder and warfare in the present. We can term it utopian genocide. As Robespierre put it: "We must smother the internal and external enemies of the Republic or perish with them.... Terror is nothing but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue."<sup>3</sup> While garden-variety and reforming tyrants have existed from earliest times to the present, millenarian tyranny is strictly modern, with no precedents before the Jacobin Terror of 1793.

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### **All millenarian revolutionary movements have a common set of genocidal aims. They all envision a return to "the Year One," a grimly repressive collectivist utopia in which individual freedom is obliterated in the name of the commune.**

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Millenarian tyrants sometimes do things for their countries that overlap with reforming tyranny—Stalin and Hitler both contributed to their respective countries' economic and technological modernization—and they are capable behind closed doors of some of the twisted excesses of the garden-variety tyrant. At bottom, however, their goal is beyond politics: They want to destroy today's world in order to bring about the nirvana of "Communism," "the thousand-year Reich," or "the worldwide Caliphate."

Millenarian tyranny is driven by a utopian vision in which society and human nature are to be completely transformed from being unjust, materialistic, and selfish in the present to being spiritually pure, selfless, and communal in the future. This transformation is a night-and-day difference: Virtually nothing can be salvaged from the corrupt present in order

to bring about this spiritually cleansed new world. Foremost among its guiding ideals is the return of "the people" to the simplicity of its origins, a collective of pure duty, submission, and self-sacrifice that is stripped of all sources of alienation including individualism, class status, religious faith, and property rights.

Beginning with the Jacobins, this return to the origins is sparked by an intense loathing for the modern age of the Enlightenment and its alleged vulgarity, selfishness, and materialism. Paradoxically, returning to a past that is so distant requires a leap into the future that will destroy all intervening, ordinary, and received traditions, including those of patriotism and religious custom. As composer Richard Wagner said of anarchist Mikhail Bakhtunin: "The annihilation of all civilization was the objective on which he had set his heart.... It was necessary, he said, to picture the whole European world ... transformed into a pile of rubble."<sup>4</sup>

All millenarian revolutionary movements have a common set of genocidal aims. They all envision a return to what the Jacobins called "the Year One," a grimly repressive collectivist utopia in which individual freedom is obliterated in the name of the commune, purging people of their vices, including property, freedom of thought, and the satisfactions of family and private life.

The second aim that all of these revolutionary movements share is the identification of a class or race enemy whose extermination is the crucial step needed to bring about the utopian community in which all alienation and vice will end forever. The class or race enemy becomes the embodiment of all human evil, whose destruction will cleanse the planet.

- For the Jacobins, it was the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats.
- For Stalin, it was the "kulaks," the so-called rich peasants.
- For Hitler, it was the Jews.

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3. Maximilien Robespierre, "On the Principles of Moral Policy that Ought to Guide the National Convention in the Internal Administration of the Republic," in *The Ninth of Thermidor: The Fall of Robespierre*, ed. Richard T. Bienvenu (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 38.

4. Richard Wagner, quoted in Bryan Magee, *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), p. 39.

- For the Jihadists today, it is the “Great Satan” (America) and the “Little Satan” (Israel), along with Christians and those who are deemed insufficiently pure Muslims.

Needless to say, the demonology identifying these classes or peoples as the source of all evil in the world is a complete delusion that is required to justify genocide and endow its violence with a supposedly absolute moral justification.

A consistent paradox of millenarian tyranny is that the slate has to be wiped clean of all traditional authorities and customs in the future in order to recapture an alleged Golden Age of the most distant past: the return to the Year One (the Jacobins); “the community of destiny” (National Socialism); “the Year Zero” (the Khmer Rouge); or the alleged original community of Islam.

Revolutionary action reshapes the present in order to bring about a future guided by a past behind the past, behind all received tradition. However deeply rooted and long-established a people’s past traditions might appear to be, they too are tainted by corruption and vice from the ground up and must be entirely jettisoned, along with more recent Enlightenment influences, in order to transport us back to the collective bliss and purity of our mythical and primeval origins. Hence, the Jacobins aimed to destroy not only the remnants of the *ancien régime*, but also the fledgling modern society of Lockean individualism that was beginning to displace it.

To get us there, a revolutionary Messiah is needed—Robespierre, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, Khomeini, al-Baghdadi—to lead a corrupt and fallen world, against its will if need be, into this shining new day. His absolutely tyrannical power in the present is justified as being necessary to end all tyranny and inequality forever.

Another way in which millenarian tyranny differs from even the most brutal of previous tyrannies, whether reforming or garden-variety, is the scale of the methodically applied violence needed to bring about the apocalyptic passage from today to the shining future. Before 1793, history was no stranger to violence, war, civil strife, bloodshed, torture, and mass murder, but not until then was murder used in a dispassionate and methodical way to surgically remove entire designated classes and races from existence—the forces who embody all vice and evil

and who therefore stand in the way of the coming collectivist Golden Age.

As early as the Jacobins, the use of mass firing squads and cannons to mow down men and women was already established, anticipating the Nazis’ *Einsatzgruppen* or the recent mass killings in the self-proclaimed Caliphate of ISIS. The numbers liquidated mounted from upwards of 250,000 across France during the Jacobin Terror to tens of millions under the 20th century’s millenarian dictatorships with their vastly improved technology of “industrialized murder” in the Gulag and Auschwitz and in Mao’s and the Khmer Rouge’s re-education camps.

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Whereas past tyrannies killed people for challenging their power through uprisings at home or military opposition from without, millenarian tyrannies commit genocide collectively against entire classes and races, whether they oppose them or not. Their victims must be annihilated to the last member before nirvana can come about. It is, so to speak, nothing personal.

Millenarian revolutionaries have no interest in the tangible, moderate aims of a liberal-democratic revolution like the Glorious or American Revolutions for establishing individual rights and enabling every citizen to improve his lot. For the millenarians, individual rights are a part of society’s disease and must be purged to create a pure collective in which every individual is interchangeable with every other and submerged in a monolith ruled by the revolutionaries themselves—former terrorists now victorious as godlike masters.

It is all or nothing: As Lenin put it, “the worse, the better.” The more oppressive the revolution’s enemies are in the present, the more necessary it will be to sweep them away through annihilating violence. True millenarian revolutionaries do not want things to improve; they do not want concrete concessions like higher wages, economic development, or social

welfare programs. Such reforms only threaten to corrupt “the people” further by turning them into *petits bourgeois*.

The progress of history was seen by Edward Gibbon, Edmund Burke, and other friends of the modern world of individual liberty and representative government as a largely benevolent process. By contrast, millenarian revolutionaries see the progress of history as entirely oppressive, unjust, and exploitive until now but about to yield, through a final spasm of revolutionary violence, a world of perfect harmony tomorrow. The progress of history is needed as a violent dynamo of social and economic strife to destroy corruption and complacency in the present and clear the stage for the future, a conviction common in varying ways to the philosophies of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Martin Heidegger.

Moreover, millenarian revolution is inevitably imperialistic, for it must culminate in war to spread the blessings of the future to all by force—a trend that has been consistent from the Jacobins to ISIS. Whatever state the revolution may inhabit for the moment is no more than an outpost for the next phase of conquest, which is why revolutionary movements are indifferent to “ordinary politics,” the tasks of concrete improvements for their peoples.

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As Trotsky wrote, the Russian Revolution was “a bivouac life,” a temporary encampment where “everything is extraordinary, temporary, transitory” because it was only a way station on the path to world Communism.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Hamas views the Gaza Strip as a mere stepping-stone toward Israel’s destruction and the coming of the same world Caliphate envisioned by the other Jihadist movements.

Millenarian revolutions seem to be more violent in societies where the claim of pre-modern tradition and authority is still very strong. The values of

the Enlightenment begin to erode the power of pre-modern authority before managing to establish individual liberties and self-government firmly, leading to nostalgia for the mythical memory of a “lost” communal wholeness before the benefits of the modern age have been fully experienced. This trend also began in the French Revolution.

The Glorious and American Revolutions took place in societies where the values of economic self-interest, religious tolerance, and self-government had already become widely influential. In France, by contrast, when the revolution broke out, it faced fierce opposition from an aristocratic and ecclesiastical establishment that was still extremely powerful and deeply hostile to the entire modern era. That old order could only be blasted away by the political equivalent of dynamite.

This combustible moment of a stalled or only partially successful conversion to Enlightenment values that produces the longing for a “lost” community of the past, requiring massive violence in order to reverse the still very limited gains of the modern age while seeking a purer community of the primordial origins, is a recurrent trend throughout the great revolutions that were to come in Russia, China, Cambodia, and Iran. The way forward is the way back behind the modern age of the rights of the individual to the communal bliss of the origins.

Paradoxically, millenarian revolutions frequently erupt not when the old autocracy is at its most repressive, but when the autocrat introduces modern reforms without being willing to share absolute power. A liberal revolution for the rights of man occurs with the autocrat’s inconsistent or reluctant acquiescence, but the expectations of reform already unleashed sweep the liberals away and bring the collectivists to the fore.

- Louis XVI’s attempts to encourage market forces and a degree of legislative self-government brought about the liberal phase of the French Revolution, soon swept aside by the Jacobins.
- The same pattern was repeated when Tsar Nicholas II’s veering between liberalization and repression sparked a revolution for liberal rights led by Alexander Kerensky, who was then swept aside by Lenin.

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5. Leon Trotsky, “On Boris Pilnyak,” trans. Eric Konkol, SovLit.net, <http://www.sovlit.net/onpilnyak/>.



- Shah Reza Pahlevi's fitful efforts at modernizing Iran without yielding absolute power sparked the Iranian Revolution, initially led by technocrats and socialists who were soon swept aside by the Khomeinists.
- Hosni Mubarak had brought Egypt a degree of economic prosperity, but his and his cronies' monopoly on power sparked a peaceful revolution of secular liberals for rights and self-government that was soon hijacked by the Muslim Brotherhood, bent on establishing a theocratic republic and ending the peace with Israel.

### **Righteous Anger and the Roots of Tyranny**

For Americans today, the millenarian variety of tyranny is encountered most immediately in the context of terrorism, for terrorists are millenarian tyrants in waiting. The many grisly episodes of terrorism in North America and Europe over the past decade, from bombings to beheadings, should prompt us to reconsider the role that righteous anger plays in extremist politics.

Usually, we are told that terrorist acts, while reprehensible, can be traced to root causes—that such acts are born of despair over lack of economic opportunity and the peaceful benefits of a secular pluralist society. Yet in almost all of these cases, the terrorists were already living in a secular pluralist society with all of its advantages.

The tremendous power of this *idée fixe* goes back to the very beginning of the modern age, the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, and still dominates the social sciences today. Thinkers including Hobbes and Voltaire argued that tyrannical ambition, military strife, and civil war were caused by denying human beings their basic right to pursue their own material self-interest and private avocations. Once they enjoyed the balm of security and well-being, the sources of aggression would melt away, leaving us free, as Voltaire argued, to cultivate our gardens. Hobbes was particularly critical of the way in which ancient philosophers like Aristotle encouraged young men to believe themselves capable of achieving great, noble, and heroic deeds that would benefit everyone and give them an immortal reputation.

But what if terrorism had little if anything to do with economic deprivation or lack of individual

opportunity? What if it were rooted in the capacity of young men for righteous zeal, anger, and indignation harnessed in the service of what they fervently believe to be a righteous, even divine mission to bring justice to the world? Righteous anger, not the longing for material comfort, should be our starting point in attempting to understand terrorism and addressing its psychological deformities, including its potential for developing into tyranny.

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Recent studies suggest that male traits of aggressiveness and honor-seeking may be hardwired in the brain, something political philosophy has understood since Plato. Studies also show that young men are one of the chief causes of violence, political or otherwise, in all societies. These studies usually conclude with the need to extend the feminist project to young men, convincing them to give up their overly assertive, judgmental stands and become more tolerant and peaceful.

Yet what if the bellicose capacities of young men were summoned into existence by the perception of justice and injustice, the conviction that injustice has to be fought and justice upheld? Such perceptions exist in every society of which we have any knowledge. The point is not to try to get rid of righteous zeal, therefore, but to convert it to the service of a view of justice that is sane and reasonable.

Hobbes understood that many young men want honor from serving what they perceive to be a noble cause. Hobbes thought that this passion could be tamed to a great extent by material well-being, but he did not think it could ever be entirely eradicated. The social contract would always have to be on guard against the wolves prowling its dark perimeters.

Since then, there has been a tendency to think that the entire world has become like that social contract, or is on the verge of becoming so, if only we could extend the benefits of prosperity to those

who still cling to aberrant passions of honor-seeking and righteousness. Yet reality contradicts this belief nearly every day, whether it be in Paris, Oklahoma City, or Iraq.

In the romanticization of revolution, revolutionaries are often portrayed as young idealists fighting the grip on power and privilege of rigid old men. In reality, as the history of revolutions from the Jacobins to the present demonstrates, young revolutionaries aim precisely to establish a state where they will have absolute power to force others into a collectivist straitjacket.

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That is why terrorists are tyrants in waiting and tyrannies terrorize their own populations while often supporting new terrorists abroad (think of the Iranian Islamic Republic). Their contempt for what they perceive as the bloated softness and weakness of modern society is translated into a demand that the masses be purified of their corrupt material pleasures, a kind of monasticism imposed on an entire society. (Sergey Nechaev's classic statement of the terrorist's creed was revealingly entitled *Catechism of the Revolutionist*.)

That indignation toward the sloth of the masses, that desire for a totalitarian collective purged of its frivolity and laxity, is what drives many of the young men who believe they are waging Jihad. The ideology of Jihadism, a sedulous blend of pseudo-religious messianism hitched to the service of a totalitarian utopia, only increases the dangerous appeal of this distorted kind of idealism.

The passion for justice born of righteous anger, with its call for the wholesale destruction and reconstruction of existence, is at the psychological core of revolutionary politics. Anger over the feeling that one has been treated unjustly—oppressed, insulted, slighted, overlooked—is common to all people, but few act violently on that sense of righteous indignation, and fewer still carry that vengeance through

to the destruction of the world around them and its replacement with a new order that will enshrine their own supremacy. Those who do so form an exclusive club of millenarian tyrants whose unbri-dled and destructive passion for justice is the engine of modern revolutionary extremism.

In many cases of millenarian tyranny, we find a shattering experience in early life—failure to achieve a respectable career, distant or oppressive parents, shame and disgrace over the family name, a feeling of being excluded by the upper class—that drove these young men to bring everything down in flames in order to avenge themselves for these injustices and insults. This vengeance now extended from the original cruel or neglectful authority figure who treated them so slightly (sometimes without being aware of it) to entire social forces and classes: “the bourgeoisie,” “the reactionaries,” “the aristos,” “the Jews.”

Hence, if Hitler had succeeded in getting into art school, if Lenin's brother had not been executed for being a subversive, or if Mao had not felt looked down on for his peasant origins, Germany, Russia, and China might well have been spared the millionfold suffering brought about by their supremacy. The ideological visions of Bolshevism, Nazism, and Maoism—the structure of millenarian tyranny since 1793—are, to be sure, indispensable for understanding their success and appeal, but the righteous anger and aggressiveness of the Leader is the crucible in which those totalitarian fantasies are forged and imposed on reality with indomitable willpower.

Many of these men begin their rise to tyrannical power unusually early for success in politics, which is generally a middle-aged vocation. Hitler was a major public figure in Germany by his thirties; Lenin became Bolshevik leader at 33; and Robespierre dominated the Jacobins by the same age. Their youthfulness often supplies a veneer of open-mindedness, vibrancy, and empathy for other youthful nonconformists that masks their long-term aim for total control.

Their thirst for absolute power absorbs and deflects drives for ordinary luxuries and amusements: The “Spartan” public image of Robespierre, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Castro, and Osama bin Laden (whether authentic or not) appeared to confirm their selflessness and dedication to a just cause.

Such men begin as revolutionaries and end as absolute despots. They appear in the guise of youthful idealists who invite other idealistic young people to join them in a revolution that will sweep away the

old world of injustice, oppression, poverty, and class distinctions and create a new, fresh world where all are free to flourish in a community that is simultaneously totally unified and allows every individual complete fulfillment.

While the Jacobins prepared their death machine for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands, the young poet Wordsworth truly felt that to be alive in Paris during the Revolution was bliss, “but to be young was very heaven.”<sup>6</sup> This vision of a brighter future where the young, following their young leaders, will rise to their place in the sun is common to all modern revolutionary movements from the Jacobins through the Bolsheviks, Nazis, Maoists, Khmer Rouge, and today’s Jihadists.

Those who hang on to the movement are gradually drawn into the spiraling violence, the mass executions, the slaughter of racial and class enemies on the way to total power, convincing themselves either that the Leader does these things unwillingly, as regrettably necessary but temporary measures until full power is achieved and can be wielded justly, or that he does not know about the excesses committed in his name. This was a common set of delusions about Stalin and Hitler among their dedicated followers.

Then they wake up and find that the self-proclaimed revolutionary that they believed was taking us all to a brighter world is in fact a tyrant bent on retaining total power forever. Stalin called them “useful idiots,” including his admirers in Europe and America.

### **From National Socialism to Third World Socialism to the International Jihad**

After the defeat of the Third Reich, in a bold transformation of earlier currents of millenarian tyranny, “the people” now moved from the collectivist far right of National Socialism to the collectivist far left of Marxism. The catalyst for this transition was the founding philosopher of existentialism, Martin Heidegger, the “hidden king” of 20th century thought as Hannah Arendt had dubbed him years earlier.<sup>7</sup> The most fervent philosophical disciple of Nazism now

became the hero of French Marxists and existentialists led by Jean-Paul Sartre.

Heidegger had tied his existentialist code of passionate risk, daring, resoluteness, and commitment to the German people’s return to its collective “destiny” in a life-and-death struggle against the spiritually debased forces of modern materialism and individualism: in other words, to the National Socialist “community of destiny” that came to power in 1933. Heidegger wrote in 1935 of “the inner truth and greatness” of National Socialism in its struggle to “build a new world,” praise that he never retracted throughout his long life.<sup>8</sup>

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Through Heidegger’s influence on French intellectuals and their disciples, including chief theorist of Third World Socialism Frantz Fanon and aspiring revolutionaries such as Pol Pot and the intellectual godfather of the Iranian Revolution, Ali Shariati, National Socialism’s *Volkish* vision of “the people” recovering its primordial origins from the alienating influences of the Enlightenment, liberal democracy, and capitalism morphs into “the people” of Third World Socialism recovering its destiny through the violent struggle of “national liberation movements” against the colonizing powers of the West. In this way, “the people” replaces “the proletariat” in the revolutionary psychodrama, and the focus of revolutionary struggle shifts from the class struggle within advanced industrial democracies to the struggle between the colonized East and its Western oppressors, between what Maoist ideologue Lin Biao called “the rural areas of the world” and the values of liberal individualism and the Enlightenment, now embodied by America (and, soon enough, Israel).<sup>9</sup>

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6. William Wordsworth, “France.—(Concluded),” in *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850), p. 299.

7. Hannah Arendt, “Martin Heidegger at Eighty,” trans. Albert Hofstadter, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (October 21, 1971).

8. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 2nd ed., trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 222.

9. Lin Biao, *Long Live the Victory of the People’s War!: In Commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Victory in the Chinese People’s War of Resistance Against Japan* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 49.



“The people,” Frantz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, must experience the oppressors’ violence and lash back violently to win its freedom. Violence is not merely a means to freedom, but a “catharsis,” a spiritual purification through the “life and death” struggle with the colonial master.<sup>10</sup> Just as in Heidegger’s invocation of a mystical German destiny, a past far behind any ordinary received traditions about the past, Fanon calls on the people to recover its destiny by shattering its own native social and religious traditions because these “masks” are hopelessly tainted by centuries of collaboration with the colonial master.<sup>11</sup>

A recent contributor to this blend of the collectivist far left and far right is Russian Slavophilic nationalist author Aleksandr Dugin. His writings on behalf of “National Bolshevism” are a throwback to the pro-fascist writings of Ernst Junger, Carl Schmitt, and Martin Heidegger. In them, Russia takes the place of Germany as the “people of destiny” that will lead a revolution against the materialistic values of the Enlightenment and “bourgeois” liberal democracy, a mission to be spread not only spiritually, but also through force of arms as Russia reasserts her imperial identity.<sup>12</sup>

The international Jihad is the 21st century’s main heir to millenarian revolutionary movements stretching back through Third World Socialism and National Socialism to the Jacobins. Whatever differences may exist among the Khomeinists, al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and ISIS, they share the same utopian aim—the establishment of a worldwide Caliphate—and are united in their implacable hatred of the “Great Satan” America and its local proxy, the “Little Satan” Israel.

Al-Qaeda grew out of the struggle of the Mujahadeen in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, the birth of their cult of honor and death in battle (as one of the Mujahadeen put it, “The Americans believe in Coca-Cola. We believe in death”). As proclaimed in al-Qaeda’s “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” Jihad became a rallying call for this-worldly, secular

revolution against both the West and corrupt, self-professed Muslim regimes that, in the Jihadists’ view, collaborated with the West and are tainted by its selfish materialism.<sup>13</sup>

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In the declaration, Osama bin Laden called on Muslims to put aside their differences and concentrate their efforts against the Western enemy in a movement he described two years later as the “World Islamic front.”<sup>14</sup> Al-Qaeda blended many previous Third World Socialist critiques of the West into its allegedly religious call to arms: Its list of grievances included Western colonialism, economic exploitation, and the attempt to repress national liberation movements like the Vietcong.

Commentators including Bernard Lewis observed an affinity between the collectivist ideal of a pure Islamic state aimed for by al-Qaeda and the *Volkish* collectivism of European fascist movements of the 1920s and 1930s. Lewis traced “the mood of anti-Westernism” in political Islamism to Heidegger, Ernst Junger, Rainer Maria Rilke, and the Nazis. As the appeal of Marxism–Leninism with its scenario of international class conflict waned, he argued, the strain in fascist ideology extolling “the spirituality and vitality of the rooted, human, national cultures of the Germans and other ‘authentic peoples’” fed “the new mystique of Third Worldism emanating from Western Europe” among Muslim intellectuals.<sup>15</sup>

Jihadism borrowed from Third World Socialism’s belief in the existence of an authentically rooted “people” whose true past exists far behind the conventionally received orthodoxy about the meaning

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10. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp. 173, 219.

11. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

12. See, for example, Aleksandr Dugin, *The Fourth Political Theory*, trans. Mark Sleboda and Michael Miller (United Kingdom: Arktos Media, 2012).

13. “Bin Laden’s Fatwa,” *PBS NewsHour*, August 23, 1996, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa\\_1996/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa_1996/).

14. “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders: World Islamic Front Statement,” February 23, 1998, <http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.

15. Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266, No. 3 (September 1990), pp. 47–60.

of tradition, a true past that can be recovered only by an act of revolutionary violence. As is well known, al-Qaeda's and other Islamists' vision of a pure Islamic state bears little resemblance to the whole rich history of Muslim religious, political, and cultural values as they evolved cumulatively over the centuries. By predating the pure society to the earliest origins of Islam, al-Qaeda implied that its entire subsequent history is tainted by Westernization and colonization, just as Fanon had maintained was the case with the received traditions ("masks") of Third World peoples.

This vision of a restored pure community of the faithful comes down to little more than the vaguest generalizations about community, lack of selfishness, and lack of corruption. It is as much a leap into an unknowable future as it is a return to the past, sweeping aside every counsel of prudence, received wisdom, theological precedent, and the rule of law—the true heir of millenarian tyranny going back to the Jacobins' return to "the Year One."

Of special interest is Islamism's intellectual founder, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, and his critique of Western spiritual corruption, decadence, sexual depravity, and nihilism, based on observations he made while visiting the U.S. as a student in the late 1940s. These criticisms contributed to a long exco-riation of the secular Enlightenment and liberal democracy that began in the West itself, typified by Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and numerous promoters of fascism, and was exported to the non-Western world along with Western economic and cultural influence.

Ironically, in finding these defects in the West, Qutb was contributing from the East to a lexicon originating in the anti-Enlightenment culture of the West itself as far back as Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* in 1750. At bottom, both al-Qaeda and the Iranian Revolution were secular revolutionary movements that employed selectively interpreted Muslim themes as a justification for this-worldly extremism to usher in what Ali Shariati termed "a classless society."<sup>16</sup>

The Khomeinists' distinctive contribution to Jihadist millenarianism is rooted in a theological difference between Sunni and Iranian Shia Islam, a

messianic strain in Shia that awaits the return of the Hidden Imam to establish justice on Earth. Ali Shariati hitched Shia messianism to the service of creating a purely this-worldly revolution in which, no longer content to wait passively for the Hidden Imam's return, the masses will create a just society through political struggle—a fusion of Shia apocalypticism with the blend of Heidegger, Fanon, and Third World Socialism that Ali Shariati absorbed in Paris.

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### **The Islamists' vision of a restored pure community of the faithful comes down to little more than the vaguest generalizations about community, lack of selfishness, and lack of corruption.**

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While many traditionalist ayatollahs denounced Ali Shariati's secularization of Shia into a creed for violent political struggle, he had an early supporter: the Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Iranian Republic after the revolution of 1979.

Beginning with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a truly sinister twist was added: A nuclear strike to wipe out Israel would begin a worldwide nuclear apocalypse that would usher in the Last Days and hasten the return of the Hidden Imam to create a worldwide utopian collective of justice and peace. As with previous millenarian revolutions, one group was held to stand in the way of mankind's future bliss: Israel. Nuclear annihilation offered a new method for utopian genocide, faster and more thorough than death camps.

In this utopian blueprint—like Hitler's, insane but internally coherent—the cost to Iranians themselves was of no consequence, especially because Israel could be wiped out with one weapon while Iran would not be entirely destroyed by a nuclear retaliation. As former President Ayatollah Akbar Hasemi-Rafsanjani sanguinely remarked, "the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world."<sup>17</sup> This willingness to see Iran absorb the

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16. Ali Shari'ati, "Islamology: The Basic Design for a School of Thought and Action," Part 4, 1968, <http://www.shariati.com/english/islam/islam4.html>.

17. Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, "Qods Day Speech (Jerusalem Day)," trans. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 14, 2001, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/2001/011214-text.html>.

“harm” of an Israeli retaliatory strike (surely millions of casualties) is reminiscent of Hitler’s willingness to divert resources needed to win the Second World War and expose Germany to catastrophically destructive bombing and invasion in order to speed up the Holocaust, even if it meant Germany’s going down in flames.

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**The Iranian leaders’ commitment to the destruction of Israel is a matter of principle, just as the Holocaust was for the Nazis and the liquidation of the kulaks was for the Bolsheviks. Genocide through nuclear devastation is meant to bring about the happiness of Year One for all of us.**

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To this day, whatever tactical shifts may occur in its relations with the West, the Iranian Republic has never disavowed Ahmadinejad’s project of nuclear Armageddon. As long as that is so, it will not be possible to negotiate successfully with Iran. The Iranian leaders’ commitment to the destruction of Israel is a matter of principle, just as the Holocaust was for the Nazis and the liquidation of the kulaks was for the Bolsheviks. Genocide through nuclear devastation is meant to bring about the happiness of Year One for all of us.

In sum, all of the hallmarks of millenarian revolution, stretching back to the Jacobins, come together in the international Jihad:

- The return to the Year One, a grim collectivist utopia allegedly based on the earliest, purest version of Muslim society in the 7th century.
- The identification of a single force that stands in the way of nirvana for all mankind and must therefore be obliterated. For the Jihadists, that force is America—the embodiment of the Enlightenment, capitalism, globalization, and bourgeois corruption—allied with Israel and the Jews.
- Lenin’s maxim “the worse, the better.” Al-Qaeda attacked the U.S. on 9/11 because it wanted

America to respond with lethal force, thereby unmasking itself as a colonialist oppressor, galvanizing the Islamic masses, and removing any hope of accommodation. Revolutionary movements do not want peace, prosperity, or sound government for their peoples, and that is true of ISIS and Hamas today.

- Finally, just as earlier millenarian tyrannies found “useful idiots,” as Stalin termed them, who actually believed that the liberal individualist values of the Enlightenment were responsible for the revolutionaries’ justified rage, numerous intellectuals on the Left believed that America had brought 9/11 on itself because, as the *Nation* magazine put it within weeks of the attack, it had been a “rogue state” oppressing Third World peoples for decades.<sup>18</sup>

**Tyranny in the World Today**

As we assess the forces of tyranny in today’s world, it is natural to wonder whether there is a danger that the American government itself might degenerate into a tyranny. The danger, while not inconceivable, is slight.

To be sure, liberal democracies are capable of tyrannical actions both against their own citizens and abroad, but that does not make them tyrannical regimes. As representative governments with power shared among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, they are capable of self-reform. One branch can check another’s overbearing actions or attempt to remedy its moral failings.

In fact, the American Founders designed the U.S. Constitution with a view to preventing tyranny from coming into being. The crime against humanity of slavery provoked the election of Abraham Lincoln and the American Civil War that brought about its end and, eventually, the fruition of that moral victory in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

America’s rise to world power exposed, many felt, a troubling connection between the President’s authority as chief executive and his authority as commander in chief, a residue of potentially tyrannical power that can be traced back to Machiavelli’s teaching on republican government and the need for recurrent princely “founders” acting outside the law, which many felt surfaced in Lincoln, Franklin

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18. Joel Rogers, “The End of Innocence,” *The Nation*, October 1, 2001, <http://www.thenation.com/article/end-innocence>.

Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon. But presidential actions thought by many to be illegal—Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus, LBJ’s wiretaps, Nixon’s dirty tricks, Guantanamo—were eventually checked by Congress, the courts, or both.

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## The greatest danger of home-grown revolutionaries on American soil today does not stem from internal American politics, but from young men who self-identify as converts to Jihad, working from within to bring about the worldwide Caliphate.

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At bottom, liberal democracies are capable of recognizing that they have not lived up to their own best principles and so must make the necessary changes. The Constitution itself presupposed the permanent possibility of tyranny and aimed to forestall it before it gathered strength. By contrast, when tyrants like Assad or Saddam commit mass murder against their own populations, they are not falling beneath a moral standard to which they might conceivably return. Tyrannical oppression *is* their only standard. Nor does a truly independent legislature, judiciary, or media exist to check the tyrant’s power.

If the American Constitution provides fairly certain safeguards against the American government’s becoming a tyranny, could America ever succumb to a home-grown millenarian revolution that would overthrow the government, abolish the Constitution, and establish a millenarian tyranny of the Jacobin kind? That too is unlikely. America has always had political extremism on both the left and right (the KKK, Anarchists, Wobblies, Minutemen, Black Panthers, Weathermen, Aryan Nation, Unabomber), but never have these elements coalesced around a broad-based utopian vision for tomorrow based upon returning to the mystical “destiny” of the past that might enlist millions of supporters.

As Louis Hartz famously argued, America’s only tradition is the liberal tradition.<sup>19</sup> There is no pre-modern “lost community” for revolutionary nostalgia to invoke, no “community of destiny” shrouded in myth. The greatest danger of home-grown

revolutionaries on American soil today does not stem from internal American politics, but from young men who self-identify as converts to Jihad, working from within to bring about the worldwide Caliphate.

This is where a cure for amnesia about tyranny is most needed. Terrorists who are tyrants in waiting will escape undetected if we see the world as having already been transformed in such a way that, owing to the opportunity for individual freedom and economic self-advancement, there should be no grounds for their anger.

The hard truth is that even if the blessings of liberal democracy were to spread around the globe (a dubious proposition at best), there is no guarantee that such violent and wrathful men will fade away. Their very contempt for what they perceive as the corrupt materialism of the West might only intensify as liberal democracy spreads throughout the non-Western world, evoking Nietzsche’s prediction that a new breed of “master” would emerge for the coming 20th century’s “struggle for the Earth” precisely through their revulsion at the unbearable prevalence of bourgeois Last Man, “the herd man of democratic morality,” a creed embraced by many Anarchist, Bolshevik, and Nazi revolutionaries.

The revolutionary’s zeal for punitive justice is, quite simply, a permanent possibility in political behavior that will never go away. It does not matter whether the vast majority of people in the non-Western world would be content with a chance for prosperity and happiness in their private lives. That will not deter the tribe of the righteously angry from their destructive mission any more than it did in France, Russia or Germany, all comparatively advanced countries at the time their revolutions broke out and most of whose leaders came from middle-class or higher backgrounds and professions.

If we entertain this disturbing perspective without the distorting lens of the modern social sciences and their inability to grasp tyranny as a permanent alternative on the human landscape, we will understand the need to keep a keen lookout for those wolves prowling the perimeters of liberal-democratic civilization in the nearby darkness. As noted, it is the same world, but our understanding of it and the contemporary threats posed by tyranny to democratic freedom will change considerably. That will involve teaching our young that real and aspiring

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19. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955).

tyrants exist, just as they always have, and what motivates them.

The first step in confronting this danger, therefore, is to speak frankly about what it is without clinging to the comforting delusion that the spread of Western-style prosperity will be sufficient to counteract it. Reducing the root causes of terrorism to poverty and frustrated individual opportunity ignores the long-established if troubling psychological possibility that a hatred born of wounded honor and moral outrage is independently rooted in the human character.

Time and again, the social sciences miss the point because they assume, going back to Hobbes, that political leaders are rational actors motivated solely by material self-interest. They will try to grab as much as they can but when checked (say with sanctions) will relent and accept a fair or at least realistic share of the pie.

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The only problem is that this is not and never has been true. Robespierre, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, Pol Pot, bin Laden—men such as these are driven by much more than material self-interest. Honor, ambition, glory, righteous anger, burning conviction, a passion for justice as they see justice, resentment, utopian ideology all factor in.

It took Western liberal democracy four centuries of character development, beginning in the Renaissance and Reformation, to enable us to look past such aggressive passions and embrace tolerance and a preference for the peaceful arts of commerce over the warrior's code of honor. Even we are far from having succeeded entirely in doing so: We can be tyrannical too, and democracies cannot always avoid being warlike, but the rest of the world rolls on as it always has, not convinced that material gain trumps every other meaningful experience, passion, or commitment.

This is true even of tyrannical aggression that falls short of true millenarianism, such as Russia's

attempt to reassert its hegemonic role in Eastern Europe. Vladimir Putin is more in the mold of 19th century Great Power militarism than that of all-out revolutionaries like Lenin or Hitler.

Recognizing that such militarism is alive and well in the 21st century would be the beginning of wisdom in understanding Putin's ambitions. Even so, the sense of a world-salvational mission belonging to Russia going back to Slavophilic thinkers like Nikolai Berdyaev and revived by Putin's adviser Dugin lends a dash of millenarian fervor to Putin's expansionist agenda that, if he does not believe in it literally himself, is certainly useful for stirring up Russian patriotism.

Putin is a rational actor in international relations in the sense that unlike Hitler or, more recently, Ahmadinejad, he does not contemplate his country and himself going down in flames as an acceptable price for attempting to bring about utopia. By the same token, however, what he sees as Russia's need to recover her honor and greatness and avenge the humiliation inflicted on her by losing the Cold War means that he will risk a very great deal—certainly a severe blow to the Russian economy through sanctions and possibly even active military opposition from the West—before he will be willing to compromise his sense of historic mission. When honor is more important to a leader than economic prosperity, bargaining becomes very hard indeed.

Millenarian tyranny is spearheaded in its purest form today by the international Jihad, heirs to Robespierre, Stalin, Hitler, and Pol Pot. For them, terror is not a temporary tactic or occasional extreme: It is the fundamental principle of the return to the Year One.

All states and political movements are capable of violent and unlawful acts, which are usually seen as unfortunate but temporary means to a tangible security, economic, or foreign policy aim or recognized as a lapse from professed principles during an emergency situation. But for genuinely revolutionary movements from the Jacobins to al-Qaeda, terror is the *only* principle, because after the enemy is defeated, the terror will have to be institutionalized and turned on human nature to purge and reconstruct it.

At bottom, the term "terrorism," while useful, can be misleading because it suggests something stateless or a random psychological aberration akin to "rampage killings." In reality, to stress the point again, terrorists are tyrants in waiting, and



tyrants are terrorists who have gained power. The real battle is not with terrorism, an abstract noun, but between two fully actualized regimes with their diametrically opposed principles: liberal democracy and tyranny.

Regrettably, even though it is self-evident that the vast majority of Muslims are not terrorists or supporters of terrorism, all self-identified Muslim terrorists are by definition Muslims until the majority of their co-religionists make it clear that they are not. Some do, but not enough. Islam needs its own Reformation to combine the greatness of its enduring faith with modern individual rights, as happened in the West several centuries ago. It is not up to those with backgrounds in other faiths—or an American President—to decree what is and is not Islam. Muslims must do it for themselves.

Identifying tyrannical forces is more relevant than ever as the promotion of freedom in today's world sometimes requires us to make some rather difficult and uncomfortable choices between greater and lesser evils. Does the replacement of a dictator by a self-professed democratic movement necessarily mean that something better will come about? Or might a new kind of tyranny even worse than what preceded it be the long-term outcome?

We should ponder how the French, Russian, and Iranian Revolutions all began as liberal reformist movements that were hijacked by collectivist extremists bent on genocide and war when we forecast a future for Egypt or Syria, or when we are tempted to throw over an imperfectly democratic authoritarian regime when a totalitarian tyranny might be waiting in the wings to replace it. We may find it necessary to choose between relatively better and relatively worse non-democratic kinds of authority.

There is abundant evidence that the removal of tyranny does not itself guarantee that people will become democrats. (Consider the fate of “nation-building” in Iraq.) They may only want revenge against their former oppressors, thereby becoming oppressors themselves. These are not pleasant alternatives, but they are unavoidable.

Confronted by the clash in today's world between secular dictatorships and millenarian Jihadists, we often search for a deluded middle ground, hoping that revolutions and civil wars can be won by teachers and bank clerks demonstrating peacefully for their rights rather than by a fanatical inner core of

radicals. We want to believe that so-called secular rebels exist in sufficient numbers among the armed opponents of dictatorships like that of Assad to stave off radical Islamism and make the transition to liberal democracy.

In hoping for this, we forget Jean Kirkpatrick's maxim that we should never undermine an authoritarian regime if doing so risks allowing a totalitarian movement to take its place (disastrously demonstrated by the Carter Administration's abandonment of the Shah of Iran) and that, moreover, whatever their failings, authoritarian regimes are much more capable of a peaceful evolution toward liberal democracy than are totalitarian dictatorships.

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Whatever prospects may exist for the spread of democracy throughout the world, one thing is certain: We have to learn again how to identify the varieties of tyranny for what they are. Without that, no prudent judgment of any kind about the greater good or the lesser of evils is possible.

Modern liberal democracy was based on the hard-headed assessment by writers like Machiavelli and Hobbes that human nature is governed by self-interest and that states become prosperous and powerful by cooperating with that passion. But it is precisely the success of the West in creating such societies—societies characterized by their general peacefulness, comfort, and lack of violent political strife—that can lull us into thinking that the entire world is that way or can become so if we will only wish for it.

To return to an earlier observation, Machiavelli and Hobbes knew that societies had to guard their security and well-being from the tyrannically minded wolves prowling the dark perimeter around the well-lit compound. We have a tendency to think the whole world is nothing but that bright compound or that it soon will be once the wolves learn they will be

fed. But wolves are predators: They kill whether they are hungry or not. To the realism of Machiavelli and Hobbes we should add Aristotle's even more fundamental reminder that tyrants value mastery and honor over material comforts: "[N]o one becomes a tyrant in order to get in out of the cold."<sup>20</sup>

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The real cure for our amnesia about tyranny is authors like these—the canon of the Great Books. Only from an immersion in the very best of philosophy, history, and literature might young people learn in their hearts and minds to replace a zeal for domination with a zeal for the common good, to be able to distinguish a permissible ambition to excel in serving the common good from an impermissible ambition to dominate one's fellow citizens, to be mature enough to realize that there are few pure idealists in political life (and when there are, they tend to be extremely dangerous) and that some of the darker, more aggressive qualities that drive the soul of a tyrant can also be found in the inner makeup of great statesmen.

Ambition cannot be removed from the human soul, no matter how much wealth and comfort we are offered. It can only be reshaped by liberal education and redirected from unjust goals to just goals. No one better understood what he called "the tribe of the eagle"—men like Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon—than Abraham Lincoln, or the temptation, explored in his Lyceum Speech, to achieve immortal fame by overthrowing the republic rather than by serving it. Lincoln made the right choices in his own rise more resolutely because he understood and overcame inwardly the appeal of the wrong ones.

This maturity about political motivation, ambition, and the permissible and impermissible varieties of honor-seeking is especially necessary today when the

canon of the Great Books is so often undermined by the self-absorption of identity politics and the hopeless lack of realism in the social sciences, which persist in refusing to recognize that tyrannical ambition is a permanent possibility in political behavior. The belief in globalization, leading either to the elevation of economics as the chief field for the study of human affairs or to the utopian fantasy of a coming global civil society—a world without borders—has also done great harm to liberal education by making young people unaware of the richness of the psychology of honor-seeking going back to the classics and the crucial distinction between just and unjust, better and worse regimes and political systems, further robbing them of the ability both to distinguish between tyranny and free self-government and to understand why liberal democracy, even at its worst and most flawed, is preferable to tyranny even at its best.

## Conclusion

Liberal democracy of the Western kind is not natural in the sense of being spontaneous. The mere removal of a tyrant does not guarantee that people everywhere in the world will automatically embrace their inner Jeffersonian democrat. They may only want revenge and triumph for their own clan, tribe, or sect. But liberal democracy definitely *is* natural in the ancient Platonic and Aristotelian meaning of human nature: not mere survival, but the cultivation of our greatest potential for moral virtue as free citizens of a self-governing republic, including tolerance, freedom of thought and expression, liberal education, and cultural excellence.

Tyrannies at their best can sometimes protect people's lives against a greater threat posed by civil strife or promote material prosperity, but they can never enable people to pursue happiness and self-fulfillment. As long as we remain vigilant against the wolves who prowl the perimeter, democracy is bound to defeat tyranny because it is simply a better idea.

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20. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1267a13.