
Laura Goldblatt and Richard Handler, University of Virginia
Two US Express Mail Stamps, one from 1983 (left) and one from 1991 (right)
• (1) Francis Fukuyama’s influential 1989 essay, “The End of History?”

• (2) The 1971 transformation of the US Post Office Department, a branch of the federal government, into a government corporation, the US Postal Service

• (3) The 1969 moon landing
Part One: Francis Fukuyama and the End of History
The End of History?

Francis Fukuyama

In watching the flow of events over the past decade or so, it is hard to avoid the feeling that something very fundamental has happened in world history. The past year has seen a flood of articles commemorating the end of the Cold War, and the fact that "peace" seems to be breaking out in many regions of the world. Most of these analyses lack any larger conceptual framework for distinguishing between what is essential and what is contingent or accidental in world history, and are predictably superficial. If Mr. Gorbachev were ousted from the Kremlin or a new Ayatollah proclaimed the millennium from a desolate Middle Eastern capital, these same commentators would scramble to announce the rebirth of a new era of conflict.

And yet, all of these people sense dimly that there is some larger process at work, a process that gives coherence and order to the daily headlines. The twentieth century saw the developed world descend into a paroxysm of ideological violence, as liberalism contended first with the remnants of absolutism, then bolchevism and fascism, and finally an updated Marxism that threatened to lead to the ultimate apocalypse of nuclear war. But the century that began full of self-confidence in the ultimate triumph of Western liberal democracy seems at its close to be returning full circle to where it started: not to an "end of ideology" or a convergence between capitalism and socialism, as earlier predicted, but to an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism.

The triumph of the West, of the Western Idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. In the past decade, there have been unmistakable changes in the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries, and in the behavior of states like China.
Part Two: Consuming the Moon
1989 (left), 2019 (middle), 1994 (right)
Part Three: Rings/Moons and the Perils of Corporate Sponsorship
POSTAL SERVICE

1992 Olympic Sponsorship—Profit or Loss Is Unknown
The End of History?

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The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. In the past decade, there have been unmistakable changes in the intellectual climate of the world’s two largest communist countries, and the significance of these changes is not to be underestimated.