

## 2 **Modern Government in Extremis**

### 3 ***1 The End Of The Liberal State***

4 Modern government, the nation-state, was born with the  
Cartesian world-view of modern man, just three hundred  
years ago.

5 And it has died with it.

6 But where we have, at least in its beginnings, a new world-  
view today, no successor to modern government has yet  
emerged.

7 We are without an effective institution of political  
integration and order. ...

8 This, at first, may seem paradoxical.

9 The new nations coming into being all over the globe are  
organizing themselves as nation-states, complete with all  
the trappings of sovereignty and constitution, supreme  
court, central bank and propaganda ministry.

10 In the modern totalitarianism, the nation-state seems to  
have become all-powerful.

11 And—perhaps the most striking fact—the countries of  
Western Europe all restored and rebuilt traditional nation-  
states after the cataclysm of the Second World War. ...

12 But this triumph of modern government is more apparent  
than real.

13 At the very time at which its dominion is becoming  
universal, the concepts and assumptions on which the  
institution rests are collapsing, and with them the ability of  
modern government to govern.

## 14 The Definition of Modern Government

15 Fundamentally four major concepts characterized the institution of modern government.

16 Together they defined it. ...

17 First is the tenet that *government has an exclusive monopoly on organized power in society*, that it is the only power center of modern society.

18 This is the meaning of the term "sovereignty" which, around the sixteenth century, appeared as the new key to the old problem of government.

19 This is also the meaning of the legal theory of "positive law" which refuses to accept any social power or legal sanction unless it derive by delegation (express or imputed) from the sovereign government—a theory which still dominates the legal and political thought of Europe. ...

20 Not since the days of the Greek polis had any government aimed at such monopolistic concentration of power as did modern government right from its first appearance in the France of Louis XIV and the parliamentary oligarchy of Whig supremacy in England.

21 Modern government swept into its own hand exclusive control of all the levers of community organization and action:

22 foreign affairs and armed forces

23 coining money, levying taxes and duties

24 communications such as the postal system, the roads and later the railroads

25 legislative and judiciary power.

26 Except in England, it took full control of education.

27 It even reached for—and in large measure attained—control over religious life, over the creed of the country and its inhabitants, and largely over the personnel and organization of the official state religion and of its rites of worship.

28 «§§§»

29 The second tenet of modern government held that it was *by nature and definition self-limiting in its scope*. ...

30 The government of the nation-state was the central and

supreme government.

31 But everywhere it tried to limit its sphere of action to the  
"national" tasks.

32 Everywhere it tried to set up dependent but functioning  
local governments for local tasks.

33 These differed greatly in their composition and powers.

34 Some, like those of nineteenth-century France, were mere  
agents of the national government; others, like those of  
England, were local self-governments supervised and  
limited, but not controlled by the national government.

35 But every national government, while legally omnipotent,  
delegated local operating responsibilities to local  
governments.

36 Even the Soviet Union today is, legally, a federation of  
autonomous republics; and within those republics  
districts and municipalities are supposed to be self-  
governing local governments.

37 «\$\$\$»

38 *At the same time (the third basic concept) modern  
government was, by definition, limited in its power. ...*

39 It was "government under the law"—and even the Soviet  
Union today holds officially that the law is supreme and  
that government is limited by it. ...

40 The sovereign government of the nation-state, being a  
power monopoly, represented a greater concentration of  
social power in a single institution than the West had seen  
in fifteen hundred years or more.

41 Yet it also represented up to recent days a smaller  
aggregate of power than the system it replaced.

42 It left a much larger sphere of the individual's existence in  
society outside and beyond organized and  
institutionalized power. ...

43 Modern government established itself by destroying,  
subordinating or neutralizing a host of local power  
centers:

44 feudal manors and petty princes

45 bishops, abbots, cathedral chapters and religious orders

46 chartered "free cities," merchant and craft guilds

47 private armies, the independent universities, hereditary judiciaries responsible to no one, and a myriad others. ...

48 Individually, none of these institutions had much power; indeed, power was so fragmented that organized community action had become impossible, even in the face of so great and imminent a danger as the Turkish imperialist drive into the heart of Europe in the sixteenth century.

49 But taken together these institutions presented an aggregate of power and domination that all but snuffed out the sphere of the individual.

50 There was little or nothing he could do—whether in his political, in his social or in his economic life—that he did not have to do in or through one of these organized institutions, and subject to their control, supervision and veto.

51 Yet none of these institutions was ever strong enough to see beyond its own shortsighted and parochial self-interest, let alone strong enough to allow the individual more than the most limited freedom of action.

52 Even in the most ruthlessly totalitarian state today, the individual may not be as completely “socialized” or “institutionalized” as he was in the system of fragmented but ubiquitous power centers which modern government destroyed and to which it succeeded. ...

53 From the point of view of society as a whole, the government of the modern West represented a tremendous monopoly concentration of power.

54 But from the point of view of the individual, it represented a tremendous decrease in domination by organized, institutional power.

55 Precisely because it held a monopoly on power which it guarded jealously and vigilantly, modern government was able to limit its own power to the minimum needed for effective control.

56 The very concentration it represented thus resulted in a sharp decrease of the total power charge of society.

57 This explains why the new modern government, even at its most capricious and despotic, was so enthusiastically supported everywhere by the rising middle classes, to whom it was the Great Emancipator.

58 «§§§»

59 The greatest innovation of modern government was its

fourth tenet: *that the government of the nation-state was the unit of an international community.*

60 This made possible something new: a rational concept of international affairs. ...

61 Not one of the great political philosophers of earlier times—from Plato to Dante—had included foreign policy and international relations within the scope of his theories of government and politics.

62 Every one of these men was fully aware that foreign politics are crucial; many of the great political thinkers had been personally and deeply immersed in foreign policy.

63 But there was nothing one could say, there were no concepts, no theories, no purposes, no sense—there was no polity outside the scope of domestic government.

64 One simply had no choice but to ignore foreign affairs in discussing the purpose and function of government and the nature of politics.

65 Even Machiavelli (perhaps the most accomplished professional diplomatist of Western history) concluded, after devoting the best part of his great book on *The Prince* to foreign affairs, that to make government possible, foreign affairs would have to be eliminated by what we today would call a “world government.” ...

66 The theory and practice of modern government, however, assumed an international community of sovereign and equal nations.

67 In that community only governments would be acting; but it also assumed—a very bold assumption—that only governments would be acted upon.

68 Nobody else—whether individual or group—would have any standing in international affairs.

69 But nobody else—whether individual or group—would be exposed to international affairs and be affected by them. ...

70 This idea—breathtaking when it appeared—made possible a theory and practice of foreign relations.

71 It made possible international law and international order.

72 It made it possible—for the first time in man’s long history, and maybe for the last time also—to organize war as an

instrument of government and policy, and to subordinate organization for war to the ends and the organs of civilian peacetime government. ...

- 73 We are only too conscious today of the failures and shortcomings of this concept.
- 74 Every student of international law knows that it abounds in contradictions and inconsistencies.
- 75 The "international order" never worked.
- 76 But this affects neither the novelty of the attempt nor the magnitude of the achievement.
- 77 Even at its most successful the concept fell far short of realization.
- 78 But it established a frame of general theory and habits of general practice that made it possible to organize international relations, to integrate warfare into government without subordinating government to incessant war, and to establish rules of law which set the norm of conduct even when being violated.

## 79 The Rise of the Liberal State

80 For two hundred years—from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century—modern government developed steadily along its original lines, becoming both increasingly the exclusive power center of its society and increasingly self-limited. ...

81 The power monopoly of modern government rested on military technology and a money economy.

82 Their juxtaposition, for two hundred years, made possible the self-limitation of modern government as well as the modern concept of international relations.

83 But the very trends that permitted the emergence of the institution ultimately destroyed its foundations. ...

84 With the introduction of gunpowder into military technology around 1450, offense had gained decided advantage over defense.

85 Until then a petty knight in his hilltop castle could sit out most attacks.

86 As long as his supply of food and water held out, his position was impregnable.

87 It is no accident that so many of the defeats of medieval and Renaissance warfare were inflicted by the traitor within the gates rather than by trial of arms.

88 But against siege guns, even the fortified castle and city were virtually defenseless.

89 At the same time the new military technology was much too expensive for anybody except a national government.

90 It required arms that had to be paid for and cared for, and men trained for long years in their use.

91 It required a standing army. ...

92 The monetization of the economy—brought about above all by the vast imports of silver from the new Spanish Empire in America—enabled government to levy taxes in money and thus to pay both its soldiers and the new professional administrators of modern government.

93 Since Europe itself produces practically no gold and very little silver, the fall of the Roman Empire, which cut off the West from the Oriental supply of monetary metals, would by itself have forced Europe into the fragmentation of

- power institutions that characterized the twelve hundred years between Diocletian and Richelieu.
- 94 If administrators can only be paid in kind, and if soldiers have to be armed locally and have to live off the land, power can only be petty and fragmented.
- 95 In 1500, at least three quarters of Europe's population still lived essentially in a nonmoney economy.
- 96 A century and a half later, all but the most isolated and backward of Europe's people such as the Scottish Highlanders—lived in a society that was, to all intents and purposes, fully monetized.
- 97 Without the money revolution, modern government would not have been possible. ...
- 98 These two together—military technology and the development of a modern economy—gave to the modern state the means to make good its claim to a monopoly on organized power. ...
- 99 For two hundred years the economy grew so much more rapidly than the demands of military technology that government, while growing absolutely in its needs and demands, appeared to shrink in relation to the total of economy and society.
- 100 That meant also that the concept of foreign affairs as a sphere affecting only governments could be maintained for two hundred years. ...
- 101 Military technology did, of course, advance rapidly.
- 102 Armies not only became much better equipped; they also became much larger.
- 103 There is no comparison between the armies of the Thirty Years' War that ended in 1648 and the armies of Napoleon a century and a half later—whether in size, in fire power, in the length of their campaigns, or in the distances over which they could move and could be supplied.
- 104 Navies—first organized by the Dutch around 1600 and becoming general by 1690—were an even greater burden:
- 105 in the capital equipment they required
- 106 in the scarce materials they consumed both afloat and

- ashore
- 107 in the technological skills needed to build and to maintain them
- 108 and in the permanent trained establishment needed to man them. ...
- 109 But the economy, and with it the population of Europe, grew even faster—perhaps the single most important reason for the emergence of the liberal state of nineteenth-century theory and practice.
- 110 Despite the rapid increase in its scale and complexity, warfare required a steadily decreasing proportion of a steadily increasing national income.
- 111 We have no figures—national income statistics are an invention of the twentieth century.
- 112 But Napoleon’s monstrous armies, engaged in incessant warfare, ate up a very much smaller share of the income than those of the Thirty Years’ War.
- 113 Even of the national income of France—the country that bore the brunt—Napoleon’s wars certainly took less than the armies of Louis XIV had consumed a century earlier.
- 114 Yet Napoleon ranged from Egypt to Denmark and from Spain to Moscow, whereas Louis XIV’s armies rarely ventured more than a hundred miles beyond the borders of France. ...
- 115 A more graphic way of saying the same thing might be that during the wars of the seventeenth century there were probably few skilled metalworkers in the entire European Continent who were not working full time on the production and repair of arms such as muskets, guns, body armor, lances or stirrups.
- 116 During the Napoleonic wars we hear again and again of serious unemployment in the metalworking crafts and industries.
- 117 While Great Britain was engaged, isolated and alone, in her desperate struggle against Napoleon, in the course of which she built and maintained both the largest army and the largest navy she had ever mustered, none of Jane Austen’s heroines was forced to go without any trinket she had the money for; none of her country gentlemen complained about the lack of able-bodied men for hire, or of coaches, horses or building materials. ...

- 118 Small wonder, then, that the same power monopoly of the modern state and its government that had appeared as the Leviathan to the men of 1660 could appear to the early nineteenth century as a domesticated pet.
- 119 The only function which the government really discharged in the eyes of that generation was that of "traffic cop"<sup>1</sup> who makes sure that all cars stay on their side of the road, do not exceed the speed limit and stop at red lights, but who has no concern with where they go, why they are on the road, or what the passengers will do when they get to their destination.
- 120 Even this role seemed to be self-liquidating; at least the historical trend seemed to go toward making the power of government always smaller relative to the increasing sphere of individual action, which was not subject to any organized or institutional power. ...
- 121 The best illustration of this unique combination of exclusive power monopoly and relative insignificance of modern government in the nineteenth century world is the European government of a non-European country-British India.
- 122 The British government in India was absolute; while it was carefully scrutinized by Parliament in London, there was no one in India to whom it was in any way accountable.
- 123 It had a monopoly on power which went far beyond anything seen in the West itself; a word from the Viceroy and the most imposing native prince, supposedly the hereditary, absolute and sovereign ruler over twenty or thirty million people, was quietly deposed or exiled to a remote island. ...
- 124 It was also the most active government with the widest scope of control.
- 125 It organized and operated, except for religious worship, whatever community activities there were throughout the entire subcontinent:
- 126 police, justice and education
- 127 all means of transportation and communication
- 128 irrigation, flood control, forestry, agricultural improvements, surveying, disease control and hospitals.
- 129 It dug wells, built cities, determined land boundaries and arbitrated between religious denominations.

- 130 It collected and published the ancient literature of the country, both Hindu and Moslem; and it restored and protected her ancient monuments. ...
- 131 That the peasant addressed the District Officer—often a mere lad in his twenties—as “my Father and my Mother” was, of course, nothing but ancient and meaningless rhetoric.
- 132 But there was substance to the joke of the juniors in the British service that they were expected by the government of India to be not only father and mother but also midwife and wet nurse to the Indian village.
- 133 For British India was, a century before the term was coined, the first Welfare State. ...
- 134 The prevailing comment on the Indian government during the nineteenth century, especially from the Liberals in England, was how monstrously swollen a bureaucracy the Indian Civil Service was.
- 135 And yet this all-powerful, all-embracing, absolute government, administering an entire subcontinent, never employed more than a thousand Europeans for all its functions and in all the branches of the Indian Civil Service (even though, until fairly recently, Indians themselves were not admitted into the professional ranks of the Service). ...
- 136 It should not surprise us, therefore, that Karl Marx, writing in the 1860’s, confidently predicted the “withering away of the state.”
- 137 Nor was there anything in this prediction to startle his generation; he only expressed in his own rhetoric what was already commonplace.
- 138 \_\_\_\_\_
- 139 1 \* The famous “Nachtwaechter” (nightwatchman) state of German liberal theory.

## 140 **The Decline of the Liberal State**

141 Yet at the very moment at which Marx wrote, the tide was already running heavily in the other direction. ...

142 There was one more old-fashioned war: The Franco-Prussian War of 1870, like its predecessors for two hundred years, took a smaller share of the national income and drained off a smaller share of the national manpower than had the previous major war.

143 Yet by then the first of the new total wars had already been fought, the first war that absorbed the entire economic capacity of a nation and forced it to mobilize its entire able-bodied population either for military service or for war production.

144 The Confederacy fought the American Civil War as a total war.

145 Our historians, dazzled either by the dominant figure of Lincoln or by the gallantry of Confederate generals, have done but scant justice to the psychological, economic and administrative efforts of the Confederacy which made possible five years of such unprecedented exertion.

146 Nor have they always understood that it was this exertion—rather than the abolition of slavery or the (by present-day standards, almost negligible) physical destruction—which brought Southern society down in ruins, destroyed its political tradition and drained its vigor.  
...

147 The decline of the foundations of modern government actually began with an even earlier American event: the American Revolution and its two political innovations, paper currency and the people's army. ...

148 There had been paper monies before—all the way back to the paper money of the Mongol Khans in the days of Marco Polo.

149 All these had, however, been simply receipts for deposits of specie, that is not money issued against the credit of a government or of anybody else, but limited to the amount of specie actually on deposit.

150 The Continental dollar did not even pretend to have any backing, but was simply paper issued against the credit of a nonexistent government. ...

- 151 Paper money enables government to expropriate the citizen legally by inflation or repudiation.
- 152 It thereby gives to government the means for complete economic mobilization, that is for unlimited government control of the citizen in the economy.
- 153 Paper money was one of the greatest of political inventions; it was also the fastest-spreading one, having been adopted within twenty years in France and within another twenty years by every other major European country.
- 154 But it is doubtful that it was a constructive invention.<sup>1</sup>
- 155 Its permanent effect was the abolition of the traditional obstacles to unlimited government control.
- 156 Though paper money does not make unlimited government inevitable, it definitely makes it possible. ...
- 157 The second major innovation of the American Revolution was the "people's army"—maybe the "people's war" might be a better term. ...
- 158 Modern government, as it emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, assumed a professional standing army as a matter of course.
- 159 But the American Revolution was fought—and won—by amateurs, by the "embattled farmers" with their own arms, their own tactics and their elected junior officers.
- 160 Though the idea of the "armed citizenry" was ancient, its revival was revolutionary.
- 161 It was the beginning of the end of the concept of "war as an instrument of policy," and therefore controllable and capable of being subordinated to civilian government.
- 162 It meant the beginning of the end of the concept of the international community as one of governments rather than of individuals, and of international events as not affecting the individual citizen in his private capacity.
- 163 And since a people's war is possible only as a popular war, it meant the end of wars of limited objective; henceforth wars had to be fought for causes rather than for objectives—and only a scoundrel compromises on a cause. ...
- 164 It is no longer original to observe that the United States is

simultaneously truly conservative and truly radical.

165 But it is rarely realized that this has been true from the beginning.

166 Politically the American Revolution was truly conservative—in the best sense of the word.

167 It was also the occasion at which America gave birth to economic and social forces of revolutionary radicalism and of world-wide impact. ...

168 George Washington, most civilized of soldiers and most moderate of rebels, would be horrified at our reality of total war, totalitarian government and garrison state.

169 Yet the innovations of 1776—paper money and armed citizenry—produced ninety years later, in the war fought for the preservation of Washington's Union, the first total war, the first total inflation, and the first total defeat and unconditional surrender.

170 With Appomattox the crisis of modern government was on.

171 «§§§»

172 For two hundred years, from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the demands of warfare on the economic capacity of a Western country decreased steadily.

173 Government could discharge its first obligation—the defense of the country—and yet steadily increase the sphere of nongovernment, the sphere of individual freedom and liberties.

174 Modern government could also increasingly control the military, asserting the principle of its subordination to civilian authority.

175 And war could increasingly be conceived as “the continuation of policy by other means”—Clausewitz' famous definition, written appropriately enough in the first decades of the nineteenth century with their tremendous economic expansion of Europe. ...

176 But for the last hundred years the tide has moved swiftly the other way—and the tidal wave is engulfing us now.

177 The Korean War of 1950-51, which President Truman could call a “police action,” imposed strains on the American economy almost as total as those of the all-out mobilization in World War I only a generation earlier. ...

- 178 The qualitative change in the demands of warfare on society has been even greater than the quantitative one.
- 179 Particularly important has been the shift in the sinews of war from weapons requiring primarily ordinary peacetime products, made in ordinary peacetime facilities, to weapons requiring primarily special-purpose products that can be made only in special-purpose facilities which are of no use except for the production of military equipment and material. ...
- 180 The early nineteenth-century army was still literally able to "live off the land" for well over 90 per cent of its needs.
- 181 Wellington's army fought in the Spanish Peninsula for five years, from 1808 to 1813.
- 182 All the special-purpose equipment it required was guns and—the only big item—a siege train.
- 183 The rest was procured locally even though Spain even then was an "underdeveloped" country. ...
- 184 The only "preparedness" necessary in the Napoleonic age was trained manpower.
- 185 After the defeat of Jena in 1806 Prussia was disarmed and had all her armaments industry destroyed.
- 186 The French Army in the country actually supervised the destruction.
- 187 Yet seven years later, Prussia could put a large and effective fighting force in the field within three months, simply because, by a ruse, she had managed to keep up the training of reservists—and very skimpy training it was by our standards. ...
- 188 Whatever special wartime products were needed, were usually both easy to produce and durable.
- 189 Right through the nineteenth century, cavalry was the most highly specialized and most highly trained branch of any land army.
- 190 It was almost exclusively manned by long-serving regulars who were heavily armed compared to the infantry soldier.
- 191 Yet the cavalry soldier of 1850 or so required only three pieces of special-purpose equipment: a horse, a saber and a pistol.

192 It was standard practice to consider the working life of the horse to be about the same as the enlistment period of the individual regular—that is, ten to fifteen years—and to figure on both saber and pistol outliving the individual trooper, if indeed not three or four troopers. ...

193 In their early stages, the World War I armies were still largely of this kind, though by 1914 equipment suitable only for warfare constituted about one fifth of the total material equipment of what was then considered the modern army.

194 By the end of World War I the situation had changed radically.

195 As much as 40 per cent or so of the equipment needed to put an army in the field, and keep it there, was special-purpose; and to a large extent this equipment had to be produced in special facilities.

196 But the bulk of it could still be produced in peacetime facilities after a brief period of conversion.

197 Hence the problem of preparedness up till World War II was the problem of maintaining a small special-purpose stock, adequate to equip the army for a period of conversion, after which ordinary productive capacity would do the job. ...

198 Today, at least three quarters—in the Air Force considerably more—of the equipment needed for a fighting force is unusable for anything else.

199 Most of it can only be produced in special facilities that are not capable of producing anything else.

200 Conversion is no longer possible.

201 To be capable of defense, a country has today to build a productive machinery which is exclusively, or at least heavily, designed for war-making alone.

202 Defense requires not only an increasingly larger share of the total national income; it also requires a permanent diversion of a larger and larger share of national productivity to strictly war purposes.

203 And to survive in the event of a conflict requires that these special-purpose industries be built during peacetime rather than after the outbreak of hostilities. ...

204 Hence military technology has exploded the concept of

war and society on which modern government based itself.

205

206 1 \* The old Goethe, in the early years of the nineteenth century, had no doubts. In the second part of Faust, the work of his old age, he has the Devil invent paper money to destroy government, community and individual decency.

207

## ***The New Pluralism***

208

The exclusive monopoly of government on organized institutional power in society has been so seriously undermined as, to be in a state of near-collapse.

209

The agent of this collapse is our new power to organize.

210

It is rapidly creating new autonomous power centers within the body politic. ...

211

In an industrial economy the individual is, by and large, productive only insofar as he has access to an organized institution of production and distribution, the enterprise.

212

By himself, the individual in an industrial system can work, but he cannot produce.

213

Only the institutional system organized for performance and survival beyond the lifetime, and independent of, any one individual is capable of production. ...

214

This is not the result of a sinister plot.

215

Nor is there any alternative if we want industrial production and its fruits.

216

What has caused this development is precisely the factor that is responsible for our industrial advance: the modern ability to organize men of high skill, knowledge and judgment for joint work and performance.

217

This both makes possible and requires a scale of operation beyond the ability of any single man to direct, let alone to do.

218

It requires such a variety of skills, knowledges and temperaments as can be supplied only by a large group of different people in organized, permanent effort.

219

It requires the commitment of present resources to a futurity of such length as to be beyond the working life of any individual.

220

It requires capital far beyond the means of any man, were

he even a modem Croesus.

- 221 Above all, it requires managing, that is systematic planning, organizing, integrating and measuring of the efforts and work of highly skilled and highly educated people which can be done only by an organized and disciplined body of men. ...
- 222 It requires a power center, partial in its purposes, to be sure, but largely autonomous. ...
- 223 As a result, new institutional power centers have shot up like Topsy.
- 224 To take our own country as an example: Fifty years ago the federal government was a shadow of its present self.
- 225 It spent less in a year than it now spends in a day.
- 226 All its civilian 'employees could have been housed comfortably in one of the Washington buildings now occupied—and overcrowded—by one of the smaller agencies.
- 227 The state governments were, as a rule, one-man shows.
- 228 And the job of being state governor, while honorific, was so little burdensome that in some of the sparsely settled states the incumbent could still keep in touch with his private law practice. ...
- 229 But—and it is a big “but”—there was no other institutional organization of social or economic power.
- 230 There were a few very rich men, a Morgan or a Rockefeller, who had great personal power and influence.
- 231 There were a few “trusts”; but even though they so badly frightened our grandfathers, the largest of them were so small, whether in assets, in sales or in number of employees, that they would go unmentioned in any list of “five hundred largest corporations” today.
- 232 Only a few railroads and telegraph companies were then so large that we would today consider them “big business”; and they were already being brought under effective governmental regulation.
- 233 Otherwise, there was nothing.
- 234 Big business, the labor unions, national farmers’ organizations, the National Association of Manufacturers,

the American Medical Association, the National Education Association, all these were still to come. ...

235 The world of the American citizen in those days looked very much like the Kansas prairie.

236 Except for one hill, the individual citizen was the tallest thing as far as the eye could see.

237 And even this hill, the federal government, while it looked imposing, was only a few hundred feet high. ...

238 Today the power charge of our society has been built up as it has never been before.

239 Instead of the Kansas prairie, the citizen has the Himalayas around him.

240 Here are the towering institutional peaks of big business, there the rugged and almost sheer cliffs of organized labor closing off access to trades, crafts and jobs to all but the dues-paying members.

241 The farmers are dominated by national farm organizations, medicine by the American Medical Association, and so on.

242 Even religious life, almost without power charge in the America of fifty years ago, is today increasingly organized in strong national institutions which speak for the individual denominations, lobby before Congress and conduct their own campaigns. ...

243 Within the government itself the administrative bureaucracy and the armed forces have largely become organized—though not yet autonomous—institutional power centers. ...

244 Of course, the federal government too has grown and expanded in size as well as power.

245 It is clearly the Everest amongst the Himalayan peaks.

246 But in relation to the total power charge of society as expressed by the other new institutions, the federal government may well have become less, rather than more, powerful.

247 Certainly its power monopoly has been broken. ...

- 248 The development of the new power centers within society may have gone furthest and fastest in this country.
- 249 But the growth itself is not specifically American; it is the result of the emergence of modern industry.
- 250 Even in Soviet Russia, Stalin, while absolute despot, could only maintain his personal power by playing against each other the major power centers of Communist party bureaucracy, Army, Secret Police and industrial management.
- 251 Since his death there has been an increasing power play between them, making and breaking governments.
- 252 Even behind the facade of "monolithic" Communism, the new institutional powers have therefore become the actual political reality.
- 253 Even there, the exclusive monopoly of organized institutional power, which had been one of the foundations of modern government, has been undermined.

## 254 **The New Metropolis**

255 The emergent industrial society has had another major impact on the foundations of government:

256 It erodes local government.

257 It creates a new social community: the metropolis.

258 And we do not know how to govern it.

259 Local affairs must be handled locally.

260 Otherwise, they will not get done.

261 If they do not get done locally they drift "upstairs" to central government.

262 This may be called the "law of political gravity"—and it is as inevitable as the physical law of gravity.

263 But local matters cannot be disposed of centrally, or they clog the wheels of central government to the point where they cannot turn at all, and where the major tasks of government—the formulation of national policy, national welfare, justice, defense or international policy—go by the board.

264 Centralized planning, as we have seen, soon degenerates into no plan at all. ...

265 One reason why local affairs must be done locally is their mass of detail, of paper work, of regulations, of bureaucracy—especially as the burden of these things seems to increase with the square of the distance from the local scene where the need exists and where the action eventually has to be taken.

266 Another, more insidious reason is that any issue, if removed "upstairs," acquires political connotations which might be quite lacking at the local scene.

267 The simplest technical matter, if referred to the top level, turns into a major philosophical issue and threatens thereby to become insoluble. ...

268 We have known all this since the earliest days of organized government.

269 During the last twenty-five years, we have learned the lesson all over again, in the organization of the big business enterprise.

270 What we today call "decentralization" in business is nothing but the creation of local government within the business enterprise, so as to have the proper organ to

- handle and to decide operational problems at the scene of action.
- 271 The major purpose of decentralization is not to make local, operating management stronger—though that too is necessary.
- 272 It is to make possible effective top management.
- 273 Without decentralization top management simply cannot do its own job, but gets mired in a mass of details and torn to pieces in a welter of emotional and personal squabbles. ...
- 274 In preindustrial society, local government tasks are few and simple, and their performance tends to be governed by well-established custom.
- 275 In an industrial society, however, local government tasks rapidly multiply.
- 276 They become highly complex, requiring technical knowledge and professional competence in their planning and execution.
- 277 They also have greater impact; industrial society falls to pieces without a transportation system, without adequate sewage or power, let alone without a functioning school system. ...
- 278 Industrial society, therefore, more than any other society, needs strong and functioning institutions of local government.
- 279 Yet in every society that has undergone the process of industrialization, local government has fallen to pieces; and inevitably the tasks that local government defaulted on fell into the lap of central government. ...
- 280 This often looked as if it were a deliberate reach for new powers on the part of central government.
- 281 This illusion has been strengthened by the traditional Leftist (or rather, French Revolution) distrust of local government and preference for central government, as the more uniform, more elegant and more “rational.”
- 282 Of all the many follies of the Leftist tradition, none is greater than this preference for centralization.
- 283 Of all its many illusions, none has been blinder than the belief that the extension of central control over local

affairs represents the success of a deliberate policy, rather than unintended failure, if not bankruptcy, of government altogether. ...

284 To be sure, the central government in an industrial society has to be strong.

285 It has to do a great many things which earlier governments never dreamed of, or perhaps never heard of.

286 But precisely because it has to be strong, central government in an industrial society has to free itself from the jobs that require local knowledge, local decisions and local action—for the same reason that the top management of a big business, in order to be strong, frees itself from operating decisions through decentralization to local managers in charge of operating units.

287 No central government today has assumed more of the local government functions than that of France; indeed, local government in France hardly exists any more.

288 Yet no central government has been more obviously paralyzed, more impotent, than that of France.

289 To a large extent this results from the domination which local concerns, issues and prejudices exercise on all levels of the national government, and from the political and emotional heat which they generate.

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291 One major reason for the crisis of local government in an industrial society is that the unit of settlement in an industrial society is not the village or even the city, but the metropolis.

292 The metropolis is not just a very large city.

293 It is quite different from the city. ...

294 The metropolis cannot be confined within pre-established political or administrative boundaries.

295 It rapidly cuts across all such lines, whether those of city, county, province, state or even nation.

296 Its boundaries are not fixed but changing; above all they are different for different tasks—for schools or for water supply, for transportation, for sewage disposal or for power supply. ...

- 297 Every industrial city has become such a metropolis, ever since the mushroom growth of the industrial cities in the English Midlands produced the first crisis of local government a century or more ago.
- 298 Whether it is metropolitan New York, San Francisco, London, Moscow, Tokyo or Johannesburg, it outgrows whatever boundaries exist; and so do all the smaller metropolitan cities in any industrial society. ...
- 299 Economic and social life in the industrial metropolis also has a degree of interdependence unknown in earlier, preindustrial times.
- 300 Of course, to provide common services – common defense, common law and justice, a common market, common coinage, common weights and measures, common churches or even a common good—has always been the rationale of the city.
- 301 But in his basic economic activities the stone mason of ancient Athens or eighteenth-century London was quite independent of the tanner or the weaver.
- 302 Today, however, all are dependent to an unheard-of degree both upon common services and facilities and upon each other. ...
- 303 The metropolis must, therefore, organize activities and services across and beyond any traditional boundary line.
- 304 Even a “sovereign” state of the American Union may have ceased to be an effective unit for something so essentially local as highways. ...
- 305 That the State of New Jersey is building an efficient system of superhighways only means that the traffic problems of the neighboring states, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware, are becoming that much worse; New Jersey’s new roads, with their superior traffic capacity, disgorge motorists and trucks into the already overloaded and inadequate road facilities of these states.
- 306 Engineers today talk of the “Eastern Sea Board Megapolis” stretching from Portland, Maine, to Norfolk, Virginia, and embracing fifty million people, as the “minimum” unit for highway and power supply planning.
- 307 But power supply must also take into account such strictly local matters as the effect of smoke from the

powerhouses on public health, air traffic, or even on the market gardens which feed the inhabitants of the metropolitan area. ...

- 308 There is today increasing concern with the social and cultural problems of metropolitan living.
- 309 We are conscious of the destruction of the countryside wrought by metropolitan expansion, and of the decay of the center of the old city as the metropolis pushes out its suburbs.
- 310 We are concerned with the sterility of life in the dead uniformity of ranch-style houses within easy commuting distance.
- 311 We wonder whether the increases in cancer, heart disease and mental illness reflect the tensions of metropolitan living.
- 312 We complain about the traffic problem, about inadequate community services, about high local taxes. ...
- 313 The metropolis does indeed present basic problems of civilization.
- 314 It may well have all the traditional problems of the city and none of its advantages.
- 315 But the central problem is its government.
- 316 It can solve none of its problems, cannot even tackle them, unless it has effective political organs for community decision and action.
- 317 It is fashionable among social scientists today to play down the importance of government and to stress rather the role of society, habits, culture.
- 318 But all these are inert, chaotic and impotent without the formal and organized structure of government. ...
- 319 The metropolis today has no government.
- 320 The traditional organs of local government are not adequate to the new tasks.
- 321 This is at the bottom of the problem of metropolitan civilization and culture.
- 322 But it is also a major factor in the crisis of national government.
- 323 Because there is no effective local government in the

metropolis, local problems inevitably become central government concerns, which paralyze central government.

## 324 **The Crisis of Government**

325 The modern government of the nation-state finds itself increasingly unable to function as a result of the explosion in military technology, abetted by the complete monetization of the economy and by the “people’s war”; the rise of new autonomous power centers within national society; and the collapse of local government. ...

326 Government everywhere has become a swollen monstrosity—yet increasingly incapable of making or executing policy.

327 There are probably few cases of such extreme malfunction as that of the Social Security system of Chile where administrative costs eat up fifty cents of every dollar paid in—with the rest destroyed almost immediately by inflation.

328 But the disease is universal.

329 At best the central government can mediate between power groups; at best it can be honestly bureaucratic and administratively efficient.

330 Policy and its execution become increasingly difficult. ...

331 Everywhere we see power move into the hands of administrative agencies—regulating and controlling transportation, power, housing and so on—all essentially local matters.

332 But administrative agencies are by nature uncontrollable.

333 They must decide individual cases rather than dispense general, impersonal law.

334 They can neither confine themselves to general policy nor adjudicate disputes; they create or destroy individual property, privileges and profits.

335 At their most scrupulous they are agencies of endless delay and red tape.

336 At their most efficient they go by individual “pull” or influence, or become corrupt.

337 They are a necessity in industrial society with its organized power centers and pressure groups and its metropolitan communities.

338 But they are a cancer in the political system, and a denial of the basic concepts of government by laws and of government in the interest of the whole. ...

- 339 Everywhere the individual is becoming the captive, if not the slave, of the garrison state.
- 340 To be prepared for defense, government today claims the right to embrace and to control all efforts of the citizens, and to commandeer their resources, skills, property and persons—practically without limitation.
- 341 To be prepared for defense, government today irrevocably controls a very large part of the total national income—taxing away for armaments in peacetime many times more than any government has ever taxed away for all purposes, warlike or peaceful.
- 342 It takes an increasing share of the citizen's productive adult life for military training.
- 343 It demands that scientific inquiry and progress largely be subordinated to the needs of bigger and better warfare.
- 344 Above all, it claims—perhaps it must claim—the power of veto on all activities, pursuits and discussions of the citizen that, in the government's opinion, "endanger the national security." ...
- 345 An attempt in the United States to forbid publication of a government document in peacetime on grounds of national security would have been laughed out of court less than twenty years ago.
- 346 Today we only question how to prevent abuse of this power.
- 347 Education has in most Western countries been state-controlled for centuries.
- 348 But it would have been inconceivable a generation ago for government to tell a university that this or that man could not be hired for any kind of research work on grounds of national security.
- 349 Today all we are concerned with in a free society is to make sure that this veto power only be applied to research that is really of military significance, and that any man so attacked obtain a fair, impartial and judicial hearing.
- 350 All we seem to be concerned with, in other words, are the proper procedures for the exercise of the new veto.
- 351 The principle itself, despite its momentous implications, we have conceded. ...
- 352 By so doing we have abandoned one of the foundations of modern government: that it be strictly limited even

though the only institution of organized power; that indeed it encompass in its scope of organized institutional power only the smaller part of the individual's life and sphere of action.

353 The less government can actually accomplish, the more it claims today. ...

354 The worst breakdown has occurred in the international sphere—the very sphere where modern government made its greatest and most original contribution. ...

355 As a result of the explosion of military technology war has gone completely out of political control.

356 It is no longer possible to subordinate war to the demands of policy.

357 On the contrary policy has everywhere to be subordinated to the demands of modern warfare, has to be focused increasingly upon the military needs of survival. ...

358 At the same time war has ceased to have any rational meaning for society and individual alike.

359 It no longer can make its one and only contribution: to bring about a decision in international affairs.

360 No country can risk total war; no country can hope to survive such war even if it wins it.

361 Hence no country can use total war as an instrument of policy—perhaps no longer even as an instrument of international blackmail.

362 International affairs have again become irrational, beyond and outside any theory or practice of government.

363 They have become an unpredictable gamble, a series of improvisations.

364 At the same time they have become total in their impact upon nation and individual.

365 In the name of foreign affairs, government today must demand a control over the citizen which denies the self-limitation of power on which modern government in its theory and practice was founded.

366 Yet government today cannot give the citizen the protection in international affairs which has always been

among its first duties, and which is a major justification and purpose of organized government. ...

367 A subtler, but perhaps more insidious, poison is the militarization of thinking, of public opinion and of policy.

368 John Foster Dulles hates war as deeply as any man in the world today.

369 But he has not been able to develop a foreign policy other than military alliances.

370 Senator McCarthy rode high until he attacked the Army.

371 In the American tradition the military has always been the safest target of political attack; but even though the Army cringed before McCarthy he was finished three months after he first tackled it.

372 That American education is in serious trouble had been known for a decade.

373 But general concern with it only began when Sputnik showed our educational weaknesses to be a danger to military security. ...

374 Unlike similar militarization in the past, this is not the result of military arrogance.

375 On the contrary our military men, at least in this country, are appalled by it, and are indeed more "civilian-minded" than the civilian public.

376 It is not the result of undue admiration of the military man; while not as bitter as after 'World War I, the reaction against the "brass" is as pronounced today as it was in the twenties.

377 Yet we are all forced to become militarists; military technology threatens to swallow up civil society. ...

378 The crisis of modern government is not a matter of republic versus monarchy, of separation of powers versus paramount power, of written versus unwritten constitution, or of this or that system of elections.

379 It is even less a matter of socialism versus capitalism, nor of democracy versus despotism.

380 No matter how organized, no government functions adequately today. ...

381 This is clearly true of totalitarian dictatorships—the one  
major response to the collapse of modern government.

382 Indeed totalitarian dictatorship, of all forms of  
government we know, is the least capable of satisfying  
society's need for effective government. ...

383 It cannot overcome the internal disintegration.

384 We have learned by now enough of what went on behind  
Nazism's façade of emotional uniformity to know how  
thinly it covered a reality of extreme incompetence,  
deadly power struggle between autonomous power  
centers, and permanent crisis.

385 The same is true of the Communist variety as events in  
Russia and in the Soviet satellites since Stalin's death have  
made abundantly clear. ...

386 At the same time totalitarianism cannot restore rationality  
and control to international life.

387 All it can do is to make a virtue of chaos, make delusion a  
habit, crisis a necessity, lying the principle of right  
conduct, and paranoia a synonym for achievement. ...

388 Above all totalitarianism cannot solve the first problem of  
functioning government: It cannot provide for an orderly  
succession. ...

389 This has been, through the ages, the basic problem of all  
forms of government.

390 From the succession by combat among the tribal braves  
to constitutional government, orderly succession has  
been the dominant concern.

391 And rightly so.

392 Before a government can be "good government," it must  
be able to function.

393 This it can do only if succession is orderly, to the point of  
being automatic, and if it immediately establishes a  
government capable of governing. ...

394 So far, the American Constitution has provided one of the  
few effective solutions of the succession problem.

- 395 Yet it is far from perfect.
- 396 It establishes automatic succession of a legitimate head of the government with full control and in full possession of his faculties.
- 397 But it does this only by building in the expedient of the Vice President: a "stand-by" and a mere cipher as long as the President lives, occupying the most frustrating political position human ingenuity could devise, condemned to burying his ambitions if an honest man, and condemned to praying for a dead man's shoes if an ambitious one.
- 398 And, as we have been reminded again these last years, we have not solved the problem of partial disability and diminished vigor in a President. ...
- 399 But few attempts to solve the succession problem have been quite so inadequate and futile as the trial by conspiracy to which any totalitarian society entrusts itself.
- 400 This is not just the experience of our times; the totalitarian method of selecting successive heads of government has been attempted so often and has failed so regularly in history as to leave little room for doubt about the inevitable outcome. ...
- 401 Much more promising than totalitarianism is the other alternative to modern government which we can dimly see: political pluralism, which is government by countervailing powers under the rule of law.
- 402 This is of course the original concept of the United States which never fully accepted the concepts of modern government and nation-state, just as it never accepted the Cartesian world-view of the modern west.
- 403 Though greatly weakened by constant drift to a national concept, pluralism is still the governing theory of American political life; it is the governing reality of American social, economic, cultural and religious life.

## 404 **Pluralism and the Common Interest**

405 The most successful creation of American pluralism is the American political party.

406 It may also be of major importance for the future. ...

407 Only a few years ago it was fashionable to decry the American political party as an unprincipled anachronism.

408 When Harold Laski, the late ideologist of the British Left, attacked it violently in the postwar years, he was only repeating what had been said for at least a hundred years by foreign observers as well as by American political scientists.

409 Being nonideological, so the argument ran, the American political party stood for nothing.

410 It had no ideals, no program, no convictions, no principles.

411 All it did was organize "interest"—sectional or social—for the conquest of power. ...

412 Today we realize that it is its nonideological character that makes the American party an agent of national unity.

413 The national convention every four years, we now understand, does an essential job behind its façade of pageantry and bombastic nonsense: It establishes a national coalition bridging across the cleavages.

414 More important, perhaps, we are beginning to realize that the ideological party is the unprincipled anachronism.

415 Willing to subordinate national welfare to doctrinaire righteousness, it increasingly becomes incapable of providing a government.

416 In the free countries the major parties are either changing into nonideological coalitions like the Christian Democrats in continental Europe or the Conservatives in Great Britain; or, like the parties in France or the Socialist parties everywhere, they are becoming prisoners of the past and effective only in opposition. ...

417 A free society requires parties.

418 And effective government requires that there be an organized alternative government.

- 419 With ideological parties moribund, only the nonideological party of pluralism can still discharge the job. ...
- 420 Altogether it is becoming clear that pluralism is the starting point for the new political theory and institutions we need.
- 421 It still permits a sphere of individual freedom and choice—if only in the gaps between the giants of organized power.
- 422 It, at least, accepts reality—political life today is pluralist everywhere.
- 423 It has also given us so far the only effective—even though limited—and only new institution for the tasks of today's political life: the public corporation for specific metropolitan tasks.
- 424 The London Passenger Transport Board, the Port of New York Authority, the Moscow Electric Power Board, the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission, the Rheinisch-Westfaelische Electricity Works, the TVA, all are designed to serve the needs of the new metropolis.
- 425 A little over a hundred years ago the Metropolitan Police of London (better known as Scotland Yard) was founded as the first such body.
- 426 Since then the public corporation has become everywhere the institution for technical tasks of the local but metropolitan community.
- 427 The metropolitan public corporation is by no means perfect.
- 428 It is local government without being local self-government; indeed it is all but beyond local control.
- 429 But it is the best we have so far. ...
- 430 Major areas in international life, such as the rapid development of education in the poor countries and their rapid economic development, require autonomous and pluralist agencies of international policy and co-operation.
- 431 The most effective international organ of recent years, the Marshall Plan, was such a pluralist institution. ...
- 432 Pluralism should again become a serious and important

- concept of political order—as, outside of this country, it has not been for three hundred years.
- 433 But pluralism is not yet capable of supplying us with the new principles and institutions of political integration we so badly need.
- 434 Whether it is at all applicable to the central issue—the collapse of international rationality—is highly dubious.
- 435 American policy during the last decade has based itself on such pluralism—especially in the various regional alliances for collective security or economic development.
- 436 No one will claim, I think, that its success has yet been so great as to prove the principle—nor, however, has it failed so completely as to disprove it. ...
- 437 More serious, there is still no cure for the old flaw of pluralism: the danger that the commonwealth will disappear under the conflict, selfishness, shortsightedness and sheer technical efficiency of pluralist institutions and partial power centers.
- 438 No pluralist system has ever escaped this disease.
- 439 In most pluralist systems it has been fatal. ...
- 440 That a policy in the general interest is bound—or at least is likely—to emerge from the attempt to balance and to compromise sectional and partial interests is old pluralist doctrine; highly developed in this country by Calhoun, it became all but the official philosophy of the bright young men of the New Deal.
- 441 But can enough trust be put into this blithe promise that right vision will result from the canceling out of assorted shortsightedness, and that selfless action will emerge from the conflicts of selfishness? ...
- 442 Clearly this is a crucial question.
- 443 Under today's conditions of industrial and international life, government's first job is to make the common interest prevail over partial interest and sectional power centers.
- 444 Yet today's pluralist political reality, except in time of war, recognizes no overriding common interest. ...
- 445 The crisis of modern government is not the result of the

incompetence of political leaders, or of their wickedness.

446 It is not capable of resolution by better men, not even by great men; it is the essence of the crisis that it takes "supermen" in government to do even a poor job.

447 Neither the American President nor the British Prime Minister can any longer do, even physically, all the jobs he is supposed to do.

448 Yet he cannot delegate any of them; all are essential to the survival of the nation and the functioning of government.

449 This is a crisis of basic concept; the very terms "sovereignty," "national state," "balance of power," "defense," "government by law," "parliamentary control," are rapidly losing meaning. ...

450 As such the crisis can be resolved only by new institutions embodying new political theory.

451 But political theory today is sterile.

452 The last great age of European political philosophy—the age of Hobbes, Locke and Harrington, of Bodin, Grotius and Montesquieu—is three hundred years in the past.

453 Burke has now been dead over a century and a half.

454 Even the brilliant but short outburst of creative political thinking in the United States—the Federalist Papers, John Adams, Jefferson, Marshall—came to an end just over a century ago with Calhoun's theory of sectional pluralism. ...

455 Until recently there seemed to be no need for basic political thinking; the ascendancy of the modern government of the nation-state seemed to be so complete and so secure as to make redundant any concern with "the foundations of the commonwealth."

456 Social theory, yes; economic theory, yes.

457 But political theory could be taken for granted.

458 In many universities political science is not even taught any more; instead we have comparative government—which concentrates on the individual variations with which different countries play the same tune of modern government. ...

459 Now the time has come for another major Age of Political Philosophy, for creative, independent, fundamental

thought, for new basic concepts and new institutions.

460 It is a challenge first of all, perhaps, to the United States;  
for one major starting point must be pluralism which is a  
living tradition only in the United States.

461 It is a task for statesmen; political thought has come from  
the men of large affairs rather than from the academician.

462 But it is also a task of the philosopher.

463 And above all it is a task of the citizen. ...

464 We need a political theory that will give us effective,  
strong government, and substantial liberties and freedom  
of the citizen against government.

465 We need new institutions of local government; and in a  
free society these have to be institutions of self-  
government.

466 We need new institutions for the international community.

467 We have to accept the reality of the new power centers;  
but we have to make them subservient to the common  
good and to the freedom of the individual.

468 We need pluralism; but it must be embedded in, and  
transcended by, objective, general law. ...

469 We have the beginnings in new political experiences.

470 Most important of these, but also least understood, may  
well be the concepts of social order in the new  
organization.

471 But the job itself still remains to be done.

472 The crisis of modern government is not confined to this or  
that country—though it is the more acute the stronger the  
national tradition of centralized government and purely  
ideological parties (e. g., in France).

473 The new job of political theory needs therefore to be  
tackled seriously in every country.

474 On its solution will largely depend the life and freedom—  
perhaps the survival—of man.

475 The decline of modern government affects all of us—and  
so will the principles, structure and institutions that will  
succeed.

476 Here is a challenge to the conservative innovator.

477 Here is a real “frontier” of the post-modern world—a  
common frontier.