

Raymond Aron and the Origins of the 'End of Ideology'

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The Author

Iain Stewart is a Lecturer in Modern European History at Queen Mary, University of London. He received his undergraduate education at the University of Liverpool before moving to the University of Manchester to complete his MA and PhD. His doctoral thesis, an historical study of the political thought of Raymond Aron, was completed at the end of 2011. Dr Stewart is writing a monograph based on this thesis for Cambridge University Press and has published articles in *History of European Ideas*, *European Review of History* and *Sartre Studies International*, as well as contributing to several edited collections. He is currently co-editing a volume on the recovery of liberal thought in postwar France which will be published later this year with Palgrave.

The Paper

This paper began life as a short chapter for a new *Companion to Raymond Aron* (forthcoming: Palgrave / Aster), but I am in the process of expanding it into a more substantial piece for my own book on Aron. Its aim is partly biographical: existing biographies of Aron, who is commonly regarded as France's greatest twentieth-century liberal political thinker, place great emphasis on his commitment to socialism before the advent of the Cold War. Yet Aron's biographers have failed to analyse the content of his socialism in detail. This matters as it means they cannot explain the fact that Aron was a participant in some of the earliest collective endeavours to formulate a 'neo-liberal' economic programme in the 1930s, a period when he identified as a socialist. By situating Aron on the overlapping peripheries of revisionist socialist and liberal movements in interwar France, my paper offers the first attempt to make sense of this paradox. The paper also serves as a study of the origins of 'end of ideology' discourse, which it traces beyond its immediate context in the cultural cold war and back to some of the revisionist economic debates in which Aron participated during the Depression. Finally, the paper reconsiders Aron's relationship with Friedrich von Hayek and suggests that, although it may make sense to describe Aron as a kind of neo-liberal, his economic thought had little in common with the kind of radical free market ideology with which the term is associated in contemporary usage.