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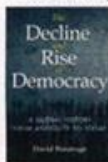
### Simon Sebag Montefiore



One of my favourite books from 2020 was *Hitler: Downfall 1939-1945* (Bodley Head). Volker Ullrich's superb and supreme new biography, while complementing other classic biographies of the dictator, is also fresh, up-to-date, shrewd and beautifully written. I think it's the best biography of Hitler written so far.



I also really enjoyed the intriguing idea behind *The Weirdest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous* (Allen Lane) by Joseph Henrich. He argues that "Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic" people are atypical, because the west was formed by exceptional processes that helped Europe dominate the world post 1750. The result is a brilliant performance – accessible, playful and scholarly, turning conventional history on its head and approaching it in a new way.



In fact, it would make a perfect companion piece for David Stasavage's readable, intriguing and academic *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today* (Princeton) – an outstanding volume that analyses the development of democracy and autocracy in a refreshing and relevant way.



Lastly, I loved Kim Ghattas's colourful, grim and gripping *Black Wave: Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Rivalry That Unravelling the Middle East* (Wildfire), which uses the Iranian Revolution and other events of 1979 to show how the Middle East turned towards extremism and intolerance.

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Simon Sebag Montefiore's latest book is *Voices of History: Speeches That Changed the World* (W&N, 2019)