

Original Paper

Doubts about Political Development Theory

Jan-Erik Lane^{1*}

¹ Professor Emeritus, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

* Jan-Erik Lane, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

Received: April 4, 2021

Accepted: May 10, 2021

Online Published: May 25, 2021

doi:10.22158/jrph.v4n2p25

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jrph.v4n2p25>

Abstract

Can political development be theorized in general hypotheses covering the history of mankind? F. Fukuyama tries, focusing upon tribalism. I doubt he has succeeded in launching a new theory of state, drawing upon new insights about Europe, Arabia as well as China and India.

1. Introduction

The book by F. Fukuyama on the origins of political order is fascinating. Neither the functionalists nor the system theorists could introduce a theory of political development. The concept difficulties as well as early political events in mankind's story were too hard to grasp. Development theories tend to give rise to philosophical issues, like *inter alia*:

- 1) Development of *cosmos*: will dark energy prevail?
- 2) Biological development: natural selection at the level of individual genes?
- 3) Economic development: is decreasing returns universally true?
- 4) Political development: the state or rule of law?

(1). Fukuyama writes that prophet Mohammed lay the ground or one foundation for an *Arab* state. But who was this Mohammed? Perhaps not more than a fairytale like biblical tales.

(2). The human condition *ex ante* the state is analysed by Fukuyama as either stateless anarchy or tribalism. They are not the same. However, we do not know how people lived before the first great civilisations emerged. The periods up to the first town *Uruk* are hidden despite lots of new findings in archaeology and genetics. The humans who went hunter-gatherers to farming were organised in tribes (the probably *Yamnaya* people for instance), but it was hardly what Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau imagined as the of nature *ex ante* the state.

The movements of people over Eurasia wouldn't have been possible unless there was some order in the tribes or among them. A stateless society is not necessarily an anarchy: *omnium bellum contra omnes*.

(3). Hobbes does not invent the concept of the state, as he is the secular theorist of absolute monarchy. He places all competences with one person—*absolutism*.

(4). Fukuyama claims that Hobbes and Locke are not so different. Very wrong. Their concepts of law are wide apart: merely the *command* of the sovereign against *Right Reason*.

(5). A state existed already in the Qin dynasty 221-207 before Christ, Fukuyama argues. Was it really a state and not merely a dominant dynasty. To Fukuyama the opposite to the state is tribal chiefdom and political development is the first replacing the second. Yet, the empires in Euphrates and the Nile were neither states nor tribal chiefdoms. But they accomplished much like the Han dynasty.

If China created the first state in human history, then India was first with rule of law. To Fukuyama, the Mughal emperors were constrained by the tribalism of the caste system. Yet, the religions of India delivered *virtuosi* who were experts on *inner-worldly asceticism*, which has nothing to do with rule of *Right Reason*.

(6). Fukuyama goes on to find a state in all Chinese dynasties as well as in the Caliphates and Ottoman empire. They fulfill the Weber properties of a state. Really? Let us quote from him directly:

- The “ruling organization” will be called “political” insofar as its existence and order is continuously safeguarded within a given territorial area by the threat and application of physical force on the part of the administrative staff. A compulsory political organization with continuous operations (politischer Anstaltshetrieb) will be called a “state” insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order. (Weber, 1978, p. 54)

Reading the Veda Tales, one is certainly in an imaginary world of Weber1—political fighting and not in a real world of Weber 2.

(7). I have no doubt that France after 1815, Germany after 1970 and Great Britain after 1707 fulfill the Weber concept2. Perhaps one could also mention Sweden after 1721. But state formation was late in the rest of the world.

(8). When Fukuyama analyses rule of law, he unfortunately employs F. Hayek’s model of law against legislation. For Hayek “law” means custom or convention, whereas “legislation” stands for enactments. Often customs originated with tribes, which is what Fukuyama wants to overcome! The Hayek distinction has little relevance. Constitutional law may result from legislation or legislation may add to the constitution—amendments. Legislation is a *sine qua non* in post-modern societies.

(9). Fukuyama wants to overcome Marx and Weber by moving the analysis of the state back into the dissolution of the tribal society. The insights of other German scholars about the fuzziness of the state is neglected, showing that there once were other political organisations than the state.

2. Conclusion

Weber's taxonomy of regimes is still useful. It is his famous analysis of the origins of capitalism that needs revision. The legacy of the Presbyterians is rule of law, not the market economy. The key person is *socinian* John Locke.

The rise of capitalism is now pushed back in time and includes oriental endeavors. Orientalism is not absent with Weber—see his writing about Islam as a religion of *warriors*. But the Occident harbours the IDEAL-TYPES: feudal society, state and rule of law.

The concept of political development is value-loaded. But anarchists like Chomsky would not cherish the state. Rule of law is praiseworthy like in Occidental constitutional democracy.

References

Fukuyama, F. (2021). *The Origins of Political Order*. Audible.

Meinecke, F. (1924). *Die Idee der Staatsraeson (The Idea of State Reason)*.

Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society* (vol. 2) Berkeley: University of California Press.