Reviews

The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution, Francis Fukuyama (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 608 pp., $35 cloth, $18 paper.

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Francis Fukuyama, the author of "The End of History," one of the most discussed political essays in recent decades, here travels back to prehistory to look for the key to understanding political order. Fukuyama is frustrated by the difficulty of building stable, order-keeping states in the contemporary developing world. What is the historical secret leading to stable political orders, such as Denmark's, he asks, and can that secret be shared with the Somalias and Afghanistans of the world?

This first volume in a planned two-volume enterprise spans everything from the society of chimpanzees to the French Revolution, and it conveys the wide-ranging nature of Fukuyama's approach. A running theme is Samuel Huntington's insight that, contra the assumptions of much American political thought, political development is more a task of building the power of an effective state than of limiting it. A chronic stumbling block to building an effective, impersonal, rule-following state, says Fukuyama, is the widespread tendency toward patrimonial forms of social organizations based on favoritism toward kin and clients. States that overcome patrimonialism not only possess strong administrative capacity but also robust legal norms and effective systems of accountability to the public. But where do these come from?

Fukuyama's strategy in answering this question is to delve into human biology and go all the way back to the earliest forms of social organization to find the basic elements out of which political orders evolve. He begins by discussing the social nature of humans and their hard-wiring for competitiveness, reciprocal altruism, the need for recognition of the self and the group, rule-following anchored in emotion, and abstract thought. Anger, shame, guilt, and pride invest norms with so much emotion, Fukuyama says, that individual self-interest gets ignored while carrying out the sometimes costly and risky tasks of serving the group interest. Meanwhile, the capacity for abstraction that humans developed to strategize and coordinate their hunting of big game gave them the ability to generalize these norms as elaborate religious and legal systems, which solve such collective action problems

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as free riding, the tragedy of the commons, and other forms of opportunism.

The problem, though, is that this kind of emotion-laden, status-conscious, pro-social rule-following is in service of the narrow interests of family lineages, such as tribes, or similar networks based on personal connections and mutual back-scratching. Initially, all human groups were based on this kind of patrimonialism, and in the developing world many still are. This lineage favoritism is not based mainly on the inclusive fitness idea of evolutionary biology, says Fukuyama: favoring your fourth cousin in a business deal is all about ancestor worship, not genetic propagation.

Patrimonialism is an easy fit with human nature, but it has serious drawbacks. It limits the scale of social organization, limits the division of labor, impedes economic efficiency, and tends to encourage a violent, self-help approach to solving security problems. A better system has the features described in classic modernization theory: a rational-legal, impersonal administrative state that monopolizes legitimate violence across a large enough territory to sustain an efficient division of labor, while being accountable to a system of rules and to the public. But how do you get one of these states, and what keeps you from sliding back to the universal default setting of patrimonialism?

One of Fukuyama's distinctive insights is that states do not simply replace patrimonial networks but rather are layered on top of them. States struggle with mixed success to dominate or co-opt such rent-seeking networks, to replace patrimonial ways with the beginnings of impersonal law and administration, and to ensure that their own cadres serve the sovereign rather than feather the nests of their kin. The orphan slave military elite of the Egyptian Mamluks and the Chinese eunuchs are examples of the tools states have adopted to accomplish this goal. The clerical counterpart of this strategy was the rule on the celibacy of the priesthood. One of the most interesting parts of Fukuyama's account explains that one of Europe's great advantages in developing the modern state was the Catholic church's assault on the extended familial lineage by backing late marriage and banning divorce, adoption, and marriage with close kin and kin's widows in order to hinder familial lineages from amassing assets.

Drawing on this argument, Fukuyama shows that the historical sequence of state building is crucial for determining its outcome. In Europe administratively strong states developed late, after institutions of law and accountability, backed by religious ideology, had already gained a toehold in some places, and after Christianity had weakened the familial base of patrimonialism. In China the sequence was the opposite. Powerful states developed before any idea that law could be a power above the state rather than a tool of state domination. Principled accountability to the public was not imagined, let alone institutionalized. Families remained strong, so relapse into egregious patrimonialism was (and of course remains) a risk.

In marshaling evidence to support these insights, Fukuyama draws on a wide range of conceptual literatures (primate sociobiology, primitive state formation, anthropological kinship theory, rationalist institutional theory, Weber's and Durkheim's sociologies of religion, canon law) and empirical studies of almost every society one might think of (including hunter-gatherers, ancient China, Mauryan India, early Islam, medieval and early modern Europe, and contemporary

Papua New Guinea). Other than the sociologist Michael Mann, no single reader will be able to judge the solidity of all of Fukuyama's scholarship, but this reader found very little to fault in the treatment of these diverse source materials. If anything, Fukuyama occasionally sticks a bit too close to a faithful rendering of the arguments of the experts he is drawing upon for his grand synthesis. His detour into the debates on comparative pathways to European state formation (for example, he examines the question why England did not become Hungary) stays true to his excellent sources, but risks losing sight of his main theme as he traces the complicated factional relationships in too many idiosyncratic cases.

Overall, Fukuyama's attempt at a grand synthesis of the development of political order has many worthy features, of which three especially stand out. First, it usefully focuses on the problem of impersonal versus personalistic forms of social and authority relations, which has been conceptually central to thinking about modernization since its earliest classical theorists, and which remains a central practical problem everywhere in the developing world, from Afghanistan to China. Second, it nicely integrates rationalist, biological, normative, and ideological elements into a coherent argument that shows how these strands work together in shaping problems of and solutions to political order. Third, it retains a sense of historical sequence, contingency, and particularity without losing sight of the ultimate theoretical goal of producing useable, conditional generalizations.

One might ask how Fukuyama stacks up to the competition. Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast, in *Violence and Social Orders*, cover a lot of the same conceptual ground as Fukuyama, but their empirical coverage is far more idiosyncratic. Their transitional actor traveling haltingly on the rocky trajectory from early forms of political order toward a modern, inclusive state is the armed, rent-seeking cartel rather than Fukuyama's group based on patrimonial lineage. The two studies disagree on the mechanisms whereby rule-following behavior becomes generalized and institutionalized, but the problems they deal with are similar enough to make a dialogue between their views rewarding.

Michael Mann's multi-volume *The Sources of Social Power* covers much of the same territory as Fukuyama's work, and more. Brilliant, original, and deeply textured as many of Mann's separate insights may be, his loose, overarching checklist of ideological, economic, military, and political factors is a convenient framework, not a theory. Shmuel Eisenstadt's writings on "Axial Age" religions and multiple modernities are similar to Fukuyama's in that they assign a key role to variations in religious trajectory in shaping a civilization's path to modernity. I found Fukuyama's arguments easier to follow, better anchored in a generalizable logic, and better integrated with the nonreligious parts of the narrative. Fukuyama is more successful at sticking to a coherent explanatory line as he ranges across time and space.

Since Fukuyama has not yet finished volume two, we do not quite know how his story will turn out. Based on the line of argument he has set out in the first volume, however, I expect the "end of history" argument to make a comeback. Nothing in *The Origins of Political Order* suggests that Fukuyama believes that there is likely to be a successful alternative

to the liberal, rule-of-law state. His criticisms of the internal contradictions of the illegitimate, unaccountable, historical Chinese state, anchored in a society that has not shaken off patrimonial social forms, seem equally apt for the China of today. There might be multiple modernities, but only one of them will be orderly in this account. Fukuyama has set up the reader for a sequel in which history will have a happy ending only if it is liberal. Stay tuned.

—Jack Snyder

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The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations, Andrew Linklater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 320 pp., $102 cloth, $30.99 paper.

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There are few books that both change our field of vision and open up a new and far-reaching research agenda. This is one of them. Linklater here engages in a sustained reflection on the core theoretical issues surrounding the problem of harm in world politics. His goal, as he puts it, is to theorize harm, not to develop a theory of harm. This is the first of three projected volumes. As he writes at the outset, "A central aim of the overall project is to understand whether, or how far, the modern world has made progress in making harm a key moral and political question for humanity as a whole" (p. 5).

There are two primary intellectual inspirations for his approach. The first is English School writing on international society, and especially Martin Wight's work on the cultural and moral underpinning of comparative international societies. The second is the process sociology of Norbert Elias, especially his work on "the civilizing process," but seen through the eyes of someone with a long-term engagement in critical social theory. One of Linklater's core aims, therefore, is to "combine Wight's analysis of states-systems with Elias's comparative approach to civilizing processes in a higher synthesis" (p. 234).

Linklater describes this book as a ground-clearing exercise, and in some ways it is, albeit a highly original and sophisticated one. The first part of the book unpacks the concept of harm: conceptualizing harms, classifying harms, considering how they may be applied to international politics. The core chapters of the book then look at harm in the context of global ethics, international relations theory, the sociology of the civilizing process, historical sociology, and, finally, English School writing on comparative state systems. Much of the writing in these chapters has a probing and sometimes exploratory quality, the main purpose of which is to trace parallels