Journal of Communications Finance
Vol 1(1), Dec 2024, pp. 105-108

Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation of Democracy by Francis Fukuyama

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Fukuyama's ideas in the landmark 1989 essay - **"The End of History"**- form the bedrock of the ideas espoused in the current book under review – **"Political order & decay from industrial revolution to globalisation of democracy"**. The 1989 essay was a seminal work in the realm of socio-political thought, wherein he argued that a liberal democracy is the final goal and stable state of all political systems, and it was a personal perspective broadening experience to go through the book. The book remains a bulwark of the liberal democratic philosophy to this day. His studies stood in contrast to the Marxian ideas of communism being the final state of social-political organisation, with "withering away of the state", absence of any personal property and absolute equality of life's outcome for all human beings. Marx had argued that democratic political system was a convenient supportive super structure for capitalistic economic substructure, and this capitalistic substructure would itself decay due to multiple internal contradictions it festers, one important being the stark inequality between the owners/capitalists and laborers. This would in turn lead to destruction of democracy which is merely a legitimising ideology and superstructure for capitalism. To this, Fukuyama had argued in "The end of History" that true communism could never be achieved, as had been witnessed in the unstable so-called communist systems of Russia & China, and a liberal democracy would be the dominant political structure. The new book in 2014 carries forward from his previous works, and Fukuyama stands by his belief in the liberal democratic order. This book is more of a spatial and temporal study of liberal democratic systems, at the same time serving as a cautionary tale against the internal flaws in the liberal democracies, which have caused stagnation and decay in this political system across many countries, and the persistence of such internal issues could jeopardise the future of the entire order. The basic premise of Fukuyama's thoughts remains largely the same, where he holds that the three main pillars of modern state are a strong effective state, the rule of law and an institutionalised democratic process with free and fair elections as the lynchpin of the model. Here it is important to note that "strong" state does not necessarily mean large, welfare-oriented and interventionist state, present in all sectors of socio- economic life, but a state powerful enough to devise policies and enforce them,

while ensuring its own legitimacy from citizens. He notes that a delicate balance of these three elements need to exist in cohesion to yield a stable liberal democratic state. Fukuyama studies the development of these elements across countries and era, starting from the era of French Revolution, Enlightenment, and the onset of Industrial revolution. He delves into the reasons and the process of development of the three elements of liberal democracy. He observes that all three elements have developed at different pace in different countries, giving each democratic order its own nuances and flavour, and thankfully does not propound a simplistic linear theory of political development.

It is held that, for example, China had a strong state, which developed to counter fragmentation of power between numerous warlords but could not develop rule of law or democratic accountability, while India developed political accountability as well as independent judiciary to enforce rule of law, however lacked on the strength of the executive. Fukuyama goes on to argue that the European nations, especially holding Denmark as a shining beacon, had a near perfect balance of the three elements in the early 19th century and form a perfect prototype of the liberal democratic order.

From his study of political systems across space and time, Fukuyama, though staunch in his support of liberal democracy as the ultimate stage of political development, admits to the decay and crisis which have become inseparable part of this structure. This idea is similar to Gunderfrank's work on the "crisis of legitimacy" which had hit welfare-oriented democracies across the world in the 1980s and 90s, which had not been able to provide a basic level of dignity and equality of opportunity to majority of the citizens, inspite of purportedly being welfare states.

He notes that a strong territorial state is the sine qua non of a stable liberal democracy, and in the absence of which the rule of law or the democratic process inevitably flounders. It is also a general reminder that political order first must be established and governed, in case it has not naturally evolved, and then the checks on state power come in through free and fair elections and rule of law.

An interesting observation, often repeated in common conversations across the globe nowadays, is that countries where democracy preceded a strong state, have higher problems with governance, than those which had strong functional states before democracy and rule of law set in. One example he gives is the USA, wherein political patronage was the basis of key powerful posts in the spoils system, and

the move to a strong functional state with good governance based on merit and competence, was much tougher with democracy already enshrined.

Also, highlighted is the importance of balance between the three elements. As an example, one downside of excessive accountability, plaguing current systems, especially America, is the "vetocracy", wherein the system of checks and balances ends up fragmenting the decision-making power way too much to ever allow strong decisions by any arm of the government. This again is visible in America, wherein interests/pressure groups have elaborate lobbies and often block socially necessary legislations.

Fukuyama further highlights "re-patrimonialisation" also as one of the biggest banes of the modern democracies, wherein, patrimonialism, though expressly banned in favour of skill and merit, is essentially making its way back in the democratic process, through powerful interest and pressure groups, leading to weaker states and bureaucracies, even in developed nations. This sounds like the "Prismatic-Sala model" of administrative and political systems of developing countries propounded by Fred Riggs, which are stuck between traditional and modern ideals, and have huge amounts of nepotism and clientelism, in spite of expressly universalistic and achievement-oriented norms and codes.

The scope of the book is mind boggling, and perhaps a bit too grand to be able to put down a verifiable and falsifiable theory. Nevertheless, many countries are analysed based on the broad three parameters, the more prominent democracies such as Britain and USA, but also varied cases such as Italy, Japan, China, Argentina, Nigeria, Greece, Costa Rica etc.

It's interesting how such tedious topics of political science and public administration have been made readable by Fukuyama. It was however felt that Fukuyama ignores the violence involved in many countries in establishment of democracies, and the plight of the stateless marginalised people who were outcast by this new social compact which yielded the strong states. Also, the state-centred approach leads him to diminish the immense role of globalisation and the global institutions of governance in shaping the destinies of various countries. Finally, it's refreshing to learn that Fukuyama stands against export of models of democracy and development and believes in indigenisation of democratic models. However, there is certain value judgement and subjective bias in Fukuyama's study of liberal democracies, as even though he highlights the problem points, he seems ethno-centric, and idolises the Washington Consensus model of development and

democracy, at the cost of indigenous and multiple forms of democracy existing across the world.

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