

2011

The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution

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Recommended Citation

van Hook, Matt and Fukuyama, Francis (2011) "The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 64 : No. 4 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol64/iss4/18>

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Beevor's scrutiny. The Americans, fixated on securing a port facility for logistical support, learned the hard way that the entrenched German garrison in Brest could hold out for a very long time. Despite a highly sophisticated air-ground coordination and the commitment of VIII Corps, the Americans had to pay dearly to pry Brest from resolute and determined German defenders—blood spilled for a port that in the end was never used.

Beevor is a well known historian of twentieth-century combat, one who knows his topic, capably weaves the broad sweep of the Normandy campaign into a compelling account, and provides the broader context, bringing in aspects of the battle that until recently have received short shrift. For example, he presents an excellent account of the battles fought by the Polish 1st Armored Division. Also, he shows the critical role of the 20 July assassination attempt against Hitler in how the German leadership responded to the relentless Allied onslaught. The subsequent hunt for conspirators wreaked havoc with the German military's ability to wage a cohesive and effective defense and helped set up the eventual Allied breakout and defeat of the Wehrmacht in France by the end of the summer.

Without a doubt, the battle for France in 1944 saw some of the most ferocious and savage fighting to take place in the European theater. There was the unrelenting fight by Montgomery to take Caen, which was won at great cost—Allied bombing during Operation GOODWOOD ultimately reduced the town to rubble. Seeing Caen as pivotal to the security of the beachhead, D-Day planners expected to have it in Allied

hands by the end of 6 June, but it did not fall until mid-July. Beevor makes the case that British sluggishness allowed a vast portion of the German army to escape the Falaise Pocket—German soldiers who would live to fight the Allies another day.

A constant thread throughout his book is the high cost paid by French citizens for the liberation of their land. Nearly twenty thousand French civilians died during the liberation of Normandy, in addition to the estimated fifteen thousand killed and nineteen thousand injured during the preliminary bombing.

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Fukuyama, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2011. 585pp. \$35

Two decades ago scholars, government policy makers, and military cold warriors struggled to decipher the meaning of the sudden and drastic change happening in the Soviet bloc. Francis Fukuyama now offers a provocative approach to this puzzle, which has been widely debated and perhaps misunderstood ever since. He cautiously asked in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) “whether, at the end of the twentieth century, it makes sense for us once again to speak of a coherent and directional History of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy.” Fukuyama went on to theorize that the fall of communism represented a great step forward in mankind's struggle for

“recognition” and higher standards of government legitimacy. Fingers quickly pointed to continual conflicts in Africa and the Middle East as proof that such idealistic notions had little value. Released in the midst of the Arab Spring, however, this new book, the first of two volumes analyzing the origins of political order, offers a timely presentation of Fukuyama’s ideas on political development.

It is a work of comparative political philosophy wrapped around a political-military world history, from prehistory through the eve of the French and American Revolutions. As these events marked the beginning of a rapid increase in the speed of political development, Fukuyama pauses here until the second volume. He begins with a biological and anthropological premise that humans naturally form societal relationships based on kinship. Kinship-based societal rule has, in turn, provided a barrier to three key areas of political development: the state, rule of law, and accountable government. The struggle to move from patrimonial systems of government to modern liberal democracy is the framework for Fukuyama’s history. Liberal development, as Fukuyama describes it, follows many different paths in different regions and cultures, not a single, linear progression.

Readers may be surprised by a nearly complete absence of Greek and Roman political history. Instead, the author describes paradoxes in Chinese, Indian, and Ottoman development. Each of these regions experienced bureaucratic “state building,” with the potential to escape the bonds of kinship-based rule, but each ultimately underwent

“political decay,” preventing the transition to liberal democracy. He contrasts these with European political development, which, while unique, was not predestined to occur before that of the rest of the world.

Perhaps the most interesting features of this work revolve around early achievements in state building that failed to secure lasting holds on their respective societies. He describes, for example, how though the Chinese dynasties of Qin (221–207 BC) and Han (206 BC to AD 220) embraced a centralized state, meritocratic promotion, and an effective civilian-led military, the rule of law never emerged and accountability remained subject to dynastic interpretation. In India, the Brahmans used religion to create something akin to the rule of law as well as an impartial standard of accountability for rulers, but they were unable to form lasting state institutions to enforce these trends.

As the American demand for the military to add “state building” to its list of core competencies increases, officers will find Fukuyama’s observations on political origins valuable reminders of the lasting effects of patrimonialism in current conflict areas. While we ponder the next phase of political development from Tunisia to Bahrain to Afghanistan and hope for the emergence of liberal democracy, we should heed Fukuyama’s caution, “Tribalism in its various forms remains a default form of political organization, even after a modern state has been created.” Perhaps this also explains the lasting problem of interservice rivalry as well!

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