

Introduction of Francis Fukuyama

By Chris Kijne

John Adams Institute

September 26, 2014

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, thank you Tracy and welcome professor Fukuyama.

This is it: Francis Fukuyama's new book, *Political Order and Political Decay, from the Industrialisation to the Globalisation of Democracy*. 548 full pages in fine print, without pictures.

And that's only part two.

Part one, *The Origins of Political Order*, came out three years ago and dealt with virtually everything before and up to the French Revolution. Together it's over a thousand pages of history of our political systems: from Washington to Lagos, from London to Beijing, from Moscow to Buenos Aires.

Writing these two books, I can assure you, would have made great minds stumble and falter. Because if one thing is clear from reading them: the development of our political systems and of our democracies is a very, very complex and often paradoxical process, taking many different forms in different circumstances and involving many different factors, from geography to economy, from technology to psychology, from sociology to philosophy... you name it.

Such that in reading these books I couldn't get away from the image of Professor Fukuyama as a Chinese variety-artist keeping fifty porcelain plates turning on bamboo-sticks, constantly running from one to the other to prevent them from falling.

And if one more thing is clear: there is no straight line from the courts of King Ashoka or from Athens to Capitol Hill, Westminster or het Binnenhof. It is a long and winding road. And if the wind blows slightly different you can just as easy end up in the Forbidden City or in the Kremlin.

Or, for that matter, in a failed state.

But professor Fukuyama has walked that road from beginning to end. An incredibly ambitious endeavor given the vast amount of ground he covers, the extraordinary amount of research, his own and many others that he summarizes in these books, the welter of arguments he puts forward and the astonishing range of topics he touches upon.

But he did not stumble, let alone falter. He has, with this second book, gloriously crossed the finish line. I was amazed to find all the plates still turning on their bamboo-sticks on page 548.

Looking at professor Fukuyama's body of work since his famous essay turned in to a book, *The End of History and The Last Man*, originally written just before the end of the Cold War in 1989, one could have seen it coming.

His writing on the importance of trust in society, on human nature and the reconstitution of social order, on state-building and even his analysis of American power and foreign policy all have their own merit, but certainly it was also finger exercises for this, what seems to be his magnum opus. In it he challenges his mentor Samuel Huntington who published his classic *Political order in Changing Societies* in 1968.

One wonders what is left for the academic Francis Fukuyama, but that may be a question for later this evening. As for the broad picture on the state of our democracies and of democracy worldwide, the competition between our political system and the rivals in Moscow, Beijing or the Islamic world, or for the internal threats to our democracies that professor Fukuyama describes in the last chapters of this book, I'll leave that terrain now for himself to cover in his talk.