

# REVERSE DOMINANCE HIERARCHY IN CIVILIZED SOCIETIES. WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN THE LEX-REX MODEL?

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## ABSTRACT

The history of civilization consists of empires, kingdoms, oligarchic republics, and city-states; it constitutes a mosaic of human settings and a long succession of rulers who have ruled over their citizenship for the sake of peace and justice. A common characteristic of these cultures is that they were ranked societies. Rulers, landlords, administrators, officers, philosophers, merchants, or laborers have been individuals who have known their location on a scale of grades; they have respected those above them and demanded respect from those below them. However, there have been civilized societies which have had no ranks, and no ruling class; they have had rules, practices of detecting transgressors, process of proving guilt and institutions of punishment. Several scholars have studied these societies and designated them with various terms. This work uses the term *covenantal societies* for this societal type and the *Lex-Rex model* for their style of government. The article focuses on the reasons why it is difficult to explain their stability, their resilience, their functionality and even their very existence.

**Keywords:** Leadership, government responsibilities, retaliation, Aristotle politics, spiritual latency, rules of rulers.

## INTRODUCTION

A new trend in science advocates cross-disciplinary research. One accepts easily the feasibility of physical chemistry, bio-physics, and geomorphology precisely because they are not easy to understand. Professor Eugene Stanley of Boston University, the founder of econo-physics, considers me as a socio-physicist. The good news is that there are other scholars who are also considered to be socio-physicists. The bad news is that since this revelation I have struggled with the term *socio-physics*.

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Physics is not sociology. Who doesn't agree with the fact established by Einstein's theory of relativity that "Two events, simultaneous for one observer, may not be simultaneous for another observer if the observers are in relative motion?" For most of us this fact is not obvious; however, according to the same theory, as long as the relative motion is not close to the speed of light, the two events are practically simultaneous; consequently, we withdraw the objection.

Sociology is different. I arrived at sociological research from a mathematical investigation studying how could pre-monarchic Israel, a society with no ranks, no ruler, and no police have a law and enforce it (Livni, Stone 2015). The feasibility of unranked societies is not new. Anthropologists studied them and named them *reverse dominance hierarchies* (Christopher Boehm, 2001; Christopher Boehm et al., 1993). They demonstrate based on evidence that in the rain forest one gets away without ranks. Is such an arrangement feasible in civilized societies? Please note that I use the term *civilized* in its sociological meaning i.e. *having a highly developed society and culture* (American Heritage Dictionary 2016). A society that has a law, a judicial process of detecting deviation of attributing guilt and punishing the guilty accordingly is civilized. Is a civilized society without ranks possible?

We learned that it is possible under certain conditions (Livni, Stone 2015). My efforts to expose our findings to others met many dissenters. After all, sociology is not physics. This work focuses on the difficulties of explaining those conclusions. But before answering why the conclusions are a hard sell let me summarize what the conclusions are.

The society that meets those conditions is a special societal type and different scholars called it different names (*pactist* Barraque 2004; *republics* Cantemir 2016; *vicinal communities* de Lagrèze 1867; *covenantal* Elazar 1995; *obște* Stahl 1936; *răzășie* Tufescu 1934). This article shall adopt Elazar's term *covenantal*. The conditions these societies have to meet are:

1. An egalitarian ethos resulting in a *reverse dominance hierarchy* (see explanation in sub-section *RULES OR RULERS – THE LEX REX MODEL*;
2. A covenant;
3. Federative network;
4. A justice administration that allows autonomous or semi-autonomous status;
5. Assembly government;
6. Office holders – generally also called elders;
7. Institutions combatting poverty and enhancing solidarity.

It is useful to take up the question of leaders and followers in order to expose the difficulties of explaining these conditions. I admit the question is over-debated in the literature. Sub-section *Leadership and Followership* however, looks at it

from the end of followership rather than the conventional wisdom focusing on leadership.

Sub-section *CIVILISATION AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES* also deals with a matter situated on the beaten path of social research. However I revisited the question to focus on the inverse relationship between the scope of government and the liberties of the population. In other words, the section highlights that the increase in the number of fields the government controls results in a decrease in liberties of the governed. This is relevant to the covenantal society because its political center is the single community and due to its reverse dominance hierarchy its control is limited to matters that are essential to the survival of the community.

*THE RULES OR RULERS – THE LEX REX MODEL* sub-section revisits Aristotle's notion of *politeia*. The section explains why its English translation *constitution* is not appropriate for the purpose of this article. *Constitution* is a legal term; it legally delimits the scope of government in societies where governments exist because they abide by a constitution.

*Politeia* exists in every *polis* (society). Aristotle lists tyranny among other types of *politeia* (Aristotle, Jowett, Davis 2000, Kindle location 48 ). The *politeia* is more profound than a legal text. It is engrained in the civilized citizens somewhere below the threshold of conscious awareness. For those who are familiar with the concepts of Bădescu, *politeia* is a spiritual latency:

[A spiritual latency] is manifested as form of sentiment, a category of thought, collectively shared, regarding the rule defining the type of attitudes towards the designated phenomenon and towards the emotional proportion regarding the [matter under consideration]. (Bădescu 2011, 128)

In Bădescu's text the matter under consideration was *punishment* a component of the *politeia*. In our case it is the proportion on the scale of balance between the scope of government and the liberties of the governed. The section identifies *acephalous societies* polities where the power of leaders is negligible. The section brings illustrating examples of reverse dominance hierarchies. It ends with a sub-type of acephalous *politeia* the Lex-Rex model. It is distinct from other acephalous structures because it has a law as ranked societies have. It is distinct from ranked societies because it doesn't tolerate ranks above the law.

The *politeia* is a *spiritual latency*. The term is clearly defined by Bădescu earlier. However, because of my background I need to avoid a potential confusion. In physics the term latency has two different meanings (American Heritage Dictionary 2016):

1. – *Latency*: The state or quality of being latent. – *Latent* – Present or potential but not evident or active, for example *latent heat*.
2. – *Latency*: The time interval between initiating a query, transmission, or process, and receiving or detecting the results.

NOTE:

Bădescu uses the term *spiritual latency*. No doubt, *spiritual latency* refers to the psychological meaning of *latent* i.e. *present and accessible in the unconscious mind but not consciously expressed*. This meaning is similar to the first meaning of *latency* in physics (e.g. *latent heat*). Both *latent heat* and *spiritual latency* are derived from Latin *latere* = to lie hidden (American Heritage Dictionary 2016).

There are societies that set on top of the scale of values concerning preserving the peace the value of obeying the ruler and his rules.

*DIFFICULTIES OF EXPLAINING THE LEX-REX MODELS IN REX-LEX CULTURES* Section deliberates why people holding such values instinctively categorize the *Lex-Rex* model in terms of fairy-tale, or chaos, or both.

Similarly there are people who grew up in the *Lex-Rex* world. They extrapolate their spiritual latencies to the most extreme manifestations of the *Rex-Lex* model. The result is mistakenly believing that the population of *Rex-Lex* societies has the same attitude toward rulers as they have. They conclude that it only takes reducing coercion and broadcasting “the truth” to convert a *Rex-Lex* nightmare into a *Lex-Rex* reality. *THE DIFFICULTIES OF EXPLAINING THE LEX-REX MODEL IN LEX-REX CULTURES* sub-section discusses this side of the misunderstanding.

## DISCUSSION

### Leadership and Followership

“Humans are political animals” (Aristotle 1, Politics). Since the phrase has been used and abused it might need some clarification; let me take a shot at it. The words *humans* and *animals* are straightforward. However the word *political* has grown negative connotations. Associated with *animal* it could mislead to believe that the thesis is dwelling on the evil side of our species. Reasonably, in Aristotle’s time and language *Zoon politikon* meant a species living in towns (*polis*). I guess the readership of this *sociology* journal willingly accepts this quasi-literal interpretation of the Athenian sage; however, let me look at the historical evolution of this *political animal* concept before its mutations and variants.

Reasonably, humans acted in groups long before civilization showed up. Hunting animals and fighting predators or other humans in groups is advantageous. Those who tried the individual confrontation were brave; however their genetic and cultural heritage is extinct. The evolution of the species allowed the survival of those who carried the genetic and cultural traits of accepting rules of hunting, fighting, celebrating victory, accepting defeat, disputing booties, and praying for good outcome of future endeavors.

Evolution endowed the human species with traits of followership. At this point my dissertation departs from the common wisdom of analysing what leadership is about. I prefer to see leadership as the other end of followership, as the North Pole of a magnet is the other end of its South Pole. Followership is the trait forced on us for survival; leadership is born when followers line up to accept rulings of someone who seems to know how to handle challenges of the group: hunting, fighting, settling disputes or foretelling the future. From prehistoric time to Aristotle's civilised polis and to the current internet era followers have looked for leaders confirming Solomon's wisdom: *there is nothing new under the sun*.

### CIVILISATION AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The previous approach makes it easier to distinguish the critical responsibilities of government from the controversial bunch of tasks for which governments assume responsibility. Critical responsibilities are those all civilizations had to fulfil in order to exist.

Adam Smith defined three essential functions of a state: defence, justice administration, and public works, (Klein 1994, 22). One also reads that "Peace and justice are the two things that make the crown" (McIlwain 2005, 84). Berezkin also confirms that conflicts are the chief reason for compliance to chiefs' rules in early pre-state chiefdoms:

Keeping in mind data, the situation seems to be ideal for emergence of the dynasty of chiefs who would suppress quarrels, organize defense and mobilize the commoners for the construction of an earthen mound for the community temple. (Berezkin 2004, 64)

In other words the same three pillars of Adam Smith: defence, justice and public works propped both the modern industrial states and pre-state Amerindian chiefdoms.

Long before Adam Smith, McIlwain and Berezkin, Jewish sages (200 BCE–200 CE) compiled the ethical lessons and wisdom of Rabbinic Jewish tradition in the Chapter of the Fathers (Pirkey Avot). They also arrived at similar three essential ingredients of social resilience: *justice, truth* and *peace* (Pirkey Avot 1:18).

The *political animal* of Aristotle willingly agreed to less than absolute freedom in order to assure the survival of justice and peace in his *polis*. This is one of the reasons why it is easier to explain leadership from the point of view of followers. Are followers interested in expanding their accord with their government for more guarantees in exchange for fewer freedoms? It turns out that this is a cultural trait and that each society arrives at a different balance between the scope of government and the liberties of the population. Not surprisingly, the more extensive is the general welfare managed by the government the less freedom is left for the individuals.

Chiefdoms, city states and empires may act on top of the three critical duties on various aspects of public life: healthcare, education, economy, finances, religion, culture, housing, environment, etc.

Table 1 lists the critical governmental services of Russia. In any civilisation the population receiving all these services gives up liberties. For example the farmer of the primitive chiefdom renounced at part of his surplus in order to get military protection from a ruler. In modern Russia the critical Taxation Agency of the Ministry of Finance collects the contribution of the individuals paid for public services.

*Table 1*

Critical Government Services of Russia

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
Defence	Military-Technical Cooperation Technical and Export Control
Foreign Affairs	Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation
Justice	Penitentiary Service Bailiff Service
Finance	Taxation Foreign Intelligence Service
Extra-ministerial	Federal Security Service Federal National Guard Service Federal Guard Service

Table 2 lists additional public affairs that the Russian Government controls. Needless to say some liberties are traded in by individuals for agreeing to transfer these services to the Government.

Table 2

## Non-critical Government Services of Russia

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Agencies</b>
Civil Defence, Emergencies and Disaster Relief	
Interior	
Agriculture	Veterinary and Phytosanitary Fishery
Construction, Housing and Utilities	
Culture	
Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic	
Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media	Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media Agency for Press and Mass Media Communications Accreditation
Economic Development	Intellectual Property State Statistics
Education	
Science and Higher Education	
Sport	
Energy	
Finance	Assay Chamber Alcohol Market Regulation Customs Treasury State Property Management
Health	Supervision of Healthcare
Industry and Trade	Technical Regulation and Metrology
Labour and Social Protection	Service for Labour and Employment Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring
Natural Resources and Environment	Supervision of Natural Resources Water Resources Forestry Mineral Resources Service for Supervision of Transport
Transport	Air Transport Road Agency Rail Transport Sea and Inland Water Transport

Table 3 lists additional offices and agencies regulating and overseeing finance, healthcare, mail, tourism, education, environment, etc.

*Table 3*

Additional Offices and Agencies of the Russian Government

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**Other Federal Services and Agencies**

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Federal Service for Financial Monitoring  
 Federal Archival Agency  
 Chief Directorate for Special Programmes of the Russian President  
 Administrative Directorate of the President of the Russian Federation  
 State Courier Service  
 Federal Anti-Monopoly Service  
 Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs  
 Federal Agency for Youth Affairs  
 Federal Agency for State Reserves  
 Federal Agency for Tourism  
 Federal Registration Service  
 Federal Medical-Biological Agency  
 Federal Service for Environmental, Technological, and Nuclear Supervision  
 Federal Service for the Oversight of Consumer Protection and Welfare  
 Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science

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For example, similarly to the EU, the Agency of Fishery of the Ministry of Agriculture (Table 2) defines a TAC (*Total Allowable Catch*) for each species of fish. I doubt that even Ivan the Terrible bothered to set quota on fish catch. Reasonably, the modern Russian fisherman gave up his liberty to catch as much as he can in exchange for security, crime suppression, environmental conservation, and other current day proven or hypothesised benefits.



There are in Russia fishermen, fish traders and pollock consumers affected by this decision. How does the Russian fisherman react to this news? There are pros and cons for compliance (Table 4).

*Table 4*

Pros and Cons of Compliance with Fishing TAC Regulation

<b>Cons</b>	<b>Pros</b>
Income reduction	Obedience to Government top on my scale of values Government is more powerful than me
Questioning legitimacy of Government	No one will disobey I never heard of illegitimate government I love my country, its government, its laws and its order
Questioning Government messing with business	Government may be sometimes wrong; following its ruling is always right
Is the decision based on science?	Even if is not science I have no way to dispute the regulation
I can catch more. Can they catch me?	If they catch me the cost is higher than the benefit

The point of this discussion is to illustrate that each civilized society arrives at a different equilibrium between public benefits and individual cost. The stability of the state is an indication of the compliance to government rules.

Take for example the Agency of Fisheries mentioned earlier.

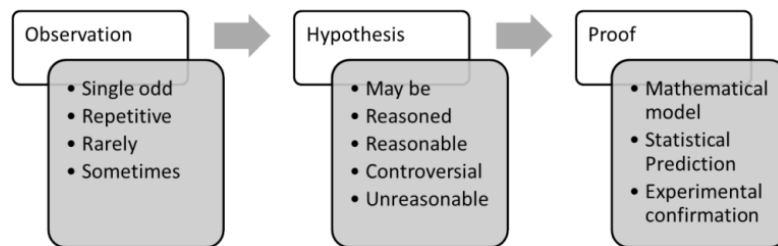
Russia's Ministry of Agriculture has announced that the country's total allowable catch (TAC) for pollock in 2022 will be decreased from 1.996 million metric tons (MT) to 1.927 million MT, (Stupachenko December 7, 2021)

Many fishermen comply; most of them because they have obeyed regulations since childhood. Disobedience leads to anarchy and chaos which is a high price to pay for a loss of 3.6% loss of income. Obviously coercion is an important factor of compliance. I however, agree with those who claim that coercion is necessary, but not always sufficient:

Whilst at a general level it is often argued that chiefs must combine earthly and magic qualities, in reality both the nature of these two types of authority and the way in which they combine are subject to considerable variation. Indeed, it may well be that some chiefdoms are singularly devoid of 'religion' and rely instead on other forms of ideology – nationalism or terrorism, for instance – to cement and

develop the bonds that make them rightful in the eyes of their members, (Chabal, Feinman, Skalník 2004).

Naturally, Russia is not chiefdom; nevertheless the need “to combine magic and earthly methods” to obtain compliance is as valid now as it was in early times.



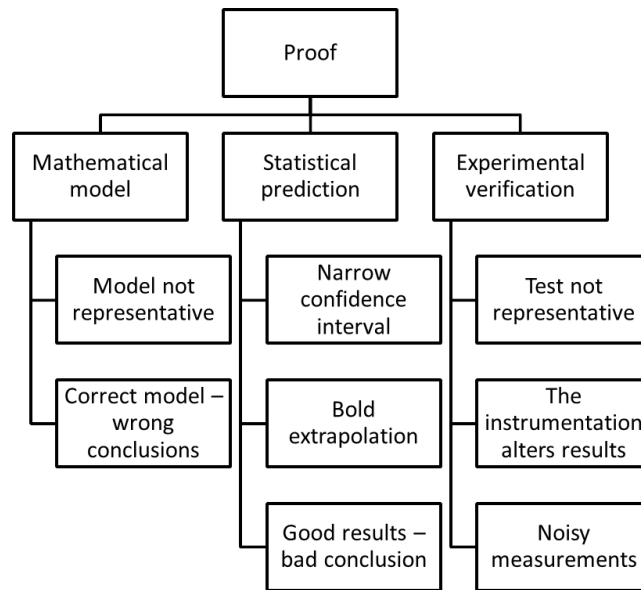
**Figure 1** – Scientific Method.

The ancient magic of religion is diminishing; as a consequence, government agencies have gradually replaced it with ‘science,’ a rising persuasion tool. I am not trying here to diminish science and scientific research and development. My background is science and technology, I am an enthusiast of scientific investigations, and I feel lucky to have lived in these times of unprecedented scientific breakthrough in almost every field of humanity. Science is not magic and scientists are not magicians. The magic comes into play when Government agencies regulate our life and use the term *science* to legitimize regulations.

The scientific method consists of observation, hypothesis, and proof (Figure 1). Only properly proven theory is behind the wonderful scientific progress of our era. A controversial hypothesis is not science; governments calling such information science mislead the people.

In my career of engineering in the field of aerospace and later of socio-physics, I encountered many works that were carried out through the phases of Figure 1, yet they were far from being good science or science at all. Figure 2 illustrates some of the mistakes I came across in engineering reports or even published scientific articles. The objective of this article is not to rebut those

works. I mention them in order to point at the peril of accepting scientific legitimization of Government decisions. My intention is not to stop Governments using the term *science* when the term is not warranted. My purpose is to clarify that modern governments keep relying on both good and unreliable knowledge in order to enhance compliance with necessary or unnecessary regulations.



**Figure 2** – Failings in proving theories; the chart mentions only shortcomings I personally encountered in my career; many other deficiencies exist.

And that is where magic comes into play; even a reasonable hypothesis is not science. Many governmental agencies employ scientifically trained personnel. However, the determination of calling any supporting information science is made by government hierarchies. If the chief of the agency needs a regulation based on science he/she will get one even if the information is in the phase of let's say controversial hypothesis. In the particular case of the pollock (scientific name *Gadus chalcogrammus*) the scientific data came from VNIRO (The Russian Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography), no doubt a reputable institute with dedicated scientists. Their finding was "a possible decline of the species" (Stupachenko December 7, 2021). The input in this case lies between a well-reasoned prediction and a reasonable theory. Neither of them is science. The practice is not necessarily Russian.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada also issues TAC regulations. There are a few differences in arriving at the quotas. For example one reads “We will continue to consult First Nations, harvesters, and other interested stakeholders towards that shared objective, and consider their valuable input to inform fisheries decisions,” (Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2021). Reasonably, this bargained practice of arriving at rules is a contribution of First Nations’ heritage to the Canadian politeia. The negotiated quota needs less coercion and less reliance on *science*.

The existence of the *Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media* agency testifies that the Russian system is reliant more on filtering information than on open dialogue not only in Fisheries but in every single aspect of Government management.

One can say therefore that the Russian Government’s legitimacy is closer to the Gourouns chiefdom in Africa where “the political authority is based on the *kwara* a protective spirit with a material fetish that only the *pio* can access,” (Dueppen 2008, 284). The term *science* replaced the *kwara* and the term *agency chief* replaced the *pio*.

I discussed this issue not in order to announce old news. The objective of this detour is to ask two questions:

1. Does the Russian system work? Do Russian individuals comply with their Government? The answer is affirmative; compliance is achieved by a combination of coercion, information filtering, magic of invoking science, patriotism or even faith, and convincing the individual of future benefits of compliance. The main difference between Russia and let’s say Canada is the more massive employment of coercion and of information filtering.
2. Does Western public opinion believe that the Russian system works? The answer is negative. The *political animal* of Western democracies would not comply with arbitrary regulations. Some would take regulations to court (US, CDC regulation of extending the tenants’ eviction moratorium, 2021); some would protest on the streets (Ottawa truckers 2022); some would think of switching party the next election. In Russia, taking the Government to court is not practical, demonstrating is dangerous, and voting for another party is useless. Therefore the Western public opinion expects that the Russian system is close to either explosion or implosion. There were revolts and revolutions in Russia. 1917 involved radical changes. The tsar was supplanted. Vladimir Illich Lenin replaced Nikolay Alexandrovich Romanoff, businesses and lands were confiscated, and a centrally planned economy took off. However, the societal type of Russia remained a typical autocratic hierarchy. The truth is that the Russian system has worked since Ivan the Terrible and most Russians would

rather have it than turning to a chaotic transition, to a ‘weak’ government with *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and to a regime that in their view controls almost nothing.

The Western public opinion is convinced that the typical Russian dreams of a constitution that limits government and confers rights and freedoms. That is because the *political animal* of the West has adopted a scale of values with freedom and supremacy of law on top of the scale. Earlier I exposed my contention that a societal system can be examined from the side of the followers not only from the side of the leaders. Consequently, in my opinion the West misunderstands Russia; even if Russia will undergo another political disruption the most likely end result will be another hierarchical organization. In this work, I shall apply the same suggestion to illustrate why individuals of covenantal background misunderstand hierarchies and why scholars of stratified background get the idea of covenantal assembly government wrong.

#### **RULES OR RULERS – THE LEX REX MODEL**

A very smart political scientist friend used to say, “The fundamental question in human affairs is, who *shall* rule?” We think the fundamental question is, “who *should* rule?” (Hogan, Kaiser 2005)

“Who shall rule?” or “Who should rule?” are indeed fundamental questions; however, in my view, not in interhuman relationships. They are fundamental in the affairs of rulers and of contenders to replace rulers. Human affairs by definition are the business of the governed and the fundamental question relating to their existence concerns the rules rather than the rulers. The rulers are a factor in what rulers pronounce; however Aristotle already noticed that in every polis there is a fundamental understanding of the relationship between rulers, rules and ruled which he called *πολιτεία* (*politeia*). Unfortunately, in English the term is translated into *constitution*.

Currently, the notion of *constitution* is related to *constitutionalism* which “is the name given to the trust which men repose in the power of words engrossed on parchment to keep a government in order”, (Hamilton 1931, 255). The *constitution* is therefore the parchment that regulates the government; constitutionalism exists in one single type of government: the constitutional democracy. *Politeia* exists in any type of government. According to the Athenian *politeia* the people sanctioned *rules and rulers, while in Sparta the rulers decreed rules and the Spartans obeyed them.*

Consequently, the *politeia* and not the ruler determines the fundamental matters in the affairs of the *polis*. We saw in the previous section how a different make-up of government in Russia and Canada changes the way fishing quotas are derived and enforced. For the business of fishermen the quotas are a fundamental question. No matter who rules, who shall rule or who should rule, Russia will manage fisheries, defence, economy, finance, health, and education according to its *politeia*. Canada will do the same according to its system of government. More relevantly to this thesis, the Russian *political animal* perceives the Canadian negotiated TAC or any other rule as a symptom of Canadian weakness; his Canadian counterpart sees the excessive coercion, and the need for an agency for *Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media* as a weakness of the Russian *politeia*.

At this point I am ready to reformulate the fundamental question to “what rules?” The answer is “the *politeia* of the polis rules.” It is not my answer and not a new idea, it is Aristotle’s and it is ancient. Solomon’s wisdom reappears again: “Nothing is new under the sun!”

That doesn’t mean I disagree with Hogan & Kaiser.

In our view, then, leadership should be defined in terms of the ability to build and maintain a group that performs well relative to its competition (Hogan, Kaiser 2005).

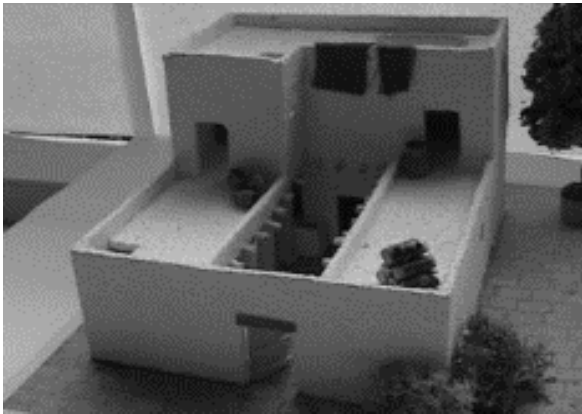
This definition is consistent with my previous observation that leadership is the other end of followership in this two-pole connection. Since this is a sociological journal it is beneficial to note that the *politeia* defines a *societal type*. Rulers decree rules; they rarely alter the societal type. Their adherence to the *politeia* affects their “ability to build and maintain” the organization. The question “who should rule?” impacts the welfare of the society. The significance of this impact varies according to the societal type. This is not news either. Aristotle’s “Politics” is precisely about the variants: democracy, tyranny, oligarchy etc. In abstract mathematical terms, the impact of “who rules?” varies between zero and infinity. This is not an original observation either. Almost every continuous magnitude varies between zero and infinity. In practical terms, in no societal type is the impact of “who rules” either zero or infinity.

Anthropologists call *acephalous* societies where the impact of the “who rules?” is close to zero. Aristotle coined the term *tyranny* for societies where the impact of the same question approaches infinity.

Acephalous societies are characterized by a *reverse dominance hierarchy* (Christopher Boehm *et al.* 1993). The bargain between leaders and followers limits the power of leaders to command. The ideological sub-stratum of such

society is called *egalitarian ethos*. It consists of tools of coercion applied by the followers against leaders who try to dominate. According to Boehm the means of coercion comprise public opinion, criticism, ridicule, disobedience, and extreme sanctions from dismissal to assassination (Christopher Boehm *et al.* 1993). Archaeological evidence shows that peer pressure of the followers disallowed opulent display of wealth, or pretensions of elitism. For example in Israel of the Judges the unearthed evidence shows uniformity and simplicity of pottery, dwelling and burial (Faust 2006).

Figure 4 illustrates the typical pre-monarchic Israelite dwelling – the four room house. Figure 3 illustrates the dwellings of a similar beginning in a Promised Land, the Pilgrims of the Mayflower.

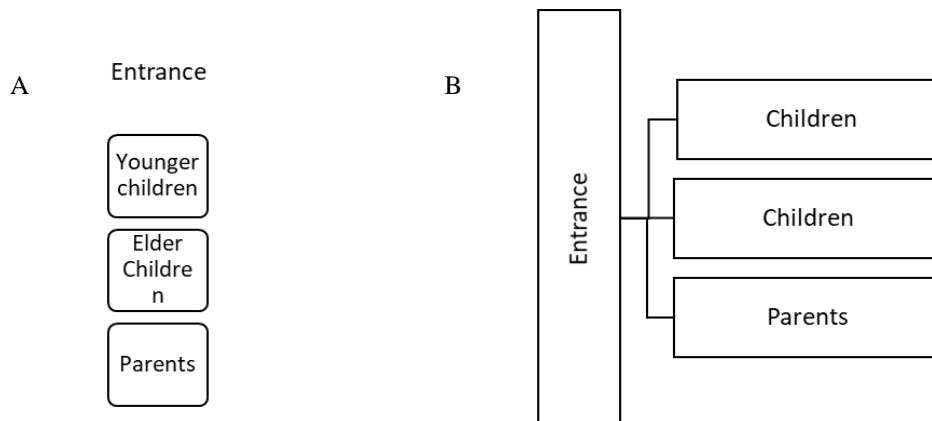


**Figure 4** – Typical Israelite Four-Room-House  
Reconstructed by Nick Laarakkers, the Netherlands;  
Public Domain



**Figure 3** – Plymouth Plantation – Replica of the  
Pilgrim's Colony of 1619 – Plimoth Patuxet a living  
history museum in Plymouth – Photo by the author

The egalitarian ethos of the Israelites is reflected not only by the popularity of the *four-room-house* within the Israelite territory, but also by its architecture. As opposed to other typical dwellings in the land (e.g. Canaanite house) where the access to a room was *in series*, the access is *in parallel* (Figure 5); as a consequence, the Israelite Four-Room-House “lacks ‘depth’ or access hierarchy and expresses a more egalitarian spirit” (Faust 2006, 79–80).



**Figure 5** – Iron Age Palestine Dwellings; A–Canaanite Layout; B–Israelite Four–Room–House.

Figure 5 graphically illustrates that parents in the Canaanite house traversed through the children's rooms, while the children did not go across the parent's room. The Israelites preferred no status differentiation even as far as sleeping arrangement within the household is concerned.

Often the dress code of acephalous societies is modest, and uniform. Black is a dominant color. As opposed to the hierarchical society in acephalous cultures lavish outfit is met with scorn. For example Rembrandt's painting "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp" (Figure 6) illustrates a modest, uniform, and monochrome black dress code for men in Calvinist Amsterdam of 16<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 6** – Rembrandt: *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (Public Domain – author's life + 100 years).

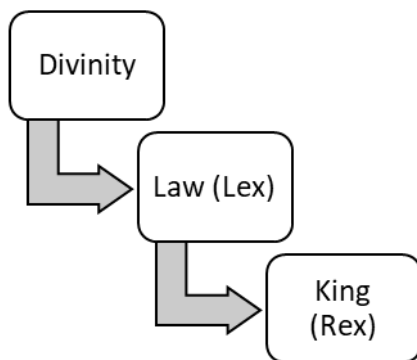
These features are common to all acephalous societies. Reasonably, the pressure for uniformity, simplicity against status symbols comes from the followers. An interesting question is what happens when followers disagree among themselves and the leaders cannot arbitrate a compromise. In a society where leaders cannot rule the likelihood of internal conflict is not negligible. I found no written answer; Professor Rousseau of McGill University enlightened me by personal communications that communities may split or fall apart due to such disagreements.

An exception is an acephalous society which follows rules that are not attributed to rulers. The only example of such society is the *covenantal* society. In

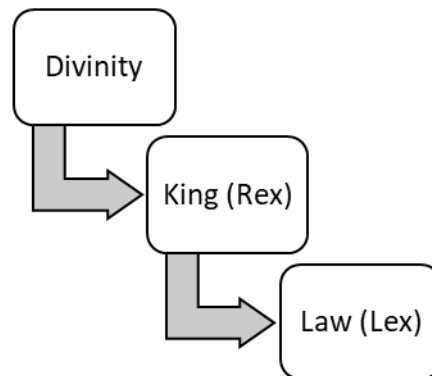


this acephalous arrangement the rules are inscribed in a *covenant*; their source of authority is attributed to divinity. Pre-monarchic Israel, Roman Palestine, Apostolic Christianity, Waldensians, Romanian Republics of Cantemir (2016), Jewish Diaspora, Gascon Vicinal Communities, Calvinists, Pilgrims, Puritans, and Presbyterians are *covenantal* societies.

As explained earlier the distinction between them and other *acephalous* societies is that they have a law (covenant). Other acephalous societies also follow customary law; however following the customs is in general voluntary. Many customs belong to the *politeia* of the chiefdom and their conservation explains the survival of the cooperation of individuals within the group. An important distinction between covenantal and other acephalous organization is that covenantal societies enforce their covenant; transgressors of commandments of the covenant are found to be *guilty* and are *punished* as in stratified societies. As mentioned earlier, other acephalous societies also follow custom; however there is no attribution of guilt and consequential punishment for violators of custom (Dickson-Gilmore 1996, 169; Sillitoe 1998, 159). Anti-social behavior is often punished by retaliation based on a principle of reciprocity and offenses are not weighed on the innocent-guilty scale but on the measure of harm to others and resolved by mediation (Bederman 2001, 48; in Africa Chaudhuri 2013; Hawthorne 1998, 16; in North Africa Hounet 2012; in Mongolia Khurelbaatar 2019, 130; in Lowveld South Africa Severin 2019, 139 ; in Southern Ethiopia Tadel, 2019, 113–114).



**Figure 7** – Lex-Rex Model



**Figure 8** – Rex-Lex Model

An important distinction between *covenantal* and stratified societies is that their leaders are not above the law (covenant). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Rutherford coined an elegant and concise expression of this order of authority: *Lex-Rex* (Rutherford 1982).

In a conventional hierarchic arrangement the King is above the Law. The opposite configuration was extremely odd in 1644; as a consequence the book *Lex Rex* was burned both in Scotland and England.

The covenantal *Lex-Rex* arrangement is still not easily understood by scholars coming from stratified background. Individuals who grew up in a covenantal community have difficulty understanding how a king is above the law. These difficulties are discussed in the next section.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF EXPLAINING THE LEX-REX MODELS IN REX-LEX CULTURES

Boehm coined the term *reverse dominance hierarchy* for the control of the clan over their leaders in primitive acephalous societies of hunter gatherers (Christopher Boehm *et al.* 1993). It is reasonable that in a clan that “does not have any recognised authority that can make a decision and to enforce it” (Chaudhuri 2013) the power of the chief stems from the agreement of the clan. Therefore it is easy to conceive such a situation in the rainforest.

However, it becomes a thorny matter when one reads the similar situation in civilised sedentary farming community:

It would be a mistake to consider that these good and old men were leaders or chiefs ... the good and old men were always under the control of the community (author’s translation of Bădescu, Cucu-Oancea, Şişeştean 2005, 542).

Farming involves owning of land and storing surplus which require rules of protecting property. The dynamics of civilized agriculture faces crises like drought, inundation, locusts, viruses, and animal or human raiders; these need permanent leadership that takes decisions and see to their enforcement. One cannot rule out that the leadership is entrusted to a council of elders (Tuden, Marshall 1972, 439). However, it is hard to envision that the elders’ decisions are followed only when the community agrees with them. “Westerners invariably see chaos in the absence of a recognised authority or State” (Chaudhuri 2013)

The covenantal *Lex-Rex* arrangement works precisely because the omnipotent covenant regulates fundamental rules that stem from customs rooted in the *politeia* many generations ago. Unlike in other acephalous societies, in the covenantal societies deviation from the covenant is monitored; covenantal individuals watch others while being watched (the right to interfere in a Romanian obşte Bădescu *et al.* 2005, 539; in Jewish communities Maimonides, Bernard 1832, 186; in Puritan communities Philbrick 2006, Kindle Location 265). It is quite an unusual custom and it conflicts with the wide-spread virtue to mind one’s own

business. This conflict fueled antagonism and prejudices (e.g., antisemitic stereotyping Lowenthal 2017, 236).

More importantly, the covenantal network was a cumbersome management arrangement and scholars who grew up in the persuasion of conventional leaders-followers *Rex-Lex* pattern will mistakenly read that the elders constitute an aristocratic ruling class; these scholars instinctively associate the claim that the office holders serve the followers with the politically correct discourse. After all, current candidates to office frequently play to the gallery pretences to serve the district, the province, or the country. No one takes these exaggerations literally.

However, in acephalous organizations coercion hinges on mobilizing the community and its forceful peer pressure. This was true in the rain forest and it has remained true in all the covenantal societies listed earlier (section RULES OR RULERS – THE LEX REX MODEL).

Another obstacle to internalizing the covenantal society consists of its strong link to religious concepts.

Elazar established that the first covenantal society was the biblical Israel (Elazar 1998). Reasonably, before Israel became a covenantal society it was a chiefdom holding egalitarian views. I am aware of many who “religiously” doubt the historicity of Bible’s stories. Regardless of its historicity, the biblical story of Dina’s rape, of the vengeance of her brothers, and of Jacob’s scolding (Genesis 34) points to an ancestry of the covenantal arrangement:

In the biblical period when violence and retaliation were the norm, the actions of Simeon and Levi were praised as demonstrations of strength. In subsequent generations, when rules of law and process began to emerge, Jacob’s rebuke became more prominent. (Dershowitz 2000, 162)

How do we know that Israel of the period of the Judges was a covenantal society? How do we know that it had “rules of law and process?” I mathematically demonstrated it is using the archaeological evidence regarding pork prohibition (Livni 2021, 35–45). Archaeological evidence consistent with the egalitarian ethos, e.g. the four-room-house, cannot prove rules of law because it only proves the egalitarian ethos. Generally speaking, any custom that makes sense cannot testify to rule enforcement. On the other hand, an absolute observance of pork prohibition does constitute a proof of an efficient law enforcement mechanism, precisely because such a culinary prohibition makes little sense. The mathematics consists of a statistical analysis proving that in pre-monarchic Israel, both the mean and the variance of deviations from the rule prohibiting pork consumption, both are practically zero.

The covenantal (*pactist*) organization in Gascony is also explained along the model of a “pact sealed between God and the Hebrew people” (Barraque 2004).

There is a consensus that biblical Israel is the source of the three monotheistic religions. The covenant's divine authority is a matter of faith; consequently the covenantal society hinges on that faith. No doubt, the covenantal faith and the covenantal society are linked. Nevertheless, I submit that the egalitarian ethos of Iron Age Israel nourished the faith in the covenant. An egalitarian organization can follow the ranked societies' model of law, process of establishing guilt, and consequential punishment; however, it will not attribute divine authority to any ruler. The work around is a random innovation: it attributes divine authority to the rules, it limits the authority of leaders and it delegates the enforcement of the rule to the entire community. Therefore the *Lex-Rex* model is not merely a result of faith; it is a socio-political make-up of government, a *politeia* which inherited the rankless vision from acephalous origins and the practice of detecting and punishing the guilty from the surrounding ranked societies.

This difficulty appears in disputing the important contribution of the covenantal Puritans to the American *politeia*. Many American and other Western scholars subscribe to "the argument that the principle of separation of church and state was an invention of nineteenth-century anti-clerical and antireligious elites, starting with Thomas Jefferson" (Witte Jr 2006). For them the thesis of strong Puritan influence on the ideological basis of modern America is anathema to the principle of separation of church and state: Puritans were religious fanatics and America is about *freedom from religion*. Is it? The First Amendment reads:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

I read it as *Freedom of Religion*. Not surprisingly, some describe the American spirit *Religion of Freedom*: "Despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot (Tocqueville 2000, 246).

Strangely, not an American, but Tocqueville, a French aristocrat taught the world about "the destiny of America embodied in the first Puritan who landed on those shores, just as the human race was represented by the first man" (Tocqueville 2000, 233). Oddly, there are some who defend Tocqueville. They listen to the question of dissent: "How can Tocqueville assert that the Puritans founded a country which, as he describes it, was more secular than religious in the 1830s?" (Kessler 1992) and subsequently they answer thoroughly defending Tocqueville.

No doubt there is a difficulty here. Puritanism is a faith; however the Puritan towns of 17<sup>th</sup> century New England<sup>2</sup> were socio-political embodiments of the *Lex-Rex* model. The sociology and not the religious persuasion is the Puritan contribution to the American *politeia* embracing democracy and constitutionalism. The first democratic *polis* was Athens. Constitutionalism however, is a covenantal

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<sup>2</sup> For example Boston, Charlestown, Dorchester, Cambridge, Wenham, Roxbury, Woburn, Chelmsford, Springfield, Dedham, Haverhill, Marblehead, Andover, Medford, Lynn, and Malden in Massachusetts, Windsor Hartford, Guilford and Milford in Connecticut and Dover, Portsmouth, Exeter, and Hampton in New Hampshire.

inheritance of Puritan America; it took off on the Central Hills of the Land of Israel (see more in Livni 2021).

Any *politeia* is linked to a socio-political conviction; after all, humans are *political animals*. Fidelity to the *politeia* is detectable; faith in religion is not:

I do not know whether all the Americans have a sincere faith in their religion, for who can search the human heart? but I am certain that they hold it to be indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions (Tocqueville 2000, 245).

One cannot tell who follows the commandments of the covenant because of religious persuasion and who practices religion because of their fidelity in the covenantal *politeia* (Tocqueville 2000, 244). The sages of the Talmud not only noticed the distinction, but also prioritized it: obeying the commandment (*mitzva* in Hebrew) comes first; doing it for Heaven's sake comes second:

A person should always engage in Torah study and performance of a *mitzva* even if he does not do so for their own sake, as through engaging in them not for their own sake, he will ultimately come to engage in them for their own sake [Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 105B, Translated by Adin Even-Israel (Steinsaltz)]

Few scholars notice the distinct *Lex-Rex* sociological pattern. The exception therefore is noteworthy:

Une troisième zone est constituée par le Sud-Ouest et surtout les pays pyrénéens où « les communautés institutionnelles...commandent toutes les manifestations de la vie ». (Bourin 2003)

Or

...un ordre pactiste de pouvoir, héritier de la très forte tradition de l'autorité publique, et une organisation singulière d'une société au final très peu féodalisé (Bidot-Germa 2008, 363).

The natural feasibility of the *Lex-Rex* model is not easy to digest because it is anathema to the *politeia* of ranked societies. Even when *Lex-Rex* communities are distinguished, their ancient roots are often disputed both in the Carpathian and the Alpine valleys. Therefore the exceptions are again noteworthy. In Romania the first promoters of earliest beginnings of covenantal arrangements strongly advocate that *Lex-Rex* type villages were the prevalent arrangement before the landed gentry

(boyars) and monasteries seized the lands of most of these free villagers<sup>3</sup> (Stahl 1936, 457; Tufescu 1934, 15).

Similarly, in spite of the striking similarity of the Waldensian communities to that of Apostolic Christianity, the Early Christian timing of their beginning is strongly opposed (e.g. Audisio 1999, 3-4; Paravy 1993, 909–910; Pouzet 1936, 8–16; Vedder 1900, 467). Not only they advocate a firm founding date (1173) and a founding city (Lyon, France) but also a founder: Pierre Valdès, the frontrunner of a group of simple and illiterate people (Pouzet 1936). I mathematically ruled out the likelihood of this narrative (Livni 2021, 83–92). Nevertheless it is worth mentioning that even the proponents of the theory unintentionally cast doubt on it. They admire the strong resilience and vitality of the Waldensian communities and networks (Audisio 1999, 159; Paravy 1993, 1182; Pouzet 1936, 6), yet they insist that their founders were “hardly semi-educated” (e.g. Pouzet 1936, 14).

#### **DIFFICULTIES OF EXPLAINING THE LEX-REX MODEL IN LEX-REX CULTURES**

*Lex-Rex* cultures also produce scholars. Growing up they unconsciously absorbed fundamental concepts of the American spirit. That doesn't mean they are particularly aware of the peculiarities of these concepts. Frequently, their difficulty of understanding their own world consists of generalizing their own scale of values to the rest of humanity.

It is not an accident that Tocqueville, a Catholic French aristocrat opened the way for appreciating the American democracy, its values of freedom, equality, rule of law, and sovereignty of the people:

In America the principle of the sovereignty of the people is not either barren or concealed, as it is with some other nations; it is recognized by the customs and proclaimed by the laws; it spreads freely, and arrives without impediment at its most remote consequences. If there is a country in the world where the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people can be fairly appreciated, where it can be studied in its application to the affairs of society, and where its dangers and its advantages may be foreseen, that country is assuredly America. (Tocqueville 2000, 33–34)

The American children internalise these notions as most natural; frequently, when they become grown-ups they attribute these values to the whole of mankind. Americans don't ignore the tyrannical world; however, they see tyranny as a forced oppression opposed to common sense and supported by mere coercion. Therefore,

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<sup>3</sup> Called *răzeși* in Moldova and *moșneni* in Valahia.

for them the *Lex-Rex* pattern is natural and explaining it is as useless as teaching American teenagers the rules of baseball.

For example in one research the space outside the sphere of freedom and rule of law is called the gap:

People in the gap want the same freedoms we enjoy, either to say yes or no, but certainly to decide on their own (Barnett 2005, 306).

That is an exaggeration to say the least. Many Iranians do want similar freedoms. However, in rural Iran the equality of genders threatens the sanctity of family; freedom of expression threatens the power of government and consequently encourages disobedience and chaos. In Iran the rule of law is another expression of the law of ruler. This is the *politeia* of rural Iran. It has been since the days of Persian kings. Rural Iranians participate at elections. According to local research, the high participation in the province of South Khorasan demonstrate nothing less than “the confidence of the country’s people to the existing governance system and hope for creating better situations in the country from different dimensions” (Alamdar, Rasti, Ahmadi 2016). This is also an exaggeration. Nevertheless, in the hearts and minds of rural Iran obedience is above freedom, and the powerful are above the law.

Similar principles dominate hearts and minds in China, Russia, North Korea etc.

American scholars and politicians wrongly believe that these attitudes are results of brainwashing made by tyrannical media. Let’s listen to an American senator, Joseph Biden, who visited the Balkans during the conflict in Serbia; we learn the following:

Biden said he learned many things about Milosevic and the Balkans during his visit, the most important thing being how media can be misused to start and feed religious, ethnic, racial, and regional conflicts. (Kaufman 2002)

The senator got it wide of the mark. Religious, ethnic, racial, and regional conflicts have existed in the Balkans at least since the battle between *Sparta and Athenas* (433 B.C.E). Jireček (1911) detected a line of discontinuity in the Balkan Peninsula dividing the *Byzantine Empire* into two language cultures: Greek and Latin. Currently, a similar cultural division can be spotted in the same region: in Croatia, alcohol use among students is 16% above European average, while in neighbouring Bosnia it is 17% below European average (Hibell *et al.* 2012). In 1912, 90 years before Biden’s visit, religious, ethnic, racial, and regional conflicts were still scurring in the Balkan Peninsula:

“The Montenegrins declared war on 8 October, followed by the Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians on 18 October. As the fighting started, Russia kept 200,000 additional troops on active duty in western Russia following the summer maneuvers. Vienna quickly found itself on the defensive. Berchtold’s first assumption, that the Turkish forces would hold their ground, proved wrong. The Balkan armies soon chased Turkish forces from large parts of Macedonia and Albania and appeared set to go all the way to Constantinople.” (Williamson Jr 2014)

Media can add fuel to the fire but they neither start it nor extinguish it.

I will end this section with another exaggeration: “Democracy, freedom, and a civil society require constant advocacy” (Kaufman 2002).

## CONCLUSIONS

Civilization transformed *Homo sapiens* into *Zoon politikon*.

The collective spiritual latency of any policy arrives at a certain balance between responsibilities of the leaders and freedoms of followers. Aristotle called this collective latency *politeia*.

The most frequent *politeia* in the history of civilization follows the *Rex-Lex* model. The Ruler possesses divine legitimacy and consequently he is above the law.

The *Lex-Rex* model can survive in a civilized sedentary civilization only if it meets a multitude of simultaneous conditions.

Most scholars educated in the *Rex-Lex* culture internalize with understandable difficulty the *Lex-Rex* model precisely because the *politeia* is a spiritual latency. There are a few exceptions and we owe them our understanding of the various embodiments of *Lex-Rex* networks.

Scholars educated in the *Rex-Lex* culture generalize their balance between governments’ responsibilities and individual liberties to the whole of mankind including to tyrannies; the result is exaggerated expectations of imminent collapse of tyrannies.

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