**TOPIC: SCHOLARS PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF STATE**

“Everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state” Benito Mussolini’s formulation remains one of the most enduring definitions of modern totalitarianism. Italy’s Fascist regime was the first to declare itself totalitarian, and it envisioned a radically new social order engineered by the state. But to what extent did all facets of Italian life genuinely reside “Within the state”? What was the scope of fascism’s totalitarian project as well as its limits? How did Italians variously negotiate, resist, and exploit the dictates of Mussolini’s regime?

Drawing on the frame work of Alltagsgescichth(The history of everyday life), Arthurs, ferris and their collaborators proposed new answers to this resistant questions. Their analytical sites include social encounters, relations, and work: gestures, clothing and comportment: language, emotion and memory. What people wore and ate, how they greeted each other, how they navigated and negotiated the demands of daily life- This choices have much to tell us about the “Unofficial relations” of power under a repressive and interventionist regime.

**THE STATE**

State, political organization of society,or the [body politic](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/body-politic&hl=),or, more narrowly, the institutions of [government](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/government&hl=). The state is a form of human association distinguished from other social groups by its purpose, the [establishment of order and security](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/public-administration&hl=); its methods, the laws and their enforcement; its territory, the area of jurisdiction or geographic boundaries; and finally by its [sovereignty](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty&hl=). The state consists, most broadly, of the agreement of the individuals on the means whereby disputes are settled in the form of laws. In such countries as the [United States](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States&hl=), [Australia](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/Australia&hl=), [Nigeria](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria&hl=), [Mexico](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/Mexico&hl=), and [Brazil](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/Brazil&hl=), the term state (or a cognate) also refers to political units, not [sovereign](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sovereign&hl=) themselves, but subject to the authority of the larger state, or federal union.

Historical Conceptions

[Greek](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Greece&hl=) and [Roman](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Rome&hl=) precedents

The history of the Western state begins in [ancient Greece](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/ancient-Greece&hl=). Plato and [Aristotle](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle&hl=) wrote of the [polis](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/polis&hl=), or [city-state](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/city-state&hl=), as an ideal form of association, in which the whole community’s religious, cultural, political, and economic needs could be satisfied. This city-state, characterized primarily by its self-sufficiency, was seen by Aristotle as the means of developing [morality](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morality&hl=) in the human character. The Greek idea corresponds more accurately to the modern concept of the nation—i.e., a population of a fixed area that shares a common language, [culture](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture&hl=), and history—whereas the Roman [res publica](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/res-publica&hl=), or [commonwealth](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/commonwealth-political-science&hl=), is more similar to the modern concept of the state. The res publica was a legal system whose jurisdiction extended to all Roman citizens, securing their rights and determining their responsibilities. With the fragmentation of the Roman system, the question of authority and the need for order and security led to a long period of struggle between the warring feudal lords of Europe.

A state is polity that is typically estabilished as a centralized organization. There is no undisputed definition of a state. Max Weber’s definition of a state as a polity that maintains a monopoly on the use of violence is widely used, as are many others. Some states are sovereign, while other states are subject to external sovereignty or hegemony, where supreme authority lies in another state. The term “State” also applies to federated states that are members of a federation, in which sovereignty is shared between member states of a federal body.

Speakers of American English often use the terms “State” and “Government” as synonyms, with both words referring organized political group that exercises authority over a particular territory. In British and Commonwealth English, “State” is the only term that has meaning while “the government” instead refers to the ministers and officials who set the political policy for the territory, something that speakers of American English refer to as “the administration”. Many human societies have been governed by state for millennia; however, for most of prehistory people lived in stateless societies. The first states arouse about 5,500 years ago in conjuction with rapid growth of cities, invention of writing and codification of new forms of religion. Overtime, a variety of different forms developed, employing a variety of justifications for their existence (such as divine rights, the theory of the social contract, etc.). Today, the modern nation is the predominant form of state to which people are subject.

**THE WEBERIAN THEORY OF STATE**

Let us start with the definition of state given by Max Weber. He says: A modern state is a system of administration and law which is modified by state and law and which guides the collective actions of the executive staff; the executive is regulated by statute likewise, and claims authority over members of the association (those who necessarily belong to the association by birth) but within a broader scope over all actively taking place in the territory over which it exercises domination”.

In this definition Weber calls the state as a:

1. System of administration and law
2. It is a symbol of collective action which means whatever the state performs is always for the general public of the community.
3. A modern state exercises domination over the community
4. Domination of the state extends over the members of the association who are natural members that are members by birth.
5. According to Weber, the state is a public organization and its authority extends over all the inhabitants (members of the association) of the geographical area.
6. The state is independent. If it is not independent it would not be possible for it to exercise control over the members of the association.
7. The state is capable of taking decisions and selecting preferences.
8. When a political organization is the state it is also capable of taking actions with autonomy. Max Weber has viewed the state from both legal and sociological point of view. According to Weber, the state is a collective legal body which has coercive power.

**ELEMENTS OF STATE**

Weber in his Economic and Society and also in other works pointed out certain elements of state elements of state. Although he did not specially mention the word element we do it for the sake of clarity of discussion. The elements, in fact, constitute the most important parts of his definition.

There are according to Weber, three elements of state:

1. Territoriality
2. Violence
3. Legitimacy

Though Weber has not directly mentioned the term Nation-state, the term was quite alive in his mind when he spoke of territoriality. In the earlier centuries, history tells us, the state was involved in internecine welfare and this situation considerably troubled the boarder and territories of different states. But today the concept of nation-state is very developed and there is not so much problem about the boarder. Each state can claim certain boarder and it is more or less respected by other state. Territoriality is, thus, a vital element of state in the opinion of Weber.

The second element is violence. The state can demand allegiance from the citizens and in the situation where some people are reluctant to show allegiance the state does not hesitate to use violent measures. But in the opinion of Weber “force is certainly not the normal or only means of the state” However, the force is a special means the state can use when necessity arises. He says very beautifully, “ the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by the means of legitimate violence”. It means that the use of force or violence is backed by legitimacy. Except state, no other political organization is authorized to use force. Hence, the force or violence is an important element of state.

The third element is Legitimacy. Whenever the state uses violence or physical force, it is claimed that there is justifiability behind the use of force and this type of justifiability can conveniently by called Legitimacy. The Legitimacy is based on any of the following factor. The legitimacy may be a belief. People believe that the state has the power to use force. That is all. This belief prevents people from opposing the use of force. Legitimacy may be based on law, constitution or statute. This occurs when the authority of the state assumes power through democratic or constitutional means “Legitimacy of the modern state is founded predominately on legal authority that is committed to a code of legal regulations”.

Institutions comprising a modern state can also be regarded as an element. These institutions are many in form and kind. They are political, economic, social, cultural, etc. Some of these institutions are directly controlled by the state and some are not. But the institutions are not above the law and authority of state. They are to act in accordance with the law and regulations made by the state.

**MARXIST THEORY OF STATE**

Marxist theory of state, besides liberal state, is perhaps the most prominent theory. Marxist theory not only challenges the basic concepts of liberal state but also emphasises that it enslaves majority men of society for the realisation of its aims, it is to be abolished or smashed without which the emancipation of common men will never be possible. However, a problem about academic analysis of Marxist theory of state is that no where Marx has methodically analysed the theory.

Marx (1818- 1883) and his friend Engels (1820-1895) have made different comments and statements which constitute the fabric of state theory. We shall first deal with the definition of state. In the Communist Manifesto (it was written by both Marx and Engels) we find a simple definition of state.

They have said that the state is the “Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another”. In the same book we find them saying, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”.

Hal Draper in his Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution defines in the following words: “The state is the institution or complex of institutions which bases itself on the availability of forcible coercion by special agencies of society in order to maintain the dominance of a ruling class, preserve the existing property relations from basic change and keep all other classes in subjection.”

Draper’s definition of Marxist state is not basically different from the definitions given by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto. The state is fundamentally an instrument of class domination. In other words, the state is used by the bourgeoisie to exploit the common people and in that sense it is a machinery for exploitation. This concept has been elaborated by Lenin.

**Origin of State:**

Marx, Engels and their followers (particularly Lenin) had no faith on the social contract theory as the origin of state. They have viewed the origin from a materialistic’ standpoint which emphasises that though the state is the creation of man, behind this there is no emotion, idea but the influence of material conditions which they termed as economic conditions.

They have divided the development of society into old communist social system, slave society, feudal society and industrial society. In the old communist society there was no state because there was no existence of private property. The system of private property worked as a potential cause of the rise of state.

The owners of private property felt insecurity as to its protection and they felt the necessity of a super power which could provide protection ultimately. How the system of private property helped the creation of state?

(1) As soon as there was private property, two classes of men there appeared—one was the owner of property and the other was without property.

(2) The conflict between them became prominent. Property owners wanted to subjugate the other class.

(3) Property owners created a force within the society and this force ultimately assumed the status of state.

From the study of history Marx and Engels have concluded that the state—for all practical purposes—was set up in the slave society. Because in the slave society there were mainly two classes—the owners of slaves and the slaves themselves. The owners of the slaves required an organisation to control and dominate slaves.

Engels in his The Origin of Family, Private Property and State has elaborately analysed the origin and development of state. The state is not something coming out of the society. It is rather the product of society. Let us quote him. “The state is, by no means, a power forced on society from without… Rather it is a product of society at a certain stage of development”.

People inhabiting in society laid the foundation of state for the realisation of their class interests. What is the class interest and how could the state fulfill this? Engels in this book has categorically stated that the interests of the owners of property are at diametrically opposite to those who are not the owners; because of this there were clashes of interests between these two classes and the interests were irreconcilable.

At the same time there developed an animosity between these two classes and again this antagonism could not be settled. All these led to a situation which necessitated a state structure.

The owners of the property came to be regarded as a separate class whose sole aims were to control the persons who were not the owners of property and to devise a mechanism whose chief function would be to help the property owners. The state in this way was created as a public power.

The man-made state had two main functions—to provide security to the owners of wealth or owners of means of production and to collect taxes from the members of society. Engels has further observed that though the state is the product of society, slowly but steadily it became the owner of enormous power and it stood above society.

But though the state stood above the society it was always friendly with the owners of property. We, therefore, conclude that the state is the outcome of human contrivance and was made with specific aims. It is now clear that according Marx and Engels the origin of the state has nothing to do with the social contract or the divine right theory. They have analysed the origin purely from materialistic point of view.

**Models of the Marxist Theory of State:**

The Marxists have discovered two models of the Marxist theory of state. One is instrumentalist model and the other model is relative autonomy model which is in opposition to the other model.

**1. The Instrumentalist Model:**

According to Marx and Engels the state was created to safeguard the economic interests (other interests are also included but economic interests are primary) and ultimately the state (along with its police, military and bureaucracy) was converted into an instrument used by the owners of property.

From this special role of the state the Marxists have deduced a particular model of Marxist theory of state which is called the instrumentalist model. The core idea of this model is the state is used as an instrument for the fulfillment of interests of a particular class or section of society.

The chief spokespersons of this model are Ralph Miliband, Sanderson, and Avineri. There are many others who have lent their support to this model. Even Lenin accepted this model in his highly eulogised famous work State and Revolution.

In Class Struggle in France, Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of the State, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx emphasised this aspect of state. On the eve of Bolshevik Revolution Lenin published State and Revolution and in this book he has said that the state is the result of the irreconcilability of class antagonism.

The bourgeoisie used the state to articulate the interests of the capitalists. Collecting materials from history Marx has shown that without using the state as an instrument the bourgeoisie could not survive at all because its survival depended upon its ability to accumulate and guard wealth.

**Central Idea of Instrumentalist Approach:**

We have already quoted a long passage from Origin of Family Private Property and State. He said: the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class. It means that the bourgeois state is completely controlled by the dominant class. This economically powerful and dominant class uses the state to serve its own purposes.

This is the instrumentalist character of state. Why the capitalist class uses the state? We have already said that without the help from the state it would be impossible for the bourgeoisie to keep its citadel of wealth intact.

**In a class society this special role of the state is inevitable and this can be explained in the form of the following points:**

(a) In any class state/society there are two main classes (there are also other classes but two classes are main. Marx and Engels came to know this from the study of history),

(b) Since the interests of these two main classes are opposite conflict between the two important classes is inevitable because the interests stand in direct opposition,

(c) Because of this the interests are irreconcilable,

(d) The two classes make preparations for aggravating the conflict. On the one hand there is the state and capitalist class and on the other hand there are workers,

(e) The capitalist class uses the state machinery (particularly the police and army) to control the revolt fuelled by the working class,

(f) If the state is not used as an instrument for dominating the working class, exploitation of the workers would not have been possible.

**Manifesto and German Ideology:**

In many of their writings Marx and Engels have elaborated the instrumentalist idea of state but analysts of Marxism are of opinion that in the Communist Manifesto (full name is Manifest of the Communist Party) and The German Ideology the concept has prominence. The bourgeois class gradually and steadily captured political power and finally established its authority over all aspects of governmental affairs.

In Manifesto Marx and Engels have said, “political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another”.

The bourgeoisie, in order to establish its full control over the industry in particular and the economy in general, has constantly revolutionised the industry, mode of production. The bourgeoisie did it by introducing new machineries and improved techniques of production into industries. By doing this the capitalist class has been able to articulate its full hold over all the branches of economy.

The bourgeoisie has not only controlled the domestic economy and internal market but also the world market. “The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption”.

In other words, the chief aim of the bourgeoisie is to control all the branches of government, the economy with all its ramifications and finally the world market. Marx and Engels have assertively said that the bourgeoisie has performed these tasks through state and in this way the state acts as an instrument.

The instrumentalist approach to politics emphasised by Marx and Engels also occupies an important place in The German Ideology (1846). This large book, consisting of more than 700 pages (Moscow edition), sporadically makes comments which throw light on the instrumentalist interpretation of politics.

This book is the joint product of Marx and Engels. They have said “By the mere fact that it is a class and no longer an estate the bourgeoisie is forced to organise itself no longer locally, but nationally and to give a general form to its average interests”. The control of the bourgeoisie class is not confined within the local political sphere but its influence spreads throughout the national politics.

In other words, the capitalist class is the controller of both local and national politics. In the Manifesto they uttered almost the same words. The state is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests—even the civil society is completely controlled by the bourgeoisie.

Here by civil society Marx and Engels have meant numerous organisations and institutions and the social, political, economic, cultural aspects of society. Marx and Engels have further observed that if there were no classes which means no private property there would not arise the necessity of any state system at all. So we can reasonably conclude that the instrumentalist approach of Marxist political study is intimately related with the emergence of private property and state structure.

**Why did Marx Emphasise it?**

A pertinent question which is generally raised ii why did Marx, Engels arrive at the conclusion that the state is the instrument of exploitation? Engels wrote a book— The Conditions of Working Class in England—in which he gave us a vivid pen picture of the pathetic conditions of workers in England and in that book he said how the capitalists used the state to exploit the workers. Not only Britain, France was also a capitalist country and the conditions of workers in that country were not better at all.

In these two capitalist states, the state was largely used as an instrument of exploitation. There is another reason. In mature capitalism almost all the members of the bourgeoisie came from the same socio-political-economic environment and while running and managing production and business their leitmotif is how to exploit the workers with the help of the state.

Naturally the exploitation and the instrumen­tality of the state both maintain their continuity. In the third place, the capitalists know it very well that in order to make the citadel of wealth a well-guarded one it is essential that the control over the citadel must be as perfect as possible and the help of the state is an indispensability.

Finally, Miliband (Marxism and Politics) is of opinion that certain structural constraints have forced the capitalists to use the state as instrument. Let us quote him: “The state is the instrument of the ruling class because given its insertion in capitalist mode of production it cannot be anything else”. What Miliband wants to say is that the environment around the capitalists was such that it was impossible for them to come out of that. Most of the capitalists were in favour of exploitation and naturally no one capitalist can go against that trend.

Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a Utopian socialist and also a great industrialist. He wanted to improve the economic conditions of the workers through reforms which he wanted to introduce. But due to the stiff opposition of other industrialists he could not succeed.

The three branches of government—the bureaucracy, the army, police— acted in tandem to exploit the workers and under such circumstances no particular industrialist could do anything against the combined anti-labour strategy.

It was also the question of survival and death. The capitalists must harvest maxi­mum amount of profit so that this profit could be converted into capital formation. In the days when Marx wrote his books there were not enough financial institutions, as they are today, to provide capital.

The prime or only source of capital was savings. The capitalists were determined to augment the quantum of savings/profit at any cost. So we find that maximisation of profit, capital formation, and exploitation, seeking the help of state machinery such as army, police and bureaucracy all are interlinked and there is no scope at all to delink one from the other.

Marx ad Engels viewed the entire episode from the standpoint of exploitation inflicting untold miseries upon the workers and the capitalists overlooked it. Marx gathered from the study of history that the state had always been used as an instrument of exploitation and he observed that during the epoch of industrialization this particular role of the state (that is as an instrument of exploitation) had earned additional momentum and it was so naked that it drew his special attention.

**Assessment of Instrumentalist Model:**

Critics have raised several objections against Marx’s instrumentalist interpretation of bourgeois state.

**Some of these criticisms are:**

1. It is generally observed that neither Marx nor Engels has stated clearly this concept. It is the interpretation of their followers. Their followers have thought that Marx and Engels might have thought on the line of instrumentalist approach.

2. The critics further maintain that it is true that the state sometimes arts as an instrument to favour the bourgeoisie but not all times and on all events. In order to establish its “neutrality” or impartiality it does something in favour of the workers which goes against the interests of the capitalists.

3. Bob Jessop believes that there is uncertainty in the formulation of instrumentalist approach. Jessop further says that state is a simple and ordinary organisation and to impose instrumentalism upon it is quite unjustified.

It is true that sometimes the capitalists use the state for the purpose of exploitation, but at the same time they use it for some other purposes. It is unfortunate that Marx has overlooked this.

4. Jessop has further observed that at different times Marx and Engels have emphasised other roles, but their followers have singled out this particular role and have over-emphasised it. This is not correct. In some countries the capitalists do not’ act as a dominating class. In those cases it is not applicable.

**2. Relative Autonomy Model:**

**Definitions:**

The relative autonomy model, in simple language, means that though the capitalist state works as an instrument at the hands of the dominant class that is the bourgeoisie, it very often exercises its power independently.

That is, the state is not always dictated by the capitalists or it does not discharge its functions at the behest of the bourgeoisie. The independent functioning of the state away from the influence of the economically dominant class is interpreted by the renowned Marxists as the relative autonomy of state. Hence the words relative autonomy do not mean that the state always acts independent of dominating class.

The word relative denotes that sometimes it acts without being influenced by the powerful class. Again, the relative autonomy status does not find its place in clear term in the writings of Marx and Engels.

In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx made certain comments which have given rise to this controversial and much talked concept. A number of Marxists, Ralph Miliband being the champion of them, have stressed that though instrumentalist model occupied Marx’s mind considerably he thought of the other model.

The fact is that Marx had no intention to construct a well-knit logical theory of state. What he saw and what he gathered from history he has written. To sum up, Marx closely observed the functioning of the capitalist states of his time and after that he drew certain conclusions. The fact is that all the capitalist states of his time did not play identical role nor did they assume same character.

**Explanation of the Concept**:

The recent studies of Marxism have revealed that Marx and Engels did not deny the impartial role of state and this is evident in many writings. Ralph Miliband is the champion of relative autonomy of state. In Socialist Registrar (1965) Miliband has said that though the instrumentalist approach is very important, the relative autonomy model is not less important.

If we fail to realise the relative autonomy model of Marxist theory of state our understanding will remain incomplete. Elsewhere (Marxism and Politics) Miliband has said that there is powerful reason for rejecting this, particular formulation as misleading…… While the state does act on behalf of the ruling class, it does not for most part act at its behest. The state does not always act in accordance with the wishes of the ruling class.

The state has an independent character and image. If anybody says that the bourgeois state is always dictated by the ruling class that would be vulgar Marxism. Miliband argues that the activities of the state relate to the process of selections. Different schemes, policies, programmes etc. are placed before the state, and it selects some of them. It does not blindly follow everything.

The state generally adopts those policies and tries to implement those schemes which will produce favourable results in the long run and will serve the purpose of the state as well as that of the bourgeoisie in a better and effective way. The state gives priority to long term interests over short term interests. Moreover, in a pluralist society, there are a number of elite groups.

Sometimes these are involved in conflict and the state authority proceeds cautiously and judiciously. This implies that the state acts independently. The same point has been stressed by another critic, “The capitalist state, legislator of the Factory Acts, is, then, the eye of the otherwise blind capitalist, the stabiliser of a system capitalist activity itself endangers”.

For academic purposes it is necessary to investigate the causes why the state attempts to maintain neutrality or establish its autonomy. One such reason, generally advanced, is that in a pluralist society there are different groups and factions of the ruling class and they are sometimes involved in conflict. The state wants to cohere all the factions together. This aim could not be achieved without the autonomous or neutral stand of the state.

The different groups/factions of the ruling class are very powerful and active and of the interests of some groups are neglected that group will raise hue and cry and disturb the smooth functioning of the political system. The ‘authority of the state treats it as an unwelcome feature or development and will try to combat it. So the state tries to make balance among all the potential forces.

Schwarzmantel has offered another reason, “The state in a liberal democratic system must have some autonomy in order to preserve its legitimacy. If the state was seen to be too closely bound up with and dominated by one set of interests it would not be able to maintain the belief that it represents the general interests”. The mere fact is that though the state acts as an instrument, in numerous cases it tries to maintain its autonomous character and it does so to enhance its image.

**Relative Autonomy in Marx’s Writing:**

Like many other concepts such as concept of class, theory of rights, historical materialism etc. Marx did not directly refer to the relative autonomy of state, but. The German Ideology, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte contain sufficient hints about this. During Napoleon’s rule the French state was represented by the powerful bureaucracy. It acted on behalf of the class rule of bourgeoisie.

In subsequent regimes the state as an instrument of exploitation did not lose its importance. That is, the instrumentalist approach was quite valid. But “only under the Second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent. As against civil society, the state machine its position thoroughly that the chief of the society of December 10 suffices for its head”.

The Eighteenth Brumaire was written by Marx between December 1851 and March 1852 and during those days he observed the two opposite roles of state—as an instrument of exploitation, as an impartial organ of administration. The state consolidated its power against the civil society because in the latter there was dominating influence of bourgeoisie and other factions of capitalists.

Second Bonaparte took this drastic step not for the general betterment of civil society but for his own sake, to satisfy his own desire for more power. “This would appear”, says Miliband, “to suggest the complete independence of the state power from all social forces in civil society”. Elsewhere he has said that the state sometimes acts independently apparently to prove that it is not controlled by any class or group. Even in that situation an individual’s lust for power works.

**Not Full Autonomy**:

In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx further makes the following comment, “And yet the state power is not suspended in mid air. Bonaparte represents a class and the most numerous class of French Society at that small holding peasants”.

Marx had stressed that the state did not exist is mid-air or in vacuum. It will always represent a class; it may be that the class is not well articulated or well organised. But its existence cannot be ruled out. Even when a state acts independently the weakness or affiliation of the state for a particular class or to any dominating group cannot be denied.

Marx has, however, said that when the two dominant groups or classes are in perfect balance, in that situation the state might act independently. But this is a rare situation. In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte Marx had admitted that the autonomy or the affiliation of state is not something fixed.

The state must study every situation and consider everything in the background of long term interests and smooth management of general administration. If it considers that these two purposes would be properly served by remaining neutral the state authority would do that.

But if it thinks that supporting the economically dominant class would be for the better interests of the governing elite or would be better for the sake of enhancement of its power it would abundon its own autonomy. Marx did not say these words in clear and unequivocal language. But various situations were active in his mind.

**CONCLUSION**

We have so far discussed the two models of Marx’s theory of state—the instrumentalist model and the relative autonomy model. The conflict between these two models cannot be denied. If the instrumentalist model is accepted the relative autonomy model becomes irrelevant. The question which disturbs the mind of the students of Marxism is which model is to be accepted. No definite answer can be provided to this vital question.

Marx and Engels have not stated anything clearly. It is clear from the analysis of The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that though he depicted the state as an instrument of class rule, of class domination and exploitation, simultaneously he did not hesitate to announce that sometimes the state might act impartially. But what role the state will assume depends upon a particular situation.

Ralph Miliband has said that even though the state acts independently, the relative class character of the state does not vanish. We have already stated that the state must always represent a class or group or faction. If so it will take decisions for its benefits.

A state of the real world always takes decision in the background of circumstances which revolved around it. If prevailing forces compel it to support a particular class the state will do that or if the situation is otherwise it will act independently.

Miliband concludes that whatever the state does, its class character is never lost. We conclude that what exact character the state will assume-depends upon the extent of power and domination of the ruling class and also upon the mentality, attitude of the persons constituting the government. Marx has simply written what he saw. He did not enter into the depth of the issue.

**The State and the Ideology:**

Though Marx and Engels have viewed the state from the background of materialism, they have never overlooked the ideological aspect of state. The ideology or ideas play a very vital role in the management of state. In The German Ideology Marx and Engels have stressed the point that in every class state the dominant class always dominants the economic, political, cultural and other aspects of state.

This does not mean that the state will always represent a particular ideology. However, the state will represent the views and ideas of the economically dominant class. Let us quote from The German Ideology a large passage:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling the material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production so that the ideas of those who lacks the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations”.

**In this passage Marx and Engels have stressed several points, some of which are:**

(1) A bourgeois state has always some ideology.

(2) This ideology is backed or fostered by the ruling class.

(3) Who is the ruling class? The class that controls the material forces of production.

(4) The ruling class through various means indoctrinates the common people. In other words, the ruling class converts the people in its favour and if it fails it tries to make them neutral. The ruling class adopts the methods of political socialisation.

(5) The ruling class gives stress on the civil society.

**Ideology Acts as a Weapon:**

Marx and Engels have paid special attention to the importance of ideology. Why? Though they are not quite clear about it, we can frame certain reasons. The purpose of the ruling class is always to exploit the workers and other vulnerable sections of society. But the exploiting class cannot expose the real character. The ruling class always uses the ideology to masquerade its real objective to exploit other classes.

If the nefarious motives of the ruling class come out that may cause embarrassment or displacement of the class rule. In other words, destabilization may be the consequence. To avoid this danger the ruling class uses idea, Schwarzmantel observes: “Even in a situation when the old order is about to be overthrown, the defence of interest and privilege is conducted under the banner of ideas”.

The capitalists want to prove that they rule not for their own benefits but for an ideology. In the garb of an ideology the exploiters advance their justification. The exploiters cannot openly declare their real motive or cannot say what they are doing. In this way ideology or ideas act as an instrument or masquerade.

In The German Ideology they have said: “For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interest as the common interest of all the members of society”.

The bourgeoisie universalises the objective and ideas and also rationalises them. The capitalist class is quite conscious of the fact that if it fails to convince the general mass of the so called benefits of the bourgeois rule agitation is bound to arise. That must be nipped in the bud.

**State, Reform and Revolution:**

One thing is quite clear from the analysis made so far — the state is an instrument of exploitation and if emancipation is not possible the state will be under the full control of the economically dominant class. The issue is the class character of the state is to be changed. That is the dominant class is to be thrown from power and this can be done through revolution. Besides revolution there is another way and it is reform.

The present structure of the state is to be changed through reforms. Whether Marx supported reforms is not clear from his vast literature. Again there is a controversy on this issue. Interpreters of Marx’s thought are of opinion that Marx believed that without revolution radical change of society is not possible. But the success of revolution depends upon some preconditions.

The workers must be mentally and materially prepared for a revolution. They must form a well-organised and cohesive class. They must be conscious of the extent of the exploitation. The workers will gladly welcome all sorts of troubles and will make sacrifice needed for the success of revolution. Naturally revolution is not an easy thing.

Some critics, for the above reason, have argued that Marx in various ways supported reforms. The purpose of the reforms would be to help the working class in its preparation for revolution.

Reforms should not constitute the goals but they are transitory means for arriving at goals. “As far as Marx is concerned it is right to say that in his perspective the workers’ movement should indeed seek improve­ments and reforms within the confines of capitalism but these reforms were to be stages on the way or means for achieving complete transformation”.

**HOBBES THEORY OF STATE**

For Locke and Rousseau, as well as for Locke’s English *predecessor*[**Thomas Hobbes**](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Hobbes&hl=)**,** the state reflected the nature of the human beings who created it. The “natural condition” of man, said Hobbes, is self-seeking and competitive. Man subjects himself to the rule of the state as the only means of self-preservation whereby he can escape the brutish cycle of mutual destruction that is otherwise the result of his contact with others.

**LOCKE’S THEORY OF STATE**

For Locke, the human condition is not so gloomy, but the state again springs from the need for protection—in this case, of [inherent](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inherent&hl=) rights. Locke said that the state is the [social contract](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-contract&hl=) by which individuals agree not to infringe on each other’s “natural rights” of life, liberty, and property, in exchange for which each man secures his own “sphere of liberty.”

**ROUSSEAU’S THEORY OF STATE**

Rousseau’s ideas reflect an attitude far more positive in respect of [human nature](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-nature&hl=) than either Hobbes or Locke. Rather than the right of a monarch to rule, Rousseau proposed that the state owed its authority to the [general will](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/general-will&hl=) of the governed. For him, the nation itself is sovereign, and the [law](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/law&hl=) is none other than the will of the people as a whole. Influenced by Plato, Rousseau recognized the state as the [environment](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environment&hl=) for the moral development of humanity. Man, though corrupted by his civilization, remained basically good and therefore capable of assuming the moral position of aiming at the [general welfare](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/common-good&hl=). Because the result of aiming at individual purposes is disagreement, a healthy (non corrupting) state can exist only when the common good is recognized as the goal.

**MACHIAVELLI AND BODIN’S THEORY**

It was not until the 16th century that the modern concept of the state emerged, in the writings of [Niccolò Machiavelli](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/Niccolo-Machiavelli&hl=) (Italy) and [Jean Bodin](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Bodin&hl=) (France), as the centralizing force whereby stability might be regained. In [The Prince](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Prince&hl=), **Machiavelli** gave prime importance to the durability of government, sweeping aside all [moral](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moral&hl=) considerations and focusing instead on the strength, vitality, courage, and independence—of the ruler. *For* **Bodin***, his contemporary, power was not sufficient in itself to create a sovereign; rule must comply with morality to be durable, and it must have continuity—i.e., a means of establishing succession. Bodin’s theory was the forerunner of the 17th-century doctrine of the “divine right of kings,” whereby*[*monarchy*](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/topic/monarchy&hl=)*became the predominate form of government in Europe. It created a climate for the ideas of the 17th-century reformers like*[*John Locke*](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Locke&hl=)*in England and*[*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Jacques-Rousseau&hl=)*in*[*France*](https://googleweblight.com/i?u=https://www.britannica.com/place/France&hl=)*, who began to reexamine the origins and purposes of the state.*