

Agenda

The State

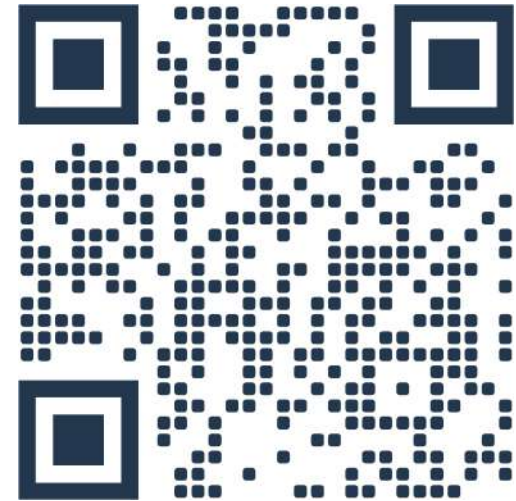
1. The State
2. Statelessness
3. Theories of state power
4. Democracy & state behavior

The State



In groups of 2-3:

- ∴ Come up with one or two examples of *state agents* — these are groups, organizations, or people that act *on behalf the state* and with *state authority*. Think broadly!
- ∴ Post these as notes on the [State agents whiteboard \(link\)](#) on Teams
- ∴ For the example(s) you picked, discuss the sources of their *legitimacy*. Why are these agents' actions broadly considered legitimate? Is their legitimacy called into question by anyone? What are the direct and indirect sources of their authority?



What is "*the*" state?

- ∴ The existence of a state is usually taken for granted
- ∴ The state is *powerful*
Law enforcement; incarceration; military deployment
- ∴ The state has *final authority* in most matters
- ∴ The state is *distinct from government*
Government is the institution that organizes state behavior



Max Weber on the state

- ∴ State is *compulsory*
- ∴ State represented by a *centralized government*
- ∴ State maintains a *monopoly on the legitimate use of force*
- ∴ State has jurisdiction within a certain *territory*
- ∴ **Sources of authority:**
Charismatic; traditional; legal-rational

E.g. the State of Canada & the Wet'suwet'en

- ∴ **Territory**
States' reach is geographic
- ∴ **Monopoly**
Does not acknowledge multiple states
- ∴ **Compulsory**
No "opting out"
- ∴ **Government**
Does not recognize social organization without formal government institution
- ∴ **Legitimacy ...**



Stateless- ness



IMAGES OF STATELESSNESS

"State of nature" Three visions of human society without a state

1 All against all

2 Natural law

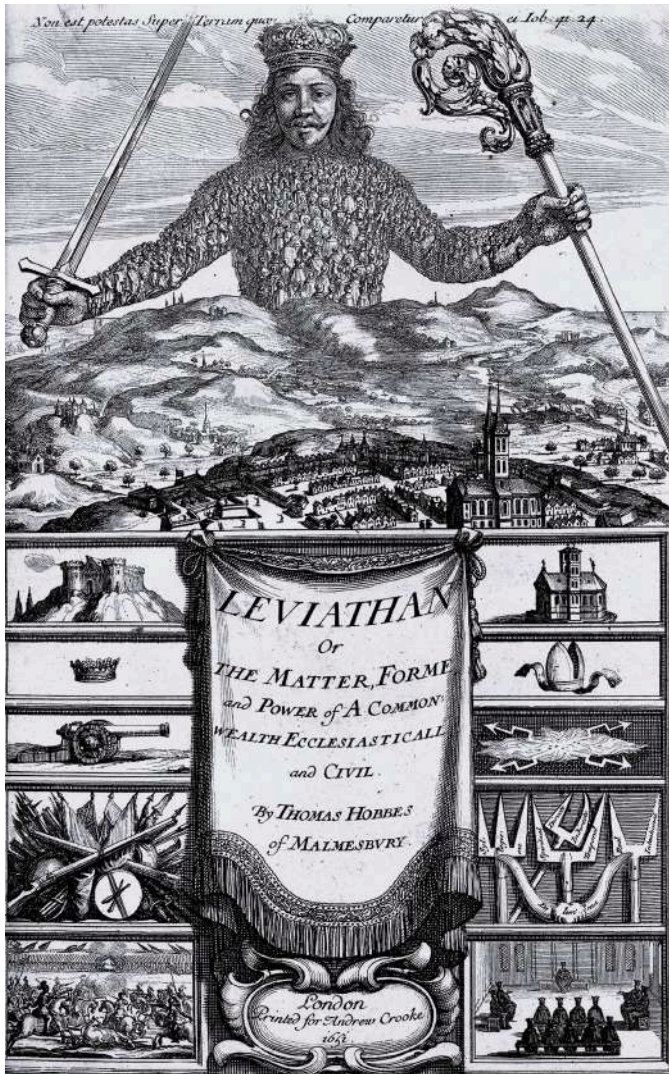
3 Social institutions

"State of nature" Three visions of human society without a state

1 All against all

2 Natural law

3 Social institutions



Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (1651)

- ∴ *Hypothetical* (rhetorical) human history
- ∴ State of nature is *chaos*
- ∴ Interpersonal violence only resolution to conflict— '*war of all against all*'
- ∴ "continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

"State of nature" Three visions of human society without a state

1 All against all

2 Natural law

3 Social institutions



John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689)

- ⋮ Refers to *empirical* "states of nature" in human history
- ⋮ Human *reason* exists without formal state
- ⋮ Mutual respect for life, liberty, and property is rational and natural (*natural law*)
- ⋮ State of nature not chaotic—governance emerges naturally

"State of nature" Three visions of human society without a state

1 All against all

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Social anarchism

(e.g. Peter Kropotkin)

- ∴ Proposed as *ideal form of society*—reject the idea of a natural, primordial “state of nature”
- ∴ Human society can *organize itself* without a formal state
- ∴ State is *inherently problematic*
- ∴ Instead: voluntary institutions, mutual aid, norms of collaboration

Theories of state power



1 Power elite

2 Dialectic

3 Pluralist

4 Poststructuralist

Power elite theories

- ∴ Power in any society is concentrated among relatively few individuals
- ∴ The existence of the state creates positions of power that not everyone has access to
- ∴ Existing social hierarchies of power (economic, status, material, etc.) ensure that only elite have access to power of the state

Empirically, most government positions of power belong to elite

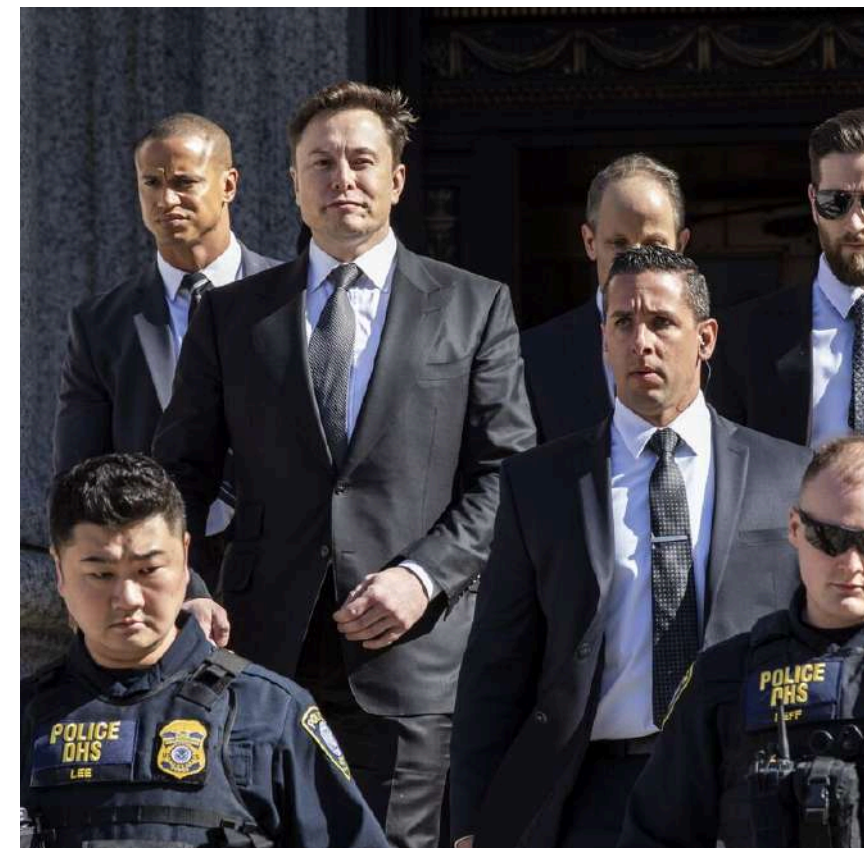


1 Power elite

2 Dialectic

3 Pluralist

4 Poststructuralist



Dialectic theories

- ∴ State power based on categorical divisions
e.g. economic class division (Marx)
- ∴ State emerges as direct result of conflict between workers and capital
- ∴ Power not located in a particular position; instead based on relations between groups

1 Power elite

2 Dialectic

3 Pluralist

4 Poststructuralist

Pluralist theories

- ∴ State is a neutral mediator of diverse groups' interests and conflicts
- ∴ State as an institution is disinterested
Aided by restrictions like constitutions, separation of powers, ...
- ∴ **Stability maintained** Balance of group powers over time
Intersecting membership in interest groups
- ∴ Change happens because interests of different coalitions fight for dominance
In the long run, leads to responsive governance
- ∴ **Variant: elite pluralism**
Admits some aspects of power elite theory
The plurality of groups jockeying for power are inaccessible to most people

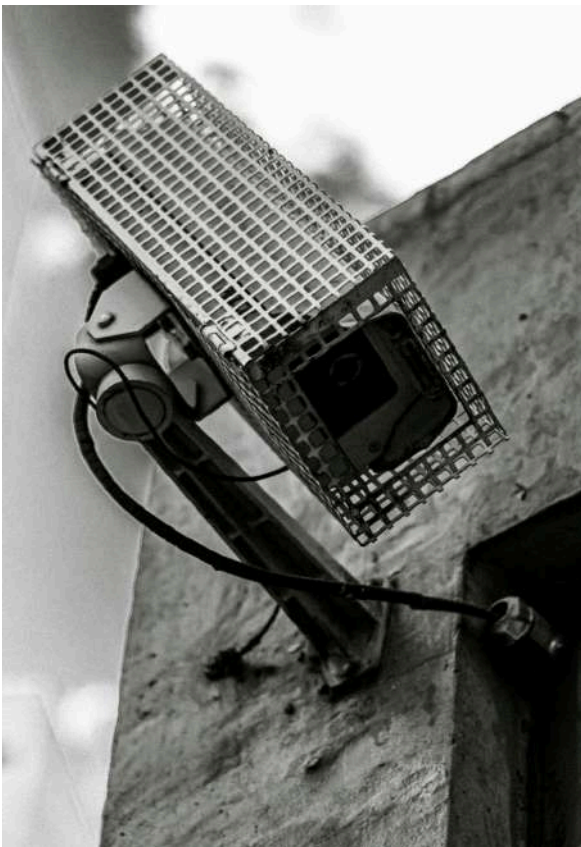


1 Power elite

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Poststructuralist theories

- ∴ Power in society is not linked to specific institutions like state, economy, etc.
- ∴ Instead, power is “dispersed” among the various institutions and relations of society
- ∴ Institutionalized knowledge and accepted beliefs are location of power
E.g. norms of surveillance that cut across institutional settings, from government to prisons to schools
- ∴ Change is extremely difficult
- ∴ “... Nothing in society will be changed if the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are not also changed.”

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books, 1980: 60

	Power elite theory	Dialectic theory	Pluralist theory	Poststructuralist theory
Power is	concentrated	concentrated but fluid	dispersed	diffused throughout social life
Power defined by	institutional position	relationship and process of institutionalized struggle	behavior	process of everyday interaction and knowledge production
Elites are	unified	usually competitive	competitive and divided	diffuse but powerful insofar as they may dominate knowledge production
Nonelites are	diverse and powerless	powerful, but only if organized	diverse and divided	powerless insofar as interests are managed by social body

Adapted from: Glasberg, Davita Silfen. Political Sociology: Oppression, Resistance, and the State. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2011.

Democracy & state behavior



Much of the theory about state actions is based in pluralist conception of state power

- ∴ Power elite and dialectic theories are basis of stratification research
- ∴ Poststructuralist theories inform thought on interaction and class

State behavior is diverse

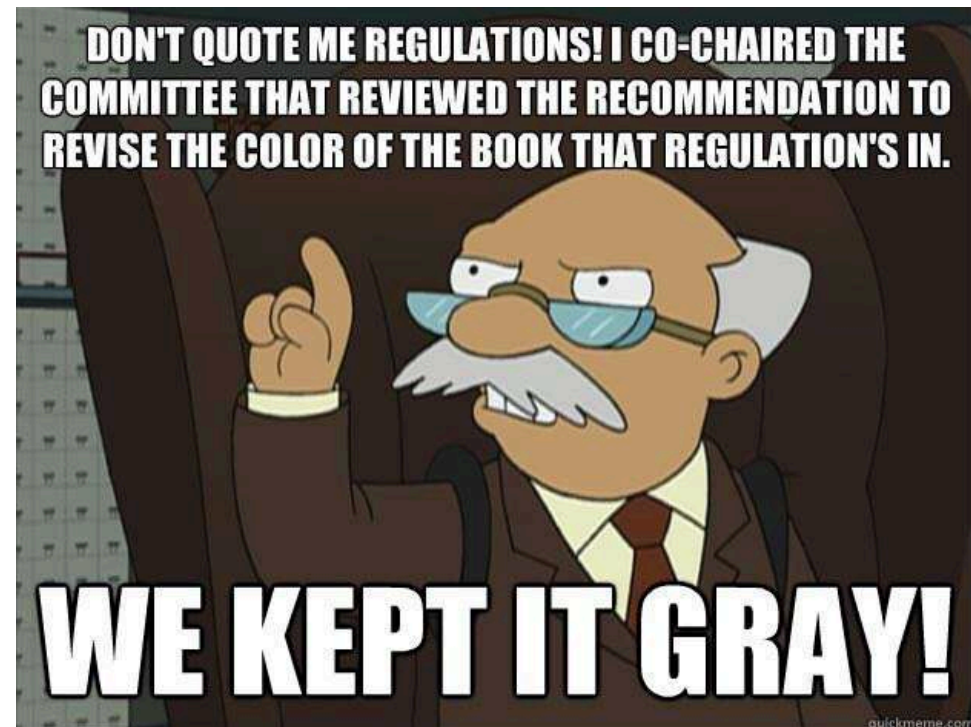
- ∴ Military / police / carceral action
- ∴ Bureaucratic processes
- ∴ Implementation of services

How do the actions of the state relate to the will of its citizens?

- ∴ Different approaches to translating diverse ideas of citizenry to policy and other government structure or behavior

Democracy: rule by public

- ∴ ('power of the people')





Direct democracy

- ∴ People participate directly in all state decisions
- ∴ Everyone has equal access to roles and processes of government
- ∴ Logistically difficult, especially at large scale

Though aspects of direct democracy exist in many non-direct settings (e.g. public referenda, town hall meetings)

Representative democracy

- ∴ Virtually all existing democratic state governments are representative democracies
- ∴ State-sanctioned decision-makers elected by citizenry as representatives of their will
- ∴ **Specific forms vary:**
Parliamentary vs presidential
Proportional vs first past the post

...



**Have a good
(& restful) break!**

