

An Agenda of Issues in Theoretical and Empirical work on the state

I. METATHEORETICAL ISSUES

1. Levels of abstraction.

- What levels of abstraction are treated as legitimate in the work you are reading?
- level of abstraction of the *concepts* in the theory and the level of abstraction of the *explanations* developed within the theory?

2. Types of explanation

- *Agentic explanations*
- *Structural explanations*
- *Counterfactuals*
- *Path dependent explanations*
- *Negative selectivity*
- *Functional explanations*

II. SUBSTANTIVE THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

1. The specific theoretical objects in the analysis of “the state”

- state policies/actions: what the state *does*
- the nature of state apparatuses
- the nature of state *actors* and their degree of autonomy of action
- “political power”
- political conflicts/struggles

2. What defines the boundaries of “the state”? What institutions/apparatuses are part of “the state”?

- police, military, courts, legislatures
- schools
- churches
- electoral political parties
- officially licensed trade unions
- the family

3. Variations

- How should we *conceptualize* the variations in the form of the state in capitalist societies?
- What are the salient dimensions of these variations?
- What defines the specificity of the “welfare state”, the “laissez faire” state, the “interventionist” state?
- How should we *explain* the variability in forms of the capitalist state?
- Are these to be explained primarily by the changing *functional requirements* of capital accumulation? By the *instrumental interests* of the capitalist class? By *class struggle*? By the interests of *state elites*? By dynamics located internal to the organizational structure of the state? Or what?

4. Class and State

- Do the apparatuses, institutions, and organizations that make up the state have a distinctive “class character”?
- How unitary is the class character of the state? How coherent and integrated are the apparatuses of the state thought to be with respect to this class character? To what extent can there be enduring contradictions and disjunctures within the state?
- What evidence would be needed to demonstrate the class character of the state?
- Is there a distinction between the class character of state *policies* and of the state as such?

5. The state and emancipatory social change