



Principles of Political Science

(PPA 1101)

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11

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The State

- Rival theories of the state
- The pluralist state
- The capitalist state
- The leviathan state
- The patriarchal state

Rival theories of the state

- what is the nature of state power, and what interests does the state represent? From this perspective, the state is an 'essentially contested' concept. There are a number of rival theories of the state, each of which offers a different account of its origins, development and impact on society. Indeed, controversy about the nature of state power has increasingly dominated modern political analysis and goes to the heart of ideological and theoretical disagreements in the discipline. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, 88)

The pluralist state

- The pluralist theory of the state has a very clear liberal lineage. It stems from the belief that the state acts as an 'umpire' or 'referee' in society. This view has also dominated mainstream political analysis, accounting for a tendency, at least within Anglo-American thought, to discount the state and state organizations and focus instead on 'government'. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, 88)

The capitalist state

- The Marxist notion of a capitalist state offers a clear alternative to the pluralist image of the state as a neutral arbiter or umpire. Marxists have typically argued that the state cannot be understood separately from the economic structure of society. This view has usually been understood in terms of the classic formulation that the state is nothing but an instrument of class oppression: the state emerges out of, and in a sense reflects, the class system. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, 89)

The leviathan state

- The image of the state as a 'leviathan' (in effect, a self-serving monster intent on expansion and aggrandizement) is one associated in modern politics with the New Right. Such a view is rooted in early or classical liberalism and, in particular, a commitment to a radical form of individualism. The New Right is distinguished by a strong antipathy towards state intervention in economic and social life, born out of the belief that the state is a parasitic growth that threatens both individual liberty and economic security. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, 92-93)

The patriarchal state

- Modern thinking about the patriarchal state must, finally, take account of the implications of feminist theory. However, this is not to say that there is a systematic feminist theory of the state. (Andrew Heywood, 2002, 93)