Cem Eroğul

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- b. İzmir (Turkey), 1944.
- graduation: Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, 1964.
- post-graduate studies: Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures (MA), Faculté de Droit et des Sciences économiques (Paris): sept. 1964-dec. 1965.
- academic career: Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, may 1966-jan. 2010: assistant associate full professor. Expelled by the military junta: between feb. 1983-march 1990.
- consistently Marxist since 1964.

PUBLICATIONS

In Turkish:

- the first political party monograph published in Turkey (1970) (Its subject was the Democrat Party which ruled the country between 1950-60)
- textbooks on constitutional theory, constitutional history, comparative government (UK, USA, France, Germany)
- diverse articles on constitutional matters, theoretical and practical

In English:

— books: An Essay on the Nature of the State, Ankara University publications, (1981).

Marxism and the Individual, Palgrave Macmillan, (2022).

- contributions: "The Establishment of Multiparty Rule: 1945-71" (1987), I. C. Schick and E. A. Tonak (eds.) *Turkey in Transition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 101-143).
- articles: "Minority Rights or Integration?" (1996), Perceptions (I/1:88-95)
- "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte: A Case Study of Marx's Method of Analysis", (13 May 2025) *Socialism and Democracy*, 1–38. DOI: 10.1080/08854300.2025.2488396

In French:

- contributions: "Les Influences en Turquie de la Conception française de la Laïcité" (1996), *Le 75. Anniversaire du Traité d'Ankara*, Publication de l'Université d'Ankara: 25-37.
- articles: "La Division de la Gauche a favorisé la Chute de la Démocratie" (1973), (Le Monde Diplomatique, mars: 3); pseudonyme: E. Cemil Seçkin "Régime politique et droits de l'Homme en Turquie", (1989-90), Turkish Yearbook of Human Rights (11-12: 3-23)
- "La Culture démocratique", (1994), Turkish Yearbook of Human Rights (16: 3-11)



An Essay on the Nature of the State

Cem Eroğul

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD9
ADDITIONAL PRELIMINARY NOTE
PREFACE THE REVENGE OF THE STATE
INTRODUCTION SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS
CHAPTER I THE THREE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE
CHAPTER II THE GENERAL INTEREST58
CHAPTER III THE DOMINANT CLASS INTEREST
CHAPTER IV THE STATE'S OWN INTEREST
CHAPTER V THE NATURE OF THE STATE
CHAPTER VI FORMS OF THE STATE
CONCLUSION THE FUTURE OF THE STATE
INDEX. 183

FOREWORD



I am at present (2005) working as a professor of constitutional law, at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Ankara (Turkey). I was born in 1944, so I am over sixty now. After graduating in 1964 from the faculty above mentioned, I went to Paris where I got the Diplôme d'Etudes supérieures, which was a prerequisite for the Doctorat d'Etat, the best Ph.D. degree offered by France in the discipline of political sciences in those years. It is during my stay in Paris till the very end of 1965, that I discovered Marxism. (Since then, this degree, as well as my faculty, the Faculté de Droit et des Sciences économiques, have been profoundly reshaped following the turmoil of May 1968.)

The discovery of Marxism has shaped my whole life since then. On my return to Turkey, I became a research assistant in the field of constitutional law. My Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1969, was the first political party monograph ever produced in Turkey and it was written from a historical materialist point of view. During the same period, I was active in the Turkish Workers' Party, which was the first legal Marxist party founded in Turkey.

The military coup of March 1971 dissolved the Turkish Workers' Party and put thus an end to my political activities. As a result, I shifted the bulk of my energy to a thorough research which aimed to build the concept of politics, the object of my academic studies, within a Marxist framework. This drew me to the analysis of the state. In 1976, I started a postgraduate course on the Marxist Theory of the State. This course lasted three years, till I went to England.

This book was written during a prolonged sabbatical leave in England, between 1979-81. It was printed in a haste (this explains its bad impression) after my return to Turkey, due to the mounting apprehension following news that the military junta which had seized power in September 1980 was now turning its attention to the universities. As a matter of fact, nearly all Marxists (including myself) and a good many democrats were expelled from the universities, following a vast purge initiated at the beginning of 1983.

I had to make a living. I returned to the university (again, the Faculty of Political Sciences in Ankara) in 1990 (following a judicial decision of great courage). But the reestablishment of a truly democratic atmosphere took a very long time. It is only in 2003 that I was able to introduce, once again, a postgraduate course on the Conceptual Framework of Marxism. This prompted me to look back at my forgotten book. On rereading it I thought that it could be of interest to others and that is why I am offering it to the attention of anyone concerned.

ADDITIONAL PRELIMINARY NOTE



Some forty years have elapsed since this book was written. Moreover, in its first ten years of existence the system of world states went through a tremendous upheaval. In the course of a process which lasted about two years (1989-1991), the socialist bloc fell into pieces. Some states were split. New states were established. This was such a thorough reshaping that it cannot be considered completely over even today (2021). In these conditions the reader is totally entitled to ask the reasons for reprinting this work without any modification.

The answer to this question should be obvious to those who have read the book. The aim of this essay was to shed light on the essence of the state. What was to be clarified was not the nature of the feudal, capitalist or socialist state, but the nature of any and every state, or the state in general. That approach was grounded in the view that the state is peculiar to class societies, and that it is endowed with fundamental common functions independent of the nature of the class dominating these societies. This being the case, as much as the disparition of the slave or feudal state didn't affect in the least the present analysis, the collapse of the capitalist or socialist state wouldn't have any impact on the argument of this book.

It is true that when the analysis in the book reached a relatively concrete level, socialist regimes as part of the actuality of the day were equally mentioned. Thus, in the sixth and final chapter of the book, the socialist states were presented as part of a world system, the other two parts being the advanced capitalist states, and the Third World countries. Again, in the conclusion, when some

forecasts were offered concerning the future of the state, the socialist group was briefly discussed in conjunction with the other two groups.

In sum, as this book is not a description but an abstract analysis, its theoretical frame is immune against political developments. The fact that conjectures related to socialist states have lost their object is irrelevent to the worth of the book. To make an analogy, the loss of a child in a traffic accident does not diminish the worth of the prediction made relatively to the future of this child.

In fact, it is my firm conviction that the disparition of the socialist bloc was not at all "fated". The Soviet Union collapsed for the same reason as the Roman Empire did, namely for having expanded out of any measure the third function of the state, i.e. the striving for the state's own interest. The fact that in Turkey as well the state is swiftly escaping any restraints means that we also could easily be confronted with the same outcome. Such occurences are not at all the inevitable result of some binding social development. Like road accidents they are mainly due to mistakes made by drivers.

Social sciences neither in the past nor in the present could or can predict narrowly what the future will be. This has nothing to do with the degree of their development. It is simply in their nature. These sciences can only signal tendencies. And when some of these tendencies are not fulfilled it is they again which offer us means of explanation. No more can be expected from these sciences.

It is my sincere hope that with its new reprint, the present book, will not only help to clarify the past, but will also provide enough clues to sort out the meaning of the collapse of the state system divided in three main groups, and the developments which followed. It goes without saying that if I hadn't faith in my analysis this book would have never been published from the outset.

If anything, my new readings, observations and reflections in the last forty years have buttressed my belief in the soundness of the basic approach of this work. Now more than ever I do not find

any compelling reason for any alteration in my text. On the contrary. The main argument stands as solid as ever. In 1981, when the book was first published a stateless world appeared inevitable in the long run but such an eventuality seemed rather remote in the visible future. Now, after four decades of neoliberal globalization we have reached a stage where the elimination of the sate has become a matter of survival for humanity. As a result of this kind of globalization one of the fundamental three functions of the state has disappeared. What remains is a "state" which confines itself to a shameless subjection to the interests of the (global and national) dominant classes, and to the seeking of its own interest through an ever more oppressive state apparatus. In a word, the state has lost its very nature.

This confirms once more the inadequacy of the state conception of vulgar Marxism reducing it to an aparatus in the service of the dominant class. The simple truth is that the state cannot fulfil its main function of serving the dominant class (or classes) without looking also after the interests of society as a whole.

The state has been instrumental in the establishment of class society. This kind of society cannot come to life, survive and prosper without a state. The price to be paid by the dominant class is to put up with some degree of care to the needs of the subaltern classes, and to endure a certain amount of egoism on the part of the state personnel. Such a theoretical approach allows us to clarify the present sitution as well as offering accurate explanations to many developments of the past. For the present I have already pointed out that the excessive exploitation of the world masses during the last wave of globalization has now sealed the fate of capitalism. Concerning the past I have stressed that the best explanation of the collapse of the Western Roman empire is to show that this society was crushed by the boundless swelling of its state. The same goes for the Soviet Union, strangled by the hypertrophy of its state apparatus and the rapacity of its state personnel. Incidentally such an explanation makes superfluous the use of far-fetched notions like

"state capitalism without private capitalists". Another example is the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe. While the enormous strength of the feudal Ottoman Empire did not allow private accumulation at the same epoch, the relative weekness of Western European feudalism opened the gates to the development of a capitalist class. Similarly, the clinging of Eastern Europe to a relentless serfdom hindered a capitalist development at the eastern part of the continent. In brief, once the strategic role of the state in class societies is explicated owing to a realistic multifunctional state theory, a theory which in my opinion is the true Marxist theory of the state, one obtains an accurate and most useful theoretical instrument enabling us to fully explain the foremost political developments of class societies of the present as well as of the past.

Finally such an approach allows us to configure a socialism of the future which will certainly not be a dictatorship of the proletariat since the primary condition of its advent will be the rescue of politics from the dirty hands of the state and its restitution to the masses. With the dawning of classless society the state has reached the end of its historic role

October, 2021

Preface

THE REVENGE OF THE STATE



No major political current appears to be very fond of the state. In the eyes of the Anarchists, the state is the main source of evil. The most important task of humanity is to get rid of it at once. In the Marxist conception it is no less an evil. Although it cannot be disposed of at a stroke, everything must be done to ensure its gradual withering away. The ultimate reign of liberty is incompatible with statehood. Social-Democracy is a little ambiguous. It values the state as a tool to be used for its aim of achieving more and more equality. It is, nevertheless, well aware of the dangers of an unbridled state power. Hence its insistence on decentralization and extended self-government. Even if its infinite gradualism somehow dilutes its ultimate socialist goal, Social-Democracy is still a part of this widespread left-wing thinking which upholds a basic incompatibility between state and liberty.

Interestingly enough, the right wing of the political spectrum is no less suspicious of the state. The Liberals' contempt for the state is truly endemic. They undoubtedly feel a deep-seated revulsion against it. Neither can the Conservatives be considered as particularly fond of the state. Despite admitting its necessity for the preservation of social order, they are very wary of any extension of state power. Actually, Fascism is the only political current of any importance which values the state as such, and it is no coincidence that Fascism itself is so odious, not only in the eyes of the left, but

equally for the most part of the right. Apparently then, whatever their other differences, all major political creeds, with the exception of Fascism, share a common dislike for the state.

Nevertheless, in actual life, the state does not appear as being in the least upset by the theoretical misgivings of this Holy Alliance. In fact, it is faring quite well. In spite of what has been said and predicted on all sides, the striking reality is that the state has never before thrived as it has in the contemporary world. Never in the course of history has the state been able to achieve such a total conquest of the world, never has it multiplied to such an extent, never has it secured so much power, never has it reached such a degree of interference in all aspects of human life. No Anarchism has yet been able to suppress any state. Notwithstanding the various political creeds of those holding power, the state has conquered the whole world, and grown stronger everywhere. Thus, the state has already achieved its practical revenge. But it still awaits its theoretical one. The aim of this essay is to contribute to the achievement of this long expected theoretical revenge.

During the last decade, a new awareness of the theoretical problems related to the state has been witnessed. This new theoretical concern is not fortuitous. It has been brought about by a very practical situation. Social life has started to stumble, everywhere, on the state. It has become obvious that the latter is the focal point of the deep-rooted social crisis which emerges, all over the world. As this crisis is more conspicuous in the West, it is not surprising that the need for a theoretical handling of the state is most felt in this part of the world. But this must not, mislead us. The problem is not at all a parochial Western one; it is, in fact, universal.

Historically, such an awareness of the problem of the state; has manifested itself every time radical changes in state forms were on the agenda. At least, this has been the case since humanity has been able to develop systematic theoretical thinking, i.e. since the Ancients. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle were the product of an

acute crisis stemming from the basic inadequacy of the city-state to match the needs of a rapidly expanding world. The problem was eventually solved by the establishment of empires, first by the Macedonians and later by the Romans. The challenge faced by Machiavelli, Bodin and Hobbes was brought about by the basic inadequacy of feudal institutions to meet the needs of rising capitalism. Historically the problem was solved by the establishment of the nation-state. Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau were confronted with an even more formidable task: the tremendous expansion of capitalism necessitated new economic freedoms which compelled the curbing of state power. The challenge was met by the establishment of the liberal state. Since then, the emergence of monopoly capitalism and the rise of the proletariat have provided the main stimuli for the political developments witnessed in the twentieth century. These challenges have been met by the establishment of imperialist, fascist, or social- democratic states, on the one hand, and socialist, or anti-imperialist ones, on the other.

As we approach the close of this century, a totally new problem is emerging with regard to the state. Until now, the question has always been to find, at every stage, an adequate form of state compatible with the new needs of its emerging social environment. At present it looks as if the challenge were much more radical. No conceivable form of state seems likely to respond to the needs of the new world which is taking shape before our eyes. Yet, paradoxically, what we are witnessing is a continuous expansion of all forms of state. The whole world looks as if it was getting sick of the state, while on the other, it does everything possible to further widen the role of the state. It is precisely this contradiction which compels us to make a new effort in order to re-consider the problem of the state. This is not an effort however, which aims at conjuring more suitable forms of state, but an attempt to go to the roots of the state phenomenon. Precisely because the state has now reached all aspects of our life, it is essential that we must focus upon its very nature rather than its various forms.

This new awareness was mainly triggered off by the May 1968 uprising in France. Towards the end of the 1960s, it looked as if the theoretical problem of the state had been totally removed from the agenda of political scientists, both in the East and the West. On one side, Marxian social thinking was still numbed by the terrible blows delivered in the Stalinist period. On the other side, the Parsonsian brand of a neo-Weberianism was ascendant in Western political thinking, discarding the problem of the state as an oldfashioned institutional concern. Even radical thought, as exemplified by H. Marcuse, was explaining at length why a revolution, i.e. a social upheaval whose main target is the state, was unthinkable in the West. In brief, the state as a theoretical problem, was ousted from the field of scientific theory. It is in such a calm sea that the storm of May 1968 suddenly exploded.

Once again, social reality had outrun theoretical thinking. The questions that theoreticians should have dealt with before were bluntly put forth in the heat of political action: What would any successful revolution in the West do with the state? Was it going to 'smash' the whole of it (including, for instance, social welfare services), or only some parts of it? And then, which parts? What was to replace the 'smashed' apparatuses? What was to be done to secure from the outset the future 'withering away' of the state? Theoretical thinking, well embarrassed by its shameful delay, had no other choice than taking up the gauntlet. It did so with an unprecedented energy, and soon produced a cascade of brilliant works, due to the efforts of N. Poulantzas, R. Miliband, H. Lefebvre, C. Offe, P. Block, the West German 'derivationists', J. O'Connor, P. Birnbaum, to cite only a few.

The originality of this new theoretical endeavour is its insistence on reaching the core of the problem, viz. to answer the main question: What is the state? Until this time, many valuable contributions had been made around various problems concerning the state. In this context, one should particularly refer to the works of scholars such as D. Easton, G. Almond, D. Apter, etc. in the field of 'comparative government'. Questions like the listing of the technical functions of the state, the detailed exposition of their handling by different state agencies, the similarities and discrepancies witnessed between various structures, the classification of state forms according to their structural-functional peculiarities, etc. were handled with a great deal of insight. On the other hand, many interesting studies were due to the efforts of constitutionalists, contributing the clarity of the legalistic approach, and also of ethnologists and historians, unveiling the functions, structures, and forms of ancient states. None of these studies, however, notwithstanding the undeniable value of their contribution, were able to come to grips with the main 'ontological' question concerning the nature of the state. The main interest of the recent Marxian approach induced by the French upheaval is precisely its focus on this fundamental question.1

The problem is, however, extremely arduous. No wonder that in spite of the outstanding quality of the majority of recent studies, a satisfactory solution has not yet been achieved. Indeed, the complexity of the matter allows for a variety of approaches. Besides Marxism, approaches like system analysis, structuralism, functionalism, historicism, etc., and techniques like model-building, comparisons, quantitative 'methods', etc. may be considered. Let us note from the outset that opting for a Marxian approach is not an easy way out.

The first difficulty facing Marxists is the very lack of a political theory in the works of the founding fathers. Marx never produced a theory of the state, even though he was well aware of both its necessity, and its acute difficulty. In a letter to Kugelmann, dated 28th

¹ This was a novelty not only from the point of view of state studies in general, but also from that of Marxian political thinking. cf. David A. Gold, Clarence Y.H. Lo, and Erik Olin Wright, "Recent Developments in Marxist Theories of the Capitalist State", Monthly Review, V. 27, n. 5 (October 1975), p. 30: "While Marxists have always had much to say about the state, it has only been fairly recently that the creation of a theory of the state has been considered an explicit task."

December 1862, he says that with the publication of the first two instalments of the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, his main task of laying down the "quintessence" of the principles of political economy was now accomplished. With what has already been achieved, others would be able to carry out the necessary developments. But there may be an exception, adds Marx, an exception where his own contribution might prove indispensable. This, he writes, is the problem of "the relations of different state forms to different economic structures of society."2 Nevertheless, the sad truth is that when Marx died twenty-one years later, he had not yet undertaken this particular task. Such a start was made by Engels, with his Origin of the Family, the Private Property and the State, but despite many illuminating insights, this was just a start. In fact, the 'Marxist theory of the state' remained inchoate even after Lenin's State and Revolution, and many valuable contributions by Gramsci.3

The second main difficulty confronting Marxists is the obvious discrepancies between the tenets of the doctrine and historical reality itself. Even at its beginnings, Marxism was adamant in its prediction of a gradual withering away of the state following immediately the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, and in spite of the trenchant assertions of its founder, the first state to claim officially to be Marxist has ended up as the most almighty organization that history has ever witnessed. Without a single exception, all socialist states established later have followed the same trend.

The third difficulty facing a Marxist approach is the existence of sharp differences among the various advocates of this doctrine. Even if it is true that all Marxists agree on some fundamentals, there still remain cleavages of such an importance that the label

² Karl Marx, Letters to Dr. Kugelmann, London, Martin Lawrence, 1934, p. 23.

³ For a brief and accurate outline of the general situation of the Marxist classics with regard to the problem of politics and state, cf. Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 1-3.

of 'Marxist' is quite insufficient to define precisely any particular endeavour in the field of social science. Every author must explain, in addition, where his/her own particular approach to the problem under study stands within the broad area of Marxism. This is not an easy task, which is why, not only the introduction, but also the bulk of the first chapter as well, will be devoted to it. Different aspects of this same problem, moreover, will be encountered in many places throughout this essay.

Despite the basically positive contribution of recent Marxian studies on the state, it must also be acknowledged that the subject has started to suffer from a certain amount of logomachy. This is mainly due to two reasons. The first one stems from the very richness of Marxism itself. After over a century of studies, the doctrine has now reached such a wealth of interpretations that its followers are often driven to minute explanations of their attitudes on all major controversies which appeared in the doctrine itself. As has been pointed out above, a certain amount of clarification is indispensable. When this is taken too far, however, the specific problem under study risks getting drowned in a sea of epistemological and methodological disputes. The second reason explaining the current loquacity arises from the problem itself. The very ubiquity of the state has brought to the fore a multitude of aspects all authorizing a theoretical interest. The temptation to say something about everything may then result in losing sight of the core of the problem.

In the present essay I have tried to avoid these pitfalls. My constant preoccupation has been to be as concise and as clear as possible. I have not indulged in lengthy considerations on the 'crisis' of Marxism, on the social meaning of this crisis, on the best way of 'reading' the classics, on the relative value of their different texts, etc. Neither have I undertaken an assessment of all political writings of classical and modern Marxism. I have also refrained from extended quotations from Marxist classics accompanied by meticulous exegeses. This not being an essay on Marxism but an essay on

the state, I have limited myself to a short exposition of the Marxist conception only in so far as it was necessary for the problem under study.

On the other hand, concerning the object of analysis, I have deliberately confined myself to the essentials, consciously taking the risk of being misjudged. Rather than dispersing my attention upon all the aspects of the question, I have tried to concentrate exclusively on what appears to me as being the crux of the matter: namely, the clarification of the basic nature of the state.⁴ It is my belief that only when this 'qualitative analysis' is carried through, here or elsewhere, that a manifold historical, empirical, and eventually quantitative research will be able to find a solid ground to stand upon.

As noted above, the introduction and the first chapter are devoted to a preliminary discussion of the fundamentals of the approach used here. Each of the following three chapters deals with one of the three basic state functions. The fifth chapter attempts to form a synthesis of these constitutive functions. The last chapter discusses the problem of the forms of the state. Finally, the conclusion contemplates the future of the state, in the light of this essay's understanding of its nature.

⁴ Throughout this essay the 'state' is used in its sense of apparatus and not community.

Introduction

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS



Everyone agrees that social activity is the sum total of all individual actions, and nothing else. Both behaviourism and Marxism hold the same opinion on this crucial matter. It is crucial in the sense that from the outset it rejects all idealistic (or metaphysical) approaches concerning social life. There is no General Will, no unfolding of Idea, no realization of Reason or Justice. There are just individuals relating to one another. There is no society beyond this point as there is no human being beneath it.

The motor of social life, its moving force, *social energy*, is nothing else but individual energy. True, it is a combination of individual energies, but in its core it is still individual energy. And energy, be it natural or social, is always physical. It is only the combined physical energy of millions of individuals (the 'masses') which account for social movement. There is no social energy outside of the muscles, the nerves, the brains of human beings and the 'tools' (in its largest sense) they use to help them in their actions.

Individuals, however, do not act randomly. On this point also, behaviourism and Marxism agree. In the course of social life and in the midst of their everlasting struggle against nature, individuals acquire more or less definite patterns of behaviour. Western social theory has agreed to call these 'roles', and it cannot do any harm to Marxism to adopt the same terminology. Roles are patterns of behaviour which mould individual action, and which bestow on them a social meaning. That is why roles are always interrelated. And that is also why individual actions interest social theory only