Discussion Question and Reading Reflection

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***Discussion Questions***

1. Why Marxist theories considered the term relative autonomy for the state despite the fact that Marxism system supports social welfare state concept?
2. Modern capitalists are infrastructural strong and despotically weak. Is this means that they do not exercise autonomous control as a state due to dependence on other factors?
3. Why is the state considered autonomous in terms of power when the only entities that have power are the state elites?
4. Is the autonomy of the state related to powerful governance?

***Background for questions***

The main reason for suggesting such questions to the reading is that the state is regarded as autonomous in the entire text but powers it possesses makes the reader doubt in the state's potential. Giving the example of the democratic state at one point in the text, it is made clear that even the democratic countries have outside influence from other entities. So, if this is the case then the autonomous power of the state is limited and restricted in some areas. Politicians decide the power that the state will reflect and they cannot do this without the support of civil society.

***Reflection on Reading***

This article is related to the autonomous power the state holds and the origins, mechanisms, and results that the state has with respect to the major power groupings of the civil society[[1]](#footnote-1). In the definition of the state, two main aspects were focused which are, centrality and territoriality in relation to the two essential types of powers that the state has i.e. infrastructural power and despotic power. The paper argued that these two powers of the state help in becoming the state autonomous through its ability to a territorially centralized form of an organization. There are many theories on the origins and powers of a state which cannot be considered as false. But at the same time, it can also be not denied that these theories are reductionist in nature and have reduced the autonomy of the state. In these theories, the state is viewed as a mere pre-existing structure that is there in the civil societies for ages. State theories like Marxism, liberalism, and functionalism etc. have treated the state to be a place where social differences occur, interest groups conflict arises, individuals are represented and institutionalized. Although there are many points of contradictions in these theories the one similarity they have is that all of them underestimates the autonomous power of a state. Using terms likes relative autonomy is one of the examples of their doubts about the supreme authority a state possesses. The factors that lead to this underestimation of the power of the state includes unpleasant politics. First sense in which the state gets associated with is the *despotic power*. This power is possessed by the elites of the states, the actions which are accessible to the elites without undertaking predictable, institutionalized cooperation with the interest groups of civil society. Despotic powers are unlimited in the states that have left a significant mark in the world's history. In capitalist societies, people often associate the *infrastructural power* to the state because they believe that the state has the power to penetrate civil society. In both cases, no matter how strong democracy is, politicians are often directed by outside civil groups. This is why states in the modern world are regarded as weak in one sense but strong in others. They are weak when it comes to despotic power as the civil society is strong there and never allows the elites to excess more power. But they are strong in the infrastructural sense as the government penetrates the civil society strictly. It can also be interpreted that there is a battle of power between the state elites and the civic groups in which one often wins while others have to obey the command.

End Notes

1. Mann, Michael. "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results." *European Journal of Sociology/Archives européennes de sociologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185-213.

1. Mann, Michael. "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results." European Journal of Sociology/Archives européennes de sociologie 25, no. 2 (1984): 185-213. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)