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POULANTZAS's PARADIGM: RECONCEPTUALIZING POWER AND CLASS IN THE CAPITALIST STATE

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Poulantzas, Capitalist State, Alternative Framework, State Power, Class Struggle	This study argues that Nicos Poulantzas presents nuanced understanding of the state and its mechanisms in capitalist societies. Unlike conventional Marxist perspectives that view the state merely as a tool of oppression for the ruling class, Poulantzas's approach recognizes the potential for popular participation in socialist transformation. His standpoint emphasizes the state as a site of class struggle and highlights its role in establishing, maintaining, and perpetuating the relations of production. It stresses the significance of developing new political subjectivities to challenge the existing structures of power and domination. Poulantzas acknowledges complexities inherent in the state within capitalist societies and rejects deterministic interpretations of its function. He focuses on the various forms of exploitation experienced by subordinate classes across economic, political, and ideological domains. His ideas offer valuable insights into influence of state on socio-economic structures, contributing to debates about the role and purpose of the state. Study offered significant information in reaching conclusion and extracting recommendations.
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INTRODUCTION

Nicos Poulantzas provides distinctive analysis of state's role in capitalist societies, considering it as a sphere for class struggle (Konings, 2010: 178; Cicerchia, 2021: 622). Central to his theory is the understanding that the state plays the crucial role in creating and sustaining the relations of production. This perspective characterizes the state as complex product of the myriad social relations (McQuade, 2020: 61). In a society divided by incessant class struggles, the capitalist state is one of cohesion that maintains equilibrium among various social classes and their sub-groups (Soener, 2022: 195). Poulantzas explores the ways in which the state is shaped by class struggles and, in turn, exerts the influence over these struggles. His concept of the power bloc emphasizes the dominance of certain classes within state apparatus (Garcia & Bugiato, 2021: 133). Poulantzas challenges the notion that the state acts as an instrument for the ruling class.

Instead, he argues that while the state serves the interests of ruling class, but it also maintains a level of relative autonomy (Baasch, 2022: 247). This relative autonomy provides the state with the capacity to mediate conflicts between dominant and subordinate classes, as well as between different factions within the capitalist class (Reiman, 2012: 175). It further illustrates the state's ability to influence and regulate the operations of the capitalist economy (Soener, 2022: 217). Essentially, the state has vested interest in protecting long-term interests of the capitalist class which may involve making concessions to subordinate classes in the short term (Carroll, 2009: 557).

Poulantzas's analysis of state power and class conflicts within context of capitalist production is comprehensive and sheds light on intricate relationship between the state and class struggles. His insights offer practical understanding of state's role in contemporary capitalist societies. Poulantzas's work is particularly valuable in examining power structures and the exploitation inherent within them. His analysis brings attention to persistent class-based inequalities, labor exploitation, and challenges faced by marginalized groups in society. In today's world, where power imbalances and social divisions remain, his work promotes an in-depth exploration of how class conflicts shape politics, policymaking, social changes. By emphasizing significance of class dynamics, Poulantzas propels a thorough assessment of the underlying systems that perpetuate economic and social disparities. This study argues that the Poulantzas theory offers unique approach for analyzing capitalist politics in contrast to other Marxist theories. It also argues that to effectively incorporate class analysis into the state theory, engagement with the Poulantzas's writings is essential, as they stimulate further discourse upon the dynamics of the modern capitalism. By employing the Poulantzas's analytical framework, we can gain a better insight into complex issues of capitalist politics that are responsible for multiple crises in our present society. It enables us to traverse through difficult terrain of the capitalist politics and explore potential routes to purposeful improvements, all while advocating for social justice and equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Poulantzas' work underscores the issue of how the state power is utilized to maintain and perpetuate dominant class relations in capitalist societies. His assessment of modern capitalist economies examines the basics of state from a more extensive, dynamic standpoint, taking into consideration different state institutions and their connection with varied social classes (Jamil & Koonan, 2022: 206). He emphasizes importance of balancing the democratic principles with socialist ideals, that remains relevant in the contemporary discussions on the creating more egalitarian society while preserving democratic rights. The unique composition of state implies that it has its own set of logic and dynamics as a particular social entity. Nevertheless, this does not imply that state is uniform; rather, it is complicated, varied amalgamation of institutions, each with their own distinct power structures and hierarchies (Poulantzas, 1975: 82). As such the state plays an important role in class struggle, having its goals entwined with the capitalist class. Nonetheless, it is affected by many internal and external factors like social movements, global power dynamics, and wider historical trends. Thus, an evaluation of the role of state in capitalist countries must involve inspection of these overarching social & political components combined with knowledge concerning dynamics and inner workings of the state (Bruff, 2012: 117).

The reproduction of capital is not restricted to productive, commodity and money capital cycles but also encompasses maintenance of class relations (Oguz, 2021: 111). The nation-states are

responsible for reproducing the conditions necessary for the international capital to thrive, even with globalization playing a role. This implies that the nation-state continues to be crucial in maintaining the class domination (Demirovic, 2011: 39). The state's economic activities are the indicative of its involvement in the class domination and exploitation, connected to both its ideological and repressive functions amid the dynamics of class struggle. The state as such has no power, that is, it does not represent the unified general will. Nonetheless, the state, as an assemblage of social relations, is essential for the continuation of capitalist social relations and its relative autonomy allows it to shape social and political outcomes (Jessop, 1985: 68). Yet, the state's relative autonomy is constantly challenged and inadequate by the class struggles, comprising not only the capitalist class and the working class, but also factions within these dominant class that strive for control over public policies and decisions. Therefore, Poulantzas puts emphasis upon recognizing the divisions within the ruling class that can give rise towards competing interests expressed through state apparatuses (Abercrombie, Turner & Urry, 1976: 516-8).

The Poulantzas identifies various traits of the state that illustrate its class-oriented character, including its complex bureaucratic structure, hierarchical system, and the use of legitimate violence. He maintains that the relationship between the state and capital accumulation is not solely derived from capitalists' demands, but rather formed through a complex interplay of the economic, political, and ideological components, which represent various power relations and interests in the societies (Jakobsen & Nielsen, 2023: 110-11). Furthermore, he notes that this relationship can be restructured depending upon the modifications in class dynamics or wider socioeconomic conditions (Jessop, 1991: 102-3). The Poulantzas perceives the state as a set of institutions that are conditioned by class interests, resulting in inner contradictions. Its ability is dependent on its capacity to legitimate the existing relations of production (Bridges, 1974: 176). Poulantzas argues that the concept of state as either tool of the capitalist class (the thing) or a separate entity existing above society is misleading (Holgersen, 2015: 10). He refutes the notion that the capitalist class is a single, unified entity that the functions as a cohesive whole (Tsolakakis, 2010: 388) and contends that the state both serves as a site of class conflict and an influential participant in relations of production (Demirovic, 2011:50). It serves to organize the interests of the dominant class and its fractions, combing them into a power bloc (Taylor, 2017: 28).

Hence, the state cannot be seen as existing outside the relations of the production as it is deeply embedded within and essential to reproduction of the relations of the production (Caplan, 1977: 87). Poulantzas places significant emphasis on understanding the specific mechanisms through which state forms and upholds hegemony and class domination. He argues that political and ideological relationship can only prevail when they are made concrete within state apparatuses. These apparatuses provides the ruling class with powerful methods to impose their will over society, as well as shape beliefs of subordinate classes to make them more compliant and less likely to resist the dominant ideology (Poulantzas, 1969: 76-77). The state apparatus actively formulates and disseminates ideology, which is then used to legitimize the social arrangements based on capitalism. This demonstrates that the state cultivates and promotes ideas, views and principles that maintain the overarching class relations. In this way, the ideology becomes the significant means for winning over the subordinated classes and preserving established order of the capitalist system (Bridges, 1974: 161). In his assessment of the state, Poulantzas focuses on how it regulates economic activity, mediates class conflicts, and reinforces social structure.

Thus, the state endeavors to unify the dominant class and its fractions into a power bloc, while this simultaneously disorganizing as well as troublesome subaltern classes (Poulantzas, 1975: 125-6).

Different factors can cause changes in how state institutions are organized, how they operate, how they interact with one another. These factors range from legal systems and bureaucratic procedures to processes of individualization and homogenization, the stage of the reproduction and the specific type of state and regime (Poulantzas, 1973: 47). For Poulantzas, an economic crisis is not truly a crisis until it reaches a tipping point of the crisis of hegemony (Spencer & Vardy, 17: 2019). Poulantzas posits that state reflects the equilibrium of class boundaries and distinctions, beyond a simple alignment with the ruling class's interests (Jessop, 1985: 37). He focuses on power structures and part class struggles play in constructing the state's structural elements. His view is to identify areas wherein resistance is possible and work out approaches to alter existing power divisions (Gallas, 2017: 258). He contests view that the state is coercive under the control of bourgeois, declaring that it simplifies its complexity (Carnoy, 1984: 124). This necessitates a inclusive approach to politics, as opposed to a static and uniform framework of vanguard party (Sessions, 2019: 87). Poulantzas posits that capitalist state has particular institutional characteristics, which are shaped by production relations and the social division of labor. This encompasses division between intellectual and manual labor, which enables the state to shape policies that have an effect on the various facets of the society (Poulantzas, 1980: 49-50).

The state engages in individualizing the individuals by deploying the disciplinary measures that manage and regulate their behavior, ultimately leading towards continuous conflict over the predominant ideologies and standards within the society, as different factions and interests try to gain influence and power (Ibid: 63-4). Moreover, state inherently has a conflicting nature, taking into account both legal and illegal aspects. Even though it works within the boundaries of set laws and ordinances, there can be occasions where state actions may wander from or even contravene these legal structures. Thus, this duality reflects the friction and discrepancies inherent in utilizing state power (Ibid: 75-6). For Poulantzas, the state is the social relation inextricably intertwined within sustaining the capitalist relationships (Easton, 1981: 304). This perspective considers the state as distinctive dynamic entity with relative autonomy, capable of intervening in the economy and shaping social relations of the production. It recognizes the potential for the power struggles and discord between different classes and their factions inside the state (Khachaturian, 2021: 174). The state's actions are mainly determined by internal class conflicts; however, the state has a certain level of the autonomy that allows it to operate as a mediator between different factions within the capitalist class while simultaneously controlling working-class frustration in the manner compatible with capital accumulation (Levine, 2002: 172).

Poulantzas proposes a novel political strategy to challenge the power of the state which entails both transforming the state apparatus from within and mobilizing grassroots movements from outside (Poulantzas, 1980: 256). The institutional materiality of the state allows for political class domination to transpire. This implies that the state serves a proactive role in structuring the power bloc's hegemonic unity and managing bases of consent (Berringer & Ferreira, 2022: 13-4). He rejects the idea that reduces the state to its ideological or repressive apparatuses, as this disregards the state's material function (Thomas, 2002: 79). Despite its own materiality, capitalist state does not have absolute autonomy; thus, its institutional field shows a tendency

towards capital and is selective in terms of its choices (Konings, 2021: 61). Poulantzas views the state as a unique entity that has a pronounced effect on the social and political structures. He believes the state's abilities are unavoidably tied to power dynamics in society, thus they cannot be examined in seclusion from overall balance of forces (Jessop, 1991: 94). It gives us a more extensive understanding of state and its functions by emphasizing significance of considering unique characteristics of each social creation rather than solely relying on abstract, simplified, or non-historic analyses of state power. It stresses evaluating unique social framework of the state, taking into consideration factors like class dynamics, as well as political and ideological factors.

Poulantzas asserts that various types of states, liberal-democratic, bourgeois-democratic, and fascist states, all have the primary objective of preserving the power of the ruling class (Caplan, 1977: 88). He acknowledges the existence of tensions and contradictions within the state and recognizes potential for social movements to bring about revolutionary change. During times of political crisis, exceptional forms of the state, such as fascism, Bonapartism, and dictatorship, emerge, characterized by distinct relationships between the state, ruling class, and working class (Rabinbach, 1976: 157-8). Fascism especially appears when the bourgeois class confronts a crisis where conventional techniques are unable to retain their control. In fascism there is an augmented form of the capitalist state power, employing police and military forces to restrain resistance and maintain control (Poulantzas, 1978: 65-6). The Poulantzas dismisses materialist reductionism, asserting that the development of classes is not simply based on the economic factors but instead emerges from the combined effects of multiple levels. Economic structure certainly impacts social classes, however, the Poulantzas argues that class struggle within the context of relations of the production is equally influential. He posits that the state acts as a cohesive force amongst different levels in the social formation during class struggle (Ibid, 1975: 68). Thus, the relations of production have the definitive role in creating social classes within capitalism, but according to Poulantzas, these are affected by class struggles at the political level (Ibid: 69).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for analyzing Poulantzas's understanding of capitalist state involves comprehensive and structured approach. Firstly, I conduct literature review to gather primary texts authored by Poulantzas and secondary sources that provide critiques, interpretations, and applications of his theories. Thus, following literature, well-defined conceptual framework is constructed. This framework encompasses crucial elements such as the state's role as a site for class struggle, its function in upholding relations of the production within the capitalist system, and potential it holds for popular participation and transformation. As part of data collection process, research involves extracting Poulantzas perspectives & viewpoints from his published works. In parallel, secondary sources are utilized to offer valuable context and interpretations. Notably, Poulantzas's seminal work, "State, Power, Socialism," serves as a foundational source that has significantly influenced discourse on state role in capitalist societies. To systematically analyze gathered data, qualitative content analysis is employed. This method eases structured examination that concentrates on identifying the pivotal concepts and arguments put forth by Poulantzas.

Through this analytical approach, the research endeavors to uncover the core elements of his theory. Thus, the overall methodology is designed with the aim of conducting a comprehensive exploration of Poulantzas's contributions to the political theory. It seeks to enrich the ongoing

discourse surrounding state's role in capitalist societies. The primary objective is to illuminate the distinctions that exist between Poulantzas's theory and conventional Marxist perspectives on the state. This involves not only emphasizing their differences but also identifying areas of convergence, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of Poulantzas intellectual legacy. The research culminates in a comprehensive interpretation of its findings. This interpretation is dedicated to addressing inherent complexities of capitalist state and underscores Poulantzas's firm rejection of the deterministic interpretations. It underscores the importance of recognizing the potential for popular agency and transformative possibilities within the framework he has developed.

Poulantzas's Theoretical Paradigm

Poulantzas's theoretical approach has its roots in Marxist theory, drawing upon the thoughts of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Gramsci “to provide systematic political theory by elucidating implicit ideas and axioms in their practical writings” (Poulantzas, 1975: 42). However, it breaks away from conventional understandings of Marxism as seen in Poulantzas's critiques of economism and instrumentalism, as well as his dismissal of trade unionism and historicism. He challenges Ralph Miliband's instrumentalist position and raises doubts about methodological approach of Louis Althusser. One key aspect of Poulantzas's framework is his recognition of the state as a crucial arena for the manifestation of class struggle. This perspective provides a foundation for examining how power is exercised and perpetuated in capitalist societies. Poulantzas's analysis exposes the collusion between the state power and capitalist interests, shedding light upon the intricate relationship between the two. His research stimulates a re-evaluation of social classes and the nature of the state within the Marxist frameworks, rejuvenating discussions in these areas. His concept of the state as a condensation of social forces is an innovative way to analyze how capitalist state works, in addition to how it relates to social divisions. In terms of tactical political maneuvers, his ideas are essential for understanding how to both confront and change society.

He plays a crucial role in motivating Marxist and Marxist-influenced scholars to reconsider the state's role and purposes (Codato & Perissinott, 2002: 69). Poulantzas' ideas are consequential for strategic politics since they describe how to confront the state and bring about transitions in society. He deviates from traditional perspective of abolishing or surpassing the state, instead suggests an alternate viewpoint that stresses continual democratization (Khachaturian, 2021: 188). His theory serves a dual purpose, combining analytical and political insights in order to understand the relationship between capitalism and state, changing nature of neoliberal state in twenty-first century (Ducange & Keucheyan, 2019: xi). He opposes understanding the state as an entity external to society, recognizing it is necessary to surpass the idea of it being a mere tool of capitalist class (Demirović, 2019: 45). To do so, Poulantzas takes a unique approach to the capitalist state in regards to its relative autonomy (Linera, 2019: 15). It also allows the state to hinder subordinate classes from becoming a revolutionary force. Since the state possesses relative autonomy so it can show some flexibility, which is manifested in material concessions given to the working class. Demands of the subordinate classes can only be fulfilled if they align with long-term interests of dominant class and do not challenge the state's power (Poulantzas: 190-91).

Poulantzas formulates his theory of state within a structural framework of social and political relations. This model asserts that social activity cannot be exclusively attributed to productive agents alone since these actors are subject to complex set of structures (economic, ideological

structure, and political structure). These structures constitute backdrop in which individuals within a social formation carry out their activities. Class divisions can be found may be revealed in any or all of these domains – economic, political, or ideological (Ibid: 62-63). Poulantzas' structural approach not only situates the state within the social formation but also establishes its hierarchical position relative to other regional structures. The state's role and function are determined by its position within this interplay of edifices. Poulantzas revitalizes class analysis, and explores the interplay between state power and social classes. He recognizes significance of constructing a comprehensive Marxist theoretical framework to comprehend function of the state in advanced capitalist settings. He is meticulous in articulating clear concepts and making meaningful distinctions (Caplan, 1977: 83). Out of few Marxist thinkers who appeared after World War II offering solutions to important questions in Marxist politics, Poulantzas stands out as one (Jessop, 1991: 78). Poulantzas's theory of state is useful in understanding how power dynamics function in society, what role state plays in sustaining them. It focus actual materiality of the capitalist states, formulated by specific historical and social conditions that perpetuate capitalism.

Poulantzas's Critique of Instrumentalism & Structuralism

Poulantzas departs from the traditional Marxist interpretations which regard the state either a tool used by the dominant class or as a superstructure determined by economic base. Instead, he views the state as an arena where conflicts and struggles between various social forces take place (Milios, 2000: 285-7). For Poulantzas, state has distinct structure, rationale & operative methods that cannot be reduced to a simplistic analysis of the instrumentalism. He disputes the view of Ralph Miliband, who suggests that state primarily functions as an instrument wielded by the ruling class to advance their interests and exercise control over society (Miliband, 1969: 23). In Miliband, the state necessary holds a preference for interests of the ruling class, making it hard for working class to pursue their own objectives (Barrow, 2002: 3-5). This standpoint regarding the state's role is based on the idea that the ruling class members holds influential positions within state apparatuses and use them to further their own objectives (Connell, 1979: 342-3). His methodology is distinctive and carries substantial influence, leaving a permanent mark on the study of the state theory. In this linking, the enduring relevance of his theoretical framework and its capacity to analyze contemporary political and social structures attest to its timeless nature. Poulantzas rejects the conception of the state as a passive tool in the hands of the ruling class, instead recognizing its relative autonomy and complex structure (Gulalp, 1987: 288-9).

He posits the concept of relative autonomy for the capitalist state to clarify that it is structured to serve and protect long-term objectives of the bourgeoisie (Meckstroth, 2000: 57). He argues that instrumentalism misrepresents the principles of Marxism (Barrow, 2007: 400), as this idea emphasizes individuals holding positions in state apparatus, based on social backgrounds (Manza & McCarthy, 2011: 159). On the contrary, Poulantzas envisions the state to be anything but a 'monolithic, fissureless entity' (Popovitch, 2014: 209); its autonomy serves to merge the capitalist interests into a dominant bloc and divide working class members through imposing laws and coercive forces (Khachaturian, 2019: 719). Poulantzas and Miliband have distinct understandings of the role and character of state, resulting in a major disagreement between them. They both accept that state works for the advantage of the dominant class, their positions differ in terms of how integrated into capitalism the state is (Clarke, 1991: 86). The crux of their debate boils down to if state state maintains autonomy, being able to act independently

from dominant classes or if it is just the tool for them. Miliband's instrumentalist point of view accentuates interdependence between political and economic power, representing that within capitalist societies, state is a tool to promote the interests of ruling class (Nash & Rich, 1975: 108-110).

In contrast, Poulantzas perceives the state as a multifaceted entity affected by class disputes. He contends that the state maintains certain degree of autonomy from the dominant class, enabling it to act within their interests as well as independently. He reiterates that the state is a forum for resolving and managing class conflicts, rather than simply reflecting the interests of a specific social class (Frankel, 1979: 235-6). Thus, he believes that the state is “an inescapable and evolving terrain of struggle essential to any project of socialist transformation” (Nelson, 49: 2019). Louis Althusser's structuralist interpretation of Marxist theory became widely accepted among Marxist theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasizing the importance of analyzing the structural aspects of capitalist society and the role of ideology in the maintaining the dominant class relations (Lewis, 2022: 71). The structural Marxism, developed by Althusser, involves a typology of the economic base and the superstructure (ideology, politics, and culture). Here, the economic base has a defining influence on the superstructure, meaning that the economic relations and mode of production shape the political, ideological, and cultural aspects of society (Althusser, 2001: 73-4). Initially, Poulantzas was inspired by Althusser's structuralist-Marxist viewpoint; however, over time he formulated his own theoretical framework that questioned the assumption of structural Marxism on the base-superstructure division. (El-Hassan, 1986: 57-8).

Poulantzas's critique of Althusser's structuralism finds its source in his issues with economic determinism, the relative autonomy of state, attention to historical specificity, and the diverse and contested nature of materiality (Giddens, 1982: 259). Poulantzas's critique extends to the concept of materiality, which he regards as far from being a singular or unified notion. Instead, stresses that materiality is the complex and highly contested, entailing multiple social dynamics and contradictions. He challenges the notion that ideological state apparatuses can effectively impose a unified discourse or ideology onto society. According to the Poulantzas, societies are characterized by the presence of multiple ideologies and discourses that interact and compete within social contexts (Sakellaropoulos, 2019: 139-140). Furthermore, Poulantzas rejects the understanding of the mode of production as a fixed and rigid category. Instead, he highlights the dynamic interactions between economic, political, and ideological elements in the mode of production. Thus, this interplay can be altered as the consequence of conflicts between different classes with the divergent interests. Consequently, the idea that there is one homogenous ruling class disregards internal factions and their relationships with the state. The state operates with its own dynamics, capacities, and objectives that go beyond purely economic considerations. Taking into account these nuances, we gain a more accurate understanding of how ideology operates and how the state interacts with the economy and society at the large (Connell, 1979: 303-5).

Poulantzas's Engagement With Gramsci's Work

Poulantzas finds inspiration in the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, particularly regarding the role of ideology and ideological state apparatuses in shaping the society's core values and beliefs. He expands on Gramsci's perspectives about the nature of the state and the role of intellectuals in modern society. Exactly, Poulantzas develops Gramsci's notion of hegemony which describes ways by ruling classes use both coercion and consent to maintain their power (Poulantzas,

1980: 81). He incorporates Gramsci's understanding of separation of mental and manual labor in his comprehension of the modern bourgeoisie. As Gramsci did, Poulantzas underscores the necessity for assessing the class fractions and their tactical standing (Jessop, 2008). Poulantzas and Gramsci both dispute idea that economic and political crises are necessarily linked, which they consider an oversimplification. Poulantzas takes his criticism a step further by exhibiting how the interface between the economic and political crises is multifaceted, contingent on the power dynamics among different social classes. This allows Poulantzas to assess capitalist crisis in a way that incorporates historical setting that goes beyond conventional Marxist economism. The Poulantzas draws on Gramsci's concept of hegemony to illustrate the role of the state in upholding capitalist relations of production and the way in which the ruling class maintains its dominance.

Poulantzas's analysis of the state and class struggle, particularly his focus on the state's role in reproducing capitalist kindred of production, makes him consider, adjust some of Gramsci's ideas, particularly regarding the institutional materiality of the state (Mouffe, 2014: 168-170). Although, he finds Gramsci's emphasis on ideological struggle and building popular alliances inspiring, but he is critical of certain aspects of his approach. For instance, Poulantzas thinks that Gramsci lacks clear understanding of the institutional materiality of state its involvement in the capitalist social relations. He also criticizes Gramsci's theory of war-of-position/war-of-movement, deeming it an adjustment of Lenin's framework that neglects the unique features of Western capitalist states (Poulantzas, 1980: 256). Poulantzas believes that Gramsci's idea of a historical bloc does not sufficiently address the significant role that the capitalist state plays in maintaining hegemony. Poulantzas asserts that all social relations are basically power relations within the framework of the state, which constantly evolves through struggles over power and resources. For Gramsci, Modern Prince is critical for establishing hegemony, which allows the dominant class to control by shaping values, beliefs, culture of society as a whole (Gramsci, 1971: 130-31).

Poulantzas argues that Gramsci's interpretation of the state of the state is confined as he treats it more as a static entity to be conquered rather than a system of the power dynamics to be transformed. Whilst Gramsci recognizes the importance of hegemony and cultural capital in maintaining social structures, Poulantzas accentuates the institutional materiality of the state. Furthermore, while Gramsci recognizes need for achieving ideological and cultural hegemony, Poulantzas stresses the importance of infiltrating state structure itself and shifting its balance of power towards working class (Salvadori, 2014: 238). Poulantzas suggests that the working class should focus on forming a wide coalition of subordinate groups that hold a collective goal of challenging the dominant ideology and transforming the state (Sassoon, 1982: 94-5). His idea of social formation is branded by set of internal conflicts and contradictions, including those between different social classes and the economic, political, and ideological realms of the society (Demirović, 2019: 52). In this regard, the Poulantzas holds that, in order to make the successful transition from democracy to socialism, a comprehensive plan must be established mixing activities inside & outside state. This involve striving to preserve counter-hegemony, i.e., an antithetical set of the principles and beliefs that challenge the ruling class' dominant ideology.

The transformation of the state will be an arduous and lengthy, not just a single revolutionary event (Koch, 2022: 7). Poulantzas asserts that the Communist Parties must undergo a shift in order for them to form political coalitions that promote democratic socialism. For Poulantzas,

economic crises in themselves are not enough to bring about a crisis of the state. Instead, it is class struggle that provides the decisive factor in this process. Poulantzas' work looks at vital strategic and theoretical matters such as characteristics of fascism and military dictatorships, the development of imperialism and class divisions, and the place of political parties and social organizations in modern capitalism (Jessop, 1991: 75). This change should be reflected in the various government institutions that reflect this balance of power. In order to remain in the control, the state must gain the consensus from the public, which is attained via its ideological apparatuses. Repressive state apparatuses are critical, but not enough to ensure long-term dominance. Therefore, it is even more imperative that the ideological apparatuses be used to win popular support for the ruling class's dominance. The working-class party should act as a platform that expresses the interests of working class, and also seeks to build a larger coalition of social groups and classes who can join together in pushing for shared objectives (Thomas 2002: 73)

The Democratic Road To Socialism

Poulantzas believes that the parliamentary system provides a potential pathway to socialism. This stance is shaped by his commitment to the Eurocommunist program, which advocates for forming democratic alliances and persuading citizens to support socialist principles through involvement in civic institutions as well as electoral politics (Martin, 2008: 23). Poulantzas argues that the basis of political power lies within the material and organizational structures of the state, which are grounded in relations of production and social division of labor. To bring about a socialist transformation, he suggests a thorough overhaul of these institutions and the whole state apparatus, encompassing replacement of existing power systems with new ones that are compatible with the goals of the working class and an overarching national coalition (Poulantzas, 1980: 22-3). However, he opposes the Marxist-Leninist approach of the 'smashing' the state and instead suggests a continuous and strenuous way that comprises both direct and representative forms of democracy, which he refers to as a 'democratic path to the socialism' (Larrabure, 2019: 229). Poulantzas criticizes Eastern Marxism—perceiving it as an obstacle to true socialist democracy due to its bureaucratic authoritarianism. This version of the Marxism developed in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries afterwards the Bolshevik Revolution.

It prioritized state involvement in enforcing socialism, leading to the bureaucratic form of the socialism led primarily by the Communist Party (Wood, 1995: 44). Poulantzas believes that the conventional Marxist interpretation of state monopoly capitalism does not adequately explain the complexities of state as a terrain for conflict between classes. He suggests that achieving socialism necessitates both internal and external struggles against state. To establish a socialist democracy, it is vital to protect democratic rights and liberties while simultaneously reshaping state into a vehicle for socialist transformation. This process involves reducing the influence of the capitalist class within state apparatus and enhancing democratic participation in decision-making processes (Ibid: 57-58). Poulantzas acknowledges the challenges and difficulties that make democratic socialism a hard goal to achieve. Despite there being no historical precedent for the successful democratic socialism, he does not accept it as a foregone conclusion. On the contrary, he maintains that even though reaching democratic socialism is arduous endeavor, it done with sustained and vigorous effort from people in their struggle for social transformation (Das, 1996: 54-6). In this connection, the Poulantzas denies the possibility of the democratic

socialism through the pre-existing theoretical or the ideological models (Maher & Khachaturian, 2021: 195).

He argues that experimentations and adaptations to changing situations are essential for the revolutionary politics that must grapple with the inconsistencies present in the representative democracies. To create desirable and achievable socialist order, the Poulantzas recommends a combination of efforts to transition political systems and popular movements' involvement in these transformations. He seeks to build a genuinely democratic form of socialism without adopting the authoritative frameworks seen in Soviet Union (Kalampokas, Betzelos & Sotiris, 2016: 20). Poulantzas views the attainment of democratic socialism as a gradual process that necessitates consistent work over time. He emphasizes need for public involvement to prevent a top-down form of socialism from taking place which could lead to centralizing power in the hands of bureaucratic decision-makers instead of providing fair representation for citizens. He believes that such a model would not be compatible with democratic socialist ideals and would not be able to achieve desired goals of social justice and equality (Thomas, 2002: 76). This is due to reason that ideology of a proletarian dictatorship does not lend itself to producing strong and enduring alliances with other actors who know they are doomed to be "eliminated during transition to socialism when dictatorship is implemented" (Poulantzas quoted in Hall & Hunt, 1979: 195).

Moreover, the issue of political alliances is contingent on specific conditions of each country; thus, and direct generalizations must not be made. He emphasizes need to keep representative democracy and individual rights intact as pursue course toward democratic socialism. "When we speak of democratic road to democratic socialism, such a strategy must not only profoundly transform but also maintain forms of representative democracy and forms of liberties" (Ibid: 196). State cannot be subjugated with strategies such as Lenin's frontal assaults or Gramsci's tactics of 'encircling' of state. Since the state is a multi-faceted structure and therefore it cannot be reduced to a single, closed entity. The state is an amalgamation and concentration of various power dynamics and influences in the society. "In its place I began to think of the state as a condensation, relation of forces, I developed this idea in *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism...* I began to apply this conception of state to problem of transition to socialism, which became clearer in last book, state, power, socialism" (Ibid: 197). He urges to consider alternative ways of overcoming the challenges and structural inequalities that prevent the attainment of a fair society. In his view, it is essential for excluded groups and the working class to actively engage in achieving democratic socialism, as opposed to resorting to violent revolution which can be detrimental.

Though this solution may bring with it certain difficulties and risks, Poulantzas still sees it as an attractive proposition when weighed against other alternatives due to its potential for increased socio-economic equality and democratic governance. He underlines the importance of aligning socialism with democratic principles like freedom, equality and popular sovereignty. This necessitates a constant struggle that takes advantage of the internal contradictions within the state and establishes strong centers of resistance within the strategic space of the state. The road to democratic socialism involves a gradual process shaped by mass movements that lead to a shift in the balance of power towards previously marginalized social classes. This struggle for democratic socialism also embraces political and ideological pluralism, expands political freedoms and advocates universal suffrage over representative democracy, while discovering new forms of self-government & direct democracy (Linaera, 2019: 19). His vision for successful

shift to socialism consists of harmonizing actions inside the state, transforming the state itself, as well as taking action outside it—all simultaneously (Thomas, 2002: 76). This strategy intends to develop a type of socialism that combines components from both direct and representative democracy, thereby enabling sustained public pressure on the state (Jessop, 2021: 172). It underscores the importance of examining both institutional and non-institutional facets of the class confrontation when evaluating the power dynamics in society (Giner & Salcedo, 1979: 358-360).

RESULTS OF STUDY

Poulantzas's perspective on state yields several crucial insights that enrich our comprehension of state's role in modern capitalist societies. To begin with, this study reinforces Poulantzas's depiction of the state as a vibrant arena of class struggle. This standpoint differs significantly from simplistic viewpoints that portray the state exclusively as a tool of repression and control for the capitalist elite. Instead, it accentuates the multifaceted nature of the state within the capitalist context. Furthermore, study underscores Poulantzas's acknowledgment of potential for popular engagement and transformation within the state machinery. This approach differs from the traditional Marxist-Leninist strategy of forming a revolutionary party to seize state power. It illustrates that the state is not impervious to change and that the agency of ordinary citizens can be harnessed to shape state policies. Research underscores intricacies that describe capitalist state, aligning with Poulantzas perspective. It rejects simplified or one-dimensional interpretations of state's function, emphasizing necessity for a nuanced understanding of state power. This covers recognizing its various facets, about regulatory, ideological, and coercive dimensions. Poulantzas' helps to political theory are of great importance, in understanding the complexities of state relation with capital & how power dynamics are influenced by production process.

His framework establishes connection between class relations and struggles and requirements of capital, serving as a foundation for analyzing the state's internal workings as an organization of competing interests and groups. It provides exceptional insight into the core nature and design of the bourgeois democracy and a revolutionary strategy empowering people through democracy. Poulantzas' work serves to both comprehend and envisage the world transcending capitalism. His concepts offer a critical perspective on the manner in which the state works to sustain capitalist social relations, as well as how collective efforts can alter state control. They are valuable for understanding the present-day economic and political phenomena, the surge of authoritarianism far-right movements and the current dilemmas posed by capitalism. In this connection, his writing provides a useful source for leveraging the collective action required to transcend the existing power structures through struggles of the working class and popular mobilizations. Lastly, the study validates Poulantzas's rejection of deterministic interpretations of the state's role. It emphasizes the potential for internal contradictions and divisions within the state apparatus itself, shedding light on the internal dynamics of the state and its relative autonomy.

DISCUSSION

Poulantzas's analysis departs from the traditional view of the state as a mere instrument of the dominant class, contending that power relations between different classes within the state are far more complex and dynamic (Poulantzas, 1978: 12). Poulantzas's theory suggests that the state serves to promote the long-term objectives of capitalists while also settling any internal

disputes among them. It recognizes that the state has its own agency and interests, which must be taken into account when examining it in its broader social and political context. Poulantzas' concept of the repression encompasses more than just the physical restrictions implemented by oppressive state apparatuses. It also encompasses the laws and legal systems that lead people to conform to a state's power (Calnitsky, 2022, 416-7). The state's relative autonomy allows it to actively organize the bourgeoisie and inhibit political organization of subordinate classes. Even though the state works for long-term interests of the bourgeois class, it is not only a tool used by this class. In this regard, Poulantzas' conception of the state has sparked extensive scholarly discourse and deliberation due to its nuanced and distinct viewpoint within the realm of political theory.

His contributions to our understanding of the state in capitalist societies deviate from conventional Marxist interpretations, offering a novel and intricate framework for analyzing the state's role. He argues that the state is not a neutral entity merely mediating between classes but rather an arena where various class interests collide and vie for power and influence (Güngen, 2022: 1-2). This perspective challenges the conventional Marxist notion of the state as a mere instrument of the ruling class, underscoring its dynamic character, molded by tensions and conflicts among different societal forces (Lewis, 2022: 78). Debates ensue concerning the state's involvement in regulating economic activities, shaping labor dynamics, and managing crises within the capitalist framework. A distinctive facet of Poulantzas's notion of the state is his recognition of the possibility of popular involvement and transformation in the state apparatus (Papaioannou, 2023: 299). In contrast to deterministic interpretations of the state, he emphasizes that the state is not impervious to change and that popular action can be leveraged to influence state policies. This perspective has triggered discussion on strategies for social and political movements to engage with the state as a means of advancing objectives, challenging the conventional revolutionary paradigm (Soener, 2022: 219-20).

CONCLUSION

The Nicos Poulantzas has made major contributions to the Marxist discourse surrounding the nature of the state. It is essential to acknowledge that Poulantzas' vision is deeply embedded within Karl Marx's primary precepts and his scholarship is a meaningful evolution of Marxist theory. Poulantzas recognizes the state as a focal point for class struggle due to its capacity to control and alter the social and economic relations. Thus, his innovative theoretical approach underscores the active role that the state plays in establishing and sustaining class relationships. It focuses on the influence of ideology and cultural hegemony in preserving the status quo. It further emphasizes that the state is not a unified structure, but rather made up of a complex web of institutions with wavering levels of autonomy and power. In this connection, Poulantzas' work delves into the inequalities of the capitalist system, whereby producers lack the ownership and control over the production mechanisms. His analysis emphasizes how the bourgeoisie wields power through the proletariat in the economic, political, and ideological domains, while also underlining the state's role in organizing the power bloc while disempowering the subaltern classes.

To overcome existing power structures, Poulantzas' paradigm proposes a twofold approach that involves both advocating for change through parliamentary politics as well as participating in non-electoral activism. Lastly, through admitting the intricacies associated with the state, Poulantzas has provided an important foundation for appreciating prospects for transformative political efforts in contemporary capitalist culture. His ideas continue to be highly pertinent in

current dialogues related to understanding nature of features of a capitalist state, structure and limits of bourgeois democracy, chances and impediments to socialist revolution, and controls of socialist democracy. Poulantzas works contain an essential point that socialism, democracy are intertwined, with necessity of popular involvement, self-governance, removal of hierarchies being paramount. Poulantzas has had a profound effect on Marxist theorists, especially in creation of a political science framework for Marxism that acknowledges the state's power and authority.

Recommendations

Nicos Poulantzas's profound insights into nature of state within capitalist societies continue to resonate and inspire scholarly engagement. As this study unfolds, several recommendations emerge to further advance our comprehension of Poulantzas's understanding of state and its relevance in contemporary political theory. Primary recommendation is continued exploration of his primary texts. Given Poulantzas's emphasis on state as a dynamic arena of class struggle, scholars can engage in comparative studies that analyze the state's role and transformation in different political and economic contexts. Conversely, comparing Poulantzas's theories with the experiences of various countries and regions can provide valuable insights into the universality or specificity of his ideas and highlight impact of the local conditions on the state dynamics. Poulantzas's work has not been immune to criticism and debate. In this linking, the future research should engage with the critiques levelled against his theories, critically assessing their validity and exploring whether subsequent scholarship has provided responses or refinements to these critiques.

Poulantzas's recognition of the potential for popular participation in the state apparatus has direct implications for contemporary activism and social movements. Scholars should explore how his ideas can inform strategies for engaging with the state to advance progressive agendas. Poulantzas's understanding of the state remains a fertile ground for scholarly exploration and practical application. Therefore, by deepening engagement with his primary texts, embracing interdisciplinary perspectives, assessing contemporary relevance, conducting the comparative studies, addressing the critiques, examining activism, and improving accessibility, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of the Poulantzas's enduring contributions to political theory. Through these recommendations, we can continue to draw inspiration from Poulantzas's work and navigate the complex terrain of state in contemporary societies.

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