

STATISM, NEW INSTITUTIONALISM, AND MARXISM

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From the late **1970s** on, a literature stressing the autonomy of the state developed rapidly in comparative sociology and political science, in direct confrontation with Marxism. In the middle **1980s** it gave rise to the 'new institutionalism'. This essay addresses the relationship of each to Marxism. I argue that both approaches caricature Marxist arguments, and that the case they make for themselves as superior alternatives depends upon their so doing. Secondly, I suggest that classical and contemporary Marxism makes better sense of the material presented by statist and new institutionalists than they do themselves. The attempt to create a 'statist' alternative to Marxism largely failed, and the 'new institutionalism' is evidence of its failure.

STATZSM

The four major early contributions to the 'new statism' were **Stepan**, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (1978), **Krasner**, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and US Foreign Policy* (1978), **Skocpol**, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (1979), and Nordlinger, *On The Autonomy of the Democratic State* (1981). Each presented the statist approach as a superior alternative to Marxism. However, a close examination of each of the texts suggests that if Marxism was rejected in these accounts, it was as much for what it would explain, as for what it would not.

Prefacing his study of **Peru** under the Velasco regime, **Stepan** declares himself to have been dismayed to find, in the course of work on the Brazilian military, 'that many of the most important theoretical approaches to politics – pluralist and Marxist alike – assigned very little independent weight to the **state**'.¹ Yet when he turns later to classical Marxist theory, he proves to be well aware of strands within it that 'offer rich, nondeterministic theoretical insights about such crucial questions as the relative autonomy of the state', asserting only that 'a main line of argumentation. . . treats the state largely as a dependent **variable**'.² He then notes that **Engels** often formulates the relationship of the political superstructure to the economic structure in 'much more mechanistic terms' than **Marx**, yet justifies his *primary* reliance on Engels' work in the development of his critique with the assertion that

'it would be sociologically unacceptable to exclude his works when we are evaluating the legacy of classical Marxism in regard to the analysis of the state' (emphasis mine). It is sociologically *acceptable*, it appears, to reduce the classical Marxist legacy to one strand of Engels' thought. Even so, **Stepan** cannot yet find Marxism guilty as charged: after having claimed that the state 'at least in Engels's formulation, is exclusively the coercive instrument of the dominant class', he cites evidence which makes it perfectly clear that even **Engels** did not rule out substantial state autonomy. Finally, he announces that 'there are neglected subthemes in Marx and **Engels** that, if read properly and applied to the special conditions of late developing, dependent-capitalist societies such as those in Latin America, in fact provide much less theoretical foundation for the neglect of the state than do many conventional Marxist **interpretations**'.³ All this is a prelude, it should be noted, to the assertion of the superiority of an organic-statist approach, and represents the last sustained consideration of Marxist theory in the text.

Despite his eager advocacy of an organic-statist approach over pluralism and Marxism, **Stepan** clearly demonstrates the ample basis in classical Marxism (carried further, as he notes, by Gramsci, Miliband, and **Poulantzas**) for consideration of the state as an autonomous force. He resolves the dilemma this creates by dwelling on elements out of which a one-sided case can be constructed, then choosing to discard Marxism for his preferred alternative.

Krasner shares with **Stepan** an explicit commitment to the establishment of a 'state-centric or realist paradigm', which he presents as superior to those offered by interest-group liberalism or **Marxism**.⁴ However, in contrast to **Stepan**, he does systematically test instrumental and structural variants of Marxism against his case material. He finds that some of the cases studied, including every one in which investments were actively promoted by the state, were more or less compatible with liberal, Marxist and statist theories, while a second major group of cases, which showed 'a clear divergence between corporate and state preferences', 'support statist and structural Marxist positions over interest-group and instrumental Marxist ones'. He concludes from this that 'the two approaches whose relative merits are most difficult to assess are structural Marxism and statism. Both see the state as an autonomous actor concerned with long-term **objectives**'.⁵ So far, then, he has no evidence for the superior analytical power of the statist approach. In order to find some, he has to turn from the issue of conflict between state goals and the goals of private capitalists over raw materials supply to cases of the use of overt or covert force by the United States abroad. It is precisely at this point that his argument is weakest. He notes that 'after 1945 all of these [cases] were clearly associated with the goal of preventing communist regimes from assuming or holding power. This aim can be comprehended from a structural Marxist perspective: communism does not enhance capitalism's long-term prospects'. But rather than concede the validity of a structural Marxist approach, he pins his hopes on the case of the Vietnam war, arguing that

The **monological** manner in which American leaders pursued their anticommunism is not **compatible** with a structural Marxist position. The absence of **means-ends** calculations, coupled with misperception, led to policies that undermined the coherence of American domestic society, particularly in Vietnam. This is the very opposite result from the one predicted by a structural Marxist argument, but it is **compatible** with a view that sees the state as capable of defining its own autonomous goals.⁶

He is reduced to arguing that the unintended outcome of the Vietnam War provides evidence against a structural Marxist position, but not against his own preferred statist alternative. This entails two absurdities: first that structural Marxism insists that capitalist states will be successful in every policy they pursue, and second that the 'autonomous' US state *desired* defeat abroad and disorder at home. Such are the lengths to which he is driven in order to differentiate his arguments from their Marxist alternative.

Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* presents a slightly different case, in that it avowedly draws much of its inspiration from Marxism, although in the end Marxism is found wanting. Rejecting two approaches to understanding revolutions (aggregate-psychological and **systems/value** consensus) out of hand, she opts to 'rely extensively upon certain ideas adapted from the Marxist and political-conflict **perspectives**'.⁷ She faults Marxism, however, along with its competitors, as voluntaristic, neglectful of international structures and world-historical developments, and guilty of either analytically collapsing state and society or reducing political and state actions to representations of economic forces and interests. The structure of the argument is eccentric. She describes **Marx** as seeing revolutions as 'class-based movements growing out of objective structural contradictions within historically developing and inherently conflict-ridden societies', and argues the need to supplement this *structural* analysis with Tilly's political-conflict approach on the grounds that 'it is one thing to identify underlying, potential tensions rooted in objective class relations understood in a manner. It is another thing to understand how and when class members find themselves *able* to struggle effectively for their **interests**'.⁸ She *then* introduces **Marx's** contrast between class in itself and class for itself, which might throw light on that very issue, *only* as evidence of voluntarism, in defiance of the structural perspective she has drawn from Marx only pages earlier. Finally, she cites one Marxist, **Hobsbawm**, in support of her critique of voluntarism, and another, Brenner, in support of her critique of the neo-Marxist Wallerstein, on whom she has drawn at length for her sketch of international and world-historical contexts. The break with classical and contemporary Marxism is more apparent than real.

When she turns to the potential autonomy of the state, **Skocpol** accuses Marxists, among others, of a 'general way of thinking' which views the state as 'nothing but *an arena* in which conflicts over basic social and economic interests are fought out', claiming that they 'regard the state as a system of organized coercion that invariably functions to support the superordinant

position of dominant classes or groups over subordinate classes or groups.' In making this claim she dismisses classical Marxism in two paragraphs on the grounds that within its terms 'it is. . . virtually impossible even to raise the possibility that fundamental conflicts of interest might arise between the existing dominant class. . . on the one hand, and the state rulers on the other.'⁹ No reference is made to transitional periods, or to **Bonapartism**, or to any other qualification of this view in classical Marxism. Mysteriously, though, she also notes that classical Marxists 'do not analytically collapse state and society', and characterizes the classical Marxist view as being that 'states are not simply created and manipulated by dominant **classes**'.¹⁰ When she turns to contemporary Marxism, she notes its concern with the structural constraints upon states, and its suggestion that 'state rulers may have to be free of control by specific dominant-class groups and personnel if they are to be able to implement policies that serve the fundamental interest of an entire dominant class'. Finding two neo-Marxists (Trimberger and Block) who do treat the state as potentially autonomous, she declares herself to have been greatly influenced by them, only to charge other (un-named) individuals with having 'carefully avoided' this line of argument, and to conclude by obliterating the distinction between instrumental and structural approaches in the claim that virtually all Marxists assume that 'state rulers cannot possibly act against the basic **interest** of a dominant class' (emphasis mine), and making the charge, denied two pages earlier, that Marxism does reflect 'the enduring sociological proclivity to absorb the state into **society**'.¹¹ She goes on to argue, as if in opposition to Marxism, that the administrative, policing and military organizations of the state are 'at least potentially autonomous from direct dominant-class control': states compete with the dominant classes for resources, and may pursue objectives at variance with theirs; in pursuit of the maintenance of order and competition with other states they 'usually do function to preserve existing economic and class structures', but may develop distinct interests of their own. On the maintenance of order, she argues as follows:

Although both the state and the dominant **class(es)** share a broad interest in keeping the subordinate classes in place in society and at work in the existing economy, the state's own fundamental interest in maintaining sheer physical order and political peace may lead it – especially in periods of crisis – to enforce concessions to **subordinate-class** demands. These concessions may be at the expense of the interests of the dominant class, but not contrary to the state's own interests in controlling the population and collecting taxes and military recruits.¹²

On competition with other states, she argues that 'international military pressures and opportunities can prompt state rulers to attempt policies that conflict with, and even in extreme instances contradict, the fundamental interests of a dominant class', undertaking military adventures that divert resources from domestic development or undermine the position of dominant socioeconomic interests, or responding to threats from abroad by launching fundamental socioeconomic reforms or intervening to alter the course of

national economic development. These are the grounds on which Skocpol asserts the need for a new statism. However, the first offers a straightforward structural Marxist position, while the second stands in an indeterminate relationship to Marxist arguments. The dominant classes have an interest in the survival and competitiveness of the state, and the relationship between military action by the state abroad and dominant class interests demands exploration, as it is initially an open question whether the former furthers or is intended to further some of the latter; it cannot be presented by definitional fiat as independent action on the part of the state. Skocpol pursues none of these issues, and therefore cannot differentiate her position from Marxism. Her accounts of classical and contemporary Marxism are partial and contradictory, and where she breaks with Marxism, she persistently draws upon Marxists and neo-Marxists to do so. At times, as we shall see below, she draws on **Marx** himself. Finally, she does not pursue the issues she raises far enough to establish a novel position. In particular, she fails to consider whether a coherent account of the potential autonomy of the state could be derived from sources in classical and contemporary Marxism.

For such a consideration, finally spumed in a demonstration of consumer sovereignty similar to that offered by **Stepan**, we must **turn** to Nordlinger. He spells out precisely the basis in classical and contemporary Marxism for a consistent account of the recurrent and frequent autonomy of the state in a capitalist society, then dismisses it as a prelude to his presentation of his own 'state-centred' **approach**.¹³ He identifies a primary view of the state in Marxism in which the state is an instrument of capital and an agent of the bourgeoisie, but accepts that a supplementary structural view explicitly sees the state as acting against the immediate interests of **each**.¹⁴ Marxism is the only variant of empirical democratic theory 'that allows for, indeed clearly insists, that the state is able to act on its preferences when these diverge from those of the politically weightiest **actors**'.¹⁵

Nordlinger then announces that in order to differentiate his own approach from Marxism, he will show 'that the liberal capitalist state acts contrary to the demands of the bourgeoisie far more **often** than acknowledged in Marxist writings' (emphasis in the original). Taking each of Marxism's generalizations as given, 'without amending, subtracting from, or adding to them', he will demonstrate that 'on a straightforward reading, without any tortuous textual interpretations, Marxist theory itself points to the frequent occurrence of Type I state autonomy' (in which public officials translate their preferences into authoritative actions when state-society preferences are divergent). In addition he will do 'what Marxist scholars have not done, identifying and pulling together those aspects of the theory that indicate when and why the capitalist state acts contrary to bourgeois **demands**'.¹⁶ Having made these claims, he cites **Miliband** to the effect that the view in the **Communist Manifesto** of the state as a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie implies a need for autonomy, and lists a number

of other arguments drawn from recent Marxist writing: political divisions in the dominant class create a need for mediation by the state; if it is to retain legitimacy the state must respond to some extent to the demands of other classes; and it needs autonomy both to carry out necessary reforms and to reconcile the rationalities of individual capitalists to the imperatives of the overall process of **accumulation**.¹⁷

Nordlinger provides no new arguments of his own, nor does he derive any new arguments from Marxism. He offers no arguments that conflict with basic premises of Marxism, nor does he combine the arguments he assembles into a new synthesis. He simply provides, from Miliband, Offe, Poulantzas, Block, Habermas, O'Connor and Wolfe – staple fare, one might think, in debates over Marxism in the middle to late **1970s** – ample evidence that some Marxists do acknowledge, and that fundamental propositions in Marxism do imply, a need for frequent and recurrent state autonomy. He then turns to other matters, taking up Marxist theory again later only to differentiate his state-centred model from it. He can do this only by forgetting what he has clearly demonstrated 'on a straightforward reading, without any tortuous textual interpretations', and claiming *both* that Marxism holds that the autonomy of the state must be consistent, almost invariable, virtually unswerving, and unaffected by the degree of societal opposition (a far cry from frequent and recurrent, and not supported by any textual evidence), *and* that it claims, in its primary society-centred thrust, that the need for state intervention against bourgeois preferences is rare. In other words, having demonstrated clearly the robust basis for a coherent synthesis, he arbitrarily separates out and distorts its elements in order to be rid of it again. As with the other statist, it seems that he has a theory of the autonomy of the democratic state in Marxism, if he wants it, but that he does not want it.

As noted above, **Krasner** finds that a structural Marxist approach makes sense of most of his material. Nordlinger, in contrast, barely considers empirical material in what is an extended theoretical essay. In order to assess further the competing claims of Marxism and statism we must therefore turn to the empirical analysis pursued by **Stepan** and **Skocpol** respectively. We shall find strong confirmation of **Sartre's** observation, recently recalled by Michael Löwy, 'that Marxism is the ultimate possible horizon of our age and that attempts to go beyond **Marx** frequently end up *falling short* of him'.¹⁸

Stepan concludes his discussion of Marxist approaches to the state with a question he declines to answer: what are the *limits* of the relative autonomy of the state? His subsequent analysis of relations between the Peruvian state under Velasco and foreign capital makes no reference to Marxist debates, but provides an answer which bears them out entirely. He outlines the attempt by the Peruvian military to build a new economic foundation that was 'neither capitalist nor communist', describing it as 'not a theoretically impossible position to **maintain**'.¹⁹ This comment perpetuates a persistent confusion between an organic-statist *ideology*, and a pattern of economic development

which was still based on capitalist accumulation, but in which the state sought to impose its own priorities on domestic and foreign capital. It came up against structural limits identified by Marxism, and faithfully reflected in **Stepan's** descriptive account. In the sugar sector, of low priority to foreign capital, most production was in domestic hands, and the state was able to expropriate unwanted foreign investors, in part, as a brief footnote tells us, because the American Chamber of Commerce in Lima rejected their appeals for support on the grounds that more significant US investors might be hurt. However, the Peruvian state remained just as vulnerable to the sharp fluctuations of the global sugar market as they had been before. In the high priority oil sector, where initial investment needs and technological demands were very high, the state had to enter into a series of agreements which increasingly favoured foreign capital. And in the manufacturing sector, it was able to exclude some unwanted inward investment, but unable to implement plans that would have given national investors and workers eventual control over existing foreign enterprises, or to attract new foreign investment in priority areas. Overall, its reformist policies prompted an investment strike on the part of foreign and domestic capital which could not be offset by increased saving on the part of the state. This in turn prompted increasing reliance on foreign borrowing and led to the first debt crisis in the region. As a result 'by the middle of 1975 Peru was increasingly dependent on the international financial community for credit to fund its development program',¹⁹ and in 1976 it signed an **IMF** agreement which froze wages, cut public spending, cancelled the right to strike, re-opened oil exploration to foreign firms, and began a programme of privatisation of state companies. A better illustration of the structural constraints which limit state autonomy **vis-à-vis** capital in the absence of a decisive break with reliance on capitalist accumulation would be hard to find. By restricting himself to a descriptive account of the potential for state autonomy *within* these limits, and failing to offer any theoretical analysis of the limits themselves, **Stepan** falls far short of a Marxist analysis in one major respect, and fails to challenge it in any other.

Skocpol's analysis of the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions suffers from similar problems. She argues at length that one of the primary factors which motivated state **rulers** was the need to force the pace of modernization in order to resist the military and commercial power of emerging capitalist rivals, concluding that 'revolutionary political crisis emerged in all three Old Regimes because agrarian structures impinged upon autocratic and protobureaucratic state organizations in ways that blocked or fettered monarchical initiatives in coping with escalating international military competition in a world undergoing uneven transformation by **capitalism**'.²¹ She is able to differentiate herself from Marxism only by *choosing* to present 'monarchical initiatives' as divorced from class interests. As she is at pains to point out, these were absolutist regimes in pre-capitalist societies facing challenges from emerging capitalist rivals, not the modern representative states which **Marx** and **Engels**

describe as committees for managing the affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. As they argue in the very same text, the constant revolutionizing of production characteristic of capitalism creates a world market, destroys established industries, makes the introduction of new ones a matter of life and death, and '**compels** all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of **production**'.²² In these circumstances, while bourgeoisies are not yet in control of the state in the absolutist monarchies, the dominant landed upper classes are 'unable to live in the old way', and Skocpol quotes **Lenin** to this effect at the head of the chapter. It is not inconsistent with a classical Marxist perspective to identify in such cases independent state projects aimed at modernization which go against existing dominant class interests. It is exactly what Marx describes and expects. If the projects which Skocpol describes seem to offer evidence against a Marxist perspective, it is because she fails to discriminate theoretically between **precapitalist** and capitalist societies, and ignores the structural context from which foreign pressures and threats from abroad emerge. Her version of the state is independent of class forces by definition, as she presents it as concerned purely with external defence and the maintenance of order at home, refusing to address the question of its possible class content.

Given these weaknesses, it is not surprising that Skocpol fails to notice the relevance of a Marxist perspective to her material. In the case of France, she describes an 'absolutist' state never entirely able to impose its will on the dominant landed class, and brought down in the end because its leading officers had largely entered the nobility and merged with the ruling classes; hence the inability of Louis XVI, on which she cites Boshier at some length, to restore his financial circumstances through a Chamber of Justice. This lends support to a central tenet of Marxist theory: by the time of the revolution the French state no longer had the relative autonomy Marxist theory **recognizes** as necessary; the nobility successfully resisted taxation and brought down the absolutist state and themselves with it. Equally, having denied herself the theoretical apparatus necessary to do so, Skocpol cannot decipher the bearing of state action on differing dominant class interests. She does not ask who among the dominant classes had a direct interest in 'military aggrandizement' and who did not, nor does she venture to distinguish between anachronistic imperial adventures on the one hand, and military action aimed at defending or broadening the scope for French entrepreneurs abroad on the other. Hence she talks indifferently of 'the vindication of French honor' and 'the protection of **seaborne** commerce' as **raisons d'être** of the French **monarchy**.²³ It is impossible to challenge a Marxist analysis of state-society relations in the revolutionary period without systematically addressing the class content of the French state, and the question of whether the French monarchy was or could **become** a vehicle for furthering bourgeois interests.

Finally, Skocpol's account of state-building in post-revolutionary France reveals her absolute failure to go beyond Marxism. She questions 'the

until recently dominant "social interpretation" – a view of largely Marxist inspiration, which holds that the Revolution was led by the bourgeoisie to displace feudalism and the aristocracy and to establish capitalism instead', and opposes to it an account of 'changes wrought by the French revolution in the structure and functioning of the **French state**'.²⁴ Interestingly enough, she does so by prefacing her chapter with a passage from Marx which locates the origins of the 'modern state edifice' in France in the revolution, incorporating the phrase in the title of the chapter itself, describing the passage from Marx as the best available expression of what the revolution did accomplish, and concluding the chapter with a restatement and endorsement of his words:

Indeed, the Revolution is best understood as a 'gigantic broom' that swept away the 'medieval rubbish' of **seigneurialism** and particularistic privilege – freeing the peasantry, private **wealth-holders**, and the state alike from the encumbrances of the **Old Regime**.²⁵

If she does not go beyond Marx here, though, she certainly falls short of him. For there is no further consideration of **Marx's** analysis of the French state after the revolution. There is no other reference to *The Civil War in France*, and no reference at all to *The Class Struggles in France* or to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. The former, it might be recalled, dwelt in its opening pages upon the obstacles to state autonomy arising from the indebtedness of the state to the financial aristocracy and upon the significance of the international context of the events of 1848, while the latter not only raised the issue of state autonomy, but also expressed fully the central theme of Skocpol's 'statist' alternative to a Marxist perspective:

The task of the first French revolution was to destroy all separate local, **territorial**, urban and provincial powers in order to create the civil unity of the nation. It had to carry further the centralization that the absolute monarchy had begun, but at the same time it had to develop the extent, the attributes and the number of underlings of the governmental power. Napoleon perfected this state machinery.²⁶

However, Marx went on to point out the contradictions and degeneration of the French state under the second Bonaparte, noting that he had been 'forced to create, alongside the real classes of society, an artificial caste for which the maintenance of his regime is a question of self-preservation', and concluding that 'the political centralization that modern society requires can arise only on the debris of the military and bureaucratic government machinery originally forged in opposition to feudalism.'²⁷ In comparison to **Marx's** richly suggestive dialectical account, Skocpol's is one-sided in the extreme.

A detailed examination of the early work of the new statist shows that although they concede more to Marxism than to any other rival approach, they seem to be at great pains to distance themselves from it. This emerges not so much in the perfectly legitimate advocacy of an alternative approach, as in the contortions in which they engage in order to justify it. **Stepan** describes a powerful analytical framework provided by Marxism, then opts to ignore it; Nordlinger claims the credit for discovering the potential for state autonomy

present in classical and contemporary Marxism, then also ignores it; **Krasner** involves himself in convoluted efforts to get the better of a Marxist reading of events which he finds convincing; and Skocpol eventually relies directly upon **Marx** himself to take her where Marxism fears to tread. There is never an attempt to grapple with Marxist theory as a whole; selective readings and consequential distortions and misunderstandings abound; where substantive issues are pursued, a fairly straightforward Marxist analysis still proves more fruitful than the statist alternative; and overall, on the evidence of these accounts, the attempt to establish a robust statist alternative to Marxism fails. Against this inauspicious background, the new statism was to assume programmatic form.

Bringing the State Back In

With the setting up in **1983** of the SSRC Research Planning Committee on States and Social Structures and the publication in **1985** of *Bringing the State Back In*, the new statism received the official blessing of the social science establishment in the **United States**, and delivered its public **manifesto**.²⁸ In some contributions, notably **Skocpol's** introduction and **Stepan's analysis** of military withdrawal from power in Latin America, the emphases of the early statist are carried forward and accentuated. Skocpol presents an even cruder caricature of the Marxist tradition, omitting the structural position entirely from her account, and immediately claiming as superior to Marxism an analysis which is entirely consistent with it. **Stepan** progresses from his earlier strategy of avoidance (stating the Marxist **case but** refusing to consider it) to Krasner's alternative strategy (showing how well a Marxist analysis works, then wriggling out of it on a pretext). At the same time, two new and rather contradictory dimensions are introduced. The first is the ambitious call for a paradigmatic reorientation of social science, involving the incorporation of elements of Weberian and Marxist traditions among others into a new synthesis; the second is a rejection of 'grand theory' which leads to a point-blank refusal to attempt any new synthesis or to spell out in any way the theoretical basis of the new stand taken. As a consequence key contributions to the collection confirm the emptiness of 'statism', and point the way back to Marxism.

In her introduction to the collection, Skocpol defends a view of states 'as social actors and as society-shaping structures'. She characterizes **Marx** as a 'society-centered' theorist who ignores the state (in defiance of her earlier qualification of this view, and her use of his work on the French state), and makes the mistaken assumption that 'nineteenth century British socioeconomic developments presaged the future for all countries and for the world as a **whole**'.²⁹ Having thus disposed of Marx, she presents contemporary neo-Marxism as addressing the lack of attention to the state in post-war US structure-functionalism, thus divorcing it from the theoretical tradition inaugurated by **Marx**. She can then present it as above all concerned with

the state, rather than with class, and hence assimilable into a new synthesis if it will abandon its dogmatic assumption that 'at base, states are inherently shaped by classes or class struggles and function to preserve and expand modes of production'.³⁰

Skocpol chides Marxists, then, with failing to grant 'true autonomy' to states. This formulation conceals an essential strategic ambiguity, between entire and permanent independence from class and social constraints on the one hand, and a temporary and partial autonomy on the other. In combination with her failure to address structural Marxist debates, it allows her to reject Marxism for failing to recognize the former, then to **pass** her own work off as superior because it demonstrates the latter. This is best observed in her use of her work with **Finegold** on New Deal agricultural policy, which she sees as providing evidence of autonomous state contributions to domestic policy making. In fact, a structural Marxist interpretation fits the case exactly, as, in Skocpol's own words, intervention involved 'policies that responded to a long-standing "agrarian crisis" but not simply in ways directly demanded by powerful farm interest **groups**'.³¹ What is more, the institutions created for the purpose were **geared primarily** to price support, which hardly threatened dominant class interests, and the fragility of the interventionist effort was swiftly revealed, when commercial farmers' organizations took over within a **couple** of years and directly pursued their class interests through the new institutions. Finegold's own summary elsewhere confirms that the case offers no challenge of any kind to Marxist theory:

Taken together, business opinion, the Democratic Party, the federal agricultural complex, and the farmer organizations explain the enactment and successful implementation of the agricultural adjustment program. The same factors served as conservative influences upon the AAA, ensuring that it addressed the problem of farmer prosperity without challenging the position of the dominant class interests within agriculture.³²

Whereas Skocpol dismisses **Marx** as 'society-centred', **Stepan** makes direct reference to his analysis of Bonapartism in his analysis of state-society relations under military rule in Latin America. He notes that in every case analyzed (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay) 'the bourgeoisie provided the social base for the new authoritarian regimes, whose first political acts were the use of the coercive apparatus of the state (located institutionally in the army) to dismantle and **disarticulate** working-class organizations'. He then claims that all four regimes 'began with periods in which the institutions of civil society were emasculated while the state enhanced its ability to pursue its own **goals**' (though without saying how these might or might not relate to class interests), and asks 'how much direct political (or, in extreme cases, economic) power are the state's bourgeois allies willing to abdicate in a **brumairean** sense in return for defensive **protection**?'³³ Given his other concerns in the essay he does not pursue the answer as methodically as he might. However, examination of the cases as he presents them does reveal a consistent answer: in every case, the bourgeois allies of the regime were

willing to support authoritarian rule for as long as a threat of **working-class** militancy remained, and the regime appeared to have their general interests at heart. And once the bourgeoisie withdrew their support, return to civilian rule ensued fairly promptly. The Chilean case is dealt with in the most detail, and eventually reveals, to **Stepan's** satisfaction, the weakness of a structural Marxist perspective. He ascribes the ability of the state under Pinochet to implement its authoritarian project to the intensity of class conflict during the preceding period, and the threat of a recomposition of the Marxist opposition, providing evidence that among producer groups and the upper class in general there was widespread fear at the beginning of the 1980s of a possible return of the left to power, and widespread recognition of the need for long-term structural change in society and the economy if that possibility was to be **ruled** out for the future. On this basis he offers the following original contribution to Marxist theory:

One might even go so far as to argue that the Chilean state represents a step beyond Bonapartism. Instead of exchanging the right to rule for the right to make money in the classic Bonapartist transaction, significant fractions of the Chilean bourgeoisie abdicated the right to rule and severely jeopardized their right to make money in the short run in the hope of preserving class privilege in the long run.³⁴

Stepan has stumbled here on a central contention of a structural Marxist perspective, which does indeed go beyond Bonapartism: that the state must at times intervene against some of the interests of the bourgeoisie if the long-term prospects for accumulation are to be preserved. However, he manages to find reasons to dismiss such a perspective. Noting that such events are not in themselves unusual, he asserts that 'what is unusual about the Chilean case is that the state was able to persist in this strategy for almost a decade':

The question raised by the Chilean case, then, was how long the state could continue to find support for a project that stood in objective contradiction to the requirements of local capital accumulation. The fact that it did so for as long as it did must be considered a strong challenge to theories of the 'capitalist state'.³⁵

On the contrary, this must be considered the most bizarre argument ever mounted in defence of the superiority of a statist perspective over Marxism. Bonapartism itself lasted more than twice as long, and far from standing in objective contradiction to the requirements of local capital accumulation, the Chilean state project was intended to restore and preserve them. **Stepan's** own informants told him explicitly that a long-term period of authoritarian rule was necessary if their interests were to be protected. In any case, within a structural Marxist perspective one might well expect an authoritarian regime founded in a moment of grave weakness on the part of the bourgeoisie to succeed in overstaying its welcome for a while. It is not surprising, given the terms of the authoritarian constitution, that Pinochet should have survived in power through the 1980s. The Chilean bourgeoisie dispensed with him at the first moment which seemed to be consistent with the continued protection of their class interests against the proletariat.

The impression given by these two contributions is that the enterprise of 'bringing the state back in' is more fruitfully conducted **within** a Marxist frame of reference rather than in opposition to it. This is confirmed by a contribution from **Skocpol's** w-editors, **Dietrich** Rueschemeyer and Peter Evans, which avoids ill-informed polemics with Marxism, declines to pursue the **will-o'-the-wisp** of 'true autonomy', and draws heavily on Marxist theory in its examination of state intervention in the areas of capital accumulation and distribution. Rueschemeyer and Evans distinguish carefully between states in capitalist, pre-capitalist and peripheral capitalist social formations, follow contemporary Marxist analysis in noting the strict limits to the autonomy of any capitalist state, and generally explore real world variations consistent with an overall Marxist framework of analysis. Their judicious summary of the **scope** of their work makes it clear that their concern with the institutional requirements for state capacity supplements rather than replaces a broader theoretical analysis. They depict state intervention as seeking to enable 'capitalist political economies to foster economic growth and manage socio-economic conflicts', note that limits to its capacity to do so may arise from the internal structure of the state and from its relation to the class structure of society, and conclude as follows:

The analysis here has focused on two **propositions** concerning the conditions under which these limitations may be overcome. First, in order to undertake effective interventions, the state must constitute a bureaucratic apparatus with sufficient corporate coherence. Second, a certain degree of autonomy from the dominant interests in a capitalist society is necessary not only to make coherent state action in pursuit of any consistent policy conception possible, but also because some of the competing interests in economy and society, even structurally dominant ones, will have to be sacrificed in order to achieve systemically required "collective goods" that cannot be provided by partial interests. Although our energies have been devoted primarily to modifying these propositions, they have remained substantially supported. %

There is of course room for constructive debate as to the implications of these propositions, and the kinds of theoretical frameworks within which they might best be developed. The first is as much Marxist as Weberian, as Skocpol and **Stepan** attest when they draw on **Marx** and **Engels** respectively on the state, while the second rests primarily on classical and contemporary Marxism. More to the point, given the arbitrary dichotomy set up by Skocpol between grand theory on the one hand and historically sensitive case study analysis on the other, it reflects a commitment to a theoretically informed and historically based method of analysis, a commitment which it shares with classical Marxism and the bulk of contemporary Marxism. It is only by bracketing Marxism **with** contemporary structure-functionalism and refusing to admit the existence of theoretically informed empirical analysis within the Marxist tradition that it is possible to sustain the illusion that the programme of Bringing the **State** Back In, where it is defensible, constitutes either a challenge to Marxism or an advance upon it.

The New Institutionalists

The 'new statism' has now largely given way to a 'new institutionalism' in which the emphasis upon the autonomy of the state has shifted to a more balanced analysis of its relations with society, or more broadly with its environment. Some of its concerns were foreshadowed by Krasner, in a 1984 review of recent writing on the state. He argued that in addition to its concern for the state as 'an actor in its own right', this saw politics more as a problem of rule and control than of allocation; emphasized institutional constraints on individual behaviour; saw current institutional structures as products of past conjunctures, and current paths of change as products of past choices; and rejected the view that structures exist because they perform certain functions in favour of a focus on disjunctures, and stress and uncertainty about the rules of the **game**.³⁷ For the new institutionalists, the polity is a relatively autonomous institutional sphere; institutions tend to persist over time; institutional **codes** and constraints invalidate interpretations of behaviour as rational maximization; change is path-dependent, hence not predictable; and as a consequence, the particular history of processes of change must be explored; and functional explanations for **outcomes** are ruled out. They focus on disparities between environmental and institutional change and between optimal and actual outcomes, and on the institutional shaping of behaviour, and see institutions as mediating between macro and micro phenomena in a complex manner which makes the tracing of simple invariant connections between them impossible. They seek to 'bring politics back in'; and a specific element in the treatment of politics as a relatively independent sphere is a continuing focus upon the state, as the most significant of all social institutions. However, the focus is generally explicitly on state-society relations, and views differ on the extent to which it is possible or appropriate to see the state as an actor. The objective now, it appears, is to 'get inside the state', and explore its internal structure and its complex links with various social actors.

At its best, the new institutionalism raises significant issues, but because it shares the statist's antipathy to 'grand theory', it proves unable to resolve them. Krasner's institutional perspective for the understanding of sovereignty illustrates the **point**.³⁸ His attempt to develop a rigorous analytical framework on the basis of the ideas of institutional persistence and path-dependency breaks down precisely because of his unwillingness to adopt **any** 'grand theoretical' framework. Institutionalization is defined as 'the tendency of behaviour, norms, or formal structures to persist through time', and Krasner argues that 'the basic characteristic of an institutional argument is that prior institutional choices limit available future options'. Thus 'while an institutionalist argument does not maintain that . . . rapid change never occurs', it does imply that such episodes are infrequent and are followed by long periods of either relative **stasis** or path-dependent **change**.³⁹ Here he draws an analogy with 'punctuated equilibrium' in evolutionary theory,

which opposes to the Darwinian view a picture of long periods of **stasis** broken by rapid change in marginal, isolated subspecies, fortuitous adaptation, and a view of structure **as** primary and constraining, rather than permissive of continuous marginal change. Explanation must take into account both structures (institutions) and environmental incentives; change is difficult, as once established a particular institutional structure tends to maintain itself or channel future change; optimal adaptation is not always possible, as choices at one point in time limit future possibilities; historical origin and present utility may require different explanations, as structural features evolved for one reason may later be put to different uses; and explanation rather than prediction ought to be the primary objective of **science**.⁴⁰

In Krasner's work, as among the new institutionalists in general, ideas regarding institutional persistence are generally far more fully elaborated than ideas concerning origins, or change. However, none treats institutions **as** permanent. In each case, we are dealing with a cycle, in which lengthy periods of institutional persistence are broken by rapid change in which old institutions disappear, and new ones originate. Here lies the theoretical problem at the centre of the new institutionalist approach. Until the concept of institutional persistence is located in a broader theoretical framework, it is impossible either to decide whether it reflects successful adaptation or resistance, or whether it challenges or confirms functionality; equally, it is impossible to explain the periods of rapid change which do occur. It remains arbitrary at a macro-structural level. This implies a need to explore not only the roots of institutional persistence, but also its relationship to underlying forces for change, and the conditions under which it will be overcome. In other words, it implies the need for a theory of history. In the absence of one, Krasner cannot move from the idea of institutional persistence to an explanation of change over the longer term; and he admits as much when he notes that his model lacks any mechanism to parallel the role of allotropic speciation in 'punctuated equilibrium' theory. He can explain equilibrium, but not punctuation. In contrast, Marxism does of course have a theory of history, famously laid out in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and one, what is more, which envisages and explains long periods of path-dependent development, interspersed by episodes of rapid change. Krasner's development of the idea of institutional persistence reveals the need for something like it, and suggests that the new institutionalists have yet to produce a coherent theoretical framework.

If at best the new institutionalism confirms the need for an integration of 'grand theory' and detailed empirical investigation, at worst it is simply a retreat from statism. This is best reflected in **Skocpol's** introduction, written jointly with Weir and Orloff, to *The Politics of Social Security in the United States*. This approaches the history of social provision in the United States from an 'institutional-political process' perspective, and in doing so departs from earlier statist arguments:

Many of the puzzles about American social politics left unresolved by . . . alternative theoretical persuasions. . . can be addressed anew from what we shall call an '**institutional-political process perspective**'. This approach examines state formation and the state's institutional structure in both societal and historical context. Political struggles and policy **outcomes** are presumed to be jointly conditioned by the institutional arrangements of the state and by class and other social relationships, but never once and for all. For states and social structures are themselves transformed over time. And so are the goals and capacities of politically active groups, in part **because** of ongoing transformations of political and social structures, and in part because of the effects of earlier state policies on subsequent political struggles and **debates**.⁴¹

This 'post-statist' approach rejects abstract, ahistorical, single-factor or generalizing styles of explanation, but does not claim explanatory primacy either for the state in particular, or for institutions in general. It opts instead for the anodyne concept of 'joint conditioning': rather than a new theoretical framework, it is a decision not to have one at all. In presenting it, Weir, Orloff and Skocpol reject in turn approaches based upon *econormism*, the *logic of industrialism, culture, and class politics*. These approaches are considered separately, and dismissed on narrow grounds in turn, with no effort to assess either the general claims or potential of each individual approach, or their joint explanatory potential. Elements of each are then combined into a new descriptive synthesis, to which nothing is added. Thus

the historical particularities of **U.S.** state formation, *when understood in relationship to capitalist economic development, urbanization, and transformations of liberal values*, explain the distinctive rhythms and limits of American social policy **making** more effectively than do socioeconomic or cultural processes abstracted from the institutional contexts of national politics (emphasis **mine**).⁴²

The institutional-political process perspective collapses here into a statement of the need for an awareness of historical particularity in the analysis of particular historical situations, with *no theoretical* force behind it; its institutional element consists of the assertion that institutional change cannot be explained without reference to institutions. It is neither a coherent theoretical framework, nor an explanation, but rather a descriptive synthesis which borrows from the different explanations which have previously been assessed serially and found wanting, giving no clue as to the theoretical principles upon which explanations should be constructed. Not surprisingly, after all the talk of new approaches, it turns out to be perfectly compatible with class analysis. A footnote informs us that the institutional-political process perspective

is not shared by all the contributors to this volume, but the editors believe that the arguments of all the papers fit within this frame of reference. **Several** contributors also explicitly develop analytical insights consistent with perspectives that emphasize capitalism and class **relations**.⁴³

This candid admission rather gives the game away. As it lacks any theoretical content of its own, the institutional-political process perspective must import some from outside. As it happens, while Weir, Orloff and Skocpol touch on various elements of Marxist argument in their dismissal of approaches

based on **economism**, the logic of industrialism, class politics and culture, they do not consider the potential of a holistic Marxist approach attentive to the issues of accumulation, class struggle and ideology. This would provide an integrated perspective on the issues they dismiss separately then bring together into their own synthesis under the descriptive categories of **economism/logic** of industrialism, class politics, and culture. As far as Marxism is concerned, they proceed by considering elements of a complex whole in isolation, and rejecting them in turn as one-dimensional, only to present as superior a synthesis of those same elements, stripped of any theoretical content.

An example of the same technique on a much grander scale can be found in Hall's study of post-war economic policy in Britain and France, with its focus on the institutional logic of the process of economic intervention in the industrialized democracies. Hall emphasises 'the institutional relationships . . . that bind the components of the state together and structure its relations with society', adding that the concept of institutions refers to the 'formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the polity and **economy**'.⁴⁴ However, as his study develops, the scope of the 'institutional' framework expands to include major organizational or structural variables of an all-embracing kind: 'the organization of labor, the organization of capital, the organization of the state, the organization of the political system, and the structural position of the country within the international **economy**'.⁴⁵ His institutionalism operates on two quite distinctive levels, and incorporates at the second level five major macro-structural variables which encompass the state and the entire social, political and international environment within which it operates. This treatment of all micro-structural and macro-structural elements relating to the state *and* its environment as 'institutional' simply produces a return to a familiar macro-structural style of analysis, with very little that is distinctively 'institutional' about it. The illusion of novelty is created, however, as by Weir, Orloff and Skocpol, by an initial review and rejection of *functionalist* (system) theory, *cultural, public choice, group* (pluralist or class), and *state-centric* approaches, and a subsequent reincorporation of elements of each into a descriptive synthesis. He follows Weir, Orloff and Skocpol in declining to consider an integrated Marxist perspective as an alternative to his own, choosing instead to allocate Marxists variously to the functionalist, cultural and group theory categories. Marxism is then rejected as functionalist in its treatment of accumulation and legitimation, and teleological in its positing of a superordinate 'system' with a status beyond that of the institutions themselves. This portrayal of Marxism, made possible only by an arbitrary scattering of different Marxist approaches between different analytical categories, and a one-sided reading of the work of Poulantzas, provides the cover he needs to present a thoroughly Marxist argument throughout his account, and pass it off as institutionalist.

This is clearest in his handling of the French case. Here he not only adopts a straightforward structural Marxist approach, but also reintroduces the functionalism that had earlier been dismissed:

We might summarize the role of the French Plan by saying that it served two basic purposes. Its primary task was the modernization and reorganization of the nation's productive apparatus. In that respect it was the centre-piece of a strategy of state-led growth. This entailed a measure of economic triage, letting the more inefficient sectors of French industry die – in some cases from exposure to the global market – and strengthening the sectors with apparent competitive potential in manufacturing and agriculture. However, this kind of **activity** inevitably generated social dislocation and resistance. Accordingly the Plan also served a second purpose – to prevent social conflict – a task that was accomplished in three ways: by masking individual loss with the veneer of common interest, by presenting industrial execution as economic euthanasia, and by tying present sacrifice to future gain. These functions were especially important in such a fragmented **society**.⁴⁶

He then follows the logic of structural Marxism, depicting with striking faithfulness in his account of French planning a state that is actually able to foster accumulation and maintain legitimacy. The French state, on Hall's account, was able to take the lead in both economic restructuring and the building of consent. It was able to eliminate inefficient industry and promote new sectors, masking individual loss with the veneer of common interest, and tying present sacrifice to future gain. It was able, in other words, to develop, impose and win support for a long term strategy of economic restructuring aimed at fitting France for a leading place in an increasingly competitive world economy. This was not bound to happen, of course, but Hall has no problem with the fact that it did, or with the resort to functionalist arguments to 'explain' it. In addition, the logic of the comparison of the French and British cases rest squarely on the issue of relative autonomy. In Britain, Hall argues, it was the rule for industry to be asked to rationalize itself, while behind the motif of indicative planning in the French case there lay 'an apparatus with the capacity to put real pressure on private sector actors to conform to the government's economic **strategy**'.⁴⁷ He later goes to some lengths to differentiate his concept of *Etatisme* from the Marxist concept of relative autonomy, on the grounds that the latter term was 'originally intended to describe the independence of the state **vis-à-vis** capital. *Etatisme* refers to a more general kind of independence and power relative to a broader range of social **actors**'.⁴⁸ The distinction is valid, but entirely irrelevant, as Hall's account of the decline of French planning in the 1960s and 1970s does revolve exclusively around the French state's **growing** closeness to capital, and the resulting weakening of the ability to deliver accumulation and legitimacy. He argues that as industrial planning succeeded, the state grew closer to large firms in the most advanced sectors in the periods of the Fifth and Sixth Plans, creating a new joint elite while simultaneously the producers' association, the CNPF, was taken over by the large modern exporting firms who were the big beneficiaries of planning. Its new leaders virtually wrote the Sixth Plan, and the government 'appeared to have abdicated responsibility for socioeconomic

management to one segment of industry'. The state lost legitimacy because 'the ability of the public to regard the state as an independent entity was eroded by the increasingly close connections between the representatives of capital and the state, which the planning process **encouraged**'.⁴⁸ The concept of *étatisme* is no doubt different from that of relative state autonomy, but here it functions strictly as a decoy.

Failing to advance on Marxism, Hall falls short instead. He fails to 'apply to France the 'institutional' approach introduced in his discussion of Britain and in his closing comparative essay – in particular as regards the organization of capital, and the situation of France in the international economy. Had he pursued the analysis, elements which he addresses separately would come together in a single coherent argument: France, more than most other leading Western economies, emerged into the mid-twentieth century with a relatively large peasantry and fragmented bourgeoisie in which small capital had a particularly prominent role. Determined to put the French economy on a level with its international competitors, the leaders of the French state embarked on a programme of planned industrialization. Responding to changes in the French economy and in the international market, the planning process came to concentrate on the largest and most advanced exporting firms. This was essential if the process of accumulation was to continue; but it had negative effects for legitimation. Hence planning was undermined by the contradictions it generated. The virtue of a holistic perspective of this kind is that it reveals the structural constraints arising essentially as a consequence of France's late industrial modernization in a global economy increasingly dominated by large multinational corporations. Without it, it is impossible to decipher the significance of state penetration of the private sector, or private sector **penetration** of the state, **with** which Hall is greatly concerned.

The significance of this analysis, beyond its direct implications for the status of Hall's argument, is that it confirms the conclusions reached above with regard to the indeterminacy of an institutionalist perspective if it is not set in a broader macro-structural theoretical framework. Hall's intuitive analytical strategy illuminates the issue with painful clarity. At exactly the point where his micro-level institutionalism, focussed on 'formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices' loses explanatory power, he switches to a macro-level institutionalism which turns out to be an integrated Marxist perspective informed by class and structural logic. As he appears unaware of the nature of this break in his argument, and unable in consequence to draw full benefit from it, there could be no more compelling demonstration of the need for a broad macro-structural theory, and the ability of Marxism to provide one.

Finally, I turn to a quite different strain of institutionalism, which has developed under the influence of rational choice theory and methodological individualism, exemplified here by Margaret **Levi's Of Rule and Revenue**.⁵⁰

Levi focusses on individuals (rulers) rather than structures (states), and offers the central hypothesis that 'rulers maximize the revenue accruing to the state subject to the constraints of their relative bargaining power, transaction costs, and discount rates'.⁵¹ Her theoretical framework emerges out of and breaks with a Marxist perspective, and she is precise as to the manner in which it does so. She argues that the Marxist tradition provides 'the best guidance for determining the most significant macro-level variables affecting a political economic system', and notes that her central perspective has some affinity with classical Marxism in that

dilemmas of predatory rule are consistent with the primary contradiction of economic development as put forward by Marx and Engels: The property rights that serve the dominant interests of society come into conflict over time with innovations in technology and economic organization and with the new and powerful classes these innovations create.⁵²

However, 'the theory of predatory rule differs from the classical Marxist approach in its focus on rulers rather than on the dominant economic class'; by eliminating the emphasis on class as the primary historical actor and undertaking instead the investigation of individuals, it gains more general application. In sharp contrast to the other institutionalists reviewed here, she adopts an uncompromisingly 'statist' perspective, albeit at the level of the ruler as individual, and claims universal applicability for her 'theory of predatory rule': state actors have interests of their own; they are not 'simply handmaidens of the dominant economic class or other influential actors. They will act in their own interests when and if they **can**'; rulers are predatory in that 'they try to extract as much revenue **as** they can from the **population**'.⁵³

Levi asserts that by down-grading class from a prime mover to a variable among other variables she broadens the scope of her theory, but in doing so she glosses over the fact that if the theory is proposed as universal, class, and the rise of capitalism, become variables which make no difference. Whatever the historical context, rulers continue to maximize revenues, subject to structurally invariant constraints. The model is intended to have universal validity, from ancient Rome to contemporary Australia: to be applicable to all rulers and all societies in which the raising of revenue occurs, be they elected prime ministers or absolute monarchs, modern capitalist economies or ancient empires. I shall suggest here, taking the case study of the 1799 English tax reform as illustrative, that on her own evidence it does not apply to any capitalist society. Far from being a successful generalization which supplants Marxism, the theory of predatory rule is an over-generalization which confirms the wisdom of the historicity of Marxism. In its effort to be universal, it obscures the particular logic of capitalist society that a Marxist analysis captures.

A simple Marxist hypothesis to pose against **Levi's** universalizing logic is that as societies become more fully characterized by capitalist relations of production, and more subject to the logic of capitalist accumulation, the

taxation policies of rulers are likely to change to reflect the new logic of social reproduction, the class alliances supporting them, and the structural implications of their stances with regard to accumulation and legitimation. This makes more sense of the imposition of income tax in Britain in 1799 than **Levi's** own account is able to do. She claims that it 'demonstrates that even rulers reluctant to maximize revenue are compelled to choose policies that increase returns to the **state**',⁵⁴ but a close analysis suggests that it does so in a way that supports a structural **Marxist** interpretation over her own.

The circumstances in which William Pitt the Younger introduced income tax were exceptional. Costly wars had put the state under severe fiscal pressure. Mounting national debt repayments were eating increasingly into what revenues were available. The American colonies had been recently lost. Napoleon, at the head of the new fighting machine that had emerged in the wake of the French Revolution, declared war at this juncture. Levi explains that

Those in Parliament shared the popular consensus that French aggression posed a **particularly** severe **risk**. They feared that the French would **strip** Britain of her commercial advantages and that French **radical** ideologies would incite an **already** restless British populace to rebellion. Landed interests sensed a threat to their own social and material well-being and were generally willing to **cooperate** to repel the enemy. ⁵⁵

The introduction of income tax clearly reflected the logic of class interests, **as** related to the twin issues of accumulation and legitimation. Whatever Pitt's 'own' interests were, they do not seem to have differed from those of the societal groups Levi **persistently** presents **as** the source of 'constraints' on the predatory ambitions of rulers. In fact Levi rounds off the study with the observation that

Pitt's personal aims were neither to build a bigger state nor to extract **all** the revenue that **could** in principle be extracted. He believed in a limited state that carried out its limited **responsibilities** efficiently. **After all**, he was a self-professed follower of Adam Smith. . . . War compelled **Pitt** to become a revenue maximizer. He sought the income tax because it was the most lucrative available means for producing revenue. However, he came to this policy reluctantly. The logic of institutional change – the necessary evolution of the state to meet new demands within a changed economy – required that, whatever his personal goals, he, as chief executive, maximize revenue to the **state**.⁵⁶

This statement alone comprehensively refutes her claim to have produced a superior analytical alternative to Marxism. It flatly contradicts the central organizing claim of the theory of predatory rule, as it shows that Pitt's 'personal' aims were sacrificed when he moved to maximize revenues to the state. But as the preceding argument has made clear, although Levi is silent on the point here, war was seen as necessary to preserve the developing capitalist system. Pitt's acceptance of the need to make war on France was perfectly consistent with Smith's doctrines with regard to the role of the state – whose liberalism specifically endorsed the state's responsibility

for national defence – and with the view that the state should normally minimize its revenue demands. Pitt did not consistently seek to maximize revenue. On the contrary, his attitude to revenue-raising varied directly, on this account, in accordance with the requirements of the developing national capitalist economy. Here as elsewhere, the case study suggests that revenue maximization is a feature of "abnormal times", and a sign of crisis. This suggests in turn that **Levi** is as much in need of a theory of history as the new institutionalists reviewed above, but less likely to see the need because of her determination to present her argument as good for all times. She does acknowledge at one point, as a limitation of the model, that 'the analysis of ruler behavior becomes considerably more difficult in modern polities or where rulers are a collection of individuals rather than a single **individual**'.⁵⁷ There is a simple reason for this. In modern (capitalist) polities, rulers have no personal or macro (systemic) reasons to give priority as a rule to the maximization of revenues. Forms and levels of revenue raising, and patterns of expenditure, will vary in accordance with the logic of class struggle and capitalist reproduction. Where rulers develop an interest in the maximization of revenue for personal gain, we are in the realm of delinquency, as we were, on **Levi's** account, in late Republican Rome.

Conclusion

In their different ways, Krasner's attempt to provide a framework for institutional analysis, Weir, **Skocpol** and **Orloff's** attempt to establish an institutional-political process perspective, Hall's attempt to provide an institutional analysis of British and French economic development, and **Levi's** attempt to formulate a universal theory of predatory rule, all end in failure. They do so, like the statisticians and just as ironically in view of their self-conscious antagonism to Marxism, in ways which suggest the strength of a Marxist perspective. This is in almost every case a consequence of two simple errors. The first is the polarisation of theory on the one hand and history on the other, as in the rejection of grand theory in favour of historically situated case studies, and the treatment of Marxism as functionalist and teleological, which rules out the possibility of a dialectical theory of history, and recognition of Marxism as one such theory. The second is a failure to approach Marxist commentaries on the state in the context of the wider corpus of Marxist theory, from which they cannot be detached. A decade ago, when contemporary Marxist theory was much in vogue, it was impossible to pretend that classical and contemporary Marxism had not addressed the issue of the state. Hence the recognition of these debates, distorted though it is, in the work of the first new statisticians. Ten years on, intellectual fashions have changed, memories have faded, and Marxism can be ignored or caricatured with greater ease. However, the shelf life of competing theories appears to be shorter with each new candidate. The

works reviewed above fail to establish a viable alternative to Marxism, and the most intellectually substantial of them – Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*, Krasner's *Defending the National Interest* and his institutional perspective on sovereignty, and **Levi's** *Of Rule and Revenue*, precisely because they make the most serious effort to do so, point the way most clearly back to Marxism.

NOTES

1. A. **Stepan**, *The State and Society: Peru In Comparative Perspective*, Princeton, 1978, p. xi.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–24.
4. S. **Krasner**, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and US Foreign Policy*, Princeton, 1978, p. 12. In what follows, I summarise a fuller discussion in P. Cammack, 'Bringing the State Back In?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 19, 1989, pp. 269–274.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 332–3.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 333.
7. T. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 13.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 13.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–6.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–28.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
13. E. Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State*, Cambridge, Mass., 1981.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–48.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 175–180.
18. M. Löwy, 'The Poetry of the Past': Marx and the French Revolution', *New Left Review*, 177, September–October 1989, p. 114.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
21. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, pp. 47 and 99.
22. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in K. Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848*, ed. D. Fernbach, London, 1973, p. 71.
23. Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, p. 60.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 174–5.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
26. K. Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in K. Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, ed. D. Fernbach, London, 1973, p. 237.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 243 and pp. 244–5.
28. P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the State Back In*, New York, 1985. I summarise and extend here arguments developed in P. Cammack, 'Bringing the State Back In?', *op. cit.*
29. T. Skocpol, 'Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research', in Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol, eds, *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 6.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
32. K. **Finegold**, 'From Agrarianism to Adjustment: The Political Origins of New Deal Agricultural Policy', *Politics & Society*, 11, 1982, p. 25.
33. A. **Stepan**, 'State Power and the Strength of Civil Society in the Southern Cone of Latin America', in P. Evans et al., eds, *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 318.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 324.
36. D. Rueschemeyer and P. Evans, 'The State and Economic Transformation: Toward an Analysis of the Conditions Underlying Effective Intervention', in P. Evans, et al., *Bringing the State Back In*, p. 68.
37. S. Krasner, 'Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics', *Comparative Politics*, 16, 2, 1984, pp. 224-5.
38. S. Krasner, 'Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective', *Comparative Political Studies*, 21, 1, April 1988.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 74.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
41. M. Weir, A. Orloff and T. Skocpol, 'Understanding American Social Politics', in Weir, Orloff and Skocpol, eds, *The Politics of Social Security in the United States*, Chicago, 1988, pp. 16-17.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
43. *Ibid.*, ft. 29, p. 17.
44. P. **Hall**, *Governing the Economy: The Politics of State Intervention in Britain and France*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 19.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 162.
48. *Ibid.*, ft. 1, p. 288.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 176-7.
50. M. Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue*, Berkeley, 1988.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 38.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 39.