

Week 4. February 8, 2017
Goran Therborn – What does the ruling class do when it rules, part II

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Conceptual distinctions in need of clarification.

I thought it would be good this time to begin by marching through the core concepts in this part of the book and be sure we understand them all. Some of these appear in interrogations, as indicated:

- Four effects of exercise of state power: further, maintain, go against, break (147) (Sarah, Janaina)
- Class character of state power (161) (Loren)
- Two processes of determination of superstructure by base: logic of mode of production & class struggle (162)
- Reproduction of a society (163, 164)
- Four axes of determination of state power (162)
- State power as Representation and mediation (169, 181) (Youbin, Masoud)
- Why does “equality before the law” reproduce class domination? (170)
- Mechanisms of reproduction: sanctions through economic constraint, violence, ideological excommunication (174) (Kaan)
- Contradiction of Domination and execution (176) [Samina]
- Contradiction of subjection and qualification (177)

One hold-over agenda item from last week:

1. Therborn claims that “bureaucracy, technocracy and representative democracy need to be smashed” and b) that “cadre organization” and “mass involvement according to political line” constitute their replacement in a socialist state. Is this convincing? (Kris)

-
2. **Ideology.** What is the role of ideology in the analysis of state power? (Benny, Kurt)
 3. **Globalization and state power:** does this affect the basic argument? How does globalization affect the possibility of mediation? (Pete, Courtney, Youbin)
 4. **State power as effects:** How should we understand the matrix of effects of state power on p.147? (Sarah) Is the restriction to immediate effects legitimate – what about unintended effects more generally? (Janaina)
 5. **The class character of the state:** Is it really safe to say that “*by definition*, every state has a class character, and every class society has a ruling class (or bloc of ruling classes)” (Loren)
 6. **Mediation and Representation.** In the analysis of representation and mediation does Therborn basically slide from a structuralist analysis to an instrumentalist analysis of the state? (Masoud)
 7. **Overall argument:** Is there a way of distilling the diverse themes in part II into a simple, overarching argument? (Griffin)
 8. Usefulness of the framework:
 - Would someone interested in understanding the details of state policies over a given period be well equipped with Therborn’s theory (Kris)
 - What is most useful from the book for Left governments (eg. Syriza)? (Pete – from last week)