

## Interrogations #4. Jessop: The State. Part I

February 16, 2017

### 1. Aaron Yarmel

Jessop gives us the following definition of “state”: “The core of the state apparatus comprises a relatively unified ensemble of socially embedded, socially regularized, and strategically selective institutions and organizations [Staatsgewalt] whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society [Staatsvolk] in a given territorial area [Staatsgebiet] in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community identified with that territory [Staatsidee]. (Adapted from Jessop 1990: 341)” (49). I am interested in the following question: if we understand state-ness as a variable, then how should we distinguish state ensembles from the state-like entities that exist above (e.g., “emergent state-like institutions”) or below the typical examples of nation-states?

One possibility is to simply reject the question by saying that towns, villages, US states, nation-states, and multi-national entities all exist on a spectrum of state-ness, and that there is no reason to put nation-states in an entirely separate category (e.g., perhaps they just happen to exist in one region of the spectrum). Another possibility is to say that, although there is a continuum of state-like entities, only modern nation-states exist on this spectrum—though they have varying degrees of state-ness. For example, the Catholic Church has some of the criteria of state-ness, but it does not act “in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community identified” with a territory. Therefore it fails to exist on the spectrum at all. US states may be a trickier case, as it is not clear whether the supremacy clause kicks them off the spectrum (e.g., it could threaten the sense in which their decisions are binding) or keeps them on the spectrum and merely gives them a much lower state-ness score than a proper nation-state would have.

**Commented [EW1]:** I think the standard treatment of this problem would be regard these as lower tiers of a layered state. They are part of “the state” insofar as they also make binding decisions, etc., but they are not super-ordinate; they have specific jurisdictions.

**Commented [EW2]:** The Catholic church is an instance where an entity has a degree of stateness – the territoriality issue is absent (except in the Vatican itself), but it has other state-like properties. But I don’t see why U.S. states pose any problem at all: they exist in a territorially organized state apparatus with a territorially differentiated structure of jurisdictional responsibilities. They do not have less stateness; they are just part of a state.

### 2. Janaina Saad

My question this week is one of clarification. *What does Jessop mean by “strategic selectivity” (p. 55)?* In suggesting that “structures are only strategically selective” (p.55) he seems to attribute agency (strategy) to structures—which was a bit puzzling to me. Perhaps we can take some time in class to clarify this concept.

**Commented [EW3]:** The basic idea here is that the structures make some strategies easy and others hard; they create obstacles and opportunities for agents to adopt different strategies. When this selectivity also happens to make the strategies that are in the interests of capitalists easy and those opposed to capitalist hard, then the selectivity can be seen as having a class bias. When those biases add up to selectivity that is functional for “capital in general” (i.e. the reproduction of capitalism as a system), then you have a functional state.

### 3. Benny Witkovsky

On page 55, as he is building the outline for his definition of the state as a relation, Jessop makes two core claims. First, that “structures are only *strategically selective* rather than *absolutely constraining*” so that opportunities exist for action to subvert, challenge or change structures. Second, that actors are “never fully aware of the conditions that affect strategic action, never fully equipped to engage in strategic reflection and learning,” and so “there are no guarantees that they will largely realize their strategic goals.”

**Commented [EW4]:** Of course, even if they were 100% aware of the nature of the constraints there would be no guarantee of success in realizing goals. They can be aware of conditions that affect strategy and there can still be uncertainty about success.

If I am reading the chapter that follows correctly this claim about the structure/agent relationship is central to his theories about the state as a relationship. But, unless I missed it, Jessop never really gives evidence to support this claim. Are we supposed to simply take it as a given that structures are never absolute and actors never fully aware? Are there moments where either side approaches that end, then what happens? Does his concept of the state as a relation depend completely on this notion of the limited capacity of both sides? More importantly, is there a way to evaluate this claim empirically or create a scale by which we understand the relative constraint of a structure and the relative power of an actor?

**Commented [EW5]:** For a structure to be absolutely constraining it would have to be the case that agents cannot make strategic choices – there is only one thing that they can do. I think it is a reasonable assumption that structures don't work this way for human agents, so the issue is the degree of selectiveness and what – if any systemic biases – are built into the selectivity.

#### 4. Courtney Deisch

My interrogation of Jessop begins on page 2, where Jessop initially introduces the fourth element to his definition of the state as “the sources of its legitimation in state projects”. The obvious question here is what is the source of this stated legitimacy of the state project? Who is imbuing the state with its legitimacy? This question seems to be answered by Jessop's idea of the *Staatsidee*: “in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community”(47). This concept is not meant to imply that the state necessarily acts in regard of the common interest or general will of the people. Rather, Jessop relies upon the importance of discourse; it is through the state's ability to create a hegemonic discourse of the state's ability and intent to act in accordance to the common interest of the people that the state achieves legitimacy. This creates a few more problems. 1) In order for hegemony to be successfully created, a discourse must emerge strategically. Who has the agency to produce this strategic discourse, recognizing the state is not a subjective actor in and of itself? 2) the *Staatsidee* seems to imply that legitimacy, here defined, is imbued by the people who accept the hegemonic discourse of the state's intent. How can the level of acceptance of this hegemonic discourse be measured? What level of its acceptance is necessary in order to claim the legitimacy of the state?

**Commented [EW6]:** I think Jessop invokes intellectuals for this task, in a rather Gramscian way. He invokes all sorts of organizational settings (think tanks, etc.) for the strategic production of this sort of vision, state idea, etc.

**Commented [EW7]:** Probably we can think of this as matter of degree – states vary in the extent to which actors actually feel it is acting in the general interest. But note – and I think this is important – even where there is a lot of skepticism about the state acting this way, politicians continue to claim that it does – and opposition politicians claim that they will put things right. Both Trump and his critics claim to be acting in the general interest and criticizing their opponents for acting for “special interests”.

#### 5. Youbin Kang

Thinking about legitimization: Jessop takes Abram's thematization of the state (p.17-18) to articulate the need of social scientists to demystify the reified account of the state as a unitary entity separated from society. This motivation informs the various paradoxes of the relationship between state and society (p.89-90), in which states balance the political fiction and reality that comprise its ensemble. Reflecting this, he discusses, through form analysis how capital as a leading logic, the capitalist state is able to implement various “institutional, spatiotemporal, and social fixes” or hegemonic strategies to subordinate it to capital. In this sense, it makes perfect sense the legitimizing role that the *capitalist type of state* assumes to rationalize its policies. It is less clear to me, how we can think of the same process of rationalization/legitimation when we think about the *state in capitalist society*, as it seems that state capacities are not primarily concerned with the capitalistic bias, and the balance of forces are not necessarily capitalistic in nature. Without the active role of rationalizing, or creating a political fiction of the account of the state, I am unsure of how to think about the state, as comprised of “class power as instrumental and transparent” (p.116).

**Commented [EW8]:** Jessop is unusual in arguing that the state is both a state in capitalist society and a capitalist type of state (as well as a patriarchal type of state and various other crystallizations). Legitimation issues arise from all of these features of actual states. He rejects the idea that in a capitalist society states will inevitably be, above all else, a capitalist type of state – the weight of those formal properties will be variable.

## 6. Tamara Wattnam

I think it would be helpful for us to clarify two issues that seem to be central in this first section of the book. First, why does Jessop argue that he prefers a "strategic relational approach" to analyses of the state? Second, what are the implications and importance of the 4th element he adds to his proposed definition of the state, i.e. the "state idea"?

**Commented [EW9]:** This can really only be answered with respect to alternative approaches. Basically, I think, he feels that all other approaches are one-sided exaggerations of one or another element of the SRA – other approaches are either too agent-centered or too structured-centered, rather than understanding the interplay of structure and agency. "Agency" becomes "strategy" in SRA, because of the relational character of agents actions.

## 7. Kaan Jittiang

In Part I of *the State*, Bob Jessop interestingly begins his discussion of the state by identifying six approaches in which state could be studied. However, for him, it seems that the most appropriate approach should be the one that could singularly combine all other approaches. This accordingly leads him to suggest the four-element approach as the starting point for the analysis of the state.

The four elements in Jessop's approach are *state apparatus*, *state population*, *state territory* and *state discourse* or *political imaginary of the state*. To him, these elements are significant, interrelated and make the *modern* state to realize 'statehood.' Jessop explains the relationship between all the four elements adapting from his work in 1990 (p.49):

The core of the state apparatus comprises relatively unified ensemble of socially embedded, socially regularized, and strategically selective institutions and organizations [*Staatsgewalt*] whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society [*Staatsvolk*] in a given territorial area [*Staatsgebiet*] in the name of the common interest or general will of an imagined political community identified with that territory [*Staatsidee*].

While this approach to the state is very interesting especially since it allows us to see the state in several dimensions at the very same time, I am wondering how useful and relevant this approach is in the study of the state in recent days given that the book is published in 2016.

- 1) I recognize that this framework of Jessop is primarily drawn from the experience of European states and therefore when he characterizes the state as *modern* state, it, for me, seems to refer to *western state* but not state elsewhere, especially those in Asia and Africa.
- 2) Even if the four elements of statehood that Jessop suggests may compose most states in Africa and Asia, it is noticeable that in many of those countries old-fashioned elements of state (which some of them, such as such as *Lese Majeste*, according to Jessop p.23 is absorbed in to the crime of sedition against the government but it actually hasn't in many countries), remains prevalent and enforced, sometimes not only to members of such society but also to members of other society. Thus, despite realizing statehood, many states in Asia retain the loose idea of *L'Etat, c'est moi*. How could the four-element approach resolve a tension between *old* and *modern* state?

**Commented [EW10]:** Interesting idea – predatory warlord states certainly do not have all four elements fully realized.

- 3) Could we really do what Jessop asks us to do, “removing the sovereign state from its privileged position in political analysis” (p.51)? Without the discussion of its sovereignty, how would we be able to understand the relationship between states with all four elements but is without internationally recognized status, such as Palestine, with other sovereign nations? Could we exclusively look into such state itself to really understand its politics?

**Commented [EW11]:** I think what he means here is more that we should abandon the idea of the state as a coherent, unitary entity – an actor. The idea of the sovereign state is derived from the pre-modern state of the King as The Sovereign – which was understood as an actor. That is why he invokes the metaphor of “cutting off the king’s head”.

#### 8. Griffin JM Bur

I found a great deal to agree with in Jessop’s book, especially Chapter Three, which helped me cohere a lot of nagging questions I’ve had for a while about various Marxian theories of the state.

A lot of this was brought into focus for me by the recently-revived discussion about the role of “real abstraction” in Marx’s thought (as opposed to “formal abstraction”). One of the strengths of Marx’s account of the capitalist mode of production, in my mind, is that it is relatively unreliant on the procedure of formal abstraction as I understand it: isolating certain common properties of various diverse phenomena (this may not be the only definition of this term, but this is how I understand it following latter-day Marxian philosophers such as Tony Smith and C.J. Arthur). Instead, Marx generates his account of the CMP by identifying a *social* process that actually confers a (relatively) homogeneous character on the societies that incorporated into it, an “abstracting” process that takes place in social life in addition to taking place in the process of analysis (viz., market competition and the profit imperative).

**The upshot is that many discussions of the capitalist state seem to me to lose sight of this fruitful methodological procedure,** an oversight that might be the source of some of the many dense typologies of the state that we’ve encountered already (something Jessop also does)—these do capture many salient features of capitalist states but they do so through a process that amounts, in my mind, to the elaboration of ever more characteristics of the state through the process of formal abstraction.

**My question is: do other people find Jessop’s key moves *against* that tendency as compelling as I do? I think he makes two very important arguments about this: first, he disavows attempts to assume the existence of some distinct object called “the state” or some property of “stateness” and then to elaborate its powers--“state theory cannot take the state for granted as an analytical object” (46; he goes so far as to say that “the state cannot exercise power” but rather “its powers...are activated”, 56).** This seems to me to be a crucial move that recovers one of Marx’s key, if somewhat obvious, methodological insights—to not assume the existence of objects as they exist in ideology but to investigate the social relations that produce the existence of those ideas and to then assess how well the ideas capture the social relations (Jessop goes out of his way to remind us that the state, in addition to being a critical category mobilized by Marxist scholars, was also a key reference point in feudalism, and then nascent bourgeois, social thought—and thus should not be taken over uncritically).

**Second, having cleared the path of the bad tendency to “state reification” (mostly in Chapter Two), Jessop moves to a positive account of the state not as an external object that acts on, or is acted on, by capitalism, but fleshes out the tantalizing concept of the state as social relation that we meet with in Therborn (and which he attributes to Poulantzas, 54).** I’ll spare the reader an exhaustive retelling of his account, in part because I think I only understand its broad outlines, but I’m especially taken by his account of the state almost as an emergent property of capitalist society—a “repository” of

**Commented [EW12]:** But is this anything other than a claim about the *realism of the mechanisms* posited in the abstraction? That is, to say that there are social processes that “confer a relatively homogeneous character of the societies that incorporate into it” is just to say that we have successfully identified common real mechanisms present in all societies we identify as “capitalist”, and that these mechanisms generate real effects, which is why they are alike in the relevant ways. Is there anything else being claimed here?

**Commented [EW13]:** By “formal” do you mean “logical” or “deductive” from some premise? Jessop does a *form* analysis – an analysis of the form of something; but this doesn’t mean that the process of concept formation used to define these characteristics is simply a logical-deductive one, rather than one based on identifying real mechanisms

**Commented [EW14]:** I think the pivot here is the active verb “exercise”: structures aren’t the sort of things that exercise anything; agents exercise powers, but they get those powers from the state. The state has powers – “its powers” – but the state as such can’t “do” anything.

social relations that seems deeply important to capitalist societies but whose separation from those societies--as a neutral arbiter, mere instrument of capital, etc.--is taken for granted by uncritical accounts. Jessop's account reminded me a lot of his interlocutor Simon Clarke, whom I'm very fond of, and who stresses the fact that the differentiation of the political and the economic spheres is not a "natural" feature of capitalist society (because capitalist society, like all human societies, is in reality an integrated whole) but one produced by the unique features of capitalist society. This doesn't mean, as Jessop carefully recognizes, that this differentiation is merely illusory or unimportant, but it does mean that "the state effect" is *produced* and should be understood and investigated that way. **I really like this argument and would like to hear other people's "takes".**

### 9. Loren Peabody

I'd like to talk about Jessop's critique of the concepts of 'power' and 'relative autonomy' as I was having trouble following his argument and appreciating its implications (pp. 91-93). He argues that "there is no such thing as 'power in general'" (p. 92) by dismissing its helpfulness as either something to be explained or something to do explanatory work. In the latter case, if one were to ask, "why was X able to do Y?," then to reply that "because X has power" is circular. In the former, if one were to ask, "why does X have capacities to act?," then X's 'power' would get explained away as one specified further the mechanisms that enable X's actions. Does he want us to dispense with using the concepts of 'power' and 'relative autonomy' to explain other phenomena? Or is he saying an explanation that doesn't specify the source of power or autonomy is incomplete?

### 10. Kris Arsaelsson

Jessop says about power, that "as *explanans*, 'power' lacks independent status in causal analysis" which is either "without content" or "redundant once research reveals the substantive mechanism" of the signified power (p. 92). He goes on to deny the existence of "'power in general'" and that the key task is to "establish the weight of different sets of particular powers and how they combine." The argument, as I understand it, is that power is simply too abstract to really capture how different capacities/resources affect outcomes given certain mechanism, which I found very convincing. In fact, even though Jessop emphasizes a "polymorphous" and "polycontextual" approach to the state, I often found his definitions at a similarly high level of abstraction and without a clear exposition of 'mechanisms.' How would we, for example, operationalize "dominant principle of societal organization" (p. 43-44) or "natural governing party or parties" (and/or their crisis) (p. 83) and fit them into a causal model? If we take Jessop's polymorphous and -contextual approach seriously and demand conceptual precision and the spelling out mechanisms, what level of abstraction is appropriate; level of analysis necessary for causal identification? It seems at least possible, from Jessop's broad overview, that causal models where "the state" is an explanans can become exceedingly complicated and requiring detailed comparable measurements (which for practical reasons can be very problematic).

**Commented [EW15]:** It is certainly a "whole"; how "integrated" this whole is is another matter.

**Commented [EOW16]:** What is really at stake in making the distinction between saying "X is a natural feature of capitalist society" and "X is produced by the unique features of capitalist society"? Why isn't something produced by the unique features of capitalism itself a natural feature of capitalism -- where "features" include things produced "uniquely" by capitalism? You're putting a lot of weight on the idea that something is produced; but that doesn't mean it isn't a predictable, inherent feature of the system in which it is produced. Could you have capitalism without this differentiation?

**Commented [EOW17]:** I think he is saying that unless you specify the capacities involved you haven't provided an explanation. I think he is being a little precious with his use of words here. To say that a particular agency is powerful means that it is able to accomplish things. Of course it has to use means to do that accomplishing, and saying it is powerful is a shorthand for saying it has the necessary means, but it is perfectly good shorthand in most cases.

**Commented [EOW18]:** I think the criticism is that the term is too vague, and that the plural form makes more sense -- powers -- because it emphasizes the heterogeneity. The issue of vague vs precise is not quite the same as abstract vs concrete, or simple vs complex. Vague would mean that the concept specifies no mechanism rather than an abstract description of a mechanism, where that level of abstraction is still explanatory. Why did a person die? He died from an illness. That is too vague to be useful since "illness" as such covers too many utterly different mechanisms. (Although perhaps there are special contexts where the point is to distinguish dying from an illness of whatever sort from some non-illness reason for dying, eg. being murdered). Illness is explanatory in a weak sense -- it identifying the set of possible mechanism involved.

### 11. Sarah Farr

I am interested in Jessop's discussion about delimiting state vs. non-state domains (p. 47-49). He writes: "A key aspect of statecraft and governmentality is how they (re)define some issues as private, technical, or managerial, removing them from overtly political decision making and contentious politics." (47).

Here, he is talking both about spheres of action, but also ideas like territorial borders. Civil society arises out of this struggle of definitions/limitations, but is also not separate from the state. The boundaries, he says, need constant policing and maintenance. Politicization extends the boundaries of the state's realm, while depoliticization rolls them back. I am trying to wrap my head around a couple of things: 1) what is civil society and how does it fall into Jessop's four-part definition of the state? 2) How are the boundaries of state domain drawn? I think his discussion of state power is important here, particularly his nuanced understanding of structure and agency (p. 54-59). Who are the boundary drawers? Who are the boundary policers? How might we expect these boundaries to reflect certain state characteristics of the state? 3) What does depoliticization (rolling back of state domain) mean in terms of the four-part definition? If private actors are not necessarily separate from the state, how do we even recognize the roll-back of state domain?

**Commented [EOW19]:** Jessop's discussion here – like Gramsci's on which it is built – is definitely slippery and confusing; certainly awkward. Gramsci defines the *integral* state as political+civil society – the state in the inclusive sense. Normally when people talk about The State then mean the state in a restrictive sense. But since it is the state is a relation, not a thing, and the relations involve binding rules on actors in civil society, and the effects of the state – its effects on class domination/reproduction – include its effects on the way actors in civil society conduct their affairs, then it would seem that civil society is a dimension of the state itself.

Personally, I think it would be better to say that civil society is an arena of struggle and power which is connected to the state through webs of relations rather than to say it is included within the concept of the state.

### 12. Kurt Kuehne

"Parties no longer act as intermediaries between the state and civil society—intermediaries sustained by a party press and broadcasting media. On the contrary, the state is now the intermediary between civil society and the parties. For access to state funds, patronage, public media and independent media regulated by the state, and other state resources is crucial for the survival of parties and their ability to reward party members" (p. 79)." **How you do interpret the relationship between state and party? That is, which one is serving as the intermediary between the other and civil society?**

I'm tempted to view parties as the intermediary, at least in the U.S. context. As Jessop notes, parties rally participation, reduce the complexity by "packaging" policy into programmes, and generally serve as an ideological conduit. On the other hand, there are many states in which party and state authority is rather difficult to disentangle. I'm particularly curious about whether or not it's ever reasonable to conflate state and party, even in one-party or dominant-party systems like China, Vietnam, Malaysia, or Singapore. Should we have different conceptual models for understanding the state-party relationship in multi-party, two-party, and one-party systems—or is it fair to say that parties always perform effectively the same function, regardless of the number of viable parties or the overall system of government (e.g., totalitarian, authoritarian democracy, liberal democracy)?

**Commented [EOW20]:** I think his point is more general than the cases you cite – like China, etc. In Germany, parties receive direct state funding to pay for research institutes connected to the party – the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation is a state funded institute of the Left Party; the Adenaur Institute for the Christian Democrats. The extent to which the state regulates the rules through which parties act, then the state gets in between citizens and parties.

In regard to the three elements of the state—the state apparatus, state territory, and state population—I appreciate Jessop' emphasis on the state's "population" rather than "citizens" or "national subjects." State authority is not only imposed upon its legal citizens/nationals, nor only within its territory. Jessop makes the important point, therefore, that state power to award citizenship and nationality is a critical mechanism for defining inclusion/exclusion, legal recognition, legitimate claims to rights and resources, and the like. A great deal of literature is framed in the language of "state-citizen relations," but this is a misleading and incomplete framing.

### 13. Pete Ramand

The SRA highlights the “strategic context of action” and the “transformative power of actions” where structure constrains agents differentially (pp. 54-5). Jessop work, for the most part, at a high level of abstraction.

What would it look like to operationalize the Strategic Relational Approach for empirical investigation today?

### 14. Masoud Movahed

Bob Jessop sketches four tasks that he wishes to accomplish in *The State: Past, Present, Future*: 1) to outline six strategies for analyzing the state and state power; 2) to define the state in a way that captures its heterogeneity and variability; 3) to construct a semantic and discursive framework of the state; and 4) to reflect on various aspects of modern states, especially in the context of capitalism.

As a ‘plain or non-dogmatic Marxist’ (p.97), Jessop insists that the state is not a “thing”, but “social relations”. For Jessop, the social relation of the ‘state power’ cannot be understood independently from “class power,” and therefore, it is ‘a mediated effect of the changing balance among *all* forces in a given situation’ (p.96). This includes those forces from outside of the state as well as within and between different parts of it. Jessop argues that states exist at many sites and scales and undertake a whole panoply of tasks, and thus they are both polymorphous and polycontextual’ (p.44). For example, threats to the most general function of the state namely “maintaining social cohesion” in a divided society are not exclusively grounded in class relations. Jessop thus adopts a “strategic-relational approach to social power” in order to resolve **this** theoretical discrepancy (p.39).

Jessop adds a forth element “the nature and purposes of state action (p.10) to the seemingly conventional approach oriented to the relationship between state’s territory, apparatus, and population.’ Towards the end of part 1, he talks about a fascinating type of analysis that relies less on the state’s formal constitution than its historical constitution—a more “**historical and agent-centered account**” (p.91). This is an area I would like to get to more clarity on and my guess is that Jessop has more to say about it in part 2 of the book as he further delves into the genealogy of states.

### 15. Samina Hossain

Mass communications is a modern phenomenon that complicates the relations that make up a state. A good illustration of this is the political party, which must balance its dual role in governing the general population *and* in representing particular interests. Borrowing from the analysis of Hall (1983), Jessop claims that the mass media’s takeover of mass parties as an intermediary between the people and politicians is contributing to “an atrophy of the public sphere”, whereby the press “remakes public opinion”, rather than reflecting it (pg. 80). While acknowledging that social media opens up “direct horizontal communications among citizens”, he also notes that mass communication allows for “narrowcasting” as well as feeding into the growing clout of consultants who are hired to craft attractive

**Commented [EOW21]:** In fact, lots of institutional analysis does just this: it asks about the structure of an institution, what kinds of practices does it enable or impede? What are the “rules of the game” that make some strategies effective and others not? Discussions, for example, about how different rules for elections and campaign funding affect the kinds of parties and political strategies we see in a political environment, are this kind of analysis: there is structural selectivity in the rules. The additional question – which is fundamental – is whether this selectivity also is reproductive of particular class interests, either (a) as a direct effect of the structures, or (b) via the way it facilitates some strategies over others.

**Commented [EOW22]:** I am not sure what “this” refers to in this sentence. And after reading this a couple of times, I can’t quite figure out what discrepancy the SRA is meant to resolve. SRA is a general framework for understanding the structure/strategy connection (or structure/agency problem, which for Jessop is pretty much the same thing).

**Commented [EOW23]:** This is where he shifts from the study of the capitalist state to the state in capitalist society: the latter is more agent-centered.

messages on behalf of politicians (pg. 84). In other words, the vast potential of mass communications raises the stakes (and costs) of campaigning. This temptation of buying public opinion, Jessop argues, is cartelizing modern parties as they turn to media consultants instead of the political class or even their social base. Jessop, however, goes on to explain that parties must be understood in their contexts i.e. whether it is embedded in a parliamentary or presidential system; a consensual or majoritarian system. **Do you agree with Jessop's assessment of the role of mass media in modern day political regimes? What kind of institutional systems or contexts can facilitate a more democratic public sphere?**

**Commented [EOW24]:** The role and character of political parties in a representative/electoral democracy is clearly crucial, and it is certainly the case that parties have changed over recent decades everywhere (although I am not sure that they have changed in the same way everywhere). What is not so clear is that a good way to think of these transformations is that the mass media has displaced parties as the intermediary between parties and the people. (I assume that when you say "takeover of mass parties" you meant "takeover the role of mass parties as an intermediary".) Did the press ever simply "reflect" public opinion? I would have thought that the press always played a role in shaping public opinion.