

Interrogations #5. Jessop: The State. Part II

February 23, 2017

1. Griffin Bur

My main interest for this week is Chapter Eight, which I thought was really excellent (unfortunately, it also made me realize that my ideas about a radical rethink of the “globalization overwhelms the capitalist state” idea are pretty unoriginal). **Jessop essentially argues for a less fetishistic account of globalization than the one usually on offer, and does so by drawing on his account of the state developed in previous chapters (which is much “thicker” than many of those on offer in Anglophone left-liberal scholarship on globalization). My question has the same format as last time: what do people make of the argument he mounts; do others find it convincing?** I will, again, provide a brief account of my interpretation below.

Jessop’s account pushes back on the narrative that globalization has become exceptionally more rapid in recent decades and that, as a result, it has essentially overwhelmed the capacity of the nation-state to govern capitalism (and that it is also responsible for the political and economic defeat of organized labor). After granting the grain of truth in these arguments, **he moves to diagnose the two main problems with it:** the fuzzy “ahistorical, spatio-temporally impoverished” conception of globalization as “a single causal mechanism with a universal, unitary logic” and the “oversimplified accounts of the state form” also bound up with those more well-known accounts (191).

The first problem is more easily dealt with on empirical grounds; Jessop notes that the planet-engulfing tendency of capital is an old phenomenon and that the current wave is more distinctive for its speed than **geographical reach** (191). My own research has led me to conclude that the pace of world market integration has actually slowed in some respects since the 1970s; the slowing of world trade in recent years, augmented by the 2008 crisis is a widely-reported phenomenon in the business press. This isn’t in itself a very profound point, I guess, but Jessop’s stress on this empirical complexity lets us dispense with a lot of breathless accounts, whether critical or positive, of globalization, especially those which treat it as a mysterious, quasi-autonomous force in its own right rather than an outcome of fundamental social processes which can be examined carefully and understood in strategic-relational, agentic terms rather than as a kind of impersonal world-historical spirit.

The second problem takes up more space and is more relevant to the book’s topic. Jessop notes and corrects several problems with the traditional account of the state subsumed by waves of globalization. First, and this is a sort of basic Marxian point not unique to Jessop but one that he articulates well, the state can’t be understood if we conceive it as a simply a passive receptacle of other social relations or a kind of neutral referee adjudicating between classes. It may not be a unitary actor, but it is certainly comprised of actors who do often act in concert and promote certain short- and long-term goals; in recent years, two of those actively promoted, as Eric Helleiner’s work has argued, were globalization and financialization. After reviewing some accounts of the world market (one of which, the capital-logic school, I think he gives short shrift), he advances his argument by developing his earlier

Commented [EOW1]: But surely the issue in the spatial dimension is not just “reach” but the depth of the commodification bound up with this reach. Capitalism has penetrated more deeply into spaces all over the world. Neoliberal globalization is the issue. Also: financialization connected to the globalization’s reach & depth is also something distinctive. There have been earlier periods of financialization of course (see Arrighi), but not so deeply implicated in radical penetration.

claim that there is no singular state which has been outrun by globalization; some states have become less autonomous as global trade and production have been increasingly integrated, and others have become less so (197). Finally, he ends the chapter by laying out this complexity in terms of three trends and three counter-trends in “state transformation”, which I also found convincing.

Commented [EOW2]: The contrast is with “become less autonomous” so this should be “more so”, right?

2. Youbin Kang

Governance, according to Jessop “refers to mechanisms and strategies of coordination in the face of complex reciprocal interdependence among operationally autonomous actors, organizations, and functional systems.” (p.166) How does the power of the state explain the effectiveness of governance? Does the structure of a more heterarchic, dialogic, and network-oriented governance, such as meta-governance, in turn, reduce the agentic power of the state? (ex. The neoliberal form of governmentality) or does it instill a more universal and democratic rule of law? (ex. Thrborn’s description of socialist forms of private-public collaboration), and are there mechanisms to ensure that the latter is preferred over the former?

Commented [EW3]: I don’t think there is any claim in Jessop that the power of the state *explains* the effectiveness of governance. It might influence it and be one of the processes that explains the development and effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of forms of governance; but governance is not simply determined by state power.

Commented [EW4]: I can’t quite figure out this question.

3. Kaan Jittiang

The territorialization seems to be an important process in state formation. This process according to Jessop does not only include the production of space and the exercise of state power over it but also involves spatial imaginary in order to create an imagined community of population within the given space and boundary. Thus, while the state formation is about state building, it is concurrently the matter of people building (p.148). Even when the state power is consolidated and the state is already established, the reproduction of the state is a continuous process that state pursues in order to secure the state both in narrow and integral sense.

I try to apply Jessop’s framework to the empirical cases in Southeast Asia, which is the region my interest and I realize that territorialization is a significant process in the formation of *modern* state there as well. The exercise of territorial control through the bureaucratization of a central authority tends to be the most common approach that national states in Southeast Asia have taken in order to successfully build a new state. Through this method, the state was able to bring together territories, which have traditionally been socio-politically diverse or different to become part of the new state. The declaration of a central language or dialect is then employed to form common identity among state’s population and unify the new territory. While the state building project has become successful to a large degree, it does not mean that it is free of backlashes. Overtime, several states in Southeast Asia began to realize problems that emerge from the nation building process in the form such as ethnic insurgency, the call for autonomous administration, and etc. Even with the reproduction of state, these problems remain intact. A large

number of populations of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds also begin to see the reproduction as the repression against them, which requires them to fight back. The question then is what should the state do in terms of strategically exercising power amidst tensions emerging from the state building process. Perhaps more specific questions should be: what kind of power should state exercise in such situation? What role does conflict play in the exercising power of the state? What is the future of the reproduction of the state? Should state continue the reproduction process? Lastly, what would be the future of the state in general? Would the future of the state be like what Jessop stated, “[t]he present future of statehood does not entail the end of the state as a distinctive form of the territorialization of political power, but there will be more complicated forms of multispatial meta-governance organized in the shadow of national and regional states” (p.245)?

Commented [EW5]: These are a lot of questions at different levels of generality.

4. Benny Witkovsky

I’m struggling a little bit to get my head around Jessop’s different definitions of government, governance, governmentality and collibration. If I’m understanding it correctly, these terms seem to refer to both structures that states construct and strategies that state actors pursue in order to govern and regulate, but in different constellations and with different consequences.

Commented [EW6]: Governance structures are not simply produced by “state actors” if by that one means actors within the formal organization of the state. Look at Table 7.1

I’m wondering if a helpful way to think about these differences is to think about the relative stateness (or access to stateness) of the actors and action involved in these processes. Governance is not a move away from the state, but the incorporation of actors with less access to traditional state-ness into the governing process. Does this help others understand these issues? Can actors and actions have stateness (or different access to stateness) or is that a variable reserved for describing the apparatus as a whole?

5. Courtney Deisch

Jessop suggest the eventuality of a “world state” developing through the form of a *world society*, *cosmopolitanism*, or a *global civil society*. He models this eventuality upon his apparent assumption that the continued development of the European Union will transform the Union into a European “nation” based upon a shared understanding of some unifying European nationalism. *Is this somewhat essentialist and evolutionary prediction useful or viable as a means to consider the development of nation states and supranational state systems?*

Commented [EW7]: I don’t think Jessop really *predicts* this. He entertains it as, perhaps, a possibility, but his discussion on p.158ff is not all that optimistic

Jessop bases his predictions for the development of a world state upon his perspective of the European Union’s path determinant progress toward a European state. I am unsure whether such path determinism is responsible given the structural crisis of the European Union that has been expressed through the Brexit vote and the growing strength of far right nationalist political parties across Europe (France’s National Front, The Netherland’s Party for Freedom, Germany’s Alternative Party, Austria’s

Freedom Party, etc). Each of these is gaining popularity in their respective nation states on party platforms that call for restriction on immigration (a direct threat to the Schengen Agreement) and/or an explicit call to secede from the European Union altogether. Each of these parties relies upon nationalist narratives that recognize the supremacy of the dominant ethnic category in each nation. In fact, the narratives frequently vilify subordinated ethnic, cultural, and racial groups as a further justification of increasing isolationist policies. This tendency (also clearly present in the US) brings me to question the viability of a the eventuality of a world state, especially as Jessop failed to account for the socially constructed yet very socially real divisions along borders of race, ethnicity, national identification, gender, etc.

6. Kurt Kuehne

At the end of Chapter 6, Jessop asks whether the nascent “world state based on a shared global identity” (160) will increasingly challenge present understandings of the contemporary nation-state. **What is the future of state? Do we agree that this shift is on the horizon, and moreover, do we think a “world state” is at all plausible?**

Jessop claims that “Political communities...are being reimagined in various ways. Among them are new ‘imagined nations’ seeking autonomy within, or control of, a defined territory below, above, or transversal to existing national states; a global civil society based on cosmopolitan patriotism; [and] the primacy of human rights over national citizenship, or some other global identity...” (161). He also suggests that the *world society* idea is “an increasingly popular social scientific concept” (160).

But is it? First, I fail to see how “imagined nations seeking autonomy” are a **new** phenomenon. If anything, I would argue that we’ve generally witnessed increasing state capacity in managing Jessop’s three primary elements: the state apparatus, territory, and population. With some exceptions, states have grown increasingly empowered in recent decades to bring peripheral or breakaway lands/nations under capital control. Second, the evidence for any serious “cosmopolitan patriotism” is slim at best. At worst, the claim is wildly elitist and out-of-touch with the world’s average villager. For much or even most of the world’s population, life is lived locally, and national citizenship and national borders are highly salient. What percent of the world owns passport? How many are second-class citizens? Even in the US and UK, the people have voted for nationalism and tightly-controlled borders. Moreover, Jessop has misrepresented the concept of “flexible citizenship”: Ong’s transnational subjects are more like citizen-mercenaries than loyalists to some pan-national patriotism. And third, even if we observe globalization and some transnational or even cosmopolitan legal/governance structures (e.g., the UN, the Geneva Conventions), national interest continues to take priority over global loyalties. It’s difficult to tell what Jessop is actually arguing in this section—it reads like an extended literature review and ends very abruptly—but to my mind he’s exaggerating the ‘movement’ towards a *world society*.

Commented [EW8]: He doesn't say that imagined nations are a new phenomenon, but rather that there are new forms of "imagined nations" there are new imagined nations, including things anchored in cosmopolitan identity.

Commented [EW9]: Couldn't one have movement towards world society, in the sense of a much more deeply set of relational interactions binding together the lives of people all over the world in which these relations are factually regulated by global norms in various ways, without any movement towards a world state?

7. Kris Arsaelsson

Jessop describes the contradiction “at the heart of bourgeois democracy, namely that subaltern classes can participate in the political process on condition that they do not use their political (read electoral and parliamentary) power to challenge the social (read economic, political, and ideological) power of the dominant classes - which, in turn, can enjoy these more basic forms of power on condition that they tolerate the short-term vagaries of democratic rule” (p. 215). Later he argues that “centralization at the expense of parliament, popular parties, and democratic liberties” have not strengthened the state but on the contrary made it harder to “manage the growing intensity” of “economic contradictions” and “new forms of popular struggle” (p. 229). Given that Jessop thinks that “the powers of the state” are “always conditional and relational” and “modern societies are so complex and differentiated that no subsystem could be structurally ‘determinant in the last instance’” (p. 248) what hypotheses can we draw from his theory (e.g. the six dimensions, SRA or modes of governance) on which forms of popular struggle to expect and how will they play out (especially when differentiating the game, rules of the game and moves within the game)?

8. Samina Hossain

After reading the second half of Jessop’s *The State*, a question remains in my mind about the degree of state primacy in exercising power. At the end of Chapter 7, the author concludes that the state’s “role is that of *primus inter pares* in a complex, heterogeneous, and multilevel network rather than that of *the* sovereign authority in a single hierarchical command structure” (p. 185). However, several passages indicate that the state still reigns supreme.

This becomes evident in Jessop’s discussions on the dilemmas and contradictions faced (and managed) by the state throughout the second half of the book. For example, spatiotemporal fixes constitute a number of state strategies – such as hierarchization and prioritization – all of which aim to displace or defer the material and social costs of contradictory state structures.

He goes on to argue that, in face of first or second order governance failures, the state has at its disposal several strategies to counter the shift toward a diffuse, horizontal system of governance, often in the pretext of maintaining social order. These strategies include meta-governance and collibration, which in very simple terms are ways in which the state is able to tweak and align institutional mechanisms closer to its own criteria of success.

Jessop’s portrayal of the state as a shadowy force becomes even more acute in Chapter 9, where he makes the claim that a constant state of emergency not only grants greater free reign to the center but is also becoming the new normal. Indeed, Jessop notes in reference to state transformation in the context of globalization (Ch. 6): “the combination of trends and counter-trends implies that the national state remains an important political force in a changing world order” (p. 201-2).

Commented [EW10]: I found it a bit hard to figure out precisely what your question is. You state two initial things under “given”: 1) the powers of the state are conditional and relations, and 2) no subsystem is “determinant in the last instance.” You then ask, give (1) and (2) what hypotheses can we draw from Jessop’s theory about expected popular struggle and their consequences. And then you add “especially when differentiating games/rules/moves. I can’t quite figure out why you extracted 1) and 2) from all of the possible elements of Jessop’s analysis as the issues to focus on in framing the question. But even aside from this, the question is just too complicated as framed.

Commented [EW11]: Note – he says “important” rather than “supreme”.

Jessop is engaging in a commendable dialectic and critical discussion about the many accounts of the state but I'm curious to know what the class thinks about his back and forth dialogue between a state-centric account – where a bold Gramscian and Foucauldian perspective on domination comes through – and his frequent cautionary disclaimers about the state as an “actor-cum-stakeholder among others” (p. 184).

9. Aaron Yarmel

What lessons should activists take from Jessop's discussion of institutional and spatiotemporal fixes? Jessop writes that “[a]n institutional fix is a complementary set of institutions that, via institutional design, imitation, imposition, or chance evolution offer (within given parametric limits) a temporary, partial, and relatively stable solution to the coordination problems involved in securing economic, political, or social order.” Spatiotemporal fixes “establish spatial and temporal boundaries within which the always relative, incomplete, and provisional structural coherence (and hence the institutional complementarities) of a given order are secured – to the extent that this is ever the case.” When agents are unhappy with the solutions offered by the state, this will lead to blowback (145). This blowback could take a variety of forms, and I am wondering whether Jessop's account gives activists any prudential reasons to favor particular forms of blowback over others. It seems as though the goal of the blowback should be to make the institutional and temporal fixes more expensive, to the extent that it is in the 'best interest' of the state system (I realize that this is an elliptical expression) to figure out a new solution. This could be another way that the strategies of agents are constrained by state structures; the most prudent options for resistance are partially determined by which fixes can most easily be made more expensive.

10. Sarah Farr

What happens to the four dimensions of the state when the concept of governance is introduced (Chapter 7)? Do we need to reimagine the state in light of the shift to governance? For example, in his discussion of colliberation, Jessop suggests that the state sovereignty must be constructed and strengthened, in part, through the contribution of resources by non-state actors (173). In the rise of governance, Jessop suggests that the state doesn't lose its significance, but its role shifts from being the direct implementer of rule to an organizer of a framework whereby other actors or institutions share in exert ruling power (ie “the definition and delivery of state projects and policies.”) (174 or 176-177). The state becomes one of many stakeholders. On the one hand, it seems that this shift does little to change the function of the state (“maintaining social cohesion in a class-divided society”), even if it changes the form and process (“In other words, rather than the statization of governmentality through bureaucratic absorption of technical experts and intellectuals, there is a governmentalization of the state as

Commented [EW12]: He does, however, always say “first” among equals, which suggests some sort of asymmetry of power. I think what he wants to avoid is any notion of states at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of power in which it effectively can impose binding commands on all other forms of power. That is what is being rejected – the unambiguously claims to super-ordinate authority. What is true is that there is no clear authority over the state that can command it, but there are other forms of power relations which the state cannot subordinate effectively.

Commented [EW13]: But it could also be that some fixes give more room for action for popular forces than others. Fast-policy temporality is less accessible to popular fixes than slow-policy formation process.

responsibilities are ‘outsourced’ in the shadow of governmental hierarchy.” (179)). On the other, Jessop says that the shift to “governance in the shadow of hierarchy” *does* have consequences for the types economic and social interventions we might expect to see, especially in terms of territory and scale (184-185). The scope of interests of non-state actors don’t seem to necessarily align with the scope of interests of the state. So, my questions are: Does this require a re-conceptualization of the four element approach? In the view of the state as one of many stakeholders, how can we expect the interests of state and non-state actors to be balanced and what might be the consequences?

Commented [EW14]: The interests of state and nonstate actors are always potentially in conflict and not aligned; this is not new. What is new is the mechanism for articulating these different interests (and associated strategies). I don’t think the four element approach changes, but of course this is a new layer of relational complexity to understanding how things work.

I appreciated this discussion much more than the picture Jessop paints of the declining importance of the state in Chapter 6. Jessop’s claim that “national boundaries and national identity are no longer fundamental premises of economic, political, and sociocultural arrangements” seemed both elitist and empirically unsupported (161). In general, I find these sorts of arguments frustrating because the implicit social actor in this narrative is someone with a European or US passport and the technological and financial resources to take advantage of their privileged location in the world order of citizenships. For the vast majority of people on this planet, states (and their boundaries and national identities) organize and constrain daily life much more than Jessop recognizes. In general, I am having difficulty reconciling this chapter with chapter 7 where Jessop argues governance has not replaced government but found new ways to coexist and find common interests.

Commented [EW15]: I think there is ambiguity in Jessop’s use of the term “premises”. If he means determinants, then globalization processes could mean that national boundaries remain terribly important as barriers to geographical mobility and as sources of identity, and yet they are not determinants of “economic, political, and social arrangements”.

11. Janaina Saad

Jessop contends that, viewed in narrowly state-theoretical terms, trends of globalization “appear as threats to the territorial and temporal sovereignty of the *national* state” but from a class-theoretical perspective, world market integration “might appear as a means to rearticulate the economic and political moments of the capital relation...” and to reorganize market-state relation to the advantage of emergent powerful class forces (p. 200). He then adopts a state-theoretical perspective in discussing trends and counter-trends in advanced capitalist states’ responses to globalization. *Given that he doesn’t provide much of a rationale for how he formulated these trends, what do folks think of his analysis of state transformation in response to globalization?* Additionally, *given Jessop’s general concern for conjunctural and contextual grounding, how might he propose we go about devising general propositions of how state’s respond to globalization?*

Commented [EW16]: I think the trends are meant to be grounded in empirical observations – these are seen as the empirical trends that are occurring, which he then redefines using the categories of his SRA approach.

12. Masoud Movahed

Part 2 of the State, Past, Present, Future of Bob Jessop, is intended to complement Part 1 with more empirical focus. If part 1 was meant to suggest that the state is variegated, and that the state is not a “thing,” but social relations, Part 2 can be considered as further complication of state as social relations. In Chapter 5, Jessop considers how time and space influence the capacities of states (i.e. states being

able to redefine and expand scales: territory and place). Chapter 6, 'State and Nation,' examines the various frameworks for the relations between the nation and the state. The empirical examples that Jessop presents are largely European states with particular national identities. Jessop in Chapter 7 'Government + Governance in the Shadow of Hierarchy' examines the question of apparatus and the varying nature of governance or "control" in modern states. I found Jessop's analysis of states' inherent tendency to crisis and failure in capitalist societies fascinating.

Of particular interest to me was the discussion on whether or not the state theory is Eurocentric in the final Chapter, 'the Future of States and Statehood.' By Jessop's own admission, his analysis of "the present state has been largely confined to advanced capitalist social formations and their forms of government and governmentality" (p.238). Jessop seems to suggest that the theory of state is essentially Eurocentric because "states in advanced capitalist social formations reflect the interstate system to which they belong as well as the more general nature of a still emerging world society" (p.239).

If Jessop's claim is that state theory is Eurocentric because it fails to reflect the "interstate systems" in the states of the Global South, then, I disagree with him. There is little doubt that developmental states of the 'East Asian Tigers of South East Asia,' however autocratic, any different in enforcing the laws of capital accumulation under the capitalist mode of production than those of their western counterparts. Even in the Middle East and North Africa or even Central Asia, where "kinship and tribal loyalties often count for more than typical institutions of the modern state,"—and where also the state operates as in a "kleptocratic manner" with strong predatory tendencies—the state still does make sure to enforce the laws of private capital accumulation. Take, for example, the state in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where every state manager—ministers and governors of the provinces—are unanimously members of the ruling clan. Even in such a state with enormous patrimonial and clientistic relations of the state with society, the state still makes sure that private capital accumulation is not, by any means, disrupted, and that their capitalists class of all sorts (i.e. landlords, merchants and finance capitals) do enjoy the legal and financial support of the ruling class. So I disagree that the state theory is Eurocentric, because the "capitalist social formations and their forms of government and governmentality," so long as they concern the process of capital accumulation are similar in both Global North and South. Kinship and tribal loyalties or the religious identities of states in the Middle East and North America or Central Asia always affect the superstructure (i.e non-economic institutions); not the base (i.e. economic institutions under capitalist mode of production).

Commented [EW17]: I don't think Jessop is claiming that there are *no* elements of his theory of the state that would not apply to states in the Global South, even the cases of Kleptocracies. His theory, however, is not merely a claim that the state supports capital accumulation. If that was the heart of his theory, then it would be the simplest of conventional Marxist accounts. What he is saying is that all of the other components were developed in the context of understanding the Western/Northern state structures and processes, and these are not sufficient for understanding the specificity of many other cases.

Also: It is a bit of a stretch to say that Kleptocratic predatory states support capital accumulation simply because the spoils of coercive extraction are then deposited in Swiss bank accounts where they become inserted into global accumulation.