

Perspectives on the Origin and Essence of the Modern State

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Abstract

The State is the dominant form of political organisation and rules the world today. It has become a consistent presence that affects daily lives almost constantly. The modern State has become a complex outfit for meeting all sorts of needs of the citizens. Over the years, fundamental and critical questions were raised on the origin and essence of the State. These have produced generations of remarkable scholarship in the discipline of social sciences. This study, relying on extant literature, crystallises the various perspectives of the modern State, explaining the liberal and radical ideas of the State. The Social Contract Theory and the Marxist Theory were examined. More so, the essence of the State, a subject of endless debate among political theorists was presented. The study also related the essence of the State to citizens' obligations. It concluded that the essence of the State is a complex and multifaceted theme, yet, one way to understand the essence of the State is to examine its functions concerning the citizens. The study recommends that for the State to be worth its salt, it must demonstrate its capacity, maintain law and order, protect citizens from external threats, provide public goods and services, and promote the general welfare of its citizens. The State should also regulate the economy, redistribute wealth, and enforce social norms.

Keywords: Citizens, Essence of the State, Liberal Perspective, Radical Perspective

Introduction

The State is arguably the most central concept in the study of Political Science and its definition is therefore an object of intense scholarly contestation. Several State forms can be identified within Western Europe, corresponding to historical epochs. The development of the modern form of State, as a public power separate from the monarch and the ruled, and constituting the supreme political authority within a defined territory, is associated with the slow institutional differentiation of the 'political' and 'economical' related to the growth of the centralised absolutist State and the spread of commodity production. In Europe, therefore, the processes of evolution toward modern States began in the late Middle Ages and continued throughout modern times. Different nations may have had experiences in their processes but they all took the same direction and went through similar stages of evolution, which displayed a distinct characteristic of order. Thus, we see the four steps in the evolution: feudalism, absolute monarchy, aristocratic dominance, and the "popular" formula. Thus, the orderly proceeding is a phenomenon of high importance calling for serious studies.

The concept of the State is not as ancient as may at first be thought. As Skinner (2009) demonstrated, it was only in the sixteenth century that the word 'State' acquired a meaning close to the modern sense, referring to an abstract, impersonal entity, separate from the person of the prince. It was also around this time that, in the English-speaking world at least, discussions about

the State, its purpose and its powers became widespread (Skinner 2009). This chapter, therefore, defines the State and sketches some of the features that mark the modern State before delving into the theoretical perspectives on the origin and essence of the State.

Conceptualising the State

Given the difficulty in defining the State, Pierson (2004, p. 239) maintains that:

we might find it difficult to give a precise and comprehensive definition of the State, but we think we recognize it when it flags us down on the motorway, sends us a final tax demand or, of course, arranges for our old-age pension to be paid. We may also think that we recognise the long arm of the State when we have a need or experience the judiciary or the coercive arm of the State.

It is important to emphasise that though some form of political organization has existed since ancient times, such as the concept of the Greek City-States and the Roman Empire, the concept of the “State” as such is comparatively new. According to Guaba (2003, p.116), “the contemporary concept of State owes its origin to Machiavelli (1469-1527), who expressed this idea in the early sixteenth century as the power which has authority over men. This is an important idea because it describes the nature of a State, not the end of a State which was the question of the political philosophy. After Machiavelli, words like State, *etat*, *steat* and *estado* appeared respectively in the English, French, German and Spanish languages, though in 1576 Jean Bodin of France preferred the term “*republique*” (republic).

One of the most incisive and influential definitions of the State was offered by the great German sociologist, Max Weber (1864–1920) at the beginning of the twentieth century (Devetak, et al., 2016). He defined the State as a ‘human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’ (Weber, 1919, p. 78). While this is consistent with the above definition of the modern State, it places the emphasis firmly on what the State does, rather than what it aspires to be or achieve. States are indeed political associations where governmental apparatuses, composed of politicians and administrative officials, establish and implement laws regulating social life within a particular territory in pursuit of various political doctrines. But the key to understanding the State, for Weber, lies neither in the laws nor the political doctrines, but in the means by which governmental rule is sustained: namely, through coercion.

For Weber and historical sociologists, such as Anthony Giddens, Michael Mann, Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly, the State is best defined in terms of means specific to its functions: namely, the control and organisation of the force that underpins its rule. Tilly (1975, p. 170) defines States as “relatively centralised, differentiated organisations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory”. His definition includes reference to territory and population, but the key issue for him is control over coercive means. This may seem counter-intuitive given that the State is commonly understood to be concerned with order and peace, but order and peace require enforcement through courts of law and the police. States claim a monopoly over the right to enforce the law internally and provide security against external threats through the establishment of police and military forces. So, force and the threat of force

have never been far from States, either in their formation or in their maintenance, internally or externally (Devesak, et al., 2016).

In defining the State, Weber (1919), presupposes that within the given territory over which it exists, the State is sovereign, no other entity or group has authority over it. Succinctly put, the State has the authority or legitimate power over others within a defined territory. More so, a State can be defined as an inclusive human organization with formal institutions for regulating the most significant external relationship of men within its scope. Again, Laski (2009) defined a State as “how the people are organized for legal coercion. The Marxists have argued that, the State is an institution that is created by the ruling class to maintain its dominance over the other classes in society. According to them, the State is not a neutral entity but rather an active agent that works to protect and promote the interests of the ruling class (Duncan, 1982). Thus, Marxist theory emphasizes that the State is fundamentally an instrument of class domination and exploitation. It is used by the bourgeoisie to exploit the common people and in that sense, it is a machinery for exploitation.

In the Marxist view, however, the State may be seen as that mechanism by which in any defined territory, the dominant social class maintains and defends its dominance over all the other existing classes. As Engels (1978) in Ekekwe (2009) argued, it was those who had acquired and must defend their property, who worked hard over time to invent the State. While this is a clearer view of understanding the State, it must equally be emphasised that the Marxist conceptualisation of the State corresponds more to reality than the liberal tradition. Implicit in the Marxist view is the notion that the State is the focal point of class relations (Ekekwe, 2009). In other words, the legitimate force over which the State has a monopoly is used mainly by the dominant class to keep other classes in check. Consequently, the State cannot be a neutral arbiter in class relations. Suffice it to add that to be neutral, in any situation, in which one party dominates another, is by definition a posture in support of the dominant party, at least, to do nothing to help the dominant party.

Thus, the State can be defined as the most inclusive organization which has formal institutions for regulating the most significant external relations of the people within its scope. It is the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organised in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organised. It is noteworthy that the State is not the power of an individual or that of a group. Rather, it is the public power – the power of the entire public that makes up the body polity. It is a continuous power that continuously serves the collective needs of the polity as defined by the rulers. Thus, even though governments, regimes, political parties, or individual public officers come and go, the public power that is in the State remains in operation all of the time. Moreover, both the rulers and the ruled are subject to the operations of the State. Its legal acts cannot be reduced to the intentions of even those who command those acts.

On the whole, a State is a form of political association or polity that is distinguished by the fact that it is not itself incorporated into any other political associations, though it may incorporate other such associations. The State is thus a supreme corporate entity because it is not incorporated into any other entity, even though it might be subordinate to other powers (such as

another State or an empire). One State is distinguished from another by it having its independent structure of political authority and an attachment to separate physical territories. The State is itself a political community, though not all political communities are States. A State is not a nation, or a people, though it may contain a single nation, parts of different nations, or several entire nations. A State arises out of society, but it does not contain or subsume society. A State will have a government, but the State is not simply a government, for there exist many more governments than there are States. The State is a modern political construction that emerged in early modern Europe but has been replicated in all other parts of the world. The most important aspect of the State that makes it a distinctive and new form of political association is its most abstract quality: it is a corporate entity.

The Liberal and Radical Perspectives on the Origin of the State

The social contract theory is rightly associated with modern political theory and is given its first full exposition and defence by Thomas Hobbes. After Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are the best-known proponents of this enormously influential theory, which has been one of the most dominant theories within political theory throughout the history of the modern West (Njoku, 2019). The social contract is a fundamental principle of legitimisation of governmental organisation, for it provides a starting point for a rational explanation of the origin of the state. The idea here is that the authority, which government has over supposed subjects or citizens derives originally from an agreement between the ruler and ruled in which the former agrees to provide advantages such as peace, security and order in return for obedience from the latter.

The social contract theory is, therefore, the theory which posits that individuals, by nature, free and equal, agreed to renounce part of their natural liberty by entering into civil society and constituting a political authority to which they subject themselves for the sake of the advantages provided by civil society (Mautner, 1999). A cardinal feature of this idea is that both the ruled and ruler were naturally, hitherto, free and equal agents in a pre-social contract state of affairs, that was devoid of law and governmental organization; whilst the motivation to consent to relinquish one's natural liberties for state protection was in the first place a free exercise of the will of the agents.

As a theory about the origin of the State and the institution of political society through a covenant among individuals, the Social Contract Theory originated in the 16th to 17th century. In his distinction between social contract as a governmental pact and social contract proper, Appadorai (2004) ascribes the first proper mention of the Social Contract Theory to Hooker and others who later developed the idea as a theory for constructing their political doctrine. However, the most famous exponents of the social contract theory were Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The starting point of their treatises rests on a hypothetical state of nature against which background the agreement between the ruler and the ruled was said to have taken place.

In his *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes pictures man's state of nature as basically a selfish one, in which man is motivated to act by his appetites, desires and passions. Owing to this selfishness and the absence of a reasoned-out guide for the amorphous community of people, everyone was against the other in a perpetual cycle of struggle, competition, diffidence and strife leading to a

state of war. There was no modicum of morality or iota of legality, for it was a senseless, unimaginable situation of *homo lupus hominem* (man the wolf of man). Hobbes describes the life of man in this state of nature as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”. Despite this situation, Hobbes concedes that this primitive state was governed by some laws of nature, which endowed man with the natural rights of self-preservation.

Man was at liberty to preserve his life by whatever means, for in such an anti-social state there was the ubiquitous fear of violent death. To avoid the unfortunate condition that the Hobbesian state of nature bred, there was a need for everyman to give up some of his natural rights and repose them in some supreme coercive power, (a man or an assembly of men) who would ensure that peace and security necessary for an organised society. The logic of Hobbes’ social contract theory, despite its perceived anomalies, is as Sogolo (2014, p. 87) points out: “If the state of nature is as intolerable as Hobbes painted, it makes perfect sense for men to cede their rights in exchange for security and protection from one powerful man or group of men.” What this implies is that for society to have peace and security, some sort of absolutism is necessary to maintain law and order.

Furthermore, John Locke’s Social Contract Theory, as postulated in his work, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) portrays a state of nature, though similar to Hobbes’ in terms of the condition of the state of nature, differed from his about the dictates of the law of nature. Whilst Locke’s state of nature was a natural and perfect condition for mankind, where men were free and equal and each living according to his desires, the laws of nature curbed the exercise of this freedom, for it stipulated that no man should infringe on the freedom, life, health and possession of another. Thus, unlike Hobbes’ conception of the law of nature, which stresses self-preservation, Locke is concerned with preserving all men.

Again, like Hobbes’, Locke’s state of nature had no enforcer of these laws, for each man was left to interpret them according to his liking. The consequence of this condition is that, whilst the Lockean state of nature was not one of war, it was a precarious condition that harboured fear, danger and insecurity of life and property. Thus, civil society was brought to being “when individual men, representing their families, come together ... and form society, they make “one body politic under one government” (par. 97) and submit themselves to the will of that body”. Thus, having created a political society and government through their consent, men then gained three things which they lacked in the State of Nature: laws, judges to adjudicate laws, and the executive power necessary to enforce these laws. Each man therefore gives over the power to protect himself and punish transgressors of the Law of Nature to the government that he has created through the compact.

According to Barker (1947), Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s social contract theory is a “gospel of return to nature and the rights of man”. The truism in this assertion is captured in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, which begins with the often-quoted lines: "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains". The import of this profound quote is the paradox of freedom which Rousseau seeks to unveil. In the state of nature, Rousseau explains, man lived a life of idyllic happiness, where he was free and equal. Unlike the Hobbesian and Lockean versions, which described man’s state as one of fear and danger, Rousseau depicts man’s life in the state of nature as essentially good.

Social Contract Theory, therefore, is a central concept in political theory, which explores the concept of an agreement between individuals and the government, highlighting the mutual obligations of the State and its citizens. At its core is the idea that individuals surrender some liberty for security provided by the government. This exchange of liberties is the foundation of a contract, where the state promises to act in the best interest of its citizens, in exchange for the population's submission to the laws and regulations of the State. Social Contract Theory asserts that individuals give up some of their natural rights, including liberty and freedom, in exchange for security provided by the state.

According to the theory, without an organized government, society would be plunged into chaos, with everyone motivated by self-interest, resulting in what philosopher Thomas Hobbes refers to as the "state of nature." The state of nature is characterized by intense competition, fear, and aggression, where there would be deprivation of fundamental human needs for necessities such as food, water, and shelter, leading to a struggle for survival. Therefore, individuals must voluntarily relinquish some of their natural rights in exchange for the government's protection and other such benefits, as dictated by the social contract. By agreeing to surrender individual rights and freedoms, individuals acknowledge their willingness to abide by the government's laws and regulations, which play a crucial role in controlling human conduct and the pursuit of happiness. A well-ordered society depends on citizens following the agreed-upon rules of the social contract (Hamsher-Monk, 1992).

The Social Contract Theory suggests that the government's primary responsibility is to work for the common good of its citizens. This means that the government must strive to provide services and resources that enable citizens to thrive, even if it means implementing policies that may not receive widespread support from every section of society. The concept of the common good implies that the government should prioritize the overall well-being of its citizens rather than promoting the vested interests of select groups. The government must provide essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure that contribute to citizens' quality of life. Additionally, the government must implement policies that benefit society as a whole rather than just catering to specific groups. The government's obligation to work for the common good is based on the idea that the purpose of government is to serve the needs of its citizens. The government must establish policies that promote equality and social justice, ensuring that every citizen has access to basic human rights and necessities. Furthermore, the role of the government goes beyond providing essential services and resources; it must also safeguard the country's future. This implies that the government should take proactive measures to prevent activities that may be harmful to citizens or the country's environment in the long run.

The third precept of Social Contract Theory posits that the legitimacy of a government comes from the consent of its citizens. According to this view, governments have authority because individuals agree to give up some of their freedom in exchange for the state's protection and other benefits. Therefore, the power wielded by governments is based on the agreement and consent of the governed. This view suggests that the government's authority and power are derived from the people rather than from a divine source or a single ruler. By entering into a social contract, citizens establish the framework of government power and authority. The

agreement between the government and its citizens is a fundamental aspect of the legitimacy of a government.

Moreover, the concept of legitimacy in Social Contract Theory suggests that governments must remain accountable to their citizens to maintain their authority. For instance, if a government fails to provide essential services, protects only the interests of the ruling class, or violates its citizens' natural rights, then it loses its legitimacy. Institutions such as constitutions, laws, and elections play a crucial role in ensuring a government's legitimacy. Elections provide citizens with an opportunity to hold the government accountable by voting out leaders who fail to meet citizens' expectations. Constitutions and laws, on the other hand, provide a framework of rules that the government must follow.

Classical Marxist's view of the State therefore shows that it is an institution with established apparatuses purposely and directly meant to defend and maintain a class domination and class exploitation. Thus, the control of the State apparatuses by the ruling elites is for, and in the whole interest of the bourgeoisie (Abbass, 2010). For Miliband and Saville (1965), both the economic and political powers of the State are merely the organized power of one class for the oppression of another. Lenin (1960) further views the State as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Thus, Engels (1970) sees the capitalist State as where the means of production and other things exist in private ownership, where both the working class and the peasants are in all or complete subjugation by the propertied class. Meanwhile, the idea of "democracy", universal suffrage, parliament, elections, policy measures, the fight for national unity and security, etc., are only presented or constituted in disguise and invariably do not alter an iota of the essential character of the State in being oriented, controlled and directed by the ruling class, purposely used to dominate the other classes in the State (Abbass, 2010).

For the Marxian Scholars, therefore, the development of the productive forces in the capitalist society produced surplus value and thus the appropriation of property for private use that necessitated the constitution of the State. It is this State that, Marxist Scholars argue, becomes an instrument in the hands of the powerful dominant class for accumulation and exploitation of the dominant members of the society. This kind of State is an organ of exploitation and is not capable of pursuing policies, or invariably politics, that would promote the interest of all. According to Alavi (1979), because of the absence of a fully developed indigenous class, the State (mostly in under-developed economies) has largely remained an instrument of the ruling class in the promotion of capitalist accumulation under the pretext of national development. Public policy is thus determined by International Finance Capital, using the local bourgeoisie in its formulation and implementation in the national economy.

Nevertheless, classical Marxists equally admit that the State sometimes enjoys relative autonomy and becomes "independent" from and superior to all social classes as the dominant force in society rather than an instrument of the dominant class (Paulantzas, 1978). This view (relative autonomy nature of the State), therefore, presents the State as a complete embodiment of the general interests of the whole society as the State stands over and above particular vested interests and consequently appears "independent", neutral or autonomous of the ruling class.

The Purpose of the State

The purpose or essence of the State has been a subject of endless debate among political theorists. The question of what purposes the State exists to serve has been asked many times in every age since human existence; and as Anifowose (1999, p. 98) rightly concurs, “it is indeed the fundamental question of politics” which seeks to examine whether the State should do certain things or refrain from them. For Aristotle, in Anifowose (1999, p. 98), the purpose of the State is “to ensure good life”, while Locke postulates that “the great and chief end of men uniting into commonwealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property” which is expressed as lives, liberties and States (quoted in Smith, 1776, p. 272). Smith (1776), therefore, identifies three purposes for which the State exists to include the duty to protect society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; the duty to protect subjects from injustice, by establishing a system of justice; and the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and institutions that will cater for the well-being of the subjects.

Thus, as equally pointed out in Appadorai (2004, pp. 40-42), “the essence of the State is connotative of the centrality of the State in improving the lives of the generality of the masses in a society under its control”. Furthermore, Herbert Spencer, cited in Anifowose (1999, p. 98) posits that the State is nothing but a natural institution for preventing one man from infringing the rights of another. For Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the best-known exponents of the Utilitarian school of thought, the purpose of the State is to provide the greatest happiness to the greatest number of individuals under its jurisdiction (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2011). Generally, classical and modern political thinkers like John Locke, Adams Smith and Herbert Spencer seem to concur that the State is not an end itself but merely the means to an end (Appadorai, 2004). The State, thus, exists to enable the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. It exists to enable men to, at least, realise the best in themselves. According to Laski, as cited in Appadorai (2004, pp. 40- 41), therefore, “men can be enabled to realize the best in themselves only if the State provides rights, such as the right to work, right to education, right to basic freedoms of speech, press, association and religion; the right to vote and be voted for, etc”. As presented by Appadorai (2004), there are divergent views among political thinkers about the purpose or essence of the State. There are perhaps as many answers to this question as there are writers on Politics. These divergent views are presented below:

i. The State as a means to end

To understand Aristotle’s thoughts on the subject, we must start with his proposition that man is by nature a political animal. This means, first, that the social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and that man can rise to his full stature only through the State. The State, Aristotle tells us, which originated for the sake of life, continues ‘for the sake of the best life’. The end of the State is, therefore, ethical. As Newman puts it, the State exists (according to Aristotle) for the sake of that kind of life which is the end of man for the increase of its population or wealth or for empire or the extension of its influence. It exists for the exercise of the qualities which make men good husbands, fathers and heads of households, good soldiers and citizens, and good men of science and philosophers. When the State by its education and laws, written and unwritten, succeeds in evoking and maintaining in vigorous activity a life rich in noble aims and deeds, then and not till then has it fully attained the end for which it exists.

The ideal State is that which adds to adequate material advantages the noblest gifts of intellect and character and the will to live for their exercise in every relation of life, and whose education,

institutions and laws are such as to develop these gifts and to call them into play. We may add that a good life is a life lived according to reason; 'function of reason in ethics consists in the direction of conduct by a rule, namely, of the mean'; in politics, reason prescribes cooperation with one's fellow citizens in promoting the welfare of the State (Appadorai, 2004). Suffice it to add that the ethical end of the State was well-recognized by thinkers in ancient India. The *Mahabharata* thus says that the State should ceaselessly foster righteousness, guide, correct and control the moral life of the people, besides making the earth habitable and comfortable for them (Prasad, 1928, p. 98).

The ethical end of the State is subordinated to convenience in Locke. His concern is not with the 'good' but with the 'convenient'. The great and chief end of men uniting into commonwealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property'-which is Locke's general name for 'lives, liberties and estates'. In other words, Locke submits that the State arose to protect private property, which to him, includes lives, liberties and estates. In the State of Nature, these were not safe owing to the want of a settled known law, a known and indifferent judge, and a common Executive. It is important to reiterate that in Locke's Social Contract, the natural man did not surrender his natural rights even to the community; only the right to enforce the law of reason is given up. The end of the State, as defined by Locke, is intelligible when it is remembered that the 'provocation' for his *Two Treatises of Civil Government* was the arbitrary exercise of power by the Stuart kings and that it aim was to justify the principles of the Bill of Rights and the 'Glorious' Revolution of 1688.

Furthermore, Adam Smith (1723-90), in his *Wealth of Nation* (1776) laid down the following proposition: The sovereign has only three duties to attend to: firstly, the duty of protecting from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting as far as possible, every member of the society from injustice or opposition of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and, thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or a small number of individuals, to erect and maintain, because the profit yielded would never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, though it might frequently do much more than repay a great society.

The process of the narrowing down of the purpose of the State reaches its culmination in Hebert Spencer (1820-1903). According to him, the State is nothing but a natural institution for preventing one man from infringing the rights of another; it is a joint-stock protection company from mutual assurance.

ii. The State as an end in itself

It is important to emphasise that, Locke, Smith and Spencer agree that the State is a means to an end, the end being a better life for the individual, whether conceived in ethical terms or not, whether the State is to interfere more or less. The opposite view that the State is an end in itself has had its exponents too, and is perhaps best illustrated by the school of thinkers known as Idealists, especially by Hegel (Mead, 1882). Hegel's argument is somewhat as follows: Men want to be free; they are free only when they do what their reason recommends. Individual reason is not, however, trustworthy, because it is particularistic and moved by temporary and irrelevant considerations. The existence of some entity, whose will be universal and as acceptable

to individuals as the voice of reason itself, is necessary. Such an entity is the State. It is a person and has a will of its own. It has ends of its own divorced from, and superior to, those of the individual human beings subjected to its authority. It carries out the dictate of universal reason and is therefore impelled by its nature and destiny to seek its perfection. The State, being an end in itself, is provided with the maximum of rights over and against the individual citizens, whose highest duty is to be members of the State. True freedom, therefore, consists in conformity to law; every law is veritable freedom.

Those who claim that the State is an end in itself also take their stand on the idea that the individual is fleeting, the State is everlasting; the leaves wither, the tree stands. As reported in Appadorai (2004, p. 41):

Society is an imperishable organism, whose life extends beyond that of the individuals who are its transitory elements. These are born, grow up, die and are substituted by others, while the social unit always retains its identity and its patrimony of ideas and sentiments, which each generation receives from the past and transmits to the future.

According to this perspective, the individual cannot, therefore, be considered as the ultimate end of society. Society has its purpose of preservation, expansion and perfection, and these are distinct from and superior to, the purpose of the individuals who at any moment compose it. In the carrying out of its proper ends, society must make use of individuals; the individual must subordinate his ends to those of society. It sounds grandiose to say that the State has ‘ends superior to those of the single individuals composing it’. But what are those ends? Why should the individual subordinate his ends to those of the State? No conclusive answer has been given. It is founded on assumptions which are contrary to human experience (Appadorai, 2004).

More so, the formula laid down by Immanuel Kant is as true now as when it was laid down: “The individual is the end and cannot be considered as a means to an end. The State may rightly be considered only as a means to the enrichment of individual personality” (Grit, 2023). According to Kant, individuals should be treated as ends in themselves, not merely as a means to an end. This means that individuals should be respected and valued for their own sake, rather than being used as a tool to achieve some other goal. As for the State, it is a complex entity that serves many purposes, including the protection of individual rights and the promotion of the common good. However, it is important to remember that the State exists to serve the people, not the other way around. In other words, the State should be considered only as a means to the enrichment of individual personality, as you mentioned. Similarly, MacIver’s (1927) very important contribution to political theory is his view of the state as an agency of human purpose. The state, he argued, is an association established by the community for the regulation of the external conditions of the social order. It is thus an instrumentality within a more inclusive unity.

iii. The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number

The Utilitarians (Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-73) have provided an answer, seemingly more satisfactory than most of the answers given above. Their submission summarises that: all men desire happiness, which may be defined as the surplus of pleasure over pain. Pleasure and pain are therefore the mainsprings of human action. According to Bentham (1948), as cited in Appadorai (2004, p. 42):

Nature has placed man under the governance of two sovereign masters: pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.... We owe to them all our ideas; we refer to them all our judgments and all the determinations of our life.

This implies that the sources of pleasure and pain are physical (e.g., good scenery), political (e.g., good laws), moral (public opinion) and religious (relation with God). It is the task of the legislature to manipulate these 'sanctions' to promote human happiness, individual and social. In the calculus of happiness, everybody is to count as one and nobody more than one. To the individual, the value of a pleasure or pain taken by itself depends on several factors, including its duration, intensity, certainty (or uncertainty) and nearness (or remoteness). In dealing with a group of persons affected is another factor. So, it is a matter of hedonistic calculus, summing up pleasures and pains in any particular case and balancing the pleasures against the pains, considering the number of persons affected and seeing whether the law contemplated produces the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The foregoing has explained that Utilitarianism is a political philosophy that bases the authority of government and the sanctity of individual rights upon their utility. According to this philosophy, the government should promote "the greatest good of the greatest number," or the maximum welfare of the maximum people. The people are obliged to obey the laws made by the state when they seek to promote general welfare. The State exists for the individual, but the individual does not exist for the State (Britannica, 2023).

The State as an organ of class rule

The Marxist theory of State, besides the Liberal State, is perhaps the most prominent, explaining the origin and essence of the State (Ekekwe, 2009). Marxist theory not only challenges the basic concepts of the Liberal State but also emphasises that it enslaves the majority men of society for the realisation of its aims, it is to be abolished or smashed without which the emancipation of common men will never be possible. Marx (1818- 1883) and his friend Engels (1820-1895) have made different comments and statements which constitute the fabric of the Marxist theory of State. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels define the State as the "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another". They also submitted that "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (1888/1967, p. 221). Again, Karl Marx's *Theory of Revolution* argues that: "The State is the institution or complex of institutions which bases itself on the availability of forcible coercion by special agencies of society to maintain the dominance of a ruling class, preserve the existing property relations from basic change and keep all other classes in subjection." Altogether, the Marxist conception of the State indicates that the State is fundamentally an instrument of class domination. In other words, the State is used by the bourgeoisie to exploit the common people and in that sense, it is a machinery for exploitation (Resnick & Wolff, 1983).

The Marxists (including Marx, Engels and Lenin) had no faith in the Social Contract Theory as the origin of the State. They have viewed the origin from a materialistic' standpoint which emphasises that though the State is the creation of man, behind this there is no emotion, or idea

but the influence of material conditions which they termed as economic conditions. They have divided the development of society into the communal social system, slave society, feudal society and industrial or capitalist society. In their submission, there was no State in the communal society because there was no existence of private property. Thus, the system of private property worked as a potential cause of the rise of the State. Consequently, the owners of private property felt insecurity as to its protection and they felt the necessity of a superpower which could provide protection ultimately. As submitted by Lenin (1917):

The State is a product and manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The State arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the State proves that class antagonisms are irreconcilable... The state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of “order”, which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes... (Singh, 1976, p. 59).

More so, Engels elucidates the concept of the “power” which is called the State, a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it. He also submits that this power consists of special bodies, including standing armies, police, prisons, etc. These are the chief instruments of the State at their command. Thus, the ruling class rules through its monopoly and control over the means of violence in society. In other words, the ruling class uses violence against other ruling classes in imperialist war and domestic (the working class) threats to its rule at home.

Furthermore, the Marxists have discovered two models of the Marxist theory of state. One is the instrumentalist model and the other model is the relative autonomy model which is in opposition to the other model. According to Marx and Engels (1967), the State was created to safeguard the economic interests (other interests are also included but economic interests are primary) and ultimately the State (along with its police, military and bureaucracy) was converted into an instrument used by the owners of property. From this special role of the State, the Marxists have deduced a particular model of the Marxist theory of State which is called the instrumentalist model. The core idea of this model is that the State is used as an instrument for the fulfilment of the interests of a particular class or section of society (Miliband, 1969). As such, the bourgeoisie used the state to articulate the interests of the capitalists. Collecting materials from history, Marx has shown that without using the State as an instrument the bourgeoisie could not survive at all because its survival depended upon its ability to accumulate and guard wealth.

On the other hand, the relative autonomy model means that though the capitalist State works as an instrument at the hands of the dominant class (that is the bourgeoisie), it very often exercises its power independently. The independent functioning of the State away from the influence of the economically dominant class is interpreted by the renowned Marxists as the relative autonomy of the State. Hence, the words relative autonomy do not mean that the State always acts independently of the dominating class. It rather denotes that sometimes it acts without being influenced by the powerful class. Again, the relative autonomy status does not find its place in clear terms in the writings of Marx and Engels.

iv. The Modern View on the Essence of the State

One of the best statements in recent times regarding the purposes of the State was made by Harold Laski. He believed that the purpose of the State was to promote social justice and equality. He argued that the State should be responsible for ensuring citizens had access to necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. Laski also believed that the state should play a role in regulating the economy to prevent the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few individuals or corporations (Laski, 1929). Again, in his book “The State in Theory and Practice,” Laski argued that the state was an instrument of economic power and that it was necessary to limit the power of the state to prevent it from being used to oppress the people (Hawkins, 1950). Similarly, in his earlier work “A Grammar of Politics,” however, he viewed the state as “the fundamental instrument of society” and defended the notion of an all-powerful sovereign state (Britannica, 2023).

The foregoing submissions of Laski presuppose that the State is an organization to enable the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. It exists to enable men, at least potentially, to realize the best that is themselves. Men can enable to realize the ‘best that is in themselves’ only if the State provides ‘rights’. Rights are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek in general to be himself at his best. They have content which changes with time and place. They are before the State in the sense that recognized or not, they are that from which its validity derives. Rights are, therefore, the groundwork of the State (Appadorai, 2004).

In the same vein, a group of other rights is necessary to enable the citizen to have a share in the government of his State, itself a necessary condition for the realization of his best self: the right to vote, periodical elections, the right to stand as a candidate for election, equal eligibility to government office (if the necessary qualifications are fulfilled), and freedom of speech, press and association. They enable the citizen to contribute his instructed judgment for the public good, to elect his rulers and call them to account for their conduct in office. They enable him, too, to work with like-minded men for the promotion of these purposes in life which he deems necessary for realizing his personality. Finally, a third group of rights which Laski calls *private* is essential. Under this head, he includes the right to reasonable access to a judicial remedy, freedom of religion and limited right of property (Laski, 1929). These are necessary to give the citizens a sense of personal security and freedom of consciousness.

Conclusion

The foregoing arguments imply that the purposes, ends or functions of the State are embedded in the establishment of order, protections and provision of secular common welfare programmes to alleviate poverty in the lives of the citizens and to participate actively in the International System. The State, therefore, has a central role to play in policy formulation and implementation in an economy and is, indeed, expected to cater for the well-being of its citizens. The problem, however, is the extent to which the State, especially in the less developed states, such as Nigeria, appears autonomous or independent of its colonial antecedents and post-colonial precedence to function for the common welfare of all its citizens rather than a privileged few classes or elites!

The essence of the State is a complex and multifaceted theme that has been debated by philosophers, political scientists, and legal scholars for centuries. However, one way to understand the essence of the State is to examine its functions. The State is responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting citizens from external threats, providing public goods and services, and promoting the general welfare of its citizens. The State also has the power to regulate the economy, redistribute wealth, and enforce social norms.

In sum, the State cannot exist without the citizens and therefore, the central purpose of the State as postulated by all the theories and perspectives indicates that man is at the centre of why the State came to be. Stated differently, one way to understand the essence of the State is to examine its functions. Consequently, the State can be said to exist to maintain law and order, protect citizens from external threats, provide public goods and services, and promote the general welfare of its citizens. The State also has the power to regulate the economy, redistribute wealth, and enforce social norms. Where a State cannot guarantee the security of the life and property of the generality of its citizens, where it cannot provide and secure social good for the citizens and where the vast majority of the citizens are living in fear and there is a general failing of the security apparatus, such a State has no doubt failed in its very essence.

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