



Conceptualizing state to determine dysfunctional state in the idealistic perspective

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Abstract

The study of state has progressively become a significant concept in political analysis research. In political sciences, state has always been the centre of its analytical studies such that the classic definitions of politics is indirectly understood as the discovery and exploration of state. The study therefore conceptualised state from the etymological and semantic perspective to the specification of state to broader concepts. It also took into consideration the derivation of other autonomous concept from states. These autonomous concepts were further utilised to analyse the dysfunctionality of states using the argumentations posited by scholars of the ideal theory. Also secondary empirical data was used to provide and build contestations in the study. The study depicted that states are not functioning effectively in the context of promoting public interest since they are unable to hold on to the ethical principles that idealism postulate to be the role of a well-functioning state.

Keywords: State, statehood, stateness, sovereignty, ideal theory.

Introduction

State as a defined concept originated from Latin expression "Status," meaning a condition¹. Status as a Latin term was known to postulate a legal standing of person in the fourteenth (14th) century Europe when Roman laws were revitalized. State as a term is said to be affiliated to Roman ideas during the times of Cicero which was basically about "status rei publicae," loosely translated as the affairs of the general populace. As a revolution of a better society strives the term state lost its references, which was directed to a precision of social groups or class and gave more preferences to the act of becoming a legal edict of the society and apparatus that is needed to be enforced².

From the perspective of Hobbes community, it is believed that state emanated from the social contract. To them, every man used to have full rights on everything in what they called "the state of nature", hence, no security. Such a society was atomistic and driven by self-preservation. The state of nature was brutish, therefore, there was the need for men to give up their natural rights in favour of a sovereign who or which reciprocate with protection, economic development and resolution of conflict (the covenant of social contract) against any domestic and peripheral threat for the safety of man³.

From the Lockeans (scholars who agree to John Locke's argument about the origination of state) point of view, it is believed that state emanated when individual collectively gave up their rights to a superior power (called state) in order to achieve the maximum satisfaction. In the case when the superior power is unable to promote the interest of the people, then the

citizens can refuse to abide by the set rules and regulations of the state or change the leadership of the state⁴. Also, the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli (the Prince, of the 16th century) cannot be underestimated when discussing the popularization of the term state, since his writings depict how a state should be organized and should be governed by what Machiavelli called "the Prince – ruler of the state."

In terms of definition, there has not been any hypothetical agreement among scholars with respect to the apt understanding of a state. It is perceived as an ideological conflict when scholars try to give a precise definition of the term. This is because different descriptions of the term lead to different theories that stipulate how a state should be or function, and result in the validation of different political strategies⁵. As Painter et al argued, if the essence of the state is defined at one period of time, it is likely for scholars to locate another period which is something different from the first period⁶. That will also be understood as state base on the significant characteristics that period comes with, hence, it becomes very difficult to have a common agreed upon definition for the term. However, the frequently posited definition of state is that of Max Weber. From his assertion, it is a "human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory"⁷. Also, the definitional characteristics asserted in the first (1) article of the 1933 Convention on Rights and Duties of States signed in Montevideo in Uruguay, is commonly recognized by scholars, experts, and leaders of the world. Based on agreements that came out of the Convention, a state should have specific features such as territory, population and government that is capable of managing and controlling the

affairs within and outside its territorial jurisdiction with other states.

Despite these characteristics, states in recent times have been unable to exercise their roles effectively thereby leading to inability to function well. As Rotberg put it, states are faced with domestic conflicts which in the long run distort their delivery of progressive political and public good to its people⁸. States are also less capable in their provision of economic growth and distribution of societal interest. They are caught up with economic injustice and ferocious struggle over national resources⁹. By these, states are losing their legitimate powers on the side of the rising multiplicity of its public⁸. As a result of the number of deleterious alarms posited above, this conceptual analysis, therefore, used an empirical secondary data from key sources to explain why some states are dysfunctional using the narratives and explanatory powers of the ideal theorists.

The Specification of State to a Broader Concepts

State as a concept did not emerge out of a vacuum. There are a number of broader concepts or theory in which State can be derived from. Such broader concepts include polity, polis and empire. This section, therefore, discusses the aforementioned concepts in details by focusing on their linkage to state as follows:

Polity: Polity is known to be the biggest political space with its own autonomy. In a polity, there is a government created and entrusted with the legal recognition and powers to rule over the terrain and populace under its control¹⁰. In the operationalization of polity as a concept, indicators such as the hierarchical echelons and control of administrative structures are measured and/or observed¹¹. The most preeminent polity that can be identified is the Westphalian states¹².

Polis: The term Polis is said to be a political entity that is typical to the ancient and classical Greek civilization during the fourth (4th) to the eight (8th) centuries which is connected to the community of humanity in a determinate geographical jurisdiction. The polis in this sense was not just a society but was attributed and affiliated with a trans-generational lastingness and a trans-familial identity, where members of the community feel a sense of solidarity transcending among all ties of blood. However, in the conventional age, the polis was categorised based on the system of governance adopted, be it democracy, oligarchy or any other form of government. References can be made to the Greek City-State of Athens, where its governance was run on the all-inclusive decision-making principles. Here, the Athenian Assembly (known to be the legislative arm) brings all citizens (women, children and slave where not recognised as citizens) to the decision making panel or table and decision conclusions are drawn based on the vote of the majority after numerous debate, deliberations, argumentations and compromises. Every citizen or member is given the equal chance or right to express their opinion,

participate in the activities of the assembly and judicial proceedings except military and financial cases, which was done through the simple drawing of the lots. Also, in polis where they subscribe to oligarchy, only some citizens were permitted to get involved in governmental affairs of the polis. That is in an oligarchic polis, participants for governmental affairs are chosen by the people to represent them through an election.

Empire: The term empire as another broader concept in which state can be derived from is defined as a group of states that are widely governed by a monarch, oligarch or a powerful sovereign state. Empire is formed when one powerful state is able to extend powers beyond its boundaries to govern other states who in this case are not autonomous on their own. Here, the governed states are regulated by the policies of the superior state. The superior state becomes a hegemon who has the capacity and ableness to widen its hegemonic measures over the territorial space in which their superiority covers with the aim of accruing and extracting often times economic values. Examples of an Empire include the Greek Empire, Austria - Hungarian Empire, Russian Empire and the British Empire.

So in analyzing the broader specification of the concept - state, a polity can be said to be the very comprehensive concept where other concepts can be deduced. Polis like the Greek City-State of Athens during the era of Pericles (448-430BC) had a lot of hegemonic powers which made it be popularly known as the Ancient Greek Empire since it was able to extend its supreme powers beyond its territorial space. It is out of this evolution that we have the current state called Greece. However, it should be noted that a State can directly emerge out of a polity without necessarily coming out of a polis or an empire. This theoretical explanation is depicted as below:

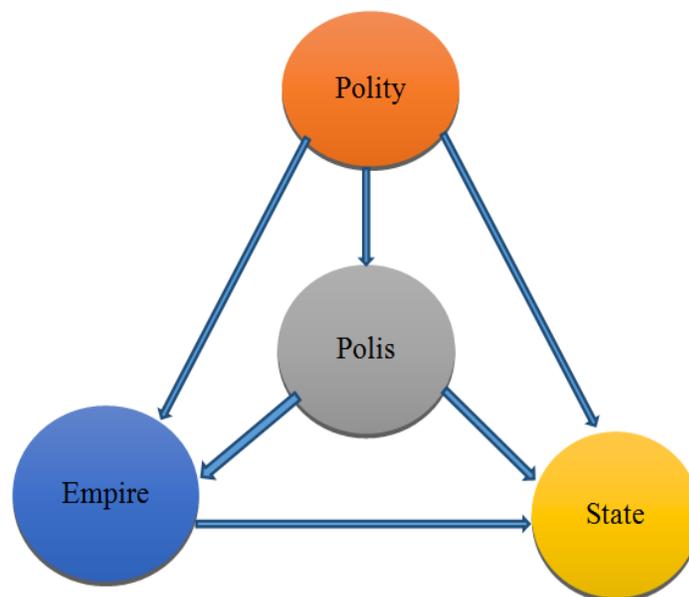


Figure-1: The evolutionary explanation of state from broader concepts in the theoretical context.

Other Concepts Derived from the Concepts of State

There are a number of autonomous concepts that can be deduced when conceptualizing state. Such concepts are discussed below:

Government: It refers to a group of people that form an administrative and managerial bureaucracy for purpose of controlling state apparatus in a particular point in time¹³. This implies that the means through which the powers of a state can be employed is through the formation of a government. By this, the state becomes an institution responsible for the continuous succession of diverse governments. Every recognized government possess coercive power¹⁴. This power gives the legitimate mandate to act in accordance with the constitutional specifications. These specifications give governments the ability to enforce existing laws, enact new laws, and adjudicate conflicts. Depending on the social context, a government can be self-perpetuating or hereditary in nature whiles in another social context like that of democracies, the roles of political parties remain key as there is a periodic election of the people who come under the umbrella of political parties to assume government positions¹⁵.

Nation and Nation-State: A nation is a population of people who are bound together by common culture, history, religion or tradition and are typically concentrated within a specified geographical reality or region. An example is the Jewish nation before the creating the State of Israel. Also, in the context of a nation-state, the state is basically bound together by a culture that is common among its nationals¹⁶. But it should be noted that in today's world, it is gradually becoming difficult to set the clear-cut distinctions between the two concepts (nation and state) joined together to generate nation-state as a new concept. According to Opello and Rosow, a nation-state is not that easy to define as a result of the fact that in the emerging scholarly understanding, nation and state are often used interchangeably¹⁷.

Statehood, Stateness and Sovereignty

According to Zaytsev, a state is a polity typology which is basically categorized by two focal parameters namely "statehood" and "stateness". The terminology statehood, in this case, refers to the scenario where individual states are being recognized as a unit on its own on the global scene or in the field of international relation.

From Zaytsev's argumentation, whenever a state receives and has statehood, it implies that such state is part of what is called the "concert of nations"¹⁸. Examples of such concert of nations include; United Nations Organization, European Union, African Union and many more. The table below gives examples of countries that have state recognition, hence, statehood and examples of countries that are not recognized, hence lacking statehood from the continental level (Table-1).

Table-1: States with and without statehood¹⁹.

| Continents | Examples of States with Statehood | Examples of States without Statehood |
|---------------|---|---|
| Africa | Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Gambia, South Africa Republic, Kenya | Afrikaners, Haratin, Somaliland, Barotseland, Oromo |
| Asia | China, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, South Korea, | Madhesh, Nagalim, Tibet, West Papua |
| Australia | Samoa, Vanuatu, Fiji, Australia, Palau, Tuvalu, Tonga, New Zealand | No country without statehood |
| Europe | France, Germany, Sweden, Estonia, United Kingdom, Austria, Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania | Kosovo, Trieste, Savoy Barittany, Crimea Tartar |
| North America | United States of America, Mexico, Panama, Cuba, Canada, Grenada | No country without statehood |
| South America | Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Venezuela | No country without statehood |

Also, the term stateness is used when looking at the state as a collective identity responsible for the summation of all internal and external functions and structures in order to promote the collective interest of its citizenry²⁰. This can be supplemented with the definition given by Zaytsev that "Stateness is the aptitude of a State to guard its geographical space, nations and promote the well-being of its inhabitants"¹⁸. With this, a state is said to have stateness when it is able to make public choices in the interest of its citizenry. It must also be able to independently control its developmental strategies both at the local and national level. The report of Melville for the Institute for Public Project which is under the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) measures the stateness as an indicator of state recognition by taking into consideration the political atlas of today's modern world²¹. The Figure-2 gives a number of states that have been sampled randomly from the report.

The Figure-2 shows the level of a countries ability to control its own affairs without or with a minimal external influence. According to the Melville report, states like the United State of America (USA), Sweden, and China are said to have more total control over their activities and relations with other States. Russia, Spain and South Africa are able to manage their affairs but are affected often times by some level of influence from the periphery²¹. For instance, it is visually known that some activities of the Russian Federation have been influenced by the sanctions and restrictive measures of external actors such as the

USA, European Union (EU) and Canada for Russia's engagement in annexing Crimea and introduction of aggression in states like Syria and Ukraine. In the case of Nigeria and other African states with low stateness are also engineered by the massive external decision of actors like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is made possible because the national budgetary of such less developed states are majorly sponsored by these supranational institutions.

However, in measuring stateness, it is not enough to quantify it in terms of the choices and managerial control of a state only. But also, it is important to take into consideration the recognition of that state by its own citizenry, hence, state identity by its own people. This is not an exception from how Linz and Stepan gave definitive identification to stateness as

when groups within a particular state are unwilling to flee from their geographical space to join or create another autonomous territorial space²². By this, the various nationalities feel accepted, recognised and proud of their nationalities associated with the state in question. This state or national identity has become more relevant because of the emergence of numerous nation-states predominating in our contemporary world. By this, as posited by Zaystev, the use of sociocultural factors such as the proudness of a person's nationality to quantify stateness¹⁸ is much more relevant to this conceptualisation. It will give the clear and full understanding of the question about the dysfunctionality of some states in the idealistic perspective. The Figure-3 shows the measurement of people's level of proudness to their nationality based on a randomly sampled states.

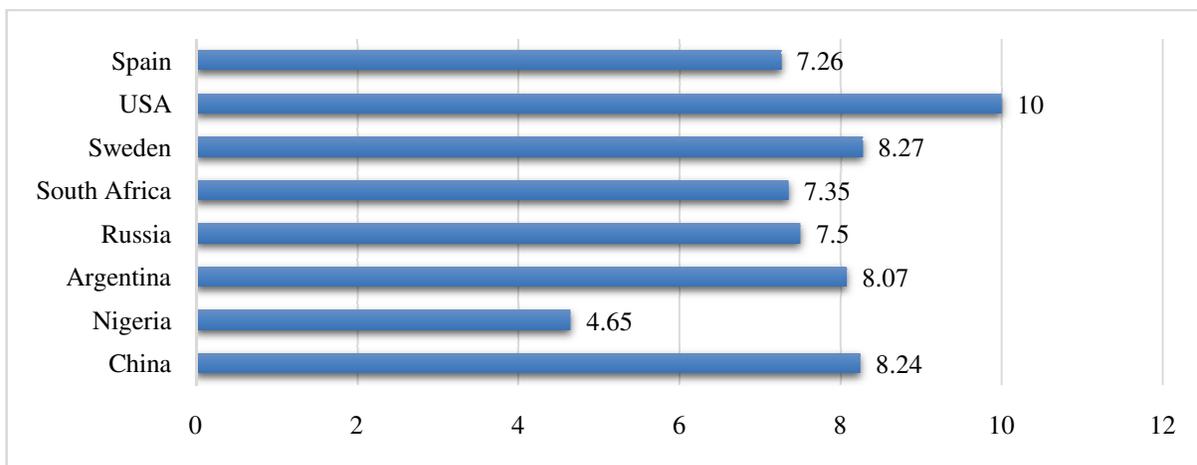


Figure-2: Random sample of states rated by stateness index.

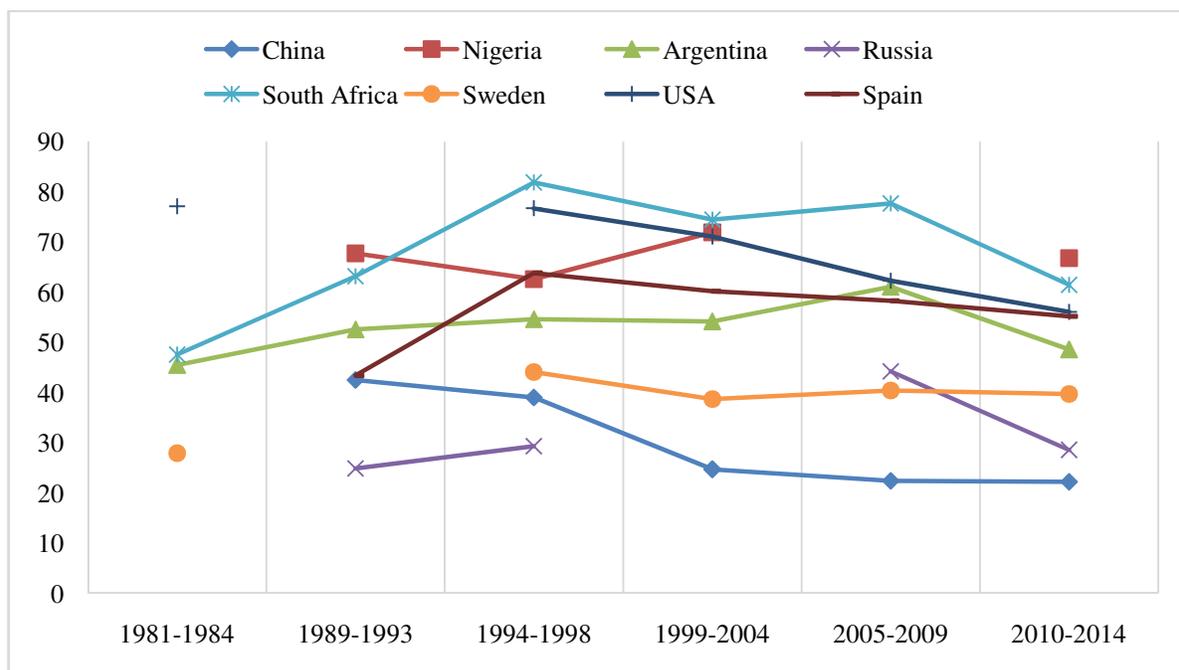


Figure-3: Measurement of respondents who are very proud of their nationality in percentages²³.

The Figure-3 shows an interesting understanding on how stateness can be perceived as a national identity and its contradictory relations with the idea of stateness as a form of a state's ability to have the managerial control over its affairs without any influence from another party. From the Figure-3, citizens of states with higher and lower stateness in Figure-2 are all losing their national identity from 2010 onwards. This means that despite the fact that a state is able or unable to manage its affairs well do not guarantee a complete or an effective level of stateness. This is attributed to some factors entertained by the states under discussion, hence, made them dysfunctional based on their capacity to accommodate those factors. Some of these factors will be discussed from the idealistic perspective later on in this script.

Also, for a state to exercise its image or responsibility of statehood and stateness, the sovereignty of the state becomes significant. The term sovereignty refers to the autonomy of the state to exercise its supreme powers within its jurisdiction without any external influence. With sovereignty, the state has prerogative powers and authority to deal with it domestic and diaspora relations without the mastery of other party being it an international community and/or another state. State sovereignty has diverse characteristics and it includes indivisibility²⁴, absolute²⁵, universal²⁶ and permanence²⁷. Sovereignty, in this case, is the power tool that supports the recognized state (statehood) to manage its own internal and external affairs, thereby leading to nationals becoming proud of their state origin (stateness). So, the empirical measurement or the functional approach and representation of state can be deduced as:

$$f(S_0) = S_1 + S_2 + S_3$$

Where; $f(S_0)$ = function of State, S_1 = Stateness, S_2 = Statehood, S_3 = Sovereignty.

This means a functional state is basically institutionalized when there is a summation or inclusion of statehood, stateness and sovereignty²⁰, all other factors held constant.

Conclusion

In today's contemporary world, a state which is seen as the dominant political entity is more likely to be successful when it has the above-discussed indicators (statehood, stateness and sovereignty). That is the state is being recognized by its citizenry, by other autonomous states, by the concert of nations and has the authorisation to act on its own. However, some states are unable to fully meet these characteristics, hence, are regarded as dysfunctional states. Scholars of the idealism concur with some of the factors that have led to the emergence and existence of dysfunction states. As the brains behind the ideal theory, Aristotle and Plato believed that man by nature is a political animal, therefore it is only when man associate himself to the society that man can realise and develop the best out of oneself. They did not give a clear-cut distinction between the society and the state, hence, they assumed state to be a political

entity which is independent in and by itself from any other entity. The writings of Avineri referred to the work of Hegel (known to be a modern idealist) understood state as a political entity guided by ethical principles²⁸. These ethical principles shape the role of the state in exercising its duties without any form of interferences.

By this, the state is seen as an institution responsible for the provision of social or public welfare to ensure individuals and communal growth and development. The state must also create and guard both the individual and collective rights of the citizenry as well as aliens within its geographical jurisdiction. Hence, the state is regarded and accepted as the power source of rights, liberties and freedoms provided to all. From the idealist narratives, if a state is unable or biases to sentinel the rights of its citizenry, then it is said to be a dysfunctional state. Likewise, the states that are unable to provide public good such as quality health care, housing, employment, peaceful environment, rule of law and many more to its people. These are some of the factors that are believed to be the result of low stateness among states. State as a concept has really made a significant impact on understanding the conceptual analysis framework and political science research in general. Therefore, the need to study state as a concept contributes to the understanding of its functionality in the public sphere and the need for its formation.

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