

CONTEMPORARY ANARCHIST STUDIES

The Concealment of the State

Jason Royce Lindsey

B L O O M S B U R Y

The Concealment of the State

CONTEMPORARY ANARCHIST STUDIES

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B L O O M S B U R Y
NEW YORK • LONDON • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Academic

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

www.bloomsbury.com

First published 2013

© Jason Royce Lindsey, 2013

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lindsey, Jason Royce.

The concealment of the state : explaining and challenging the postmodern studies / Jason Royce Lindsey.

pages cm -- (Contemporary anarchist studies)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4411-0206-5 (pbk.) -- ISBN 978-1-4411-7245-7 (hardcover) 1. State, The. 2. Capitalism. 3. Anarchism. 4. Sovereignty. I. Title.

JC11.L55 2013

320.1--dc23

2013012217

ISBN: HB: 978-1-4411-7245-7

PB: 978-1-4411-0206-5

ePub: 978-1-4411-4123-1

ePDF: 978-1-4411-4856-8

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

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For Holly

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The main catalyst for *Concealment of the State* was my participation in the first annual conference of the Anarchist Studies Network (ASN) held at the University of Loughborough in 2008. After exchanging ideas with such an interesting group of peers, I began to devote much more time to some questions that are central to contemporary Anarchist Studies. How has political ideology changed following the end of the Cold War? What are the similarities and differences between our current period of global capitalism and that faced by the anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How well does the anarchist critique fit contemporary nation states? Through the efforts of many people, including Ruth Kinna and Dave Berry at Loughborough University, the Anarchist Studies Network held its second “annual” conference there in 2012. My experience at the second ASN conference provided the inspiration to finish the manuscript. My thanks to the many organizers and participants.

I also learned about the proposed *Contemporary Anarchist Studies* book series through the ASN. Thanks to the series editors—Laurence Davis, Alex Prichard, Uri Gordon, and Nathan Jun—for their interest and constructive criticism. Alex Prichard is owed particular thanks for his guidance on how to put together a better book proposal. All were very supportive of my effort to contribute to the field of Anarchist Studies. Thanks are owed as well to my editor Ally Jane Grossan at Bloomsbury and to Marie-Claire Antoine for steering the proposal through its first steps. The final version of this book is better thanks to their input, though responsibility for errors and oversights rests with me.

I wrote the main draft of *Concealment of the State* while on a sabbatical from my home institution in Minnesota, St. Cloud State University. I also received a reduction in my teaching assignment the following year from the School of Public Affairs while finishing the book. This support for research time outside of the classroom was critical for completing the project. I owe special thanks to Dr Orn Bodvarsson, Dean of the School of Public Affairs, for his support. This support for research in contemporary Anarchist Studies shows that academic freedom, and the commitment to open inquiry, can still be found in US higher education. All of us in academia should work to make sure things stay that way through our professional organizations.

Some material presented in *Concealment of the State* appeared in three of my earlier publications. Two of these instances concern my discussion of coercion found in Chapter 4, “Engines of Oppression.” An earlier description of the changing US military appears in my essay “America and the New Dynamics of War,” *Peace Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, April 2007, pp. 255–60. An earlier discussion of the philosophical implications of non-lethal force technologies can be found in my article “Vattimo’s Renunciation of Violence,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, vol. 16, no. 1, February 2013, pp. 99–111. Some of the material discussing anarchist critiques of the state, presented in the conclusion, can also be found in my article “Functional Representation and Its Anarchist Origins,” *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, Autumn 2010, pp. 85–100. My thanks to all of the editors and publishers for permission to use excerpts from these works here.

The most important collaborator for me to acknowledge is my wife, Holly Evers. It is thanks to her observations and criticisms that the arguments presented here became clearer. Several policy examples and political controversies that I use to illustrate my argument were also suggested by her. Holly’s painstaking editing made my “final” manuscript much more comprehensible, for which my subsequent editors are no doubt grateful.

Jason Royce Lindsey

February 2013

Kharkiv, Ukraine

1

The concealment of the state

Our contemporary political discourse is dominated by the economic logic of capitalism. This growing monopoly over our political imaginations seems inevitable as the lessons of capitalism are applied to more and more areas of human life. This attempt to expand the use of economic “science” includes popular books that “explore the hidden side of everything,” because “if morality represents how people would like the world to work, then economics shows how it actually does work.”¹ The mechanics of the market are so familiar that many of us assume it is “natural,” and we attempt to study it as we would study physics or chemistry. This iron-clad conception of reality also pushes for the privatization of traditional state services in the name of efficiency.

Thanks to this worldview, the inevitable political question that follows all government activity today is whether the market could provide the service or good more effectively. The story of how corporations have provided human beings with new methods for exploiting natural, financial, and human capital has become more familiar to us than the state’s provision of public goods. Indeed, in the United States, the importance of the corporation has been enshrined by the Supreme Court’s decision to expand the historical (and individual) “freedom of speech” protection to corporations engaged in political lobbying.² As a result of this intellectual trend, the state has been diminished in our political consciousness. Increasingly, the state is characterized as the less nimble, antiquated player in comparison to the dynamic free market.

However, states have not gone away, and, without them, the economic system we know would disappear. Much of the research investment underlying impressive new technologies, medical treatments, and the continued development of the fine arts is dependent upon state financial support. On a deeper level, the legal framework for corporations and the initial guarantee underpinning most transactions and agreements originate with the state’s sovereignty. All of us routinely sign contracts and agreements ranging from consumer purchases to health insurance. In the

most developed countries, we confidently agree to pay for services from faceless entities we know only as a brand. Yet, we feel comfortable engaging in such trust because we know that our legal systems are the ultimate arbiter of any potential disputes. In this sense, the state is the “unmoved mover” of our modern social world; the state’s sovereignty is the first guarantee that anchors all others.

In addition, states are arguably the most important consumer in the market. Among the OECD states, government spending accounts on average for just over 19 percent of all economic activity.³ The privatization of services is at its core, resulting in the transfer of taxpayer monies, collected by the state, to corporations and firms. The contracts for private companies to provide services ranging from garbage collection and education to policing and space travel are awarded by states and paid for by the public. What is the difference from public provision? The garbage collectors, space engineers, security guards, and their managers are technically not government employees, though the public is paying them one step removed. Indeed, the state’s sovereignty underlies much of our daily consumer activity. The state regulates our work environment and may even pay our salary. However, the championing of contemporary economic thinking has slowly displaced our awareness of this fact.

Nonetheless, the state continues to play an enormous role in our lives. This has been a fact of human existence for centuries. States are arguably the most important of all human inventions since they mark a turning point in our evolution. Using the state, we harnessed the physical strength, intellectual creativity, and other talents of our populations for unprecedented economic growth and resource extraction. States provided society with the organization necessary to alleviate poverty, create educational institutions, and promote universal literacy. We have used the governing capacity of states to create a global market, as well as redistribute domestic resources. Of course, states have also exploited the scientific potential of societies to develop increasingly lethal military technologies. States also presided over industrial policies that have left us with permanent ecological damage. States brought a powerful new form of organization to human society, and we have used it for both good and ill, as with any other human invention.

Thinking about the state as a human invention can help us to better understand its overwhelming influence on history. However, the nation state differs from other inventions on one important point: it contains and is dependent on an enormous amount of human agency. It consists of institutions that are staffed by human beings who decide and implement the state’s actions. The power these individuals wield through the state raises profoundly difficult moral questions. Why do they have the authority to act on behalf of others? What are the moral limits of the coercive power they exercise? How can human beings keep the state accountable, rather than falling into subservience to it?

These philosophical questions have accompanied the development of the state from its earliest inception. The results of this line of classical inquiry are various theories of political legitimacy. We can map this intellectual journey from the early, supernatural justifications of monarchical rule in Egypt and Mesopotamia, through the Greek's justifications and rankings of *poleis*, to contemporary theories about improving democracy. The increasing sophistication of these theories parallels the evolution of state structures. Yet, even in those political systems that strive for transparency and democratic accountability, the question of who is doing what, where, and why looms large. As nation states have taken on additional responsibilities, made use of increasingly sophisticated technology, and grown to govern millions of citizens, this thread of human agency becomes difficult to follow.

In contemporary times, another level of complexity further obscures the human agency of the state. The phenomenon labeled by the catchall term "globalization" has pushed accountability ever more toward the horizon. Today, when we attempt to unravel who owns some of our local businesses, we are confronted with chains of capital that are transnational. When we demand accountability or action from our local state authorities, they often patiently explain to us how the free market works. Citizens worried about a local impact, such as the zoning of a new superstore, the environmental consequences of development, or the threat to local employment due to outsourcing, are told that little can be done. Free trade agreements that allow capital to flow across borders and rules of private investment that trump the commons hinder action on local community concerns.

What is the primary motivation for states to participate in this system of global capitalism? Isn't it paradoxical for nation states to jealously assert their sovereignty vis-à-vis other states while allowing global capitalism to whittle away their authority? In the case of democratic political systems, it seems illogical for the state to allow democratic control to wither locally for the sake of foreign capital. Why do contemporary nation states participate in an economic system that undermines their sovereignty?

It is in fact the state's goal of maintaining sovereignty that forces very different political regimes from around the planet to pursue globalization. Power in the international system is intertwined with economic competitiveness. Only states with a highly productive economy can develop the technology that lies behind modern military might. Only states with large economies influence multinational meetings like the G20. Thus, the state's *raison d'être*, its sovereignty, compels it to participate in the global economy, even though that participation is at odds with the immediate interests of much of the population.

For example, political groups advocating increased taxes to fund community assistance, education, or health care provisions are warned that this is either impossible or unrealistic since it would undermine the national economy's competitiveness. How can the state take the risk of investing in

such concerns if other states ignore them? Instead, the state must channel its efforts into fostering immediate economic growth or risk falling behind those powers that do. This competition leads the state to demand many sacrifices from its population. The power of the state could be harnessed to provide additional social benefits, but it would be at a cost to economic performance. This stark choice creates a political dilemma for contemporary nation states.

Globalization rewards states that integrate into the international economic regime. However, the citizenry of these states demand a set of conflicting responses. Some economic elites support this vision of autonomous markets. For this interest group, the continued existence of sovereign states is an ongoing interference into the “natural” activity of global markets; the state is too sovereign. From another quarter, much of the citizenry demands policies that run counter to the free-market orthodoxy of globalization. For this interest group, the sovereign state is failing to mitigate the problems created by globalization; the state is not sovereign enough.

States augment their power, and thus their capacities to exercise coercion and guarantee their sovereignty, through economic success. Yet, contemporary economic health is linked with integration into a global capitalist economy that appears to ignore sovereign borders. How can the state maintain its usefulness if its sovereignty is eroded? If states are no longer sovereign, then why should we support them? On the other hand, how can a contemporary state guarantee its sovereignty in the world other than by joining the economic competition of globalization? This paradox explains the contemporary difficulty of legitimizing state power within a context of globalizing capitalism.

The ideological solution for contemporary states is to maintain their sovereign agency while insisting that they have given much of it up to the new rules of global capitalism. Today, the state claims that its creation, the market, has become even more autonomous than in the past and stands as an alternate entity to the state. The state can then retreat behind the screen of the “free” market to answer both camps in contemporary society. For the winners of globalization, the state appears to get out of the way of market innovation and productivity. For the citizenry alarmed at globalization’s outcomes, the state claims to be powerless against the inevitable. Contemporary states put forward this position despite the fact that they provide the regulatory infrastructure the market relies upon and the sovereign guarantee necessary to underpin all other agreements, including transnational free trade agreements. States will also violate all the usual “rules” and intervene into the market when necessary to prevent its collapse.

However, state sovereignty, by its very nature, is a competition with other states. This competition requires participation in the global economy in a race to stay ahead of other states. The importance of this fact, and the bearing it has on the continued existence of the state, trumps popular concerns with

globalization's effects. Thus, there is a common interest in maintaining the useful fiction of an inevitable and autonomous global capitalism. For many economic elites, this belief reinforces their class interests. For political elites, this ideology is important because of the power it confers on the state. For many inside and outside of our ruling elite, this ideology reflects a certainty that seems so obvious it is unquestioned.

Nonetheless, there is an obvious contradiction in this ideology. The state cannot strengthen its sovereignty by participating in a regime that undermines it. Yet, contemporary states that are well integrated into the global economic system seem to be the most powerful of all. This paradox dissolves once we realize that states have turned to the ideology of concealing their agency. This concealment relies in part on the diversion of political demands into the closed ideological system of free-market orthodoxy.

The politics of concealment

Increasingly, politicians and policy makers from across the political spectrum insist that the market is an immovable force that constrains their ability to act. To maintain this facade, contemporary states have bifurcated their functions into two broad areas: the deep and shallow state. The shallow state has been freed from much of the policy formulation and implementation that is truly constrained by the needs of state sovereignty. Instead, this important function now rests with the less visible deep state. By compartmentalizing many responsibilities to the deep state, the shallow state can proclaim the limitations of state action imposed by the market, despite the implausible contradictions of this claim.

Although this ideological turn allows contemporary states to dissolve the immediate tensions of globalization, it is also transforming traditional political dynamics. By bifurcating politics into a deep and shallow state, contemporary states hide their ability to act, but at a cost. Political actors in the shallow state are left to visibly debate policies, which, from the outset, have been closely circumscribed by the actions of the deep state. This shift of responsibility allows politicians in the shallow state to pursue votes with popular, or populist, policies that ignore increasingly hard economic and ecological constraints. To some extent, politicians must engage with their constituents (and with each other) in this circumscribed, populist arena because so many issues of substance have been removed from their sphere of influence.

While the state has traditionally had to maintain secrecy in some areas (e.g. defense, intelligence, or the all-pervasive category of "security"), we now see a shift of even mundane policy decisions to less visible agencies in the deep state. Examples include budget recommendations, environmental regulations, consumer and workplace safety, scientific investment, transportation planning,

and educational policies. Thus, elected officials can grandstand on what issues are left in this hollowed out, shallow arena of politics. With substantive (and often unpopular) policy made and implemented in the deep state, we see the remains of politics in the shallows. Here the focus is increasingly on national identity, cultural controversy, consumer frustrations, and symbolic acts of solidarity with constituents. Politicians in the shallow state have come to rely on the quiet competence of the deep state and have little incentive to engage publicly with the difficult policy choices facing society.

This book maps the ideological and functional logic that makes this behavior seem “natural” to the human actors who are, collectively, the state. As I show in the subsequent chapters, political actors within both the deep and shallow state, despite still having sharp disputes on many topics, have come to accept the concealment of the state as a background assumption to contemporary politics. I do not argue that this acceptance is necessarily a conscious one for most political actors and state functionaries. Instead, this behavior can be thought of as agents within the state following an “institutional logic” that colors their perception and frames the choice of actions available to policy makers.⁴

For example, under the pressures of global capitalism, many states have reduced their services to achieve macroeconomic stability. Consider the remarkable responses of governments to economic crisis in 2008 and 2009. In the United States and many other countries, rather than an expansion of welfare services, most state assistance was directed toward large financial organizations. Although many commentators criticized these “bail outs,” fierce criticism was also directed at practically any state assistance to the citizenry in the aftermath of the crisis. Stimulus spending by governments, modest extensions of unemployment insurance, and assistance to local levels of government were routinely attacked in the popular media. Thus, the startling twist in the political fallout from the crisis is that this criticism came from those sections of the population that state assistance was supposed to help.

This phenomenon shows the extent to which states have found a useful ideological logic in the concealment of the state. The removal or reduction of services to the population has become associated with responsible economic management. As a result, we see in European countries, ranging in size from Great Britain to Latvia, the possibility of securing popular support by pledging austerity.⁵ In the United States, we see a popular movement, the Tea Party, demanding that candidates implement pro-business austerity measures to reduce deficit spending. The economic crisis of 2008 also provoked the authoritarian (and notionally still communist) government of China to protest over interference in the free market from the currency policies of the United States. Whether supposedly left or right wing, authoritarian or democratic, a common ideology is beginning to cut across our traditional political divisions.

What about those cases where the citizenry still makes demands of the state? In the aftermath of the great recession of 2008, we have seen governments in Greece insist that they must implement austerity, despite massive protests in 2012, because of “economic reality.” In Italy that same year, a technocratic, caretaker government was hailed as a positive development since it would remove politics from responsible economic management. Thus, decisions about taxing, spending, and what to cut from public budgets were safely removed from politics in these Western democracies.

In all of these cases, the foundation for this political orientation (which claims to be a reality outside of and above politics) is the widespread acceptance that the state should only provide a minimal level of benefits and services to its population. The rest of what the citizenry needs is to be fulfilled through their individual agency within a market as free as possible from government interference. In turn, citizens accepting this view see the state retreating from their lives as social benefits are withdrawn. Privatization of various services leaves more and more citizens with market relationships rather than political ones. This pattern satisfies the ideological imperative to rely on markets rather than the “heavy hand of government.” Of course, there are still political rituals such as voting and some remaining vestiges of local participation, especially in federal political systems. Yet, to many individual citizens, the state has retreated from the horizon of their daily perception.

Evidence for this trend can be seen in its duplication around the world. As in the past, the ideological norms of the developed states are transmitted to developing societies through cultural, economic, and political connections. Thus, some supporting evidence for my argument is the parallel movement we find in the developing countries. Those states have taken up this same behavior, but with some delay. The same processes of influence, cajoling, seduction, and coercion that originally pushed societies into adopting the nation state are now pushing them to adopt the contemporary ideology of the most developed, postmodern states.

The other cache of evidence is in the ideological reactions we see to incidents that expose the state’s ability to act. When faced with great risk, society falls back to an earlier position of looking to the state. However, this sudden surfacing of the state provokes convoluted political responses in a desperate effort to bridge an ideology that denies the state can act with urgent, practical needs. In the case of the United States, we see the odd political maneuvers that have followed in the aftermath of the threat of terrorism and natural disaster.

For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, there was the startling call by President Bush for patriots to continue shopping. By fulfilling their duty as consumers, that is maintaining their market relationships, the citizenry could keep America strong. How else should the citizenry be mobilized in response to such an event? Yet, this call

for citizens to remain active in the free market accompanied startling state actions, ranging from the invasion of Afghanistan to extraordinary rendition and the “enhanced interrogation” of suspects. Thus, American citizens were told to show their patriotism and fulfill their longing to help by going about their important daily business of market transactions. In contrast, the decisive, sharp end of the state was deployed without conscription, without a formal declaration of war, or other traditional *political* actions that call attention to the power of the state.

Or, in another striking example from the United States in 2005, the country witnessed the complete breakdown of civilization in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina decimated the city. At first, government reaction seemed to show only an inexplicable inertia. This initial paralysis was quickly followed by odd commentaries that asked why poorer residents, living in one of the areas of deep poverty in the United States, had not saved themselves by evacuating. In other words, why did citizens think that their government would save them from natural disaster? Why would they think the state has the power to do so? Isn't it unrealistic to expect the state to protect all of its citizens in this way? On the other hand, the authorities eventually took action to assist the city's beleaguered residents. This belated intervention took place against another set of commentaries: is the United States still a powerful, developed country given that the government cannot muster an adequate response to a natural disaster?

In this sense, the concealment of the state allows for paradox. The state can assert that it has no agency to employ when it is able to shift burdens onto the population within the market sphere. However, if this denial of agency begins to be perceived as weakness, the state can unleash coercion with less political cost or oversight. Thus, we have the paradox of supposedly globalized and less sovereign states that, nonetheless, possess unprecedented instruments of coercion and surveillance.

More globally, we see this phenomenon tied to the political fallout from an increasing awareness of universal environmental risks. Many individuals voice concern about the environment in global public opinion polling. However, in a classic “free rider” problem, citizens around the world also voice frustration at the fact that, acting alone, they cannot do anything about it.⁶ Even if the individual tries to make a difference, their effort seems hopeless in the face of transnational problems like climate change. The failure of collective action in this policy area may also be driving some individuals to take more extreme, direct action. As I discuss below, the deep state has begun to prepare for environmental challenges despite arguments in the shallows over whether a problem even exists.

An interpretation of politics as broad as mine should raise some immediate skeptical questions. Perhaps the most obvious counterfactual to my argument is this: if this is a new hegemonic ideology, then when did it start? The contention of this work is that its origins lie at the end of the

Cold War. While many studies (including ones that claimed to be autopsies) were applied to the former Soviet Union, few have stopped to consider how deeply the end of this conflict affected the United States and the “developed” world.⁷ Yet, the end of the Cold War was also the end of many political certainties for the West. In this sense, the concealment of the state is an ideological reaction to the new political, social, and economic challenges that states face in our post–Cold War world.

The collapse of communist regimes discredited statist economic systems and removed a rival example from the mental map of the world. During the Cold War, state involvement in the economy and daily life in the West could always be contrasted to the extremes of the Eastern Bloc. Now in the twenty-first century, even modest interventions into the economy of the United States are labeled totalitarian, communist, or socialist by partisan opponents. Perhaps one could argue that there has always been a tendency to such inflated and alarmist rhetoric in the political systems of the West, especially in the United States. However, the discrediting of state socialism has led to a general skepticism of the state having a role in any area of everyday life. As I discuss in a later chapter, this skepticism is now so profound that it has led to efforts to conceal the state’s role in exercising coercion and, in the most traditional state role of all, national defense.

In addition, the end of the Cold War cleared the way ideologically for the triumph of neoliberal capitalism as the new global status quo. The tension between the benefits to the state’s capabilities from the globalization of capitalism and the backlash among the population from globalization’s fallout creates a fundamental contradiction. One logical response would be for politicians to clearly make the case for globalization or, at least, argue that its benefits outweigh its shortcomings. However, this response carries the risk of rejection by the population. Such a rejection would be incompatible with the state’s need to participate in this system. Instead, by concealing the ability of the state to act, policy makers can make globalization and its effects on the population seem inevitable. This ideological maneuver limits political debate to “responsible” discourse about when and where we should mitigate the effects of global capitalism.

Aside from its impact upon contemporary politics, the concealment of the state also has a wider cultural impact. In turn, this cultural influence feeds back into the political system. As the state’s positive importance becomes more hidden, the citizenry of the most developed countries begins to think of politics and government only as an interference. Suburbanization has probably fed this tendency, at least in the United States and other developed countries. In such communities, the illusion of a modern self-sufficiency easily takes hold. As commuters do not rely on public transport and withdraw into their private homes, the idea that they do not need government becomes common. They see themselves as maintaining their homes, their private transportation, and their private schools, and become unaware of the deeper

infrastructure they depend upon. This includes the state's maintenance of a legal framework that supports the ownership of private property and that requires safety in the products they consume.

By exposing this behavior and giving it easily comprehensible labels, I hope that popular political activity from below can challenge it more effectively. Otherwise, our political systems are likely to become increasingly opaque despite our traditional forms of participation like voting, grassroots interest group organization, unionization of the workplace, and, at the end of the day, demonstrations or strikes. These forms of political activity were progressive in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, it is difficult to imagine how they can pressure the state in the future, when, from the outset, the state denies that it has the ability to meet our demands.

Ideology and the state

My core argument is that the concealment of the state is a recent ideological turn. Unfortunately, ideology is often seen as a slippery foundation for the scientific study of politics. In recent decades, the methodology of rational choice has become a dominant approach in political science. This turn toward rational choice is popular since it promises political science a firmer foundation for its studies, one akin to the core assumptions of economics.⁸ Thus, an attempt at linking broad political realities to ideological motivations is, from the outset, open to criticism from political science methodologies that attempt to distill politics to clearer, value-free analysis. On the other hand, adopting methodologies that exclude concerns of value such as justice, equality, or freedom seems doomed to fall into a pattern of economic rather than *political* analysis. The political salience of these ideals is not what any of those values ultimately are. Few contemporary philosophers hold out any hope for settling such perennial questions. What is important for politics is what individuals think those values are.

There is an alternative, influential methodology in political science that is more akin to the perspective adopted here. Generally described as “new institutionalism,” this approach looks more broadly at institutional constraints and the way structure influences policy. While still assuming that individuals are behaving rationally, this approach attempts to place that behavior within a realistic social and political context. While individuals are indeed probably pursuing interests and policies they consider rational, they do so within an environment that influences what they consider to be possible, plausible, and the best, or morally correct, course of action.

Hall and Rosemary have provided a typology of the “new institutionalism” that has influenced political science over the last two decades.⁹ Among these frameworks is historical institutionalism, which includes a cultural approach. As the authors explain,

From this perspective, institutions provide moral or cognitive templates for interpretation and action. The individual is seen as an entity deeply embedded in a world of institutions, composed of symbols, scripts, and routines, which provide filters for interpretation of both the situation and oneself, out of which a course of action is constructed. Not only do institutions provide strategically useful information, they also affect the very identities, self-images and preferences of the actors.¹⁰

Thus, the concept of ideology becomes more concrete when we firmly link it to the historical development of specific institutions. In addition, the policy choices made by these institutions can serve as further evidence for the worldviews of the actors serving within them.

The use of such a methodology is critically important for understanding the contemporary state. The state is a collection of human agents organized into various institutions. The perceptual framework of these human beings shapes the choices they make, their convictions about the use or misuse of power, and their belief in what is best for society. From the perspective of historical institutionalism, change is created from the conflict of views and interests that human beings pursue within these institutions.¹¹ What is striking about our contemporary times is the similar ideological outlook of political elites across differing societies.

Nonetheless, whenever one turns to a discussion of ideology, the ground is in many ways less firm. In sociological theory, we can find the concept stretched across a broad range of human activity. For example, Mann in his classic study of social power describes the rise of world religions as the triumph of ideological power.¹² Further back in the sociological canon, we have Weber's example of linking the development of capitalism with the Protestant work ethic.¹³ Thus, ideology can quickly become a very expansive concept. In this sense, ideology can become the explanation for more and more areas of social life. There is also a risk when studying ideology to dismiss human action as driven by irrational cultural factors.

In contrast, my use of the concept of ideology is focused more narrowly on the political. Using ideology for more narrowly defined political analysis carries risks too. In this more restricted view, ideology can easily become a simplistic explanation of class politics. In his classic formulation, Marx argued that an ideology performs two very important functions. One is that it takes something historically contingent, for Marx this was the capitalist market, and transforms it into an everlasting universal. Second, an effective ideology explains the order of things so that everyone theoretically benefits, not just the class in charge. From this perspective, ideology becomes a simple product of class antagonisms.

However, the current behavior of the state extends beyond a simplistic explanation of class behavior. There is also more to it than the relationship between the market and the state, discussed so frequently by a range of

scholars and activists. This includes sophisticated studies of the so-called “power elite.”¹⁴ Arguably the most developed criticisms of the state in this category examine the United States.¹⁵ In some cases the analysis of this elite relies on traditional Marxist categories of class. However, the inspiration for this school of thought is the idea that Marx’s definition of a ruling class has become hopelessly antiquated. In Mills’ classic study, he attempted to expand the definition of the ruling elite to include those that direct culture as well as politics and capital. He argued that

The power elite are not solitary rulers. Advisers and consultants, spokesmen and opinion-makers are often the captains of their higher thought and decision. Immediately below the elite are the professional politicians of the middle levels of power, in the Congress and in the pressure groups, as well as among the new and old upper classes of town and city and region. Mingling with them, in curious ways which we shall explore, are those professional celebrities who live by being continually displayed but are never, so long as they remain celebrities, displayed enough. If such celebrities are not at the head of any dominating hierarchy, they do often have the power to distract the attention of the public or afford sensations to the masses, or, more directly, to gain the ear of those who do occupy positions of direct power.¹⁶

Thus, elite studies have attempted to broaden our understanding of who rules to fit our contemporary times.

Yet, even these broader studies tend to explain elite membership and elite behavior in terms of concrete benefits. Although it is difficult to deny that wealthy individuals benefit from current political and economic orthodoxy (i.e. that there is a relevant separation between market and state), there is also a deeper conviction present. For these individuals, the “reality” of the market is an obvious refutation of political interference. This argument resonates so strongly in current society that we find it enthusiastically proclaimed by many individuals who are clearly not in the class that sits atop globalization. For many individuals, the market is the home of their aspirations despite the odds they face.

Furthermore, a second group has an interest that is often absent in the usual critique of class interests or the hidden relationships of the state and market. To individuals serving in the institutions and agencies of the state, maintaining the power of the state is important for the common good. From their perspective, society needs the organizational power that the state provides. Without this force, how can one right wrongs in society and protect the vulnerable? The ideal of a career in “public service” is based upon this very basic idea that the state exists for the benefit of society. From this perspective, the state must constantly enhance its capabilities for maintaining sovereignty to continue its beneficial role.

Thus, my discussion of ideology has a more focused target than broader sociological studies, but at the same time, it is not a narrow discussion of class politics. There are cultural implications from this ideological turn, which I explore in a later chapter. However, even when examining the cultural fallout from this set of ideas, my concern remains focused on its political implications. My argument is an attempt to explain how a particular political development has become both so prevalent and unquestioned. It is in this sense that my study is one of ideology.

Does the state still exist?

The concealment of the state is not confined to conscious efforts to assist in ideological obfuscation. Critics of the state, including some currents within contemporary anarchist thinking, question whether the state even exists, or, more accurately, whether it is useful to think about the state as a separate, concrete institution. For example, Richard J.F. Day's reflections on the work of Foucault and Lefort lead him to argue that activist politics needs to move on beyond making demands of the state.¹⁷ From this perspective, the state has metastasized into society. Now that the state's mechanisms of discipline are everywhere, the state is in effect nowhere.

Thus, the state as a separate, comprehensible institution is gone, and Foucault is right in criticizing anyone who still thinks that a revolution must behead the king. On the other hand, Foucault himself states,

I don't want to say that the state isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the state in two senses. First of all, because the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations; and further, because the state can only operate on the basis of other, already-existing power relations.¹⁸

In this sense, Foucault does not dismiss the state, but wants to expand our understanding of power. For Foucault, this is essential to grasping the creative aspects of power beyond the repressive power we associate with the state.

Thanks to Foucault's insight, this broader perspective on power, and its expansion across social space, underlies many observations about contemporary society. For example, in the burgeoning field of surveillance studies, the current consensus is that surveillance, and its social effects, must be approached as the study of something more than state action. Although the state does engage in surveillance and deploys cutting-edge technology for this purpose, individuals encounter surveillance pervasively throughout

society in the most developed countries. Thus, the recent trend in surveillance studies is to explore the “assemblages” of surveillance found in the market as well as the state’s activities.¹⁹ The main thrust of this line of inquiry is that aside from the surveillance activities of the state, we increasingly find individuals being tracked in the developed world through credit reports and various market tools. Arguably, the disciplining effects of surveillance outside of the state have a profound effect on the behavior of individuals in the developed world compared to state surveillance directed toward traditional concerns of security and military affairs.²⁰

I suggest an additional complication with our reading of this situation; there is agency and design to the contemporary state’s declining visibility. The state is still an important institution, but this fact has become more difficult to see thanks to ideological camouflage. Rather than arguing that the market is doing the disciplining of the state, rendering the state somewhat obsolete, we should consider the possibility that there is no independent, free market. From this perspective, the state has not metastasized into society and become less relevant. Instead, the state has greatly expanded its control of society by employing surveillance and discipline at a distance. This sleight of hand allows the state to creep into (or to use the terminology of Jurgen Habermas, “colonize”) more and more areas of life. Nonetheless, the state remains an organized institution behind this colonized front.

For example, drawing again upon research in surveillance studies, why has surveillance of individuals thrived? In the United States, the state has decided to allow credit bureaus to co-opt the social security number of citizens to aid surveillance. Various mechanisms for tracking individuals online for marketing purposes are cleared by state agencies for deployment. The US government opened up the GPS system, initially designed and deployed for military purposes, for commercial exploitation. These efforts have now led to the ability of law enforcement to subpoena and track individuals through their cell phones. Thus, it is obviously true that a comprehensive understanding of surveillance today requires scholars to examine market and commercial activities as well as state actions. Nonetheless, the linchpin for these efforts and the approval for operating these commercial forms of surveillance always lead back to the state and its decisions.

If we delve deeper into the intellectual history of anarchism, then we often find claims that the state does not really exist. Rather than an independent institution, we are told that the state is a false category serving one or more different purposes. In some interpretations, the state is an idea for obfuscating the power of the ruling class. In other descriptions, the state’s purpose is reifying the rule of some human beings over others. Or, more abstractly, the state is seen as a fictional, ideological entity that embodies economic power (which is the *real* source of power).

However, this line of argument often blends together two things: the state and metaphysical claims of who or what inhabits it. For example, the idea

of the nation or country is often blended together in the literature with the state. Anarchist literature can easily compare arguments about the political legitimacy of European states (whether based on the divine right of kings, nationalism, or other traditions) to theological arguments.

For Bakunin, the concept of state sovereignty is an obvious parallel to the role of God, the unmoved mover, in various theologies. In both cases, we find metaphysical claims that are often irrational. Yet, behind these irrational claims, the state is still a real force in the world. As Bakunin noted,

The state is force, and for it, first of all, is the right of force, the triumphant argument of the needle-gun, of the *chassepot*. But man is so singularly constituted that this argument, wholly eloquent as it may appear, is not sufficient in the long run. Some moral sanction or other is absolutely necessary to enforce his respect.²¹

Nations are much like God in this sense. One chooses to believe in them or not. The state though is a much more real entity. Anyone who fails to pay his taxes can find out how real the state is when it comes to collect. There is also a very sharp end to contemporary states when we look at their coercive abilities. Thus, we should distinguish between describing the institutions that are the state, staffed by “real” human beings, and the metaphysical ideas, including ones about nations, countries, and supernatural beings, that legitimate these institutions.

On the other hand, skepticism about using the state as a category of analysis does emphasize an important point. The success of the state’s colonization of much that we regard as “social” is beyond dispute. However, this does not mean that the state, which is everywhere, is now nowhere. Instead, this looming presence of the state in more and more areas of life creates the contradictions that have led to the ideology of concealment. The increase in our dependence on the state, and its ever-growing invincibility, undermines many of the ideas that have legitimated it in the past. Thus, we see a turn toward a new ideology, one that attempts to conceal the ubiquitous state. Denying the usefulness of the state as a category of analysis risks aiding this concealment.

A postmodern state?

Rather than denying that the state exists, or that it matters, we should instead look at states as they are. Just as the state has, through previous centuries, undergone many changes, so too the contemporary state differs from the past. For want of a better term, we can describe contemporary states as postmodern. Unfortunately, the term “postmodern” has become overused to the point of almost losing any meaning. Nonetheless, it can

serve as a marker for us if we are attempting to distinguish the current nation state from its past iterations.

The term “postmodernism” was coined to try and express the idea that our contemporary situation differs from that of other recent history. In other words, we live in a different context than the recent past. So, too, the context within which contemporary states operate seems fundamentally different from the modern period. Today states must compete within the globalized form of contemporary capitalism to maintain their sovereignty. Thus, contemporary states face a paradoxical situation with global capitalism: it empowers them as well as imposing constraints. Does this mean that the state is postmodern?

The context of globalized capitalism also appears to be one of enormous risk. Increasingly, we face potential global disasters from climate change to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Yet, our political institutions are organized into nation states with sovereign borders. Transnational risks and policy problems are inherently endemic to such a system. Furthermore, though we are economically interconnected with individuals on the other side of the world, we vote alongside neighbors we barely know.

Both of these observations are closely intertwined with the cultural context of contemporary states. In a recent analysis of this phenomenon and contemporary politics, Paul James notices something similar. Attempting to describe the “postmodern nation,” James points out that today

...the state is most often viewed either as a baleful institution to be minimized or deregulated or as a necessary, if intrusive, organ of public administration, as a provider of essential services for the vulnerable.²²

This indeed is the common picture we have of the contemporary nation state. Yet, as James notes further,

The image of the nation state as an aging Leviathan, more comfortable lumbering amidst the inglorious structures of the past, is belied by the alacrity with which “it” has taken up various administrative techniques such as electronic information storage and other forms of disembodied surveillance.²³

The quotes around “it,” in the above statement, are intended by James as a qualifier. For him, as for so many other theorists, the state is a complicated agglomeration of institutions, individuals, and practices, making it difficult to define. Nonetheless, as these observations by James point out, the state has not gone away.

Thus, we should still be concerned with the state. However, the state we are attempting to understand is different than its earlier, modern form. Or at least, we can say that the problems, international context, and needs of

the contemporary state are no longer modern, despite its politics remaining stubbornly modern in form. In this sense, the behavior of the state that I describe in subsequent chapters is an attempt to bridge the continued practice of a modern politics by states confronting the postmodern condition.

Of course, terms like the “postmodern condition” have become suspect to many of us because of weak scholarship. However, the idea and description of the postmodern condition is a useful one so long as we remain clear about what we mean. Lyotard explains the broad cultural atmosphere, historical moment, intellectual perspective, and social context that is the postmodern as “the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies.”²⁴ This condition is one of a crisis of legitimation because of the skepticism with which we regard all narratives. From this foundational crack running through contemporary knowledge, profound consequences follow.

The state, too, is affected by this cultural shift. Postmodernism is a challenge to our modern theories of political legitimacy. As Lyotard and other serious scholars of this unfolding moment in intellectual history point out, the most solid characteristic of the postmodern condition is a profound skepticism toward any metanarratives. These narratives include claims of nationalism, religious affirmation, and even the civic myths that underpin our identities as citizens of the state. How does one justify the state’s absolute authority in an age where absolutist arguments are viewed with cynicism?

The best example of this quandary is the current efforts in political theory to justify citizenship as a positive category. Skeptics, influenced by the postmodern deconstruction of identity, have questioned how one can morally justify borders. For example, Joseph Carens argues that in today’s world, citizenship in the most developed nations is an inherited privilege.²⁵ The moral luck of one’s birthplace has profound consequences. Some of us will experience the educational and health care systems of the developed nations, while others are condemned to grinding poverty. Carens draws the parallel between this luck at birth and the past consequences of being born to privilege or servitude in the feudal age. What moral grounds can justify us excluding individuals who want to come and join our wealthier society? Aren’t we just trying to defend our privileged existence?

This problem of political philosophy underpins the current obsession with identity politics. How can we define citizenship in an age skeptical of narratives? On what basis do we decide who belongs? What narrative of identity in our postmodern universe can withstand deconstructive criticism?

Other theorists, such as Benjamin Barber and Richard Dagger, have argued that we can anchor citizenship in the value of democracy.²⁶ The argument is that we must have citizens to establish functioning democracies. From this perspective too, boundaries are necessary to enable meaningful democratic participation. How can I influence the decisions affecting my neighborhood or county, unless voting is limited to local residents? If instead, I only vote

as a global citizen, then how can I meaningfully influence policy that affects my small corner of the world?

Democracy is also the suggested answer for who belongs. Noted theorist Jurgen Habermas argues that we can establish citizenship as an identity solely through legal, constitutional means. Habermas' conception of "constitutional patriotism" suggests that we can create an identity that will hold up the corrosive deconstruction of postmodernism if we remove the past residues of nationalism and other narratives from it.²⁷

However, these suggested answers to the dilemma of political legitimacy in our postmodern world cut against the grain of contemporary states. As discussed earlier, globalization has pushed states into an increasingly paradoxical competition. To maintain their sovereignty, they must participate. To provide the guarantees to other states necessary for this system of global capitalism (most starkly free trade agreements), nation states cannot risk too much democratic control of this infrastructure. Thus, the suggestion of theorists like Habermas for more democracy runs headlong into the state's growing reliance on technocratic management.

Similarly, focusing on the need for local boundary drawing, so that citizens can democratically influence local policies, runs counter to the state's needs. Globalization is about reducing barriers to capital. Strengthening local control risks democratic support for "protectionism." At the same time, returning to our modern narratives of political identity runs counter to the needs of contemporary states. Although much of the population in the developed world might be comfortable with such a *revanchist* turn, the state cannot pursue such a turn as real policy. Narratives of nationalism may be used in elections and political marketing; however, our political and economic elites cannot maintain such ideas with a straight face when conducting business across the borders (political and cultural) of global capitalism.

Thus, we have the paradoxes that make up the postmodern state. In our contemporary situation, states lack a description of citizenship that can satisfy postmodern skepticism toward grand narratives of identity. The suggested solution of our contemporary philosophers is to replace these old stories of nationalism and cultural identities (which postmodern deconstruction shows to be hollow) with more transparent democratic procedures. However, that solution poses great risk to the state because the demos might vote to opt out of or restrict global capitalism. Such a turn would make the state less competitive and undermine its strength in the international system.

The solution to this dilemma has become the ideology of concealing the state. While our political systems continue to use institutions, procedures, and rhetoric that is relentlessly modern, the postmodern state conceals itself. Although many of the forms of modern politics are still with us, like elections, lobbying, demonstrations, and local participation, these forms seem more and more antiquated. The rapid changes in communications technology and

our popular culture surrounding these changes make politics seem like a backwater of stagnated practices and ideas.

For these various reasons, the postmodern state is an institution that attempts to conceal its agency. By denying it has the power to act, the postmodern state makes the continuing development of globalized capitalism seem inevitable. The postmodern state also claims that the market it has created is now an autonomous entity. This claim allows the state to avoid responding to democratic demands to modify the rules and outcomes of the market. Finally, by concealing its agency, the postmodern state can continue to neglect the ossifying modern political system it inherits from the past. Arguably, the urgency for action in this last area is diffused if we come to believe it does not matter much anyway, especially in comparison to the reality of the market.

With a topic as broad as this, where do we begin? A good starting point is the bifurcation of the contemporary state into a shallow and deep set of institutions. This separation is arguably the central mechanism for the concealment of the state. In many ways, this bifurcation of the state's institutions is also reliant on the idea of a separate free market, autonomous from the state. It can also be argued that this is not a new political development but rather the outcome of a long historical trend. Nonetheless, as I argue in the next chapter, the deep and shallow state has become so important to contemporary politics that one can also argue that it is a defining characteristic of the postmodern state.

Notes

- 1 Here, I am referring to the enormously popular book: Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006). This quote is from p. 11 of their book. For a scholarly critique of viewing economics this way, see Ben Fine and Dimitris Milonakis, *From Economics Imperialism to Freakonomics: The Shifting Boundaries between Economics and other Social Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- 2 See: *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. 50 (2010).
- 3 This statistic can be found at www.oecd.org, and in early 2012 this site contained accurate figures through 2007. We can assume the average will be quite different with data from 2008 forward, reflecting the stimulus efforts of some governments, and the austerity cuts by others, during the great recession.
- 4 Excellent studies on the impact of institutional logic include James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), or Graham Allison's classic *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Little Brown, 1971).

- 5 Consider the pledges and program of the British Conservative–Liberal coalition that took power in 2010, or the re-election success of the Latvian government of Prime Minister Dombrovskis in October 2010 by pledging to stay the course on an extreme austerity package.
- 6 The classic description of the “free rider” problem comes from Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
- 7 For example, Jack Matlock’s *Autopsy on an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1995), or David Remnick’s, *Lenin’s Tomb* (New York: Random House, 1993).
- 8 For an overview of the debate in political science about this approach, see Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994) and the closely related volume, Jeffrey Friedman ed., *The Rational Choice Controversy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).
- 9 Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies*, no. XLIV, 1996, pp. 936–57.
- 10 Hall and Taylor, “Political Science,” p. 939.
- 11 For a good discussion of the role of conflict, see B. Guy Peters, Jon Pierre, and Desmond S. King, “The Politics of Path Dependency: Political Conflict in Historical Institutionalism,” *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 67, no. 4, November 2005, pp. 1275–300.
- 12 For a summary of this expansive discussion, see Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*. vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 363–71.
- 13 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans Peter Baehr and Gordon G. Wells (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).
- 14 This is the title of C. Wright Mills’ classic study. See C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, 2000).
- 15 Including the popular textbook by Michael Parenti, *Democracy for the Few* (9th edition, Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2010).
- 16 Mills, *The Power Elite*, p. 4.
- 17 Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the New Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).
- 18 Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, vol. 3, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), pp. 122–3.
- 19 For a discussion of the logic behind this approach, see Sean P. Hier, “Probing the Surveillant Assemblage: On the Dialectics of Surveillance Practices as Processes of Social Control,” *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2003, pp. 399–411.
- 20 David Lyon, *Surveillance as Social Sorting* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- 21 Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 83.

- 22 Paul James, *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 257.
- 23 James, *Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism*, p. 257.
- 24 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. xxiii.
- 25 Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 229–53.
- 26 See Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), and Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues: Rights, Citizenship, and Republican Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 27 Jurgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 255–81.

2

Deep and shallow state

In the run-up to national elections in 2012, two US House Representatives publicly announced their skepticism about a number of scientific issues. Rep. Paul Broun told an audience of constituents that evolution, the Big Bang theory, and embryology are “lies straight from the pit of hell.”¹ He also explained that he had reviewed scientific evidence showing that the earth is only around 9,000 years old. Two months before, his colleague Rep. Todd Akin said in a television interview that he favored more regulations on abortion since women’s bodies will naturally abort a pregnancy caused by what he called “legitimate rape.”² These statements were especially interesting given that both congressmen are members of the US House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

These two incidents illustrate an increasingly common pattern in US politics. While an array of conservative politicians deny the existence of evolution to appease the religious right, the US federal budget still quietly contains millions of dollars in research support to critical areas of biomedical research. Investment in areas of science, which some elected officials claim to reject or doubt, is seen as necessary to maintain the competitive edge of the United States in the worldwide race for new cures and breakthroughs. Thus, we see politicians in the United States attacking the science being done in the “private sector” and often threatening to cut off public funding for grants that support such science. Yet, these threatened cutoffs and new regulations never occur except at the margins of overall research and development. This puzzling political behavior is a small example of the postmodern state’s larger ideological dynamics. The dominant ideology of postmodern states is to conceal their agency.

What motivates this ideological reaction? In his analysis of the emerging “risk society,” Beck argues that increasingly what matters to all of society are decisions made in areas that were traditionally considered nonpolitical.³ This traditionally nonpolitical area includes private-sector industrial and technological development. However, as Beck stresses, the risks attached to these decisions are now much more universal. Beck claims that

The promotion and protection of “scientific progress” and of “the freedom of science” become the greasy pole on which the primary responsibility for political arrangements slips from the democratic political system into the context of economic and techno-scientific politics, which is not democratically legitimated. A revolution under the cloak of normality occurs, which escapes from possibilities of intervention but must all the same be justified and enforced against a public that is becoming critical.⁴

The state needs these continued developments in technology and science to maintain its competitiveness and thus its sovereignty. Yet, the pursuit of scientific breakthroughs, such as bioengineering new organisms, genetically modified crops, or research into mind-altering pharmaceuticals, raises the risk of a technologically fueled catastrophe.⁵

The tensions and contradictions of this position call forth an ideological response. In the case of scientific risks, the state claims that these innovations occur in a global marketplace that is difficult for the state to regulate. In this manner, the state avoids a larger debate and public pressure to weigh the risks of research into creating new life-forms and mind-controlling pharmaceuticals. However, this response is not limited to concerns about risky science, but has become the postmodern state’s default response when challenged in many policy areas that it deems too important for politics. The claim that the state’s hands are tied is increasingly heard whenever citizens voice complaints. This ideological response is especially useful for the state in the broad realm of economic policy.

We see in many developed states a rising populist backlash to the forces of globalized capitalism. This growing tide of popular outrage ranges from worries about local jobs moving abroad to the insecurities triggered by immigration. Across the EU, the new cross-border labor market has triggered grievances about employment. But the most telling example of this backlash can be seen in the reaction to austerity imposed in EU countries like Greece following the great recession of 2008. In Greece, the government has had to make substantial concessions to other EU states and creditors to stave off a financial meltdown. The crowds in the streets of Athens and the defection of parliamentarians from establishment parties attest to the broad, popular hostility to the arrangements that have been made. Yet, the Greek government has patiently explained again and again that there is no alternative to Greece making such concessions while remaining part of the global economic system. The alternative, reintroducing the drachma and exiting the euro, is presented as the worst option for the country. However, many Greeks disagree and have begun to ask about the cost to the population of the remaining part of the “system.”

Arguably, the state’s denial of being able to act only inflames the pent-up demands of this backlash to globalization. As the Greek parliament continued to vote for austerity, the crowds on the streets became more

frustrated and violent. We have also seen more extremist reactions to continued globalization across the developing world. For example, in the United States populist militias have offered to police the country's border with Mexico. The United States has also seen an explosion of local initiatives to make English the official language in municipalities. Areas in northern Europe like Denmark and the Netherlands, long famous for their progressive social attitudes, have seen the rise of anti-immigration parties. Perhaps even more worrying has been the growth of links between various groups, such as elements of the American Tea Party and the English Defence League, which claim to be part of an international, "anti-Islamification" front.⁶ In these more extreme cases, the attempt to find scapegoats for the complicated problems of globalization smacks of desperation. If the state insists that global economic integration is out of its hands, then this political acquiescence risks inviting more desperate, confused, and extreme responses.

We can see the ideological reaction of hiding the state's agency most clearly in the complete denial anti-globalization protests face. The groups protesting at meetings of the G20, WTO, or the Davos forum represent a broad range of complaints linked to global capitalism. Yet, because they are attempting to voice the complaints of the multitude, it is easy for supporters of global capitalism to characterize the protests as inchoate. The continued integration of the world's economies is presented as a given, only resisted by the deluded or confused. The fact that it is necessary for the world's states to meet at the highest "summit" level to coordinate and advance this integration is blithely ignored. If this integration is so natural and unstoppable, then why must sovereign states agree to it by treaty?

The concealment of the state's agency works well in this case because it is indeed difficult for anti-globalization forces to point to one agent responsible for the many ills they seek to address. If the broad movement attempts to assert the local against the global, then it falls into the trap of denying international solidarity with other wronged groups. The other political advantage concealment enjoys is the gulf between the two groups mentioned here. On the one hand, we see anti-immigration populist movements voicing their discontent, and on the other we have a leftist anti-global capitalism movement. The obvious ideological distance between these two strands of resistance makes it easy for the state to dismiss both camps as impractical or extremist. Instead, we are told that the trends of "globalization" are irresistible.

In this sense, the concealment of the state benefits from leaving globalization as an amorphous description of our contemporary situation. Attempts to deconstruct globalization into positive and negative elements are drowned out by the overarching claim that it is a process beyond the control of nation states. Even our humanitarian concerns with providing freedom of movement are folded into the larger ideological claim that this can only be accomplished with unfettered global capitalism. As a result,

the political message of the anti-global capitalism movement is inevitably too nuanced in the ideological contest against “globalization’s” narrative. Instead, the received idea of our time becomes that we must accept the good and bad of globalization.

In all of these cases, the state is faced with a populist revolt over the outcomes of continued global economic integration. This same system that provides many rewards to economic elites also punishes those workers, students, small business owners, and the growing number of unemployed who lag behind. However, can any state, by the logic of state competition and the maintenance of sovereignty, afford to disengage from this process? In the case of Greece, many economic institutions (including large banks) claimed that the country’s economy would immediately contract by 30 percent or more if it left the euro, leading to economic chaos.⁷ From this perspective, the concealment of the state satisfies an immediate ideological need. By hiding the agency of the state, politicians can argue that their hands are tied and the demands of the citizenry are simply impossible to meet. Thus, their state’s continued participation in global capitalism is stated as unchangeable fact regardless of what the population may want.

The relative success of this ideological sleight of hand rests upon the compartmentalization of the state into a shallow and deep component. If we look at the state from this dualistic perspective, then the mechanism for concealing the state’s power is easier to see. The public sees a shallow state interacting with an autonomous market. This shallow state insists that it has little control over this autonomous, global market. What the public does not see is a deeper state that maintains this market and even decides *what the market is*.

Thanks to this bifurcation of the state, politicians in the shallows can adopt extreme ideological positions in public, knowing that the deep state will quietly maintain critical policy areas regardless of popular opinion. Indeed, we increasingly witness politicians making contradictory or outright irrational statements as they grandstand on the ideological, populist, and cultural issues left to the shallow state. This explains how a state and economy like that of the United States, constantly developing new technology and advancing science, can also have national politicians who publicly reject rational science. Public policy has been increasingly shifted to the deep state, leaving elected officials free to grandstand on increasingly symbolic, rather than substantive, issues.

Thinking about a deeper state is not an entirely new form of political analysis by any means. Some policy areas have historically been concealed such as intelligence and defense. Both are of obvious importance to maintaining the sovereignty of the state in the international arena. For clear functional reasons, we expect states to conceal much of their defense preparations and clandestine intelligence activities. Thus, the institutions of “national security” have often been thought of as a “deeper” state. But

contemporary states have pushed more policy areas into the deep state than in the past. The deep state now includes very mundane policies and regulations.

There is no better place to start with policy examples of this dynamic than the current ecological crisis. In the United States, we see a number of politicians arguing that there is no such thing as climate change. Indeed, one elected state attorney general attempted to file fraud charges in the state of Virginia against an academic researching this area with state funding.⁸ Yet, we find, at the same time, the US Department of Defense describing the need to prepare for the ramifications of climate change in its Quadrennial Defense Review. Similarly, the US Securities and Exchange Commission has advised corporations that best practice should now include disclosure to investors about the company's exposure to risks from climate change.⁹

Aside from global threats, many politicians in the United States continue to debate the merits of any environmental regulations. This includes some presidential candidates in the Republican primaries saying that they would close down the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Yet, we see the deep state stepping up its efforts at enforcement in this area. This includes the fact that the EPA now posts a most wanted list similar to the FBI. The existence of this list came to wider public attention following the extradition of a wanted individual who had fled abroad.¹⁰ Thus, we see the dynamic of the deep state providing the regulations, policies, and legal infrastructure that public officials in the shallows argue is unnecessary.

Such examples are not limited to the United States. In Canada, a conservative government, whose members have at times displayed skepticism about global warming, has provided additional funding to patrol the arctic (as it melts and opens new sea lanes). Indeed, a host of very different states has joined in on this arctic rush: Russia, the United States, Canada, Denmark, and Norway, despite their varying levels of acceptance or denial on climate change.¹¹ In the UK, we find various committees advising the government on the need to move railways infrastructure away from the eroding coastline.¹² Thus, while politicians in the shallow state debate the reality of "global warming" or the more neutral "climate change," the deep state in many countries is quietly preparing for it.

Examples of the state concealing its agency in the areas of scientific, environmental, and broad economic policy are initially suggestive. However, there is further evidence to support these observations from two main areas that I describe below. First, there is the sheer number of policy examples that illustrate the political dynamic operating between the deep and shallow state. As we examine the breadth of these examples, the pattern of the deep state taking on more and more responsibility for public policy becomes clear. Second, although it is easier to observe these characteristics in some states compared to others, the recurrence of this behavior in a range of nation states, supposedly governed by very different political regimes,

further proves the existence and potency of this ideological turn. To better understand this political dynamic, we should begin by examining the part of the postmodern state that is the most visible, the shallows.

The shallow state

The shallow state consists of the state's visible institutions, agencies, and practices that interact with the population. Obviously, this interaction includes elections or whatever forms of politics the state permits. For many, this visible, front end of the state is what they think of as "government." This popular conception of the state is not surprising since visible institutions of government give the larger intangible aspects of the state a concrete form. In this sense, we can say that the shallows represent the state to most citizens.

At its most extreme, this representation of the state can be vested in one individual. In authoritarian political systems, the focus of "politics" in the shallows usually becomes one strongman (though in our contemporary world they typically style themselves "presidents"). In more transparent democratic systems, the individual officeholder (a president or a prime minister) can embody the state but is seen competing with others in the politics of the shallows. Democratic political systems also include visible institutions of government like legislatures and provincial or local functionaries that are driven into the background under authoritarian rule. Finally, democratic systems also stage the largest spectacle to be found in the shallows, elections, on a regular cycle too.

Beyond this representation of the state by officeholders and institutions, the citizenry experiences the shallow state primarily as a source of resource extraction, regulation, and public benefits. Individuals may think they have little connection to the state, until tax season. Then, they are confronted with the fact that they are paying into the state for the services and benefits it renders. This creates a difficult dynamic in the most developed countries where the citizenry is becoming less aware of the infrastructure that it uses every day, but is painfully aware that they are taxed. On the other hand, benefits awarded to some individuals may be highly visible, such as social welfare provisions. Much of the daily turbulence of politics centers on the citizenry's perceptions of who is contributing to the upkeep of the state, how much they are contributing, and who is reaping the benefits.

This area can also be the sharp end of the state for individuals.¹³ In the United States and other federal systems, individual citizens are often ignorant of their local government structures, and how to participate within them, until they are confronted with an unpleasant reality: perhaps the zoning of their neighborhood is being changed to allow high rises, the authorities plan on opening a prison nearby, or there is a sudden change in property taxes

and values. The sudden shock of these very concrete policy outcomes renews the citizen's awareness of the power and role of local government.

Beyond these concrete manifestations of the state, most citizens lack a broader comprehension of the state's totality. Instead, elected officials who appear on television and everyday news reporting are the point of contact for many citizens' political consciousness.¹⁴ Other ideas of the state are primarily ideological, including feelings of patriotism or nationalism.¹⁵ This tendency is a continuation of a long-observed trend in modern societies. Studies of political psychology have noted the tendency for citizens to think of their state concretely as tax and spending policies or as specific institutions and politicians. When asked about the state more broadly, citizens tend to discuss vague conceptions of the nation.

Recent political science research conducted in many of the world's democracies underlines the weak connections individuals have to the state in the shallows. For example, in the United States, citizens show a great deal of ignorance about the basic structure and function of their government when surveyed by social scientists.¹⁶ This general level of ignorance appears to be fertile ground for questionable campaign practices like push polling or outrageously misleading campaign advertising by direct mail and less visible media outlets. Political science research shows that the better informed citizens are, the more difficult it is to manipulate them.¹⁷ On a deeper level, research in political psychology indicates that lower levels of political knowledge correlate with individuals having incoherent worldviews.¹⁸ The concern for more practical politics is that these confused, larger understandings of the world transfer over into weak understandings of public policy choices.

The overall trend that emerges in the shallows is a growing lack of accountability. There are multiple reasons for this decline, aside from the decline in the public's political knowledge. For example, contemporary political science research has attempted to untangle the complicated relationship between modern media and the public's understanding of policy issues. This recent research includes concerns with the increasing consumption of entertainment rather than news.¹⁹ Another important factor in declining accountability seems to be the dominance of cultural issues in contemporary politics. Many of the intense issues associated with political polarization in the United States focus on symbolic and "values" topics rather than more substantive policy challenges. These trends combine to form a public that seems less informed on many complicated topics, but is often energized about broad social issues. In the United States, recent examples have included same-sex marriage, the role of religion in public schools, and the use of English as an "official" language. In Great Britain and the Netherlands, we find highly charged debates about immigration and national identity. In Japan, there have been highly controversial arguments about national identity and coming to terms with the nation's past.

These are important issues in many ways; however, they are also far removed from the nuts and bolts of economic, environmental, educational, and science policy. Politicians engaging with citizens in these broad, hot-button topic areas do not have to reveal much about their support for more substantive policy actions. In many ways, the behavior of politicians in the shallows increasingly resembles that of an irresponsible minority. This phenomenon is familiar to observers of parliamentary systems. After a parliamentary election that is quite decisive (and leaves a smaller party locked out of policy making by a majority), the minority group has little incentive to assist with policy formation. Instead, the minority group, denied policy portfolios and whose votes are not needed to pass legislation, logically focuses on attacking the majority government. There is little constraint on these attacks, since their only purpose is short-term political gains as opposed to actual policy formation.

For example, during the primary season of the US presidential campaign of 2012, one candidate announced that she would bring back “\$2 gasoline” for all Americans. As commentator Thomas Friedman noted in response the next day, such a statement ignores not only the environmental challenges such an outcome would hold, but also the very practical market constraints on oil as countries like China and India industrialize.²⁰ In some ways, this behavior seems like the very traditional one of unfulfilled campaign promises. However, the exploitation of weaknesses in public knowledge also appears to be undergoing a fundamental change.

If we think about the behavior of politicians in the shallow state, then we see the opportunity these low levels of public knowledge enable. Inflammatory statements and misleading characterizations thrive within such an environment. The more complex the policy question, the greater the ability of politicians to exploit this gap. Thus, in the United States recent debates on the most complicated topics, such as health care reform, the debt ceiling, structural deficits, and fiscal stimulus efforts, have produced the most heated rhetoric. It is very surprising to see presidential candidates using campaign rallies to denounce the “treasonous” behavior of a Federal Reserve chairman (in regard to the fiscal stimulus effort of quantitative easing).²¹ On the other hand, more traditional hot-button topics for American politics, such as continuing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq or the provision of welfare services, seem to have disappeared into the deep state. What many politicians appear to prefer are simple, inflated pronouncements over very complicated and subtle policies that few in the public understand.

There is an understandable political logic to this behavior, given the evidence of various political science studies. For example, in a study of natural disaster preparedness in the United States, political scientists found that voters overwhelmingly gave credit for post-disaster assistance to the incumbent presidential political party, but absolutely none to politicians engaged in pre-disaster planning and preparedness.²² Thus, the policy authors

of disaster assistance received no credit, but the president who happened to distribute aid afterward did. In some cases, US presidents received credit for distributing assistance even though they had earlier opposed creating the programs that became so essential in the aftermath of disaster. With examples such as this, few politicians in the shallows have an incentive to work on the complex problems that come due in the future.

The modern political phenomena of the twenty-four-hour media cycle and instant polling appear to have only intensified this tendency.²³ Individual politicians can obtain almost instant feedback on their recent actions, provided the public sees it. Thus, the time frame of elected officials has shortened much like the overall cycle of information in today's world. What is easily measured is short-term feedback over highly visible public pronouncements. On the other hand, credit for hard work on complicated, long-term policy problems is unlikely to register with voters.

Thus, the shallows serve as the "front end" of the state. The shallow state provides an interface between the population and the larger collective entity of the state. This interface includes both signals from the population, which can range from voting to demonstrations, and signals from the state. The signals from the state can include rewards, incentives, and punishments. These activities are important for the state's day-to-day existence. In this sense, they are important for the survival of the state and its maintenance of sovereignty. Even symbolic actions can in the long run contribute to the maintenance of a polity. For example, Anderson in his classic study emphasizes the importance of creating a psychological context or imagined link across a community for it to function as a polity.²⁴

However, the connection between sovereignty and these daily interactions or symbolic references is at a distance compared to the activities of the deep state. For example, the mundane task of tax collection has a larger impact on state capabilities. Individual citizens encounter this routine activity often on a daily or at least weekly basis. Does the citizen pay VAT or sales tax on every transaction? Is there a weekly income tax deduction from the citizen's paycheck? Or, is doing one's taxes an annual ritual? While not very dramatic, this microlevel activity eventually adds up to empowering the state with financial resources.

The key difference in the bifurcation of the postmodern state is the visibility of the shallows compared to its deep counterpart. In a long-studied tension between the need to maintain accountability versus the ability of the state to maintain its long-term sovereignty, the bureaucracy is a necessary source of institutional knowledge, experience, and continuity. In this less visible part of government we find the deep state. Increasingly, politicians in the shallow state are passing the difficult work of deciding and implementing policy to this less visible area. In democratic systems, the advantage of this behavior for elected politicians is the escape from the responsibility of making difficult choices. As Michael M. Ting demonstrates in a detailed study, there is often

a logical, political advantage for legislatures to abdicate spending authority to the bureaucracy.²⁵ Doing so saves professional politicians the difficulty of putting together the necessary votes if they suspect the bureaucracy is likely to make decisions similar enough to the legislator's own preferences.

Another advantage for politicians in democratic systems is the better fit of short term and symbolic policy with electoral politics. In a study of policy responsiveness by state governments in the United States, Lax and Phillips found that "states effectively translate majority opinion into policy about half the time," even when those majorities are quite large.²⁶ In addition, the policy that is made by state governments tends to be more ideologically conservative or liberal (in the American sense) than the opinion of median voters. This implies a sort of overcorrection by state politicians where they are relying more on ideological cues than on finer-grain public opinion. In this sense, it is much easier for politicians to rely on such thumbnail sketches of their electorate's policy preferences than to invest the time and effort necessary to gauge their constituents' opinions on specific policy choices. Nonetheless, this is not a bad strategy for politicians in the shallows. There is growing evidence that voters tend to prioritize their ideological or symbolic preferences over more practical concerns.²⁷ This tendency only serves to reinforce the behavior of politicians in the shallows. Like the older example of the irresponsible minority in parliamentary politics, contemporary politicians in the shallow state can pander to popular prejudice with fewer and fewer repercussions.

However, drawing on so many examples from the United States points to another complication with studying this ideology. The bifurcation of the state is more visible in some political systems, less so in others. For example, in his recent analysis of contemporary China, Richard McGregor explains that despite popular perceptions of wholesale reform, the Chinese Communist Party still directs large segments of the economy from behind the scenes. Thus,

The Party's removal of itself from the many areas of life and work of its citizens into which it once crudely and cruelly intruded has been as strategic as it has been enlightened. As intoxicating as these changes have been for the Chinese people, the retreat has also paradoxically empowered the authorities. The Party has been able to maintain its own secret political life, directing the state from behind the scenes, while capturing the benefits and the kudos delivered by a liberalized economy and a richer society at the same time.²⁸

Thus, in an authoritarian system like contemporary China, the presence of a deeper state, setting policy from behind the facade of a free market, is much easier to grasp. As McGregor explains in meticulous detail, many companies in China are still "state enterprises" despite being listed on overseas stock exchanges. In these cases, the CEO of the firm is still a Communist party

member, with a notional civil service rank in the formal government bureaucracy.

In a democratic political system with a robust civil society and a longer history of capitalism, the presence of a deep and shallow state is much harder to conceptualize. However, we can consider another interesting example from the United States. An investigative series from the *New York Times* revealed that the large American corporation General Electric paid no taxes in 2010. In fact, the company received over \$3 billion from the government to add to its profits that year of 14.2 billion.²⁹ In essence, the United States, supposedly a system with a very free, autonomous market, subsidizes some of its largest corporations through its tax policies. Although a step removed from the subsidies or money injected into a state company in China, in both cases we find the deep state quietly subsidizing large corporations that compete in the global “free market.” Yet, in which case is the state’s concealment deeper?

The fact that similar political behavior is increasingly common to both democratic and authoritarian regimes suggests its importance within the context of contemporary politics. Indeed, the political science subfield of comparative politics argues that when we find a similar institution (or in this case, similar state behaviors) cutting across differences of culture, place, and regime, this commonality is serving an important purpose. If we consider the two examples of corporate governance mentioned earlier, then we can begin to see how this bifurcation of the state enables concealment in both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

In the case of Chinese companies, it is difficult for overseas investors, or even many local Chinese businessmen, to associate large telecommunications firms with the government. Although many are aware of the party membership held by directors of state companies, it remains conceptually difficult for many of us to associate these organizations with what we think of as the state. Similarly, despite receiving government subsidies, it is difficult for citizens in the United States to associate a firm like General Electric with concrete institutions of government like the US Congress or the presidency.

For this reason, we need to think about what constitutes the broader state. There is more to the state than the highly visible institutions and officeholders of the shallows. On the other hand, this other part of the state seems to be more than just the less visible bureaucracy. As opposed to the shallow front end of the state, there is a deeper state. As we shall see, defining what constitutes the deep state is very challenging.

The deep state

Unfortunately, a quick Internet search reveals that discussion of the deep state is most commonly found in two domains. First, it has been a perennially popular idea in Turkish politics. There, the deep state is thought

of as an informal establishment, centered on the military, which dominates politics from behind the scenes.³⁰ Over time, this idea has spread to the popular analysis of other political systems across the Middle East, Russia, and beyond. In the case of Turkey, the deep state (supposedly consisting of the country's military leadership and fellow traveling elites) is often assigned responsibility for policy outcomes with little supporting evidence. Nonetheless, the supposed existence of this behind-the-scenes cabal is convenient for politicians across the country's political spectrum.

For secular-leaning liberal politicians in Turkey, it remains a source of comfort. In this version, the potential of intervention by the deep state acts to confine the cultural politics of religious conservatives within "responsible limits." On the other hand, from the conservative side of politics, the threat of the deep state has been used to justify the reforms pushed through in recent years by Prime Minister Erdogan's AK (Justice and Development) Party.³¹ These reforms are democratic in that they roll back some of the mechanisms used in the past by the secular military leadership to constrain the actions of the country's politicians. On the other hand, those reforms appear to secularists as the first step toward more conservative social policies. From either perspective in contemporary Turkish politics, it is difficult to discern how much of a factor the deep state really is as opposed to a useful fiction. Similarly, the application of this idea to other political systems is of questionable utility.

Even worse, the idea of a deep state also thrives on the Internet among the conspiracy minded.³² As with all conspiracy theories, these observations attempt to simplify the complexity of the world by projecting responsibility for events onto a concrete agent. For example, a common conspiracy explanation for globalization is an all-powerful UN (despite all the contrary evidence of that organization's decline). Or, we often see conspiracies claim that there is actually a double game going on with cataclysmic events rather than facing the reality of a state's failure. In the United States, the classic example is the conspiracy theory claiming that the government allowed the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 to provide a pretext for entering the war. Apparently, many find this idea easier to believe than accepting the simpler explanation that the United States could fail to defend itself. This phenomenon seems to have repeated itself in recent years with the vast growth of conspiracy theories surrounding the 9/11 attacks.³³ Again, for many individuals, it is easier to accept the idea that their government allowed this to happen, rather than the simpler explanation of the US failure to defend itself and the vulnerability that comes with this truth. Instead, grossly elaborate scenarios are suggested to link events with a particular agent, whether that is a secretive government agency or an unbelievably effective United Nations.

Thus, there is a risk of turning to the deep state as an answer to everything, rather than as an aid to careful political analysis. Once it is asserted that a

layer of the state is concealed, it can become a projection of our fears and anger about politics. This difficulty is compounded by the simple fact that the deep state's activity is opaque. In the Turkish political system, the deep state reference appears to have worn out its utility as it can now be used and abused by all sides in the country's politics. For the conspiracy-minded lurking online, the idea of a deep state becomes a convenient site of agency responsible for all of the complications of politics. To avoid the errors of logic found in either of these examples, a clearer definition of the deep state and its political role is needed. We need to look at specific policy examples to gauge the utility of this idea for explaining the behavior of contemporary nation states.

In the area of policy study, the idea of a deep state is routinely used to try and understand the national security establishment of the most developed countries, especially the United States. For example, in Peter Gill's attempt to "develop a systemic framework for the comparative analysis of security intelligence agencies," he discusses the utility of a dual or multilayer state perspective.³⁴ As Gill points out, this perspective is important to avoid the pitfalls of imagining the state as a unified, rational actor. In the case of intelligence and security concerns, it is particularly obvious that some parts of the state do not know what is happening elsewhere.

From the perspective of such security studies, we can ask, how deep is the deep state? Consider that in November 2010, President Obama, in an attempt to reduce confusion and improve transparency, issued an executive order on the proper classification of sensitive material. A new designation, "Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)," was introduced to replace more than 120 designations that the bureaucracy had invented.³⁵ These designations illustrate two points. First, that information is power, especially in the policy process of a modern nation state, and thus there is a need to control it. Second, claiming that all of this empowering information is classified or top secret, because of its importance to national security, is simply implausible. Thus, new gradations of information must be invented. The classification of information also provides an idea of the scope of the deep state. In the midst of the WikiLeaks scandal, it emerged that the employee who passed on classified information to the site possessed a clearance of "secret." In turn, apparently more than 900,000 individuals currently hold that same level of clearance across the US government.³⁶

Thus, in policy studies, the one area of the deep state that does draw attention is intelligence and security. Various warnings over the years of the rise of the "national security" state were common during the Cold War.³⁷ Further iterations of this concern then emerged under the threat of global terrorism. Since sovereignty is closely linked to the state's coercive capabilities, defense, intelligence, and the ever-expanding "security" have traditionally been in the shadows. The instrumental ends of warfare and intelligence gathering require secrecy. Thus, as long as there are nation states

dedicated to maintaining their sovereignty, we can expect the deep state to always have this coercive core.

However, the remarkable change in the post–Cold War environment has been the scope of state activity that has followed clandestine intelligence into the shadows. For example, in an attempt to explain both recent political successes and setbacks in reforming US social policy, Suzanne Mettler has turned to the idea of a “submerged state.”³⁸ Mettler describes the submerged state as:

a conglomeration of federal social policies that incentivize and subsidize activities engaged in by private actors and individuals. These feature a variety of tools, including social benefits in the form of tax breaks for individuals and families; the regulation and tax-free nature of benefits provided by private employers, including health care benefits in the form of insurance; and the government-sponsored enterprises and third-party organizations that receive federal subsidies in exchange for carrying out public policy goals, such as the banks and lending associations that have administered student loans.³⁹

Mettler’s analysis draws on earlier conceptions of welfare provisions in the United States constituting a shadow state.⁴⁰ According to Mettler, the fact that social policy in the United States is administered by this elusive, submerged state has two important consequences.

First, its complexity and scattered connections make reforming it extremely challenging for both the executive branch and Congress. Tinkering with policy changes in one area often produces unexpected consequences elsewhere and at times engenders political resistance from unexpected quarters. For politicians worried about popularity and their next election, there is little incentive to take on such a task. Second, the complicated arrangements surrounding the implementation of social policy obscures its impact from average citizens. In a study of public opinion about social welfare policies in the United States, political scientists found that the public was not only uninformed, but misinformed.⁴¹ The difference means that they often believed with great certainty erroneous facts about this area of public policy. These false beliefs included extremely inaccurate assumptions of how much the US government spends on such policies and how many citizens receive benefits.

This potent combination of complicated policy and poor public knowledge about it discourages involvement by political actors in the shallow state. In turn, this lack of visibility creates a growing unaccountability in the policy area of social welfare. The deep (or in Mettler’s analysis, “submerged”) state is increasingly relied on by frustrated or unmotivated officials to make and maintain social policy. Given its inaccessibility, the public is ill informed on the subject. This feeds into the deep state having a free hand to make policy

since there is little call for accountability. In addition, given the complex obscurity of this policy area, elected officials can hope to win few votes by engaging with it. Thus, in a policy area far removed from intelligence gathering or defense, we find policy determined by the less visible, deep state.

At the same time, the complex interactions of the public policy process discredit a simple description of the deep state. We can view a human invention that is as vast and complicated as the state in many ways. In some cases, there is greater utility in imagining even more elaborate models of the state, depending on the level of analysis pursued. Close analysis of particular policy areas reveals the involvement of many actors including elected officials, bureaucrats, and individuals in the “private sector.” This complex interaction has spawned a new “paradigm” in policy studies and public administration. The shorthand for this new approach is “governance rather than government.”⁴² In other words, public policy is formed in part by actors outside of government institutions. To many observers this shift is a positive development. Rather than traditional government regulation, the idea of contemporary governance is to allow society more access to policy making so that it is driven from below.

However, a number of studies have pointed out that despite the promise of opening up policy “beyond the state,” to actors in the private sector and at the community level, the messy chaos of governance rather than government can also undermine democratic accountability.⁴³ This outcome is due to the often bewildering array of government institutions, nongovernmental organizations, private-sector leaders, and professional lobbyists, engaged with highly specific policy issues. Paradoxically, this expansive inclusion of focused participants only serves to obscure the ultimate agency of the state. Once the consultations, open forums, feedback sessions, and so forth end, it is still the state acting and implementing policy. But following this link to the state through all of the noise becomes extremely difficult.

Thus, the deep state should not be thought of as a list of secretive organizations hidden away by government. Instead, the deep and shallow state dynamic is very fluid within contemporary states. We can argue that, in a perverse way, the addition of nongovernmental actors to the policy process can transform such organizations into part of the deep state. Given this challenge, what criteria can we use to identify the “deep” state? If the contemporary state often includes so many nongovernmental actors in the policy process, then is it even possible to identify such a category of the state?

It is if we focus on the concept of sovereignty. It is here, at the bedrock of the state, its *raison d'être* that the state's active efforts become visible. How? First, the state must continue to be the human organization that regulates all others. In this sense, the deep state must maintain the oversight

functions that subordinate all other human organization to it. Aside from our traditional understanding of “security” agencies and functions, this oversight includes a vast array of legal infrastructure. The maintenance of sovereignty can involve other agencies concerned with planning, health care, or even education. Given that states are increasingly competitive in their efforts at socioeconomic development, even the health of the population can be seen as important to the continued sovereignty of a state. Similarly, education that makes the workforce competitive in global capitalism can begin to acquire a national security complexion.⁴⁴

The second aspect of sovereignty that the deep state must support is perpetuity. Why can a state like the UK offer bonds with a maturity of thirty years? How can states guarantee leases of land for 100 years or pledge in treaties to maintain a position forever? Or consider that on October 3, 2010, the Federal Republic of Germany made the last reparations payment set by the Versailles treaty of 1919.⁴⁵ Why? Because the FRG is the successor to the other German states before it. Because the state will exist forever, it can make promises and provide assurances that no other human organization can. Even powerful market corporations cannot assert this level of guarantee since they are ultimately regulated by the state, but also because the free-market ideology they draw upon assumes many companies will, and must, fail.

Due to these imperatives, the deep state possesses a logic that is more objective than the political fashions we see in the shallows. This also explains the attempt at times by various politicians to link their policy concerns to national security. To secure itself, the state must rely on the resources of the deep end both to scrutinize its contemporary position and to maintain or improve that position into the future. These twin needs are absolute since nothing from within the state’s infrastructure can trump the importance of preserving the state. Thus, we should think of the deep state less as a set of concrete institutions and more as a functional logic that pervades the state.

How then should we define the deep state? The deep state is best understood as the parts of the state most vital to the *praxis* of maintaining sovereignty. “Praxis” is a broad and perhaps overused philosophical term. Nonetheless, it is useful in this context. At its simplest, praxis is the process of turning an idea into reality. But attached to this idea of process, praxis also refers to the embodiment of this idea in the world. The praxis of maintaining state sovereignty requires the concrete creation of many institutions, bureaucracies, and officeholders. In turn, these institutions create legislation and policies to maintain state sovereignty.

However, a list of all state institutions does not identify the deep state. Instead, the deep state is a shifting set of institutions and officeholders that are most closely connected to the core objective of maintaining the sovereignty of the state. The preservation of the state overrules other imperatives within the state, including, when necessary, the political rules of the shallow state.

This dynamic means that even with a simple, dualistic separation of the state into two categories, there are many areas of the state that are difficult to classify. For example, what about a state's legal system? In the developed democracies, court activities are exceedingly well documented and by law accessible through public records. Even in more authoritarian regimes, courts make some pretense of following published rules and allowing access to their decisions. At the same time, courts are important for the state's maintenance of sovereignty since they provide oversight for agreements and contracts through all levels of society. Should an institution like the judiciary be considered part of the deep state?

In a recent study, Richard Hasen found that the US Supreme Court has gained power at the expense of Congress over the last two decades.⁴⁶ This power stems from the fact that Congress has been polarized into inactivity. It rarely takes action to override the Court's findings. Instead, increasingly partisan, ideological debates in Congress have led to a vacuum in not only interpreting but also adjusting and fine-tuning the complex federal laws and regulations that do manage to pass the legislature. The downside to this outcome is that important decisions on policy implementation are shifting to a less accountable, and by comparison, less visible branch of government. In the United States, it is not plausible to categorize the Supreme Court as an institution of the deep state. However, given the current political divisions in the United States, we do see this less accountable branch of government filling the vacuum from a gridlocked legislature. In this sense, the logic of the deep state is present in recent Supreme Court behavior.

Thus, the other important question with defining the deep state is visibility. Typically, the deep state is made up of institutions and agencies that are usually headed by an unelected official, and thus only indirectly accountable to the electorate. Here, we can think of all of the directors and heads of agencies appointed throughout the state bureaucracy. Obviously, some of these positions are much more important for the deep state's mission of maintaining sovereignty than others. In addition, the activity of the agency is either not a matter of public record or if it is then it is very difficult to access. But at the same time, the failures of the shallow state can also push more visible branches of government, like the judiciary in the United States, into the functional role of the deep state.

The battle over accountability and implementation of public policy is an old topic in the study of state bureaucracies. In the literature studying the American political system, there has long been concern about "iron triangles" or "issue networks" made up of the bureaucracy, members of Congress, and lobbyists who capture control of policy making, to the exclusion of the public.⁴⁷ In studies of British politics, there has long been a worry about the "mandarins" of Whitehall determining public policy with little oversight from parliament. In these older policy studies, the key difference between state institutions like the legislature, the courts, and the

bureaucracy is their relative visibility. Legal decisions are generally intended to be public knowledge, because this is part of their function, to lay down rules that guide private and public activities. Similarly, the legislative acts of a parliament by their function are intended for larger public consumption. In contrast, the bureaucracy performs its functions with little or no visibility. Thus, a more traditional policy studies approach would suggest that defining the deep state is an issue of transparency in government.

However, these older studies are predicated on the idea of identifying various interests present in the policy process. For example, classic studies of iron triangles attempted to expose the monopoly that interest groups could acquire in specific policy areas, with little public oversight. Similarly, classic studies of bureaucratic influence worried that the agenda of an unelected bureaucracy could reign unchecked by elected officials. The interests conceived of in these studies tend to be very concrete ones: for example, interest groups concerned with making more money in the marketplace through changes to regulations, and bureaucrats influencing policy so that their department receives a larger budget allocation or avoids tasks the bureaucrats do not want to pursue.

In contrast, the functional logic of the deep state is a more elusive motivation. Consider, for example, the question of whether the actions of the state are a conscious attempt at concealment. Clearly, this is the case in some circumstances. In intelligence gathering and other areas connected to the state's security, secrecy is a functional requirement. Thus, conscious efforts to conceal the state's activities are expected here. Another sort of functional logic can be found where the state attempts to publicly tie its own hands. The best example of this conscious restraint is by granting "independence" to a central bank. This independence from politics makes promises of the central bank, and the setting of interest rates, more credible to the market. Thus, the fiction that this administrative arrangement places a central bank outside of state control (despite the influence the state retains over it) is a very conscious decision to conceal the state's agency.

On the other hand, if the concealment of the state has emerged as an ideological norm, then arguably many policy decisions that enable this concealment are not, strictly speaking, conscious ones. For example, attempts at privatization or outsourcing motivated by the state's budget concerns may very well have consequences for government transparency and accountability that state actors failed to consider. Also, given how complicated the state is in many places, concealment can be a by-product of otherwise innocuous rule changes in the bureaucracy. The objective of decision makers within different state agencies and institutions is never unitary. Various actors within the state have differing agendas, sometimes very modest ones. Therefore, we must look closely at policy decisions before we can conclude that they represent a conscious attempt at concealing the state.

Nor is activity by the deep state necessarily secretive by design. The complexity of modern policy across integrated, developed societies is obviously complex in ways unforeseen even two decades ago. With globalized capitalism outside its borders and complex, diverse societies within, contemporary developed states must act on a range of problems beyond the scope of legislative oversight. Thus, the bureaucracy often acts within extremely broad boundaries set by elected officials. In a study from the United States, the relatively innocuous Food and Drug Administration was found to act autonomously in the absence of congressional scrutiny. When prodded by legislators, the agency did respond to congressional concerns.⁴⁸ Yet the sheer complexity of the day-to-day decisions made by this agency ensures that it is often left alone by the shallow state.

However, the deep state's most important role in concealing the postmodern state is arguably its oversight of a theoretically autonomous, free market. The deep state's maintenance of the market enables the more public shallow state to claim that this area is beyond its control. In this sense, the deep state is a paradox. Many observers worry about the hidden activities of intelligence and defense agencies. Yet, the dynamic of the deep and shallow state has its most corrosive effects on accountability and transparency here. Although classification and state secrets have been part of the state since the early modern period, the ideology of the free market has created new possibilities for concealing the postmodern state's agency. What is deeper than the classified and secret parts of the state? The answer is the part of the state hidden in plain sight.

Hiding behind the market

When a firm merges with another or buys out a rival in the marketplace, the description is often of a "takeover." Yet, when the state privatizes services by awarding a contract to a firm, the assumption is that the firm continues to be independent in the free market. Describing a firm as taken over by the state would imply an unusual level of interference. Nonetheless, the distinctions are a matter of degree. A number of private firms depend on taxpayer money from the state for their existence. Why are they not considered part of the state?

Arguably, the key difference with privatization is that a change in ownership alters incentives. In turn, these new incentives push the organization to strive for greater efficiency to maximize profit. However, an exhaustive study of privatization in the UK by Vickers and Yarrow concluded that

The efficiency implications of these changes in incentives depend very much on the competitive and regulatory environment in which a given firm operates. Indeed, it can be argued that the degree of market product

competition and the effectiveness of regulatory policy typically have rather larger effects on performance than ownership *per se*.⁴⁹

This is an important point given that the public is often assured that privatized services will match rigid guidelines set by the state. Such regulations obviously place some limits on what a private firm can do differently from a public one.

If this is the case, then again the question becomes, why these private firms are not part of the state? Their employees provide a good or service to the public or in the public's interest. The contracts the firms receive are awarded by the state with guidelines or performance targets set by the state. Often the public is required to use the firm's service because the state has designated only one firm or a small number of them as acceptable providers. To ensure their good performance, the state theoretically holds a great incentive over these firms; their contracts could be awarded to a competitor. However, it is often the case that these "private" firms become monopolies once this connection to public funds is established.

Firms that survive primarily through receiving taxpayer money cover a large area of the economy. In the United States, a number of firms specialize in providing garbage collection to municipalities and local governments. Other firms in the United States have specialized in setting up and running "charter" schools. These are essentially nonofficial public schools that the state allows to function free of the interference and costs of teachers organized within the national teachers' unions. Other companies manage and provide basic utilities. In all cases, the contracts awarded to such firms are decided by the state, with specific rules and targets. The employees are receiving taxpayer funds and often have a local monopoly for the service they provide.

Why are they not part of the state? Theoretically, the state could decide not to renew their contract and find a new provider in the competitive marketplace. This is plausible in some cases such as the new, hot field of companies providing education services. It is much less plausible when we consider a "private" electric utility. If it loses a contract, will it then be withdrawing its generating stations from the local grid? Is it still the case that the mere difference of notional ownership can transform the internal incentives and efficiencies of these firms?

Nor is this pattern confined to routine matters such as garbage collection and utilities. In a startling case from the UK, we find the state outsourcing or privatizing a core function of the state: policing. As the UK prepared to host the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, details emerged about the role of private security services, such as the firm G4S, in providing security for the games.⁵⁰ One of the political controversies surrounding the Olympics is always the cost to the host city. The government argued that security costs would be reduced by outsourcing security to firms that could quickly

gear up for the large event as opposed to regular police and security forces attempting to do so.

Nonetheless, this private firm is using taxpayer money to pay security guards to provide policing in all but name at the event. The distinction between “security” and “policing” seemed very thin in the context of the Olympic Games. The government assured critics that these “private security” forces were completely integrated into the larger protection effort, including military backup in the event of the worst. Again, what distinction remains then between these contractors and all of the other forces they are integrated with? In the end, the private firm was unable to hire enough security guards for the many venues of the London games. This led to the British government deploying 18,000 soldiers to supplement the “private” contractor. Why were publicly funded security guards working side by side with British soldiers still considered a private force?

Arguably, the most dramatic example of the state using the market is with the privatization of prisons. Here, the hollowness of claiming that state action taking place in the market is somehow not of the state is most apparent. Individuals are incarcerated in buildings and conditions that are supposed to match explicit government criteria.⁵¹ Land for the prison is often obtained for the firm through government assistance. Guards and staff at private prisons are supposed to abide by the same standards as “official” guards and wardens. The application of discipline and coercion to prisoners is supposed to match state rules on the use of force. These operations are paid for with taxpayer money. The prisoners are sentenced to these facilities by state courts. Yet, through the magic of the market, these are private rather than state prisons. What is the difference? Private prisons are supposedly more cost-efficient, though scholarship indicates “that other institutional characteristics—such as the facility’s economy of scale, age, and security level—were the strongest predictors of a prison’s daily per diem cost.”⁵² Perhaps the wages of private guards are lower than “official” state-employed guards. The legacy costs of pensions and health service are perhaps less because private guards are not unionized. But most importantly, the state can claim that rather than expanding itself with yet another prison, it is instead somehow cutting back the state by outsourcing this need to the cheaper, more efficient, and nimble market. Otherwise, the state must admit that it is expanding.

Beyond these examples taking place on planet Earth, the state has increasingly “outsourced” more spectacular services. In the United States, NASA has awarded a contract for cargo missions to the International Space Station to a private firm. The argument was that this market-based firm could provide an alternative to the retired shuttle program more quickly and efficiently than NASA’s traditional pipeline for such projects. And indeed, the firm Space X has delivered on its contract sending a cargo flight to the ISS in June 2012. However, why is this an example of an autonomous

market doing something better than the state? The firm was created and worked very hard on one goal, to win the contract NASA offered. The firm's payment comes from public money. NASA set the targets and rules for the contract. In this sense, our example seems to be less about the state getting smaller, rather than it acquiring a new firm. The US Congress could have approved a program to shut down the unsafe American space shuttle program and create a whole new, safer delivery system to resupply the ISS from scratch. However, the announcement to retire the old, costly NASA program, and then contract out to entrepreneurs for a new, cheaper, and more efficient system sounds better politically.

Occasionally, the paradoxes of this situation undermine its ideological camouflage. In a startling example from the United States, a court case is looming over the privatization of collecting legal fines in several states. In an effort to cut costs, a number of local and state governments contracted collection agencies to collect fines ranging from parking tickets to those levied by the criminal courts. The legal conundrum that had arisen is that these supposedly private agencies have been given the power to increase these fines with late penalties and other fees beyond what the courts established. In some cases, they have also requested that delinquent payers be incarcerated for not paying. In the United States, these actions raise a number of complicated constitutional questions about jurisdiction and legal authority since it is giving power to a private agency to order someone arrested. One judge in the US state of Alabama commented that the drive for this privatization was supported by state legislators, some of whom suggested that state courts should be "self-financing" through collecting such fees rather than depend on the state budget!⁵³

In this sense, the state can be interchangeable with the market in the other direction. For example, in the United States, a minor scandal emerged around the issue of prisons bidding for government contracts against the private sector.⁵⁴ In the UK, it emerged that individuals were being forced to participate in a work-training scheme that the government arranged with a number of private employers. Thus, employees at large retailers in Britain and a few other firms find themselves working next to people who are receiving only welfare support rather than the minimum wage. So, the state can order people to work within the supposedly autonomous marketplace. Of course, in the UK case, the government could only do so with the cooperation of the private firms choosing to participate in the program.⁵⁵

The state is capable of even more dramatic incursions into the market. During the global financial crisis of 2008, a number of states took over or nationalized banks that were "too big to fail." Other banks were ordered to merge or to sell off some of their units. A number of central banks intervened in the markets with measures to ease the availability of credit or in some cases, to prop up government debt.

Such takeovers, interventions, and nationalizations are presented as a response to crisis. Political rhetoric justifies such emergency measures

and assures citizens that they are temporary. The state claims that it will quickly get itself out of the car business (in the case of the United States taking over General Motors) or the banking business (in the case of the UK National Rock). The blatant and visible action of the state in these cases is incompatible with the ideology of concealment unless it emphasizes the idea that the state is temporarily intervening in the autonomous market.

The state itself decides what entities are market- or state-controlled. The state also sets the parameters for market activity. So, just as the state can claim that it has privatized operations or outsourced services to the market, it can also reclaim parts of the market or change its rules of engagement. So what is the market? It is what the state says it is. What is the distinction between a private firm and state agencies? Does it depend on the quantity of business devoted to government contracts? What about the “official” oversight of the firm or agency’s activities? Are the employees officially working for the state (typically with more rules, salary, benefits, and protections) or not? These weak distinctions between what is private and public mean that the state sets the boundaries of the market.

Thus, the idea of an autonomous market allows the state to further conceal its agency in plain sight. Despite the ideological rhetoric of privatization “downsizing” or “rolling back” the state, the actual outcome is the expansion of the state. Rather than engaging in a political fight to expand the government workforce, or increase public services, the state acquires outside firms (with employees, equipment, etc.) while simultaneously claiming to cut costs. And indeed costs are often lowered through this maneuver as these new employees are paid less than official government workers (though the offset is that the managers of these firms seem to be better paid than official government supervisors). This shell game of having official government employees and agencies versus off-the-books contractors allows the state to claim it is following the indisputable logic of the market and trimming the size of the state. The state can then quietly expand or shift resources to new projects.

On the other hand, the state can also choose not to act by insisting on the inviolability of the market. Recurring examples of this state behavior are seen in cases that involve the maintenance of the commons. For example, in a case from the United States, residents in Michigan became embroiled in legal action against the Nestle Corporation over water. In this case, Nestle is accused by residents of pumping out so much water for a bottling plant that it has reduced the flow through local aquifers. In essence, various local citizen groups claim that this corporation, after buying a small parcel of land, is extracting local water from broader regional sources, bottling it, and selling it for a profit. This action is pulling water from a much larger area, but legal efforts against the company have floundered over the corporation’s assertion of its property rights. The state initially indicated to residents that there was little it could do, given the free market and rights of property

owners. Yet, it was the state that enabled the corporation's actions by providing tax incentives and assistance in obtaining the land it built on.⁵⁶

In his recent study of water policies from around the world, Christopher Fishman points to a similar example in Fiji. The free market has created a profitable business there. Local water is bottled and shipped all over the world. Yet, half of Fiji's population lacks access to a reliable water supply.⁵⁷ Is the state of Fiji truly powerless to harness this same know-how for the sake of its citizenry? Or, does such a paradox illustrate the priorities of the state? The government of Fiji can argue that it lacks the resources to provide potable water to the population, while licensing and taxing a global bottled water brand that is operating within the boundaries of an autonomous, free market.

In these examples, the state fails to act on the concerns of the public to protect public resources or the common use of resources. The private interests of the market are asserted and the state indicates its hands are tied. With a bit of digging and careful research, we find the state has enabled the behavior via tax incentives, land acquisition assistance, and other policies that it now says it is impotent to stop.

We can consider another interesting case from the United States. In congressional hearings in 2010 about the failures of for-profit colleges, a key point that emerged was the institutions' reliance on guaranteed government loans to students. Their supporters attempted to argue that these institutions represented a more nimble form of higher education that could quickly adapt to student needs and market demands. Nonetheless, the congressional hearings showed that the profits of these institutions were completely reliant on the student loans and financial aid the state provided to students. So, in the case of for-profit, market competitive education in the United States, the federal government provides students the grants and loans for tuition.

A parallel development emerged in America's K-12 education policies. In 2010 and 2011, an increasing number of primary and high schools began offering their students the option of online classes. Previously, online courses were the domain of higher education but they have become increasingly attractive to school districts facing budget cuts. However, a few states began to require students to take a set number of their high school classes online. This latter decision is especially interesting given the extensive lobbying for such provisions by private companies that provide online content to public schools.⁵⁸ In effect, such measures have taxpayer money going to private companies and conceal the state shifting toward support for cheaper instruction.

We can also find state concealment in the very mundane policy area of pensions. In many countries, but especially in the United States, UK, and some EU states, parts of the pension system have shifted to the open market. The argument is that better returns could be had from investing parts of pension funds in the market. This shift was framed as utilizing the

greater efficiency of the marketplace. However, closer analysis reveals that these pension funds are primarily purchasers of government debt. As *the Economist* pointed out in a recent article,

An example of this tangled relationship can be seen in the efforts of individual American states to deal with budget shortfalls. Some states are launching special bond issues to get the funds needed to finance their pension contributions. And who are likely to be significant buyers of those bonds? State pension funds.⁵⁹

Once again the move toward privatization simply obscures the source of funding for this area of social policy. Across the United States, many public employees are no longer provided with pension programs. Instead, they are required to invest part of their salary in stocks, bonds, and other assets through management companies such as TIAA-CREF or banks like Wells Fargo, in lieu of a pension. In some programs the local, state, or federal government matches these contributions. Yet, what is the significant difference between the old-style pension system and mandatory investments by workers (deducted from their paychecks by the state) into heavily regulated retirement funds?

In another policy area that seems mundane or even arcane, we find state action creating new economic realities. Consider the insurance market in the United States. In an attempt to improve their local economies, several US states have made fundamental changes to laws regulating the insurance industry. As a result, states such as Vermont now allow insurance companies to create shell holdings in which they deposit steep company losses, making the parent company's ledger much healthier.⁶⁰ Thanks to this state intervention, private corporations are suddenly able to pay dividends again and hire more employees. Once again, despite the myths of an autonomous market, the state has changed the so-called "realities" and disciplinary "constraints" of the market.

In all of these examples, we see that the deep state is buttressing a theoretically autonomous market. However, even a modest effort reveals that these "free market" areas are parasitic upon the legal infrastructure of the state and often receive their funding from the state. We see for-profit companies in education paid by students and school districts, whose funding originates with the federal government. Stock markets receive large inflows of capital from institutional investors managing 401(k) programs, mandated for government employees.

Occasionally, the neat ideological division of free market and the state is ruptured by scandal. These moments can be useful for highlighting the inconsistencies and contradictions that are papered over by the ideological claim that the market is a freestanding entity. In the UK, the recent and ongoing scandal over phone hacking by subsidiaries of the News Corporation

revealed the tight networks between the media and elements of the state. Despite the ideology of a self-regulating market, this scandal revealed the illegality that can occur when the state and free-market institutions collaborate behind the scenes. In this instance, the British government has launched an exhaustive investigation into allegations of police being bribed by reporters for information and breaches of privacy by reporters. The fact that some accused members of the press had close access to elected officials further complicated the issue. How can the press remain a watchdog for government accountability if it is so dependent on access to the state? If the market truly provides a bulwark against the state, then why is there such a need for clear rules about contact between members of the shallow and deep state with the media?

The recent trial of Iceland's former prime minister Geir Haarde is another prime example. The Icelandic state resorted to criminal charges against the former prime minister following the banking collapse there. In essence, the state attempted to charge its former head of government with a form of criminal negligence in failing to maintain and oversee the market.⁶¹ In moments such as this, the bifurcation of the state and the ideal of a free market are suddenly thrust back into the public's consciousness. If markets are self-regulating and autonomous, and the state is increasingly losing sovereignty over them, then how can a former head of government face criminal charges for regulation of his country's financial system?

Concealment of our dependency

Another, almost universal motive drives the ideology of concealment. In contemporary societies, we have become highly dependent on the state. In the developed world, the state maintains the socioeconomic system that provides us with much day-to-day comfort. In the developing world, the state has become the force that promises to deliver a quality of life similar to the most developed states. However, within our current culture of global capitalism, this stark dependence on the state raises troublesome misgivings.

If the state is a driving force for the development and maintenance of the economy, then how do we define the private sector? In the policy examples discussed earlier, privatization merely turns into a distancing of implementation from the state, but nonetheless, an implementation reliant upon taxpayer support. In addition, debates in the shallow state often conceal a consensus and quiet policy development and implementation by the deep state. What links these two forms of state behavior together?

The parallel thread between these examples is the need to reconcile our absolute dependency on the modern state with our myths about freedom, equality, and the independence of the individual. If we recognize that the outcomes of our socioeconomic system are not the result of an

impartial, invisible hand of the marketplace, then we are forced to confront the unpleasant truth. The state structures the rewards, incentives, and punishments of our present system. Yet, many of us prefer to consider ourselves as largely autonomous agents standing or falling on our talents and effort. Instead, in the developed world, our comfortable lives depend on state policies. Conversely, this also means that the inequalities in our societies are due largely to state policies. For those of us living in the developing world, the progress, or lack of progress, in our lives can be traced to state policies.

The other unpleasant truth connected to the deep state's increasing co-optation of policy is that our survival depends on the state. While debates on the coming ecological crisis play out in the shallows, the deep state attempts to take the actions necessary for the survival of our societies. In the past, existential threats to our social order came from the threat of war by other states. Today, we face profound risks from environmental damage, industrial accidents, and weapons of mass destruction. These dangers drive us even more into the arms of the state. What human institution besides the state is powerful enough to protect us from these dangers? Concealing the state shields us from recognizing this dependency.

This dependency on the state for continued survival strikes at the core of much conventional wisdom about economic development and the role of the individual. Much of the world has worked out some sort of accommodation with the status quo of global capitalism. However, this ideological concordance is tied to several underlying assumptions. One is that the private market is somehow autonomous from politics and thus allows individuals to succeed on the merit of their talents and industriousness. Another is that the present model of economic development faces no real limitations on growth. Thus, each generation hopes to be more successful than the previous one and all remain confident that their standard of living will improve indefinitely.

The worldview embodied in this understanding is currently under siege. The looming ecological crisis undercuts the assumption that growth based on our inherited model of capitalism is unlimited. Instead, the realities of shortages in nonrenewable resources and the risks to sustaining a vast global population are impinging on the consciousness of many. Catastrophic risks, such as climate change and the degradation of our food supplies, are irresolvable through the mantra of more competition and freer markets. For example, more competition seems unlikely to stop overfishing. Similarly, less regulation seems unlikely to control experiments with genetically modified crops. Rather, there is an increased need for the state to protect common resources, regulate growth, and to coordinate these policies with other sovereign states.

To acknowledge this need, and the fact that our survival now hinges on political actions, undermines a lot of comfortable assumptions. Individuals

are not free to rise as far as they can in the economy, unless their activity is compatible with state policies on manageable growth. The invisible hand of the market will not lead to fair, equal outcomes, but, if unrestrained, will cause pernicious results. Many of us will face a future of, at least, a more modest standard of living as resources are depleted. Our fate, now more than ever, rests in the hands of our governments. The individual has less control over his own destiny, and must accept this to survive in a depleted, overcrowded world.

This reality is troubling and fits poorly with the theories of political legitimacy we have inherited. In the most developed countries, our various constitutional theories begin with core assumptions about individual freedom. By extension, it is this individual freedom that enables us to place limits on authority from an autonomous vantage point outside of state control. To recognize instead our dependency on the state means that we must also confront the weakness of constitutional constraints on the postmodern state.

If we turn to examine theories about the state, then we find that the ideology of concealing the state avoids confronting two difficulties. First, the history of state formation demystifies the origin of contemporary governments. Contemporary nation states evolved to meet the specific social and political problems of their time. Concealing the state avoids an obvious question: if nation states had to evolve in the past when confronted with broad challenges, then isn't our contemporary situation a good candidate for another period of rethinking the state? By denying its current role in global capitalism, the postmodern state avoids the question of whether or not contemporary failures show it is time to replace it.

Second, if we examine theories of political legitimacy that have evolved alongside state institutions, then we find an unresolved, recurrent problem. As the anarchist tradition shows, state sovereignty is closely linked to coercion. Justifying the state's use of coercion has long been a challenge to theories of political legitimacy. For contemporary states, the challenge of justifying their coercive powers is even more problematic, given the almost invincible technologies of coercion and surveillance that are available to the most developed nations. Given this unresolved tension from the past, it is simply easier for the state to conceal its ability in this area.

This last point raises another question, though. Nation states have existed for quite some time and have weathered earlier crises. If contemporary states are turning to a newer ideology to resolve their political contradictions, then surely this recent turn is displacing a previous ideological consensus? If the current response to crisis is a shift in ideology, then surely history can provide us with previous examples of this dynamic? For this reason, we should look at past theories of the state. These theories have evolved alongside the state's institutions in an attempt to legitimize the state's claims to sovereignty. As we shall see, the greatest challenge for these theories has

always been to legitimate the state's use of coercion against its subjects and, more recently, its citizens. The overwhelming power of contemporary states is easier to conceal than justify.

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3

Theories of the state

My argument is that the ideology of concealment is necessary to satisfy the political contradictions of postmodern states. The previous chapters imply that we are witnessing a radical ideological shift. However, another consideration is whether the ideology of concealment is that radical a change. From a broader perspective, the contemporary ideology of concealing the state can also be interpreted as the latest turn in the intellectual history that accompanies state development.

At various points in history, the state has been forced to innovate. This motivation has come most often from the competition between states. Indeed, one thing all theories of the state share, ranging from anarchist literature to contemporary scholarship in political science, is that war drove state formation in early modern Europe. The competition between states in the context of Europe drove innovation to raise and organize the finances, manpower, and materials needed for warfare.

Much closer to our own time, states were forced to innovate again due to domestic changes. The most obvious example can be seen in the vast canon of literature exploring the state's response to industrialization and the social changes unleashed by capitalism. This response includes the creation of modern welfare states in the West. These regimes choose to use state power to ameliorate some of the social tensions generated by capitalism. In Russia, and then the developing world, we also see an alternate reaction. In this case, the state attempts to build an entirely different, anti-capitalist order. Across this range of extremes, we find the state responding to the difficult domestic problems arising from the broad social changes triggered by capitalist development.

In turn, these transformations generated accompanying parallel theories about the state, including attempts to legitimate its power. For nation states in Europe during the modern period, nationalism became a dominant justification for states engaged in warfare. Nationalism was used by both states struggling to assert their independence in Europe during the nineteenth

century and Imperial powers asserting their claims to colonization. Later, as many of these European states transformed into liberal welfare states, various forms of social contract theory and constitutionalism became the legitimating theory of the state's power.

The Soviet model of state communism developed a very different ideology to justify its political and economic system. Rather than an appeal to nationalism, the Soviet model attempted to create an elaborate ideology of state socialism. At various stages in Soviet history, this ideology shifted between claims to universal leadership based on class struggle and a latent Russian nationalism. Ultimately, the nationalism of the various regions constituting the Soviet Union would outlive the Soviet state. The entire region, including Russia itself, now runs the gamut of contemporary regimes. We find the Baltic states joining the European Union's liberal democracies on the one hand, and varying degrees of capitalist, but authoritarian systems on the other.

From this perspective, an important source of support for my argument is its fit with a larger pattern of history. As state institutions have transformed, in response to various demands (whether international competition with other states or domestic pressure), new ideologies have struggled to justify the state's power. If today's postmodern state possesses previously undreamed of instruments of coercion, and requires an unprecedented level of discipline from its population for successful economic competition, then concealment as an ideology becomes less surprising and more politically logical. The ideology of concealing the state reflects the challenge of continuing this long tradition in the face of states with unprecedented power.

To gain a better understanding of this latest ideological turn, we should examine two narratives that describe the state. The first of these narratives is provided by a scholarly consensus on the formation and evolution of the nation state. According to this view, the origin of states can be traced to constellations of social, cultural, and technological factors interacting with political innovation. The context provided by this history further illuminates the current ideology of concealing the state's agency. As in the past, the contemporary ideology of the state attempts to legitimate the state's actions. This need for legitimacy is especially pressing in policy areas that states consider absolutely necessary to protect their sovereignty.

The second narrative describing the state comes from the tradition of the radical left and focuses upon both the unintended consequences of the state and its intentional pernicious use. Historically, we find a set of criticisms from this tradition that shadow the various theories of political legitimacy justifying the state. Again and again, this tradition has challenged claims that the state is acting in the best interest of the population. In some cases, this criticism has claimed that the state is simply an institution designed to benefit a ruling class at the expense of everyone else.

However, an even deeper set of anarchist criticisms from within this second critical tradition question how an institution like the state, which

claims to possess sovereignty and a monopoly for the legitimate use of violence, could ever be beneficial to human beings. The main points of this critique still resonate since, despite our increasingly sophisticated theories of political legitimacy, the state contains the same contradictions that inspired the anarchist critique of the nineteenth century.

The first and foremost of these contradictions is state sovereignty. Sovereignty provides an initial guarantee for contracts and agreements across society. In this sense, the state is the unmoved mover that underpins the increasingly complex business arrangements of contemporary societies. Our ability to pay for items with the swipe of a card or by entering electronic information online relies on complex infrastructure guaranteed by the state. Cards, account numbers, and user names are taken to represent real individuals because of the state's policing of identity theft. The assumption that items on the shelf in the first world will work once we get them home comes from the consumer warranties the state requires. The confidence that business partners on the other side of the world will deliver on a contract comes from the knowledge that the state's courts will arbitrate disputes and enforce agreements. The more powerful the state, the more confident we are of these transactions in the marketplace.

However, this enforcement power ultimately rests on physical coercion. My certainty that business partners will deliver on their end of the bargain, because we have a contract, is based on the power of the state. Although it is possible to describe the constraints placed on all parties to a contract as emanating from "the law," ultimately it is the state's coercive power that limits the freedom of contracting parties. From the anarchist perspective, theories of political legitimacy can be deconstructed as efforts to conceal this kernel of violence that is the real foundation for the state. The sanctions the state applies are so certain and absolute because they ultimately can be backed by violence to the individual resisting them.

In addition, the anarchist tradition provides a moral critique that sheds further light on the attractiveness of the ideology of concealment. For the anarchists of the nineteenth century, the state's attempt to underpin all social cooperation with the guarantee of sovereignty was leading to an unprecedented dependency on the state. They saw the state expanding into more and more areas of life through regulations, policing, and new social policies. Increasingly, it would be the state providing education, pensions, workplace regulations, and even oversight of the family.

While this process delivered some short-term gains to different classes in society, it also pointed to a future of decaying, alternate social institutions. What need is there for unions, cultural associations, educational funds, and other civic organizations if the resources of the state are used to provide the social goods these groups were formed for? The anarchists feared a future that would see our utter dependence on the state for any sort of social policy initiatives. In such a future, the anarchists asked, what sort of "citizens"

would any of us really be? How could citizens maintain critical oversight of something they were so utterly reliant upon?

On the one hand, if we consider the use of the state through history, then it is difficult to argue that it is inherently pernicious. Indeed, states have at times promoted progressive social policies. It is also difficult to imagine challenging many contemporary social injustices without using state structures.¹ Furthermore, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have presented us with frightening examples of failed states. On the other hand, the twentieth century also provides examples of the state evolving into totalitarian dictatorships. Thus, the highly effective set of institutions that make up the nation state hold both great promise and risk. This dilemma is a constant presence that looms over the various theories of political legitimacy that have evolved in step with the nation state.

Attempts to legitimate contemporary states now face a final difficulty. Today, we are witnessing similar policies implemented by regimes that are (theoretically) radically different from one another. The examples of this behavior abound. We see surveillance technologies aggressively deployed by a democracy like the UK and an authoritarian state like China.² We see the world's champion of free-market principles, the United States, nationalizing financial and automobile companies in response to crisis, as well as similar actions in Russia's authoritarian system. And in almost every political system the most heated politics surround cultural issues instead of policy.³ What explanation of political legitimacy can satisfy us while also explaining the fact that distinct political regimes are adopting similar policies?

Authoritarian behavior by democratic regimes seems paradoxical given the widespread optimism that surrounded "globalization" after the Cold War. Most political observers expected that tighter integration into a global regime of free markets would lead to greater democratization and less conflict. A recent comprehensive study of post-Cold War authoritarian regimes found that the incentive of access to global capitalism discourages authoritarian elites from blatant coercion.⁴ Instead, authoritarian regimes have begun to use a mix of tools including managed elections to shore up their power. This sort of finding from political science is more in keeping with the idea that the spread of an international regime of global capitalism, including the norms it inherited from its Western origins, puts beneficial limits on state power.

If we view the issue from the perspective of an authoritarian political system, then the advantages of global capitalism to the elites of such a system are not just personal enrichment. To survive in the competition of the international system, those regimes must have economic power to support their sovereignty. Poor states in the international system have little leverage in their relations to others. A poor economy is also a weak foundation for military forces and an internal coercive apparatus. In an authoritarian system, the state operates domestically with low levels of legitimacy, thus

it must rely on higher levels of coercion to maintain its sovereignty. The contemporary technology of coercion is expensive, thus authoritarian governments need global markets.

Yet, the stress of globalization is not creating a one-way convergence toward a model of liberal, free-market democracy. Indeed scholars such as Wolin have gone as far as arguing that this stress is creating an “inverted totalitarianism” in formerly democratic regimes.⁵ By this term, Wolin means a regime that, although it claims to be formally democratic, is instead dominated by corporate interests and reliant upon a depoliticized and apathetic citizenry. While this assertion is clearly debatable, the fact that global capitalism creates a new context surrounding all functioning political systems is not.

If we view the issue of globalization from the perspective of a democratic political system, then we see a challenge here. In a democratic system, the state operates domestically with higher levels of legitimacy at home, and relies much less on coercion to maintain its sovereignty. However, domestic criticism in such a system often asserts local democratic values in opposition to this larger, global economic system that extends beyond its borders. In cases of conflict between these two values, the state is put in the position of asserting the need of global capitalism against its own citizenry’s wishes.

In both cases, the rewards for participating in the system of global capitalism, including the economic power it provides, outweigh domestic concerns. In authoritarian regimes, more domestic dissent is tolerated for the sake of continued access to global markets. In democratic regimes, violations of popular sovereignty and democratic ideals are committed by the state for the sake of remaining competitive in this global economic system. The mutual competition between states, regardless of their political complexion, pushes all into the system of global capitalism.

This common policy outcome, on a global scale, marks an important break with the past. The formation and evolution of states reflected different paths taken in response to policy problems within particular political environments. Today, states are facing a set of similar challenges around the world. At the same time, the need for states to continue competing with one another within the context of global capitalism has reduced the range of responses available to them. Therefore, all regimes are facing a dwindling set of options. Increasingly, the common ideological solution that resolves the worst of these contradictions is for states to conceal their agency.

From this broad perspective, the ideology of concealing the state is just the latest turn in a very long process linking the state’s evolution to a parallel, unfolding history of political thought. Yet, for the argument made here to be credible, two points need to be established. First, that contemporary state behavior is a logical extension of past attempts by the state to innovate in the face of challenges. Second, that the contemporary ideology of concealing the state’s agency attempts to answer criticisms of the state’s legitimacy in

a new way. This mission of the contemporary ideology is broadly similar to that of past political philosophies. However, what is changed in both cases is the specific set of challenges faced by contemporary states, and the intellectual solution to justifying, or in this case *concealing*, current state behavior.

Formation and evolution of the state

The literature exploring the evolution of the nation state is vast. This breadth is inevitable since states were formed through different means, in different places, and at different times. For example, Charles Tilly has developed two models of state formation based on whether the state wanted to expand commerce or increase resource extraction tied to agriculture.⁶ Other authors have distinguished between a West European variant of state formation and an Eastern one.⁷ This last line of scholarship generally focuses on the “peasant question” and the state’s responses to it. Similarly, Barrington Moore attempted to show outcomes of dictatorship or democracy depending on whether the path of state formation was rooted in patterns of agriculture or trade.⁸

In addition, we have a canon that explores the method by which the developed Western world imposed the technology of the state onto developing societies. Both through the process of creating an international system that relies on the nation state as its building block and through the violent (in some cases less violent) episodes of “decolonization,” the West has pushed, pulled, encouraged, or forced the societies of the world into the mold of the modern nation state.⁹ Almost always, the imposition of the Western state model in these societies came at the expense of destroying or displacing alternate local forms of social organization.

In turn, a large body of scholarship explores how well or poorly this model of the state fits the context of regions outside of Europe. For example, in Africa the process of state-building had to occur within a different geographic context than Europe. African states faced the difficult task of integrating territories with vaster environmental and ethnic diversity than in Europe. In addition, African states have attempted to consolidate themselves in an international system that puts more constraints on states going to war, for the sake of changing territorial boundaries, compared to the earlier experience of Europe.¹⁰

More recent scholarship has focused on the state’s role in shaping domestic political systems, as well as the limitations of the nation state in today’s international environment.¹¹ In the former case, political scientists assert that the institutional structures of the state profoundly shape even the political culture of a country. In the latter case, political scientists assert that these state institutions are declining in influence due to the growing

influence of international politics. There is also an ongoing argument in political science about how much explanatory power studies of the state yield compared to studies of other political actors like parties and interest groups. Yet other political scientists argue that the study of domestic political culture or the constraints of the international economic system are more likely to tell us something relevant about contemporary politics.¹² Thus, even the relevance of focusing on the state as an object of useful study has generated a significant literature in political science.

Any author adding more commentary to this vast literature should do so with trepidation. Fortunately, from this expansive literature a few points of consensus emerge, at least for the case of states that evolved in Europe and its settler societies. First, the formation and consolidation of modern state structures is connected to the war-making function.¹³ In some accounts this becomes very reductionist, citing the introduction of firearms and other technologies. Rather than specialized knights with their elaborate training and expensive armaments, states begin to draft the peasant into standing armies. These standing armies required a whole infrastructure to conscript, train, and maintain full-time soldiers. In turn, the constant expense of this state activity forces the state to modernize the collection of revenue. Arguably, these institutional changes have a deep impact on culture as well. The success and power of states that adopt this new model, especially France, forced rivals on the continent to adopt the same design for the sake of survival or deterrence.¹⁴

An example of these trends coming together is in the well-documented history of officer training. In France and Britain, the need for a better-educated officer to operate the sophisticated technology of the artillery and navy, respectively, leads to new military schools. The success of these new military techniques in Europe forces other societies to adopt them as well.¹⁵ In turn, these breakthroughs in military training raise the question of what else can be accomplished with better-educated soldiers. This need for continued military development has the unforeseen consequences of breaking the old aristocratic monopoly on military command and leads to some early calls for national and public education.

Second, the theoretical empowerment of the state emerges as a legacy of religious and civil warfare. On the continent, the legacy of the Reformation and the Thirty Years' War forced the political philosophers of the age to innovate. The solution that many propose in various guises is sovereignty. In the case of territories further to the East, the solution is partition along religious lines with a sovereign ruler. Inside France, where partition is not a solution, given that the Protestant Huguenots are concentrated in urban centers and Catholics in the countryside, Jean Bodin offered a slightly different interpretation of sovereignty. Here, sovereignty becomes connected to territory and a king who stands above the divisions within the society. A subject of the French king lives in France, regardless of his individual

religious affiliation. Therefore, Bodin's theoretical support for an absolutist sovereign paradoxically allows for more diversity in the society among the sovereign's subjects.¹⁶

In Britain, the civil war leads Thomas Hobbes to a similar paradox. His answer too is the creation of an invincible, sovereign state. The advantage of sovereignty here is that it creates a perpetual guarantor for the law (and order) society needs. Hobbes argued that this guarantor function must be perpetual if the state assumes the role of the unmoved mover that can guarantee all other contracts in the society. Thus, in his masterwork, *Leviathan*, Hobbes proposed a one-time social contract that creates a perpetual sovereign. This powerful state paradoxically provides more freedom for the individual since it provides the neutral judge needed to uphold contracts, provide law and order, and guarantee the property of individuals.

Third, the state moving into the industrial and later postindustrial periods of economic development acquires an important mediating role in the social tensions created by capitalist development. Obviously, one of the greatest ideological debates in human history is where and to what extent the state should regulate the market economy. Nonetheless, careful comparative research by political scientists documents very clearly the role of the state in addressing human concerns with the outcomes of capitalism, though with varying degrees of effectiveness in each case.¹⁷ In the West, nation states adjust the legacy of their earlier social contracts to include economic and social guarantees beyond the legal rights discussed by Hobbes, Locke, and others.

Thus, despite the vast literature available on state development, there is an overall theme that is consistent. In Europe and its settler societies, the nation state develops as a reaction to three major challenges. The state needed to improve its ability to wage war for self-defense. In reaction, states became more centralized and justified their power largely through appeals to nationalism or religious affiliation. Later, to incorporate religious diversity, the state needed a new relationship to its subjects. This led, paradoxically, to new forms of absolutist theory where a sovereign state stands over an entire territory and everyone residing in it. More recently, the state faced a new challenge with the social tensions unleashed by capitalism. For the liberal welfare states of the West, the sovereign had to adjust the "old" social contract to include new social protections. In Russia and states following its path in the developing world, the alternative to Western capitalist society becomes the construction of a totalitarian state. The absolute absolutism of these totalitarian examples of state socialism attempts to impose a different social order to that found in the capitalist West.

The solution in all three of these diverse cases was for the state to reinforce its sovereignty. Through the use of sovereignty, the state could guarantee the society from outside attack by consolidating all of its resources (material and manpower) into one centralized army. As Foucault has shown, this process leads to the refinement of disciplines that wring even more productivity and

effectiveness from this manpower and material.¹⁸ By the twentieth century we see this process leading to total war. The states in the West, and eventually Japan, can harness their entire productive capacity for war making. The two world wars became the proof that war has shifted to an all-pervasive, society-wide endeavor.

Sovereignty also allowed the state to expand its borders and include a larger and more religiously diverse population. From the religious complications of Bodin's time, states slowly acquired the theoretical explanation for why they should be sovereign over various peoples. As the territorial breadth of states included a greater breadth of people, sovereignty became linked to the idea of a separate political identity that could be universal. In this sense, universal, political citizenship is the analogue of sovereignty. The religious affiliation of the individual becomes secondary to his earthly membership in society. God becomes more distant in comparison with one's relationship to the Leviathan state.

The guarantee of sovereign authority also provided the legal infrastructure that aided capitalist development. Increasingly complex contracts and chains of transactions were possible, thanks to the legal foundation provided by an ultimate sovereign. Later, market interventions by the sovereign state allowed it to mitigate some of the tensions inherent in capitalist society. The harsh conditions of Manchester-style industrialization eventually gave way to state-enforced labor codes, market regulation, and welfare provisions.

In an extreme reaction to the tensions of early capitalism, the Russian empire was transformed through the Soviet experience into a totalitarian, state socialist alternative. In this case the state becomes arguably even more sovereign than in the West, given the imposition of state direction not only over the economy but all aspects of society. Under Soviet rule, the state closely supervised the arts, the sciences, sport, and any conceivable form of social organization in its quest for ideological conformity.

These earlier European states became, in turn, the model for state formation across the planet. This includes not only the imperialism and colonialism of the Western nation states but also the Soviet Union's domination of its satellite allies during the Cold War. The nation states we know today evolved as a response to several historical challenges that emerged in Europe. The solution to these specific problems, the nation state, was then transposed onto other societies through the process of war, colonization, imperialism, and cultural influence.

The utility and contingency of the state

Given their common histories and origins, it is interesting to think about the uses made of the state. In the eighteenth century, Liberals used the state to finish off the privileges of the old feudal order in much of Europe. The

ideological arguments advanced in this conflict eventually assisted struggles for suffrage and the expansion of individual rights. In the nineteenth century, the state became active in the formation of the new capitalist market. The disruptions caused by the transition from agrarian to market society led to the twentieth-century state acting as a bulwark against market failures and the social tensions it triggers.¹⁹ Thus, it is difficult to argue that the state has always had a pernicious impact on human beings. In some cases, the state has responded to alleviate human suffering.

However, we also see in the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century the use of the state to terrorize societies. This last point, the possibility of state-organized terror, is linked to the fact that the state is not just a set of institutions and agencies. For states to function well, they must also operate in the world of ideas. At their core, states depend on the citizenry believing it has some sort of common identity.²⁰ For many contemporary philosophers, one explanation for totalitarianism in the twentieth century is that it was an attempt to use the state to impose an ideology upon society despite the concerns, interests, objections, or resistance of that community. Rather than recast the state's ideology, violence is used to attack the real-world constraints and human beings that have gotten in the way of utopia.²¹

These nightmare examples of totalitarianism from the twentieth century are most commonly interpreted as showing the need for keeping the state accountable through the institutions and practices of representative democracy. Indeed, since the state has been used for many ends, it seems difficult to argue that it is inherently detrimental to human beings. If one considers the religious warfare after the Reformation, the refinement of Bodin's sovereignty becomes an attractive solution to the problem of political identity. The war capabilities the state develops can in some instances be credited with deterring external aggression. Also, the social contract theories supporting the state forced it to eventually intervene in the most egregious cases of tension triggered by capitalist development. In our own historical period, the effects of failed states in the international system point to the usefulness of states. If one examines conditions in failed states like Somalia or Congo, then Hobbes' call for a strong state to guarantee order looks less objectionable.²² Thus, the state appears to be, at least, a necessary evil when we consider life without it.

Furthermore, the necessity of the state only seems to be reinforced by the challenges of our contemporary situation. Contemporary nation states are tasked with managing an extremely complex array of social, economic, and technological policies. The state has gained enormous power through this management. At the same time, the development of these capacities has created a vast risk of catastrophe.

Governments around the world must weigh choices on economic development that are fraught with long-term risks to the environment and often short-term risks to social stability in areas like employment. Even the

most noninterventionist, market-oriented states must consider education policy if they are to remain economically competitive. States must regulate specific technologies like nuclear power and genetic engineering to avoid the potentially catastrophic risks tied to them; nation states have also entered into treaty obligations with one another to regulate these specific areas of danger. Finally, aside from the risks of economic and technological development, contemporary nation states face the risks of ideologically based terrorism practiced on a scale that surpasses past episodes of political violence.

The state seems to be essential for the well-being of humans given these realities confronting contemporary society. Nonetheless, there is a tradition that argues that the state is inherently harmful to human society, no matter how well designed its institutions. Anarchist arguments against the state touch on several areas. But their overall point is that the state is ultimately harmful to human interests. As I explain later, some of these criticisms are an interesting complement to the academic consensus on the state discussed earlier. Although the anarchist tradition is rooted most firmly in the nineteenth century, its criticisms of the state take on more urgency in the aftermath of twentieth-century totalitarianism.

The development of the state provided the means to address challenges posed by new forms of warfare, political identity in growing societies, and the tensions of capitalist industrialization, but the haunting question has always been: at what cost? What paths were not taken on the way to developing the nation state that could solve these same problems?

Setting aside even older philosophical treatments,²³ radical criticism of the state takes a decisive turn with Rousseau. In his discourses on “the Arts and Sciences” and “the Origins of Inequality,” Rousseau rejected the enlightenment view of historical progress. Instead, Rousseau is an early voice posing a positive category of nature to the scientific and technological progress of his time. This vein of criticism also leads him to eventually invert the social contract of theorists like Hobbes and Locke. Rather than a social contract to exit the state of nature and create a new legitimate political order, Rousseau tried to imagine a social contract to escape the sick, artificial order of his time and return to a free, natural society.

Rousseau’s philosophical efforts are popularly associated with his subsequent influence on the French Revolution. However, this importance for intellectual history tends to obscure the radical implications of Rousseau’s criticism of political legitimacy. By contrasting his own time with a natural ideal, Rousseau amplifies a classic but underarticulated idea: that the state is an artificial construction. Rousseau puts this bluntly in the first discourse:

While governments and laws provide for the safety and well-being of assembled men, the sciences, letters, and arts, less despotic and perhaps more powerful, spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with

which men are burdened, stifle in them the sense of that original liberty for which they seemed to have been born, make them love their slavery, and turn them into what is called civilized peoples.²⁴

This basic point sets in motion a whole chain of related questions. First, if the state is artifice, a product of human agency, then isn't it open to further change by us? Second, if the state is not natural, then what purpose should it serve?

For Rousseau, the state in France was created to accomplish certain ends, first and foremost the protection of property. From this initial purpose, Rousseau traces the subsequent development of the current social order. In the second discourse, he asserts,

The first person, who, having fenced off a plot of ground, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.²⁵

The subsequent attempts by Liberal social contract theorists, Conservative Monarchists, or the church to explain this institution by other means are simply camouflage for its real purpose—protecting the property of the wealthy. In this sense, they are an example of the “garlands of flowers” Rousseau criticizes in his first discourse. Living in an age before theories of trickle-down economics, Rousseau dismissed any plausible justification for this role out of hand.

Another important point that emerges from Rousseau is his criticism of representation. For Rousseau, the only way to return toward natural freedom is to have direct democracy. In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau questions the believability of an elected official serving as my substitute after an election.²⁶ While Locke argued that representatives are simply delegates for those of us unable to devote ourselves full time to government, Rousseau argued that representatives are only accountable the day of an election. How could a representative know every constituent's true interest on every policy topic? Even if I voted for a representative at an election, because he campaigned on certain policy preferences, how would that representative know if I changed my mind afterward when confronted with new information? This concern with direct, immediate participation in governing leads Rousseau to call for independent, small-scale communities.²⁷

This impulse also lies behind Rousseau's assertion that he approved of the *corvée* (a levy of labor) more than taxation.²⁸ In the former, the citizen would know exactly what his contribution was and where it went. Indeed, the logic of Rousseau's point is appealing. How many of us would gain a better understanding of welfare policy and social conditions if we volunteered to help with public assistance rather than writing a check at tax season? If we are worried about public education where we live, then

shouldn't we attempt to gain direct experience with local schools before we criticize the way they are funded and managed?

Echoes of Rousseau's criticism of the state appear throughout other radical traditions. For example, Rousseau's assertion that the purpose of the state was primarily to protect property, and thus serves as the origins of inequality, reemerges in Marx as the assertion that the state is the executive committee of the ruling class. Just as Rousseau dismissed various theories of political legitimacy as window dressing to justify the state maintaining inequality, so too Marx argues that:

all struggles within the state, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another...²⁹

Thus, the state becomes an entity used for the protection of property and interests of a ruling class.

However, more than others, the anarchist tradition points to nagging questions about the state that have never gone away. This radical tradition's criticism of the state encompasses more than the focus on inequality and class interest found in the current of socialist ideas extending back through Marx to Rousseau. Although many anarchists would agree with the fact that the state defends inequalities that benefit the ruling class, the anarchist analysis of the state also questions the plausibility of the state's ultimate monopoly on authority and the moral consequences of society relying on the state.

For example, on the point of the state serving as the final sovereign authority for society, Bakunin long ago voiced a pertinent question. How can one institution, the state, be an expert in all areas? How is it possible for the state to judge all questions within society?

Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer.³⁰

For Bakunin, authority derives from rational recognition of areas of expertise. What is irrational to Bakunin is the idea that an individual invested with political authority is now an expert over all areas of life. Regardless of how an individual comes to political power, he is still an individual. Obviously, all individuals have strengths and weaknesses. No individual is a master of all the arts and sciences. Thus, no matter how we refine our democratic procedures, the idea of sovereign authority elevates human beings to an unnatural role.

In many ways, this skepticism of political authority is an echo of Plato's classical question: how does one train to be a politician? Other experts train

in specific fields, medicine for a doctor, physics for an engineer, and the law for a lawyer. Yet, what is the required training to become a ruler over others? Historically, one answer has been warfare, such as Machiavelli's description of a prince. But in a modern state, with all of the policy areas now under its influence, what possible training could equip someone to be an expert in governing? Kropotkin vividly expresses his skepticism on this point:

Is it not indeed absurd to take a certain number of men from out [of] the mass, and to entrust them with the management of all public affairs, saying to them, "Attend to these matters, we exonerate ourselves from the task by laying it upon you: it is for you to make laws on all manner of subjects—armaments and mad dogs, observatories and chimneys, instruction and street-sweeping, since you are the chosen ones whom the people has voted capable of doing everything!"³¹

With this skepticism toward political authority, Kropotkin echoes Rousseau's older skepticism of representation over direct participation. Since no individual can be an expert in everything, shouldn't we have as many people as possible not just voting, but governing?

Yet the idea of everyone governing in a modern nation state seems utopian. Thus, modern, liberal democratic states turned to the idea of representative government. The logic of this solution follows that of Locke's social contract. Since I cannot devote myself full time to government business, I do the next best thing by deputizing someone to represent me. From the anarchist perspective, though, this solution only seems to replicate the issue of expertise. How could a representative ever know my true needs, preferences, and aspirations? Referring to the view of a hypothetical representative, Kropotkin posits the following:

I am unacquainted with most of the questions upon which I shall be called on to legislate. I shall either have to work to some extent in the dark, which will not be to your advantage, or I shall appeal to you and summon meetings in which you will yourselves seek to come to an understanding on the questions at issue, in which case my office will be unnecessary.³²

In other words, no one could be a better expert in an area of immediate interest than myself. Why do I need to go through a set of representatives to reach agreements with others?

Of course, Kropotkin writing in the nineteenth century could scarcely imagine the complexity of current societies and their legal frameworks. Arguably, the advantage a representative has over common citizens is that he may draw on large resources to get to the bottom of issues. Modern representatives in government have staffs, a budget, and in many countries,

the ability to issue subpoenas. Thus, the representative brings in experts to explain policy options and then chooses the one he thinks is best.

This idea is embodied in the common-law tradition of juries. Twelve jurors drawn at random from the community are not expected to be legal experts. Instead, they are expected to exhibit through their deliberations what Aristotle called “the wisdom of the multitude.” Although none are experts in the law, all of the jurors can draw upon their respective education and experience. This pooling of ability gives them a collective strength lacking if we examine each individual in turn. From this perspective, the common-law tradition presumes that a jury can make a correct decision in a case if all of the facts and legal procedures are clearly presented to them by experts (in this case lawyers for both sides and a judge).

To dismiss the criticisms of the anarchists, many observers have used a similar argument. When Kropotkin, Bakunin, or other critics question the omniscient competence of the state, the counterargument is that they perform Plato’s classical sleight of hand. That is, they take an individual and ridicule the idea of any one person ruling competently in all areas. Instead, the philosophical defense of the state’s omniscience is usually a variation of Aristotle’s “wisdom of the multitude.” The state is not one individual, but instead a pooling of the expertise and abilities of many individuals. One individual cannot perform competently in all areas, but representatives supported by an expert bureaucracy can. In this sense, representatives are like a jury. Each has his or her limitations; their selection may even be somewhat random, but taken together and provided with expert guidance, the jury as a collective can reach a competent decision.

Deeper challenges

However, the anarchist criticism runs philosophically deeper than these dueling analogies indicate. A jury is deciding a question of fact. Similarly, we can imagine a democratically elected representative, provided with expert advice, choosing between policies if the issue was merely one of fact. But political decisions are often more than a choice of facts. Instead, political authorities must choose between different policies on the basis of philosophical convictions. Should the state invest more in education or lower taxes for greater economic growth? When, if ever, should the state go to war? These sorts of questions extend beyond analysis of factual information.

For Rousseau, even the best procedures to elect representatives would only guarantee that the elected official implemented the general will at that moment. Once an election passes, how could an official claim, for example two years later, that he still knew how his constituents would want him to vote on any issue? We can imagine a situation where even the most dedicated

representative cannot know this. For example, imagine a member of the US House of Representatives, or an MP from the British House of Commons, or even a representative from a local city council holding a number of meetings to ask his constituents how they wish for him to vote on a specific upcoming bill. Imagine further that these constituents answer with a resounding positive vote for the legislation. The representative then attends his meeting of the House, Parliament, or city council prepared to cast a supporting vote as his constituents instructed him to do a week or more ago.

However, during that session, our imaginary representative listens to a lengthy debate that includes updated information. During the course of this debate the representative finds himself shifting his own opinion as he listens to an impassioned debate. At this point in our imaginary example, would the representative not wonder if his constituents would also change their minds if they were present? Doesn't it seem illogical for the representative to cast a vote from instructions he received previously before engaging in the actual debate on legislation? It is in this sense that Rousseau argues true representation is an impossibility. Even the most dedicated representative can only hope to know what his constituents wanted at a particular moment in the past.

Furthermore, as we increase the stakes involved in such decisions, the moral authority of political office seems to inversely decline. Delegating authority to a professional politician to decide some mundane matters might seem plausible. Locke argued in his idea of the social contract that individuals needed to delegate the business of government to others, so that they are free to tend to their private interests. However, would it ever be rational to cede authority to someone else to decide on war or peace? For Bakunin it is highly irrational to cede the power of life and death (a monopoly on coercion) to someone else. Why would I ever admit that someone has a right to kill me or order me to kill someone else?

This also brings us to the other complication between deciding a question on facts versus philosophical beliefs. If my beliefs clash with the course taken by my representatives, then why should I acquiesce? The answer from Locke and most social contract theory, arguably up through the twentieth-century political philosophers John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas, is a procedural one. If we structure the competition of ideas and political positions fairly, then the outcome of this clash should be fair. Or, at least, it is a pragmatic way to structure politics to avoid violence.

From the anarchist perspective, this question invites an analysis of degrees. Perhaps I would easily acquiesce to the majority on many policy points. Giving in to the majority is easier the less concerned I am with an issue. On the other hand, politics is also about a clash of values. The more important the value to me, the harder it will be for me to admit political defeat. Arguably, I should do so in many cases for the greater good of social peace, tolerance, or out of concern and empathy for others.

Yet, there is always a limit. In Locke's social contract, his concern with this point leads him to conclude that one always has the right to "appeal to heaven." By this euphemism, Locke means a right to rebel if one is convinced that the government is tyrannical. Even in Hobbes' seemingly iron-clad contract, the sovereign must still have police since he cannot expect an individual accused of violating the sovereign to surrender voluntarily. Thus, in the social contract theories we associate with contemporary constitutional regimes, there is an idea of limits to authority and justified resistance or rebellion.

Arguably, the most sophisticated version of social contract theory available to us is that of the late twentieth-century theorist John Rawls. This modern version of the social contract replaces Hobbes and Locke's speculative state of nature with a hypothetical "original position."³³ This original position is described by Rawls as a thought experiment where individuals have all of their rational capacities, but no knowledge of their status in society. In Rawls, the social contract's limits seem even grayer since it would be irrational for us in this original position to choose anything other than a set of arrangements that benefit the least well-off in society. Rawls attributes this rational conclusion to the fact that since any of us in the original position could find ourselves in this least well-off position, we will want to minimize poverty and other misfortunes. For Rawls, then, the requirements of the social contract demand that the state provide many of the social welfare provisions we associate with modern, developed states. In this sense, Rawls places even broader limits on state authority than in the older social contract theory of Locke. Now individual rights include a broad basket of minimum welfare guarantees that the state must provide.

Among sophisticated theories of political legitimacy, there are always limits to state authority. Social contract theories are the most explicit in their call for limits to state power. However, it is difficult to imagine any theories of the state that lack such claims. Even extreme supporters of state power find themselves beholden to some sort of limits. For example, in Carl Schmitt's notorious work on sovereignty, *Political Theology* (published in Weimar Germany), the discussion is that of the state's power during the exception, or in other words, crisis and emergencies.³⁴ Schmitt attempts to construct an extreme definition of sovereignty claiming that it truly lies with the part of the state (or the individual) that can decide to suspend the rule of law. Schmitt argues that "All tendencies of modern constitutional development point toward eliminating the sovereign in this sense."³⁵ However, Schmitt questions the realistic limits of constitutionalism, arguing that "...whether the extreme exception can be banished from the world is not a juristic question."³⁶ Instead, Schmitt argues that the true limits of the state are grounded in the needs of an emergency situation, and the state's need to do what is necessary to survive. Thus, even a theorist of dictatorship like Schmitt implies that the state requires some sort of justification, such as an emergency due to social disorder, to fully exercise its sovereign power.

Other highly charged nationalist or communist ideological claims about the legitimacy of the state rely, almost always, on a claim of necessity. In other words, the vast power being turned over to the state is a necessary evil for the sake of a higher cause. Though such claims support extreme totalitarian states, the “ends” that they claim to seek are used to justify dictatorial “means.” Thus, in a philosophical sense (though not one of much use to those trapped under such a regime), even totalitarian theories of state legitimacy contain the germ of a limit to state authority. The vast power of the state still must be linked, however tangentially, to the ideological goal of communism, fascist superiority, or extreme nationalism.

When the ideology supporting totalitarian regimes crumbles, the political system collapses. We have seen such events again and again in the wave of regime change that swept across Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War. In some historical cases, the totalitarian regime can go on for a while in a twilight period that rests on almost pure coercion.³⁷ Yet, even in contemporary times with sophisticated mechanisms of coercion, pure force remains a very ineffective prop for political rule. In this sense, sovereignty is always problematic for theories of political legitimacy. Even extreme supporters of the state, and apologists for dictatorship, find that they need a justification for the absolute authority the state claims.

Perhaps Schmitt, as an open theorist of dictatorship, is less afraid to grapple with an unpleasant truth. Sovereignty is ultimately about force, and theories of political legitimacy attempt to justify this monopoly of violence. However, with the exception of the anarchist tradition, the necessity of the state’s ability to use violence, however selectively, is never questioned. Here, we see why for many anarchists like Bakunin the state seems akin to a belief in God. The state serves as an unmoved mover, a final authority that is always correct. This infallibility of the state serves as a linchpin to everything else, much as God’s ultimate authority is the keystone for various theologies. We cannot really question the omnipotence of God within various theologies, but theology attempts to explain how this is for the best.

One answer that is often repeated to the anarchist challenge of legitimating political authority is constitutionalism. Yet, given the amount of scholarship now available on creating constitutions, constitutionalism is not an easy refutation of the anarchist position.³⁸ Elites usually draft constitutions with little input from society, often in secrecy, and then submit their efforts to a plebiscitary referendum for legitimacy. Indeed, the elites typically drafting a constitution rely upon their social status, fame, or moral authority to justify their actions.

Despite these elitist origins, the contemporary political philosopher Jurgen Habermas argues that we can still view constitution making as an example of democratic action if we interpret a constitutional convention as “the founding act in an ongoing process of constitution making that continues across generations.”³⁹ In other words, we can view constitution

making as an act that enables participation to occur. Thus, despite their elitist origins, constitutions are co-original with democratic participation since constitutions, with their rules and institutions, make future democratic activity possible.

However, from an anarchist perspective this view of constitution making ignores an important point. Politics introduces a moral dimension that requires some judgments and understanding of the original motivation behind constitutional arrangements. Central to Habermas' broader philosophy is the idea that reason is integral to human communication because I wish to convince or explain to others some goal.

However, we can think of many other interactions, common to the human condition, which rely on subterfuge and efforts at obfuscation rather than transparency. Consider the examples of seduction, "white lies" to avoid hurting others, and the ancient art of selling in the marketplace. In all of these cases, how we morally judge an individual's efforts turns on the question of his initial motivations. A "white lie" is often acceptable to us if we learn that it shielded another from unnecessary emotional pain, some exaggeration is expected in the market place, and moral judgments on seduction are as old as human literature. Therefore, judgments about communication rest in part on the motivations behind it. The communication used to construct a constitution is potentially undermined by the motivations of those behind it.

This point is especially relevant given the scale of constitution making. The number of individuals affected by this activity is much larger than some of the examples of smaller-scale social interactions mentioned above. Given this impact when designing political rules that individuals must submit themselves to, the pragmatic acceptance of constitutional origins found in Habermas' and others' commentaries is difficult to accept. How can the rules created by elites, often for very narrow political ends, be accepted as justifying state sovereignty? Even if this original act leads to positive reforms later in history, how does this original act justify the ultimate authority of the state?

Furthermore, another insight from the anarchist tradition turns on the issue of motivation and its link to the morality of action. In other words, even if I act correctly, there is a difference between me doing so of my own volition rather than from fear of punishment. From this perspective Bakunin explains:

And even when the State enjoins something good, it undoes and spoils it precisely because the latter comes in the form of a command, and because every command provokes and arouses the legitimate revolt of freedom; and also because, from the point of view of true morality, of human and not divine morality, the good which is done by command from above ceases to be good and thereby becomes evil. Liberty, morality, and the humane dignity of man consist precisely in that man does good

not because he is ordered to do so, but because he conceives it, wants it, and loves it.⁴⁰

Thus, when I act out of fear of the state, I behave as a believer does from fear of God's punishment. Are my actions then that of a moral, rational individual? From the anarchist perspective, this instead makes my behavior akin to an ignorant servant or slave, motivated by fear.

Closely related to this point is the anarchist concern of dependency. The existence of the state lulls society into accepting that it is dependent on it. As Kropotkin explains,

The absorption of all social functions by the state necessarily favoured the development of an unbridled, narrow-minded individualism. In proportion as the obligations toward the state grew in numbers the citizens were evidently relieved from their obligations towards each other.⁴¹

From this perspective, the state's role and dominance becomes self-fulfilling. In a more recent study of the contemporary state and its contradictions, Jens Bartelson argues that "we simply seem to lack the intellectual resources necessary to conceive of a political order beyond or without the state, since the state has been present for long enough for the concept to confine our political imagination."⁴² Thus, our dependence on the state cripples our ability to imagine alternatives to social organization.

For Bakunin and other anarchists, improving the process of choosing our representatives does not resolve these issues. Once an individual delegates authority to someone else, they are no longer equal. While we might imagine some individual trustee relationships in society that seem plausibly acceptable (parents to children, expert assistance in some area), this model falls apart once we invest the trustee with lethal, coercive power over other adults, based on philosophical convictions, rather than facts.

Of course, Bakunin's run-in with the authority of Russian and Prussian autocracy colored his view of the state. For Bakunin the state attempting to serve in its role as the unmoved mover was the blundering, overreaching empire of the nineteenth century. This perception of the state is reflected in the enthusiasm of the nineteenth-century anarchists for science as a foil to the ignorant state of their time. Starting with Proudhon, this current of scientific opposition to the state carries on through much of the radical left including Marx's development of scientific socialism.

However, for the anarchists the realization that the state could co-opt science was also present early on. Kropotkin and others became alarmed at the ability of the state to apply scientific method to coercion, both in domestic policing and in its military efforts against other states.⁴³ The concerns of nineteenth- and twentieth-century anarchists in this area

included permanent, standing armies and the vast files that police agencies were beginning to accrue. As technology enhances the coercive power of the state, the anarchist fear has been of a dwindling space for social and individual independence.

Thus, the anarchists were pioneers in pointing to the latent dangers of technocracy. On the one hand, rule by experts would seem more logical to the anarchist critique of authority than other options. Long ago, Jeremy Bentham hoped to reduce the politics of his time to arithmetic through his philosophy of utilitarianism. Bentham argued that by accepting the goal of pursuing “the greatest good for the greatest number,” social policy could be reduced to a science of calculating costs and benefits.⁴⁴ To this end, Bentham devoted himself to the attempt to quantify human happiness so that it could be measurably compared to the costs of obtaining it.

Despite this effort at a science of politics, Bentham returned to a position not that far removed from Plato’s speculations of *Republic*. Bentham argued that utilitarianism would require the training of “sympathetic observers” to put a number to human happiness and thus make his political calculus possible. Similarly, Plato argued that only the philosophers of his time, with their training in dialectics, would be able to rule correctly, thanks to this expertise.

Yet, in the end rule by expertise falls to the same criticism the anarchists raise against the procedural attempt to legitimize state authority. How could one area provide the expertise needed for all of society? What possible training or education can plausibly prepare an individual for such high office? On the other hand, if we adopt Aristotle’s idea of the wisdom of the multitude, how do we explain a small number of individuals making choices that extend beyond facts into competing moral positions?

State, markets, and political legitimacy

The nation state emerged as a solution to specific problems faced by political elites in the early modern period. After this initial stage of formation, the state was further adapted to resolve subsequent problems such as the tensions created by capitalist industrialization. In the twentieth century the state was also reorganized into more extreme forms, including totalitarian variants to support increasingly complex political ideologies. Thus, the state has been used for varying ends, some progressive and others pernicious.

This long path of state development is shadowed by the arguments used to explain and justify the state. At various stages in the state’s development, these efforts have been more or less successful depending on the use of the state. In the nineteenth century, liberal states offered a progressive development in many policy areas that fit well with ideas of constitutionalism. Later, the social tensions unleashed by nineteenth-century capitalism eroded

the legitimacy of the liberal state. In the twentieth century, totalitarianism destroyed trust in the state with its use of state-directed terror. In our own time, the examples of failed twenty-first-century states in parts of the world show many may simply crave any government that provides basic social order.

From this broader, historical perspective, the concealment of the state is not necessarily a radical turn. Instead, we can view this ideology as simply the latest in a long line of arguments that attempt to justify the state. What does make this latest ideological turn different is the fact that the difficulties of justifying the contemporary state are so acute. In fact, the contradictions of the postmodern state are so pronounced that an ideology of concealing the state becomes the best solution.

What is so difficult about legitimating current states? In part the problem is the latest iteration of the point anarchists made long ago. The state's goal of sovereignty is so closely tied to the coercive function that it undermines the credibility of this human innovation. Thus, the state has evolved with various ideological tools to try and justify this connection. What these various theories of political legitimacy all have in common is their ability to obscure the fact that the state relies on human agency.

For the state to fulfill its domestic function, the ultimate guarantor of all other agreements within a society, it must maintain its sovereignty. For the state to fulfill its international function, the management of relations between societies by speaking with one voice for an entire society, it must maintain its sovereignty. But sovereignty is more than a concept of international law. To maintain it, states must engage in the practice of coercion.

As I discuss in Chapter 4, the coercive capabilities of contemporary states have created a new ideological need. Instruments of coercion and surveillance have grown exponentially in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The technologies now available to the state are so troubling; they effectively puncture our remaining myths about privacy and the limits of effective coercion. This development is another aspect of contemporary politics well served by the ideology of concealing the state.

And for this reason, the ideology that legitimates contemporary states is one of outright concealment. This phenomenon of obscuring the state exploits an area of the anarchist tradition that seems weak: the state's intertwining with markets. We should not be too surprised by weakness in this area of anarchist thought. After all, a long-running debate in contemporary political science is over the link between democracy and the markets.⁴⁵ This debate has become even more complex as the process of "globalization" has forced other states to integrate into the international economic system.⁴⁶

For Kropotkin and other anarchists, the idea of markets was antithetical to democracy since the market requires a sovereign state, with vast coercive power, to make it a reality. Kropotkin, among many others, called for replacing the market and the state with a new federative system of

cooperation. The vision was to replace the domineering unmoved mover of the state with institutions of a more human scale. Kropotkin attempts to sketch how this future can be organized in his *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*. Smaller-scale economic activity would remove the need for the Leviathan state.

However, anarchist thought on how to replace the market, or to restructure labor and work, fails to take into account the ability of the state to recede into the background behind the market. Consider the attempt Kropotkin makes to untangle the state from other concepts in his *The State: Its Historic Role*. On the one hand, Kropotkin warns against the mistake of “the German school, which enjoys confusing state with society.”⁴⁷ On the other hand, Kropotkin also cautions against confusing the state with “government.” As he explains,

The state idea means something quite different from the idea of government. It not only includes the existence of a power situated above society, but also of a territorial concentration as well as the concentration of many functions of the life of societies in the hands of a few. It carries with it some new relationships between members of society, which did not exist before the establishment of the state. A whole mechanism of legislation and of policing has to be developed in order to subject some classes to the domination of others.⁴⁸

Thus, Kropotkin implies here that “the market” is indeed a fiction of the state.

Following Kropotkin as quoted above, we could argue that the market, with its labor and class relations, is part of the state. On the other hand, does that not return us to the fallacy of the German school he describes, conflating aspects of society with the state? Should we turn to an analysis of a true or “real” society that is still present despite the distortions of the state and its pseudo-autonomous free market? In his historical analysis of the state, Kropotkin shows that there have been forms of society prior to the creation of the state and thus, we can return to a community that does not have a state.

What is missing, though, from any of these options is an analysis of how the state can convincingly alienate this part of itself from the public and, yet, at other times suddenly assert its role. In times of market crisis, the state steps forward to reinforce the market. The paramount examples of this dynamic are the Great Depression of the 1930s and the financial crisis of 2008–2009. But aside from these moments of state support and intervention, the dynamic of the twentieth century, which accelerated toward its end, has been for the state to use the market as cover for its withdrawal. Behind the screen of the market, increasingly dominant in daily life, the state can choose where and when to act much more selectively than in the recent past.

How then do we explain the market's relationship to the state? Is the public's perception of the market simply an ideological illusion? This implies that the market is simply part of the state. However, this runs the risk of making the mistake Kropotkin fears and denying that there is anything happening outside of the state: conflating state and society. Despite the state's dominance, regulations, and maintenance, the "market" still seems to contain elements of individual initiative and cooperation. On the other hand, if we attempt to abstract out the state from the market, or a true part of society, then we seem to risk focusing on what Kropotkin warns is "government" rather than the state.

By exploiting this difficult terrain between state, society, and the market, and through the use of the deep and shallow state dynamic described in the previous chapter, the state can choose to conceal itself. As we shall see, the state can even hide its coercive abilities. If we examine the instruments of coercion and surveillance available to contemporary states, then this motivation for concealment becomes clear. The postmodern state's coercive power is so great that it undermines the conventional theories that have legitimated the state's power in the past.

Notes

- 1 The need for state involvement in the interest of social justice is an important point in Nancy Fraser's debate with Axel Honneth over "redistribution vs. recognition." See Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?* (New York: Verso, 2003).
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4

Engines of oppression

There is an additional policy area that has driven contemporary states to adopt the ideology of concealment. As political observers have pointed out for centuries, coercion is a key function of the state. The state supplies the ultimate sanction over all other institutions and organizations in a society. Thus, it becomes the unmoved mover guaranteeing all other promises. The state's coercive power is the instrument that underpins its sovereignty externally and internally. In the international arena, the state's coercive capability is a deterrent to other states. Within a state's borders, the logic of the state's "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force"¹ is that found in Thomas Hobbes: covenants without the sword are meaningless. Yet, in our contemporary time, the state has begun to conceal this role as well.

While the state's monopoly on the use of force has always been a challenge to theories of political legitimacy, the postmodern state has begun to conceal even basic police functions. Why is this a contemporary ideological need? Because, aside from challenges by other nation states, the instruments available to the nation state of today have leapt beyond any plausible opposition. Concealment of the state's coercive power reflects the need to paper over the huge gulf between the capabilities of private citizens to physically protect themselves and maintain an expectation of privacy and the state's invincible instruments of coercion and surveillance.

The technological and organizational changes found in modern military formations and police agencies represent not only quantitative improvements but also a disturbing qualitative change. In the following chapter, I discuss three different trends that support this assertion. The increasing sophistication of surveillance, including our consumer behavior in the "free market," means we face not just a reduction of privacy, but perhaps no longer have it all. The use of new military technologies like drone aircraft makes it much easier for countries, including those with democratic regimes, to wage war with less accountability. Finally, the new technologies of nonlethal force point to a future where states can ignore even the largest protests.

Throughout history, theories of political legitimacy have attempted to reconcile the coercive power of the state with morality. The state's monopoly on violence has always challenged philosophical justification ranging from arguments about the need for order to more subtle theories of "just war." The difficulty of reconciling moral authority with violence now faces an even greater challenge given the absolute coercive power available to the state. This situation leads the state to engage in unusual efforts to conceal its ability. Without this concealment, our collective myths about individual liberty and autonomy would suffer a significant blow.

Yet, the competition in the international state system forces states to develop and refine their instruments of coercion. Just as unilateral disarmament was unthinkable during the Cold War era, so too today, states must pursue new military technology like robotics lest they fall behind others. In addition to the conventional threats of war between states, there is an increasing arms race inside of states for surveillance and policing technologies that can guarantee the state's sovereignty within its borders. Arguably, the state must show other states in the international system that its "homeland" is secure before it can make credible claims to sovereignty. A secure homeland is also a place of secure financial transactions, enforceable business contracts, and lower risks of fraud. Thus, the growing complexity of market transactions has accelerated the need for internal surveillance in order to maintain business confidence.

It is important to consider the concealment of coercion separately since it is tied so closely to the state's core function of maintaining sovereignty. In this sense, the political dynamics surrounding the ideology of concealing the state should be clearer relative to this core area of state activity. Because of the links between coercion and violence, this particular area of state power has always posed the greatest challenge to theories of political legitimacy. Thus, the need for the state to now move to a strategy of concealment in this area also shows us the degree of challenge the contemporary state faces when seeking legitimacy.

Today, the state has acquired technologies that virtually eliminate privacy, ensure that enemies fight only replaceable machines rather than living soldiers, and provide non-lethal force options. The possibilities that these technologies create for controlling the population are very frightening. We can only imagine what would have happened had the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century possessed such capabilities. The engines of oppression now available to the state have undermined past theories of legitimacy to such an extent that the state must resort to an ideology of concealment.

Historical dynamics

One of the most popular galleries in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art is "Arms and Armor." This section is dominated in its center by a display of four complete knight's suits of armor arranged as if mounted for

battle (or perhaps more romantically, a tournament). The original purpose of the medieval suits of armor and weapons in that gallery is softened by their antiquity. Nonetheless, these antiques are illustrative of an important dynamic in history. In the past, there have been periodic stages of state development where its coercive capabilities outstrip any conceivable opposing force aside from other states. Such monopolies on force, not just *de jure* but *de facto*, remained in place until new technological developments, or new forms of social organization, broke this dominance. The knight that we can romanticize today was once a state-of-the-art engine of oppression.

Indeed, the best example of this dynamic is the feudal period, marked by the great gulf between the average person and its soldiery.² Armored knights engaged in a type of warfare that was highly specialized and required enormous up-front investment. No common person could hope to challenge them on the battlefield until their obsolescence, thanks to new technology like Swiss pikes and, eventually, firearms. The other state-of-the-art technology from the feudal period was fortification. The enormous investment required for increasingly sophisticated castles illustrates again the great gulf between individuals and rulers. Thus, an age that knew great disparity between the types of armed force that a state (albeit a weak one) could organize and that available to the commons was also an age of despotism. No mass uprising or communal resistance could hope to challenge the might of armored knights until technology and social change (like urbanization) provided new possibilities.

We then see a period in the sixteenth century and late seventeenth century where commoners, though often led by nobles, were able to disrupt the state. For example, in the principalities of Germany there were the great peasant uprisings inspired in part by new religious ideas.³ In Britain, we see the English Civil Wars toppling the Monarchy and its Cavaliers, thanks in part to the more modern forces of Cromwell's Roundheads. This period marks a transitional stage where the (often-crude) use of new firearms and cannon were disruptive to the received military strategy of the day.

However, the absolutist state that emerged later in Europe was able, through increased capacities like revenue collection, to reassert its distance. If we think about the problem of political philosophy that Hobbes faces in his masterwork, *Leviathan*, it was to logically call for the reestablishment of centralized state power after the English Civil Wars. Why should subjects support the restoration of a monarch after the freedom of the civil war period? For Hobbes, the obvious answer was that this freedom had become the war of all against all, and thus, we are paradoxically safer, and freer, under an absolute law-giving state.

In France, we find a very different political context. Why could the absolutist Sun King hold court at the open and unfortified Versailles? Because his absolutist, centralized state reduced the fortresses of the nobility and disbanded any rival military organization. The idea of a French noble

raising an army that can challenge the King's standing forces becomes an anachronism under Louis XIV. It is not until Louis the XVI that new forms of resistance from an urban population with firearms could threaten the monarchy.

Closer to us in time, the twentieth century gives us the phenomenon of total war and weapons of mass destruction. However, it is also a period marked by revolution and the success of guerrilla warfare. The success of guerrilla tactics is reflected in the resources devoted to the perfection of counterinsurgency doctrine by the major powers. It is also reflected in the varying degrees of failure dealt to the military organizations engaged in such fighting. One can argue that the success of the guerrilla in the twentieth century depends in part on new international norms that oppose excessive civilian deaths. Yet, this same complicating factor, the rules of warfare for the age, has often placed some limits on the technical possibilities of state violence.⁴ As the twentieth century shows, however, states have also often ignored the rules in the pursuit of total war.

From this broad historical perspective, what should we make of our contemporary situation and the armed forces of our states, especially in the developed North (or West, or whatever we want to call wealthier states)? Today, we see engines of war that are once again far beyond the capabilities of ordinary citizens. Indeed, many of these technologies are far beyond the capacity of most other nation states. Instead of being driven by metallurgy and the disciplining or reorganization of people, they are now driven by the investments in and refinements of advanced technology.

Consider that, increasingly, the most developed nations deploy robots on the battlefield. Their opponents are thus forced to engage at a great distance. The current trend points to a future where less developed nations or insurgencies send out armed combatants to engage with machines. In the case of Afghanistan, the United States has developed an entire operational infrastructure for using unmanned drone aircraft. This use of unmanned machines also reduces the visibility of coercion to its home audience. Rather than the disruption to daily life of a soldier deployed far from home, the military is able to send a machine to the battlefield. In the case of the use of drone aircraft in Afghanistan by the United States, it emerged that many of the operators piloting the machines did so in shifts at an Air Force base in the US state of Ohio. This has raised the concern that operators of drone aircraft engage in killing at a much greater psychological distance than traditional soldiering.⁵ Rather than traditional combat, these operators reported to work, controlled the aircraft for a few hours, sometimes discharging weapons, and then commuted home at the end of their shift.⁶

Nonetheless, the United States has remained embroiled in the Afghanistan war for years. From this perspective, one can argue that the guerrilla or "insurgent" still has a lot of fight left in him. What is remarkable, though, is that the United States has maintained forces in Afghanistan for so long

with so little political cost at home. It is on this point that we see the largest impact of shifting the fight from living soldiers to machines. The wear and loss of drone aircraft is invisible to the public compared to the suffering of soldiers. As mechanization replaces soldiers, states that can afford this technology go to war with less political cost.

Besides this deployment of technology, the most advanced nation states have developed all-volunteer armies. The use of such structures greatly reduces the visibility of coercion to the domestic population. Rather than conscripting a broad range of individuals from society for the military, volunteers are largely drawn from particular classes and regions. In the United States, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates expressed concern about this trend in 2010. He noted that for many Americans, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were a distant reality, because a smaller number of career soldiers carried the burden of multiple deployments. Gates also commented on the evidence showing that these volunteers tended to come from similar educational and class backgrounds. Finally, Gates noted that the recruitment of volunteers had fallen into such a regional dichotomy that US military bases were now concentrated in the US Southeast, Southwest, and West. Alternatively, the fewest number of installations are in the Northeast of the country.⁷

What is emerging is a military structure that the United States can deploy with less domestic political cost to the American government.⁸ The consequences of this change are profound for the United States and the world. As Secretary Gates noted in his speech, one of the key trends within this troubling change is the increasing compartmentalization of the military from the rest of American society. Many observers, especially abroad, are puzzled by the small amount of political protest in the United States over the war in Iraq. What this point of view fails to see are the changes that have occurred within the US armed forces and American society since the 1970s. The critical difference is that, unlike the past, today's military practically constitutes a separate social class within American society. As an all-volunteer body, with many life long members, deployment of this professional military force does not create domestic political opposition like the 1960s conscript army that was sent to Vietnam.

Instead, the modern American military relies on a core of full-time military personnel who have chosen the service as a career. Many Americans choose the military career path in an effort to move up in society from poorer backgrounds. Studies of military recruitment consistently show that the service's most significant appeal to young people is its educational benefits. Individuals enlisting in the military after high school earn college tuition credits for each year they serve. While feelings of patriotism are also important to military recruitment, studies consistently show that the military's chief attraction is the social mobility it enables. For example, surveys show that high school students with college-educated parents and

higher grades in school are less likely to enlist. However, traditionally poorer ethnic minorities, specifically African Americans and Hispanics, are more likely to enlist than their white peers. Thus, military service often provides a path to college and social advancement for individuals with less affluent origins in American society.⁹

Although this professional, volunteer force is ethnically diverse, it remains concentrated in specific, cohesive communities. This slice of the American population lives on or near military installations across the United States and learns to expect deployment as a possibility. Divisions within this community do exist, such as that between higher-level officers from the prestigious American military academies and lower-ranking soldiers. However, the neighborhoods near military bases across the United States are some of the most racially integrated in the country. This social cohesion sets these communities apart from others across the United States.¹⁰ In surveys of opinion, military personnel drawn from similar backgrounds in American society and with similar career paths show significant attitudinal differences from civilians. From this perspective, US military personnel live in tight-knit communities that are supportive of soldiers and families, but are also disconnected from the average American's daily life.¹¹

On this point, it is noticeable that the major source of resentment toward the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has been from the National Guard and Reserve members' families. These reservists traditionally support full-time soldiers as needed during emergencies. However, the Iraq conflict has seen many National Guard units deployed for 12 or more months at a time, depending on the unit and its specialization. This group is drawn from a much more inclusive cross section of the citizenry compared to the compartmentalized career soldiers. As a result, deployment of the National Guard has been one of the more politically difficult aspects of the war for both Republican and Democratic presidential administrations.

Further deployments of reserve units would be necessary if the professional army were not also supported by so-called "contract soldiers" serving with US forces in Iraq.¹² Contract soldiers are employees of private American companies under contract with the US Department of Defense. Currently, these contract soldiers are one of the largest contingents of coalition troops in Iraq and are almost equal in size to the British contribution. These mercenary forces perform a broad range of functions that used to be the exclusive responsibility of US troops. The most elastic of these duties, security, allows contract soldiers to fill critical gaps in the overstretched volunteer army. Given this group's monetary motive for being in Iraq, it is not plausible to expect any political pressure from the public over casualties in this group. Indeed, the casualties from the contract forces are largely invisible since the media does not give them the same attention as other battlefield deaths.

Besides these structural changes to the military's composition, improvements in weaponry and battlefield medicine have held American casualties in Iraq

to a minimum. Compared to the Vietnam conflict, fewer American soldiers die on the battlefield. Compared to an even larger number of wars, the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq show that while soldiers are still grievously wounded, the lethality of those injuries has declined remarkably.¹³ Improvements that cost the United States less lives on the battlefield make the overall likelihood of using force more likely. This tragic paradox stems from the simple political calculation that force is easier to apply the lower its cost in American lives. Thus, fewer casualties increase the likelihood of some lives being lost because all deployments are politically cheaper.

This decline in American military deaths through better battlefield medicine also corresponds to an increased effectiveness on the battlefield. With improvements in military weaponry and technology, fewer soldiers can cover larger areas of occupation. Thus, American military forces can occupy a country the size of Iraq, at least tenuously, with a relatively small force of about 160,000 troops. The result of these two trends is fewer forces deployed and fewer casualties from that smaller force.

Another irony of this situation is that improvements in battlefield medicine and weapons technology that save the life of the common American soldier also increase the odds of collateral damage affecting foreign civilians. For example, reliance on cruise missiles and air strikes reduces American military deaths, but this is offset by the likelihood of injuring innocent bystanders. Estimates of Iraqi civilian deaths range in the tens of thousands. Yet, large numbers of Iraqi civilian deaths have so far failed to make a strong impression on the American public. Obviously, the moral logic of distinguishing between the two groups is tragically nearsighted. Even by conservative estimates, the total number of Iraqi civilian deaths since the American-led invasion began is far beyond the number of US military casualties. Besides the immediate suffering these deaths represent for the people of Iraq, this violence has triggered an exodus of the country's middle class and best educated. Thus, Iraq will continue to feel the consequences of this population loss for decades to come.

Nonetheless, American politicians know that what is significant in domestic politics are American military casualties, not the innocents caught in the fray a world away from their constituents. So, as the political costs for using military force come down through fewer battlefield deaths and the deployment of smaller, compartmentalized forces, it is easier for this and future American administrations to use force.

Further technological developments are likely to continue this political trend. For example, recent reports in the news media and scholarly sources reveal that the US Department of Defense is investing heavily in robotics research.¹⁴ This priority is supported by an enthusiastic US Congress, which has consistently increased funding in this area over the last few years. The military already uses robots to help with bomb disposal and other dangerous tasks. Most impressive to date has been the increased use of robotic aircraft, drones, for aerial reconnaissance and remotely controlled air strikes.

Besides robotics, reports of even more bizarre military research, with far-reaching ethical consequences and questions, have appeared in the American and British media. The research arm of the Department of Defense, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), has been experimenting with the remote control of animals. Apparently, one of their largest experiments has involved using sharks for naval reconnaissance. The sharks have electronics implanted in them allowing an operator to steer them toward a chosen target. DARPA has pioneered this line of research because using a living organism, like a shark, saves much time and cost over developing a machine to do the same task (i.e. swim like a shark). The research is attempting to ascertain the feasibility of using sharks and other modified animals for dangerous reconnaissance missions.¹⁵ Similarly, a more mundane but equally bizarre area of research is the possible use of smaller animals such as insects for both spying and small amounts of electrical power generation.¹⁶

The instrumental logic driving these developments in technology and capability raises a fundamental question for a democratic state. If robots, machines, and modified animals make up an increasingly significant element of US fighting forces, then what will happen to the politics of military action?

One obvious point is that the use of machines and other substitutes for human soldiers reduces the political pressure on policy makers. The public's tolerance for casualties is an important calculation when a democracy goes to war. With the increased use of machines, this political pressure can be reduced. Therefore, current trends within the American military establishment may make it much easier for politicians to support future wars. This possibility represents a challenge to long-held assumptions about democracies and war.

In political philosophy, theorists have long assumed that one of the responsibilities of democratic citizens is defense of the state. Modern political scientists, who have been concerned with the public's lack of interest in foreign policy, knew that voters would at least pay attention on issues of war and peace. This traditional assumption is often cited as an important advantage of democracy. Many argue that democratic governments are more pacific since citizen armies will only support wars that are vital for self-defense. Yet, this traditional assumption, already debatable, is made even less plausible by career, volunteer armies and technologies that reduce the human cost to the home front.

Coercion and the market

The state's concealment of coercion is also aided by popular belief in an independent "free" market. For example, in the United States, arguably a country with the greatest freedom of speech protections available, we see

the market aiding state surveillance. It is particularly interesting to consider the case of US telecommunications companies, an area of the economy that is considered world leading. In the fall of 2010, it emerged that private companies were having difficulty quickly responding to government requests for wiretapping surveillance.¹⁷ All of the firms involved quickly agreed to make necessary changes so that wiretaps could be easily “switched on” when requested. Implementation of this feature required close technical collaboration. In fact, officials explained to *The New York Times* that telecommunications companies were never fined for failing to comply with wiretap requests, because this would be disruptive to the close collaboration between their engineers and government technicians. Thus, quiet state action hides behind the myth that free markets, with many private companies providing services, act as a bulwark to state encroachment.

A well-publicized dispute between the Canadian firm RIM and the governments of India and the United Arab Emirates also shows that private companies are rarely bulwarks against the state. In this case, the two governments demanded that RIM turnover encryption “keys” that would allow their security agencies to monitor communications. As the dispute was resolved, by RIM turning over this information to the two states, it emerged that what these governments wanted was the same access that RIM had already provided to governments like the United States and most of Western Europe.¹⁸

In a similar case following rioting in London in 2011, private companies met with British officials to discuss allowing police forces greater access to various social media. The looters and rioters (in some cases) appeared to organize events and share information through social networking services like Twitter. This voluntary meeting with representatives from Facebook, Twitter, and RIM appeared to be a retreat by the government from earlier calls for legislation in this area. However, the paradox of voluntary cooperation from these companies, conducted in a closed-door meeting, is that the government’s surveillance demands have now been met in a less transparent way than legislation would have demanded.¹⁹ This behind-the-scenes agreement with private enterprise also allowed the British government to avoid unpleasant comparisons to authoritarian regimes, like China and Iran, which have also sought such controls. Thus, rather than serving as a bulwark against state intrusiveness, we often find private enterprise enabling the state.

Surveillance links between the state and free-market enterprises are not especially new. In the United States, private industry has co-opted the individual social security number because it is the most reliable form of identification. Now individuals routinely give this number to private companies for access to services and lines of credit. Arguably, this activity has reduced privacy in the United States faster than any government action. A stolen social security number has devastating consequences for individuals.

The media is filled with stories of individuals who suffer this loss spending years “trying to get their life back.”

A similar pattern is emerging in Britain with national identity cards. Although there are objections being raised by traditional civil liberties groups to the introduction of identity cards, another objection is that many private companies will piggyback onto the larger official database.²⁰ The assumption is that various consumer services will begin to use this form of identification. Hence, consumer demand for increasingly sophisticated services, ones that require a company to firmly establish with whom they are dealing, will make this identity scheme increasingly pervasive. Indeed, the British government has speculated that the scheme’s costs may be partially covered by charging private financial companies for access to the registry. It is easy to foresee how this new registry will be used to tie individuals with good credit to financing for various status objects and increasingly more intricate, at a distance, services. This will drive the expansion of the original government project to more and more corners of daily life.

The contemporary state’s outsourcing of coercion is even more surprising. The best example in this case is the reliance of the United States on private military contractors to provide manpower in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the creative fiction of hiring “independent contractors” enables the US military to avoid the public scrutiny, and political fallout, of conscription. In the United States, this has become a standard operating procedure for the country’s armed forces. Along with the enlisted volunteers, various contractors are hired in roles ranging from logistical support to combat.²¹ The latter role typically occurs under the euphemism of “security” work. Overall, there has been a pervasive privatization of armed forces.

Other states have also increasingly outsourced coercion. In Australia, the government has privatized the detention of illegal immigrants. This privatization has come with a long list of abuses and failures by the private companies involved.²² A similar trend toward privatization of prisons can be seen in the United States. In a recent case in Florida, a state judge blocked the looming privatization of twenty-nine state prisons. This instance of the courts blocking privatization was interesting because the judge complained that state legislators hid the legislation for this action within the “hidden recesses” of a budget bill.²³ Thus, market obfuscation can empower the state. Yet, this obfuscation undermines the argument, heard across the spectrum of political rhetoric and academic discourse, that the free market helps to check the power of the state.

The myth of the free market provides another ideological analogue in the United States. The right to bear arms is often defended on the political right as an ultimate check against tyranny. Indeed, many argue that the widespread legal ownership of firearms is proof of the freedom embodied in the American republic. Of course, this ideological position aids the concealment of true coercion. It is absurd to think that the light weapons citizens may

legally own is a counterweight to the vast instruments of coercion possessed by modern, developed states. In the United States, citizens, providing they follow the rules, may legally own semiautomatic assault rifles. However, these are only a threat to other citizens. The contemporary state found in the United States possesses an arsenal that is a galaxy away from that which even the wealthiest and most unscrupulous individual could plausibly obtain. Thus, the argument that the right to bear arms is an ultimate check on state power serves the ideology of concealing the state. This myth obscures the truly invincible nature of contemporary state power.

Privatization of coercion and surveillance increases the concealment of the state as accountability is a step removed from government. We can consider the extraordinary case that emerged in the UK during the winter of 2011. The case against a group of so-called environmental extremists, accused of planning to occupy a privately run power plant, collapsed when it emerged that an undercover police spy had been embedded in various environmental groups for seven years. In court, the role of this individual became a central question as it began to look as though he were an agent provocateur and had clearly breached ethical guidelines.

Yet, even more amazing was the discovery of the agent's organization in Britain. The National Public Order Intelligence Unit is neither a branch of Scotland Yard nor the London Metropolitan Police. Instead, its functions were privatized to a limited company run by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).²⁴ This organization, which operates as a private limited company, had become controversial in 2009 when it emerged that it was under government contract to produce lists of "domestic extremists" for use by the nation's police forces. After receiving bad publicity for putting clearly innocuous, peaceful but perhaps politically active citizens on this list (for which there was no mechanism of appeal and apparently no method to obtain for public scrutiny), the contract was revoked. In 2011, following this further scandal involving ACPO, the government promised a thorough review of the contract.

This is an example of the state concealing itself behind privatization. Once the scandal broke in Britain's national press, the state announced an investigation into the bad behavior of this nongovernmental contractor. Of course, it is still the taxpayer's money being used to spy on citizens. But privatization, justified for the sake of efficiency, makes this activity less accountable to the public and provides a stalking horse for the state. Bad behavior, or shall we say, behavior that would embarrass a democratic state with rule of law, is subcontracted in the name of efficiency. However, if this unpleasant surveillance operation then comes to light, the state can claim ignorance of the methods used, and promise a review. The punishment will obviously be to revoke the lucrative contract issued to the agency by the state.

An even deeper question of accountability emerges from a trend in the United States. In the face of continuing budget cuts, as local and state

governments refuse to increase taxes or fees, many police departments have resorted to unpaid volunteers.²⁵ Although unarmed, these unpaid volunteers are being used to make up for shortfalls in police personnel in a variety of roles. The goal of such programs is to free regular police to handle the most dangerous crimes, while leaving volunteers to follow up on more routine investigatory procedures. However, one must wonder at the unpaid volunteers' motivations. There is also an unresolved question of oversight of such volunteers. If a police officer is found in violation of rules in the field, then he risks a formal review process and sanctions. Unless their behavior is found criminally corrupt, it is unclear what sanctions could be applied to unpaid volunteers other than asking them to stop donating their time.

Surveillance and the market

Arguably, the best example of the market obfuscating the role of the state is in the domain of surveillance. A dynamic of particular importance in developed countries is that products and services, which incorporate surveillance technologies, have become status objects. Increasingly, it is routine for consumers to sign away access to private data in return for "free" communications services. The most sought-after smart phones and tablet computers come now with the convenient features made possible by constant GPS tracking technology. Yet, most scholarly treatments of privacy compare the right to privacy to large policy issues that raise questions of community welfare. The comparison of trade-offs between privacy and security is most common. However, there are other examples too like the trade-offs between public health and the privacy of medical records.²⁶

Although an important dimension of the problem, these discussions of privacy can also obscure some of the social dynamics surrounding surveillance technologies. For example, some scholars are concerned that the consistent framing of the debate between surveillance and privacy as one of trade-offs obscures the political issues surrounding the deployment of surveillance technology.²⁷ The risk is that that when we look at surveillance this way, we lose sight of which economic interests, such as specific firms, benefit from and thus lobby government for additional surveillance.

Therefore, to gain some perspective on this other dynamic connected to surveillance, we should look at privacy differently. We should think about surveillance and privacy as a question of maintaining a collective good. This perspective is harder to find in treatments of the subject.²⁸ Analyzing the threat to privacy as a problem of collective action, similar to that of environmental degradation, highlights the feedback between politics and cultural forces that is missing from current discussions of privacy rights and trade-offs.

For example, Kieran O'Hara has argued that the growing social practice of publishing private photos and information on Facebook and other social networking sites could lead to changes in expectation within courts of law over reasonable expectations of privacy.²⁹ Thus, in a broad look at the growing loss of privacy due to consumer technologies, O'Hara has called privacy a public, rather than an exclusively private, good.³⁰

At first glance, discussing privacy as a collective good may appear counterintuitive. A plausible concern is that if we move away from a rights idea of privacy, then we may risk devaluing the overall status of privacy. However, the nature of privacy as a right, and theorizing about its complexity, is a common discussion in political and social theory. For example, in a classic article on the topic, Judith Jarvis Thomson argued that privacy, while important to individual well-being, is philosophically derived from other first principle rights (such as individual liberty, freedom of association, or the right of controlling one's body).³¹ Thomson argues that in many cases, what appears to be an argument about privacy can, on closer analysis, be reconstructed as an argument about property rights including ownership of our bodies and nonpublic space.

On the other hand, Jeffrey H. Reiman has objected to Thomson's thesis arguing that it risks whittling away at privacy through smaller arguments about where ownership and property rights end. Instead, Reiman introduces an argument containing a perspective closer to that of privacy as a collective good. He argues that:

Privacy is a social practice. It involves a complex of behaviors that stretches from refraining from asking questions about what is none of one's business to refraining from looking into open windows one passes on the street, from refraining from entering a closed door without knocking to refraining from knocking down a locked door without a warrant.³²

Thus, Reiman calls privacy a "complex social ritual" that often involves close contextual analysis when we are making judgments about it. Why do we engage in it? Because Reiman argues it is what confirms to us our individuality.

This example from the field of political theory shows that there is room within discussions of privacy for a collective perspective. The advantage of looking at privacy as a collective good is that an individual's access to privacy can be severely eroded by the choices of others in the marketplace. Thus, claims that the state is not eroding privacy are disingenuous on this point. The state is allowing privacy to disappear by allowing this activity to exist in the "free market."

There are many examples of consumer behavior undermining public goods. For example, we are all aware of the problem of environmental damage

due to consumer choices. The best contemporary examples are consumers choosing inefficient, gas-guzzling SUVs or the growing difficulty of handling the waste generated by our disposable products. In a pattern similar to the aforementioned, our short-term consumer choices of convenience and status are outweighing the long-term collective good of privacy. Just as the status acquired from our large inefficient automobiles wrecks the environment, so too is our rush to be early adopters of new consumer gadgets, always connected to our ever-growing global communications network, which in turn erodes privacy. Thus, on the surface, the loss of privacy due to new consumer technologies seems similar to other collective action problems such as the environment.

In both cases, consumer choices focused on short-term results eventually lead to larger, pernicious changes. However, one key difference is that our environmental resources and thresholds are fixed in a way that privacy is not. We can imagine privacy as a resource, but one that is much more flexible and subject to altering perceptions over time. A casual look at the breadth of available historical, philosophical, and legal scholarship on the topic makes this clear.³³ Thus, attempts to define a threshold of damage or proof of erosion are much more difficult here than with environmental concerns.

Similarly, identifying state neglect in this area becomes more difficult than in the environmental case. Many commentators devote significant attention to the risks of state surveillance and the subsequent risk of creating “Big Brother.” What is much more difficult to criticize is the state’s role in market activity that erodes privacy. For example, many individuals are aware that choosing a large polluting automobile has a negative environmental impact. However, it is much more difficult to show that consumer demands (including individual subscriptions) for services that track one’s mobile phone position reduce everyone’s privacy. The common belief is that it is up to the individual to weigh the trade-offs between the benefits of new services and ceding some level of privacy. As a consequence, the state neglects to protect the commons, including our collective level of privacy.

Furthermore, in the case of environmental damage due to large cars and oversized homes in the United States, there are less harmful options available such as smaller, more fuel-efficient cars and homes. In the case of privacy and surveillance technology, there is no small car option. Instead, the technology being sold inherently reduces this good through the service it provides. The only alternative to this service and convenience is to do without. Thus a more parallel example from environmental concerns would be the waste generated by bottled water in recent years. In the developed world, clean tap water is widely available. So the product of bottled water is marketed as one of convenience and status (most bottled waters claim to be of better taste, health, unique sources, etc.). The best alternative to bottled water’s long-term environmental hazards is to avoid the product all together.

Many surveillance technologies are now tied in with required social practices or, at least, social expectations. For example, mobile phones are now not only a convenience but a “necessity.” The argument is that possession of a cell phone provides one with a safety net in daily life. In response to consumer perceptions that some elderly users were uncomfortable with the technology, and that many children were not prepared for an open link to the outside world, the industry has responded with a simplified phone. In addition to being very simple to operate, this class of phone will only dial out to numbers pre-programmed into it. It will also only receive calls from pre-programmed numbers.³⁴ The fact that our culture adjusts to these changes is apparent to anyone who has recently attempted to find the once-common, now close to extinction, public pay phone.

Another familiar example is the use of credit cards for air travel, car rentals, and hotel rooms. Initially, individuals used credit cards for their convenience when traveling. Yet, anyone attempting to pay cash for these services will gain first hand experience of the pressure to adopt these new “standards.” What was once a convenience is now considered the only legitimate method of obtaining these services. Attempts to opt out and use cash for travel arrangements are likely to cause suspicion and perhaps even trigger surveillance. For example, anyone attempting to purchase an airline ticket in the United States or EU using cash is investigated by state security services.

In addition, the security and convenience of widely accepted credit cards has led us to accepting the constant monitoring of our transactions. Thus, our consumer demands for safety have led most lenders to develop constant scrutiny of our financial activity for suspicious activity. For example, a sudden trip overseas or even using your card in a new neighborhood can trigger a red flag. Anyone who has in recent years broken their usual profile or pattern of behavior is familiar with a sudden phone call from their credit card’s security office or even the cancellation of their credit card. While this “service” provided by various financial institutions can be marketed as meeting a demand from customers for security, its usefulness for state surveillance is intrinsic.

Here again, the comparison to environmental concerns and consumer choices is highly relevant. Arguably, the best inroads against wasteful environmental choices have been the development of marketable alternatives. For example, marketing has created a certain status associated with owning a hybrid automobile rather than a large SUV, or the shift in more exclusive restaurants back to tap water rather than polluting, branded bottled waters.

In the case of surveillance requirements and technologies within the market, we do not find such options. Instead, the only way we can access many daily services is through participation in these surveillance practices. As two justices of the US Supreme Court recently noted, the idea of individuals giving up privacy voluntarily (by turning over information to a third party

with disclosure) is increasingly questionable.³⁵ The justices pointed out that many consumers instead are likely to have a reasonable expectation of privacy when using services like cell phones (despite the phone company having a list of all of the numbers they call and the user's physical location) or toll payment devices in their car (which record the date and time of one's travel).

The state ultimately benefits from the collection of this vast amount of information. Although it can hide behind the argument that it is individual choice made in a free market full of data, realistically, many of us have little choice but to participate. If we wish to travel, then we must surrender personal details. If we wish to communicate using recent technologies, then we must surrender more personal details. When the state now focuses on one of us, it can (in democratic systems) take out a warrant to obtain this treasure trove from "private" companies. Thus, the idea of an independent market enables the state to conceal its growing ability to maintain surveillance over everyone in ways never possible before.

The nonlethal future of coercion

What is the future of concealing coercion? Currently, a number of governments are developing nonlethal weapons. The stated goal of developing such weapons is to provide police and military forces with a more humane use-of-force option. As one observer has pointed out, the US military began serious research into such devices after its intervention into Somalia in the 1990s.³⁶ Since that time research and discussion of the usefulness of such devices has continued in the US military establishment and subsequently spread internationally.

This expansion of interest has spawned a growing policy and strategy literature about nonlethal technologies. The majority of this literature focuses on two main areas. One is the possibility nonlethal options present to first-world military forces when conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian missions or interventions. Another is growing commentary over the criteria and testing necessary to deem a weapon non- or less than lethal.³⁷

In addition to more practical and immediate questions surrounding the ethical use of such devices, the development of non-lethal force technologies also challenges many traditional assumptions of political theory. One of these core assumptions is the relationship between violence and power. Consider Hannah Arendt's classic distinction between power and violence:

one of the most obvious distinctions between power and violence is that power always stands in need of numbers, whereas violence can manage without them because it relies on instruments.... The extreme form of power is all against one, the extreme form of violence is one against all. And this latter is never possible without instruments.³⁸

Yet, we are seeing today radical technological change in the “instruments” that states can now deploy. How will these new technological instruments change this dynamic of power and violence?

Consider the great upheavals of the late 1980s in Eastern Europe. In the case of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, hundreds of thousands demonstrated in the streets for change. The regimes had only two choices. They could use deadly force and disperse these protests by raking the streets with gunfire and stay in power, but with nothing left except coercion. If they did not shoot, it would be a signal of the regime’s abdication. China in 1989 was the exception that proved the rule; there the authorities faced throngs but were willing to shoot and remain in power. However, even in that case we see that the party had to adjust its line in the wake of this ultimatum. The party survives, but with economic concessions that have fueled rapid social change.

What if these regimes had possessed the technology to break up 100,000 demonstrators without using lethal force? What difference would this technology have made back in 1989 when the bankrupt communist regimes of Eastern Europe were told by thousands of people that their time had passed? Could such instruments provide an escape for the state from the logic of power and violence that Arendt describes? One of the unexplored implications of nonlethal force is that it allows contemporary states to wriggle out of this dilemma. Thousands or tens of thousands of us may mass in future, but the state can force us to disperse in a more humane way, removing this moral ultimatum.

In 2010, there was a curious standoff in Stuttgart, Germany, between a broad group of residents and the federal government over plans for redevelopment. The issue was over plans to demolish the city’s 100-year-old train station to make way for a new high-speed rail project. The plan included clearing hundreds of trees from a nearby park much beloved by residents. The local population argued that they never fully understood what the redevelopment involved until the demolition had begun. They resorted to direct demonstrations to stop it.

The resort to direct action was necessary, according to resident leaders, because they were told the plans and development were too far along to stop. Once again, the state argued that its hands were tied. The standoff took a critical turn in the last week of September 2010. Riot police using water cannon ultimately broke up demonstrators attempting to protect the trees. The pictures of wounded demonstrators embarrassed the national government. These pictures triggered a march of 25,000 Stuttgart residents whose cry was “shame” on the government for such heavy-handed tactics.³⁹ This led to the chancellor herself intervening and calling for a halt to the project. Wounding citizens of the Federal Republic for protecting trees was clearly a step too far in support of train station redevelopment.

Similarly, the attempt by the French government to increase the minimum retirement age from 60 to 62 was met with massive protests in the fall of

2010. A growing strike led to an increase in transportation disruptions, and that in turn began to trigger shortages in fuel, food, and other goods in France. By October 19, police estimates had close to half a million French citizens demonstrating throughout the country.⁴⁰ The police acted with great restraint in the face of this resistance. Indeed, could the state justify using force against demonstrators over the issue of raising the retirement age by two years? Is it defensible to employ force against the citizenry in the name of pension reforms?

In the future though, the use of coercion by the police can be concealed in such situations. Of course, we have many historical examples of new technologies leading to less-than-benevolent outcomes. In her work referred earlier, Arendt emphasizes that violence requires instruments and how these instruments are applied is up to the human imagination. From this perspective, one could argue that the new nonlethal technologies are quantitative improvements on older crowd-control technologies like tear gas and water cannons.

In contrast, the technologies now being developed by a number of nation states not only are quantitative improvements but also signal a qualitative change. This qualitative change is linked to another core assumption of political theory that these technologies challenge: the proportionality of force.

As Michael Walzer discusses in his classic study of the morality of war, a key idea of just applications of force is that coercion should be proportionate to the threat. In the case of deterrence, just use of force would suggest that enough coercion is applied to deter the act.⁴¹ From the perspective of military and police research, there is an argument that nonlethal technologies expand the spectrum of responses available to soldiers and police so that a more proportionate level of force can be applied to a situation. This is especially the case in situations of asymmetric conflict where the military faces combatants hidden among civilians.⁴² On the other hand, some observers have commented on the challenge these technologies present to traditional theories of just war.⁴³ This challenge includes the fact that by disrupting traditional ideas of proportionality and discrimination on the battlefield, nonlethal weapons may lead to more civilians being affected by a conflict.⁴⁴

There is a pressing domestic political concern in states developing a nonlethal capacity. Here, we need to consider the purpose of these new machines. In the United States, the Active Denial System (ADS) technology is a microwave that creates a burning sensation at a considerable distance. In Israel, the technology behind the “skunk” is an odor foul enough to trigger physical flight. These devices cause an individual otherwise committed to holding his or her ground to flee. Is this the technology needed to break up a riot or looting? Are individuals in a riot committed to standing and holding ground in the face of police force and current crowd-control methods?

Instead, the new nonlethal technologies currently under development are instruments capable of forcing even the most committed individuals to break and run due to uncontrollable physical reactions. These technologies are designed beyond what is needed to break up an atomistic, rioting crowd. Instead, they hold the possibility of dispersing crowds pulled together because of higher ideological causes or political grievances. Rather than riot control, nonlethal force on this scale represents a new instrument of social control. It provides the state with a way to break up mass crowds that are drawn together for a purpose and highly motivated to stand their ground. On this point, there are an increasing number of alarmist newspaper and more popular journalistic articles warning about the future limits of protest and civil disobedience.

Possible judgments about the proportionality of this coercion are disrupted because nonlethal technologies of social control can conceal the use of coercion. What lasting effects are there from the US microwave device, or Israel's "skunk"? None, and that is precisely the point of these devices. There will be no visible body count on the streets or casualties showing up in hospital. Arguably, one can say that these technologies do not entirely obscure the deployment of coercion. People will still know that the crowd-control machines were deployed. Yet, how are we to judge the proportionality of this much less visible form of coercion? To what extent can we argue that a disproportionate amount of coercion has been used when there is no obvious physical harm left behind?

If these devices are being developed for larger-scale social control, then the evaluation of harm and proportionality must turn to the intent of the state deploying this coercion and the individuals being controlled. Rappert observes in his study of nonlethal weapons that the deployment of such technology by police against civilians becomes highly contextual:

Here, questions about the legitimacy of force tie in with assumptions about the identity of those taking part in "public order" events and about their motivations.⁴⁵

Thus, in the absence of obvious physical harm we will need to develop a different rubric for evaluating the proportionality of nonlethal coercion that includes some measure of intent.

If these concerns seem overblown then perhaps an example of this logic from another theater is in order. On a smaller social scale, we can see the moral implication of nonlethal force on display in the use of conducted energy devices (CEDs). The best-known manufacturer of such devices is Taser International. In fact the brand is so well known it has entered popular speech with a verb "tasing." The website for Taser International provides links to various publications, both scientific and legal, in an effort to show that the products are indeed nonlethal and are an alternative to firearms.

The widespread availability of this device to police departments has allowed police a more acceptable first use of force option. In the past when confronted with the choice of using deadly force or more traditional methods of physical coercion, police were more likely to err on the side of restraint. Now, the quick resort to “tasing” individuals and the frequency with which these devices are being used is documented by organizations like Amnesty International.⁴⁶

There is also growing commentary in the UK about the resulting change to policing there. Famous for not carrying deadly weapons, the recent decision to arm thousands of police in the UK with tasers has caused some observers to speculate about whether this signifies a more profound shift in social relations between police and public. Thus, with the nonlethal technology of tasers, we already see that coercion is more likely to be used and that it is difficult to gauge the proportionality of this coercion.

Concealing invincibility

The future refinement of technologies like nonlethal force and the continued privatization of police and armed forces are improving the state’s ability to conceal its use of coercion. As democratic accountability declines and the might of the state becomes practically invincible, the ideological pressure for concealing the state grows. The state faces similar pressure in other areas of policy, but none touches on the state’s core function of maintaining sovereignty like coercion. At the same time, justifying the state’s monopoly on coercion has always been the most challenging area of theories of political legitimacy. As the coercive power of the state grows exponentially, this tension has driven the state to the ideological solution of concealment.

Arguably, there is an even deeper reason for the state’s concealment. Sovereignty is a goal that can never truly be satisfied. In her broad discussion about war and violence, Butler describes the impossibility of the “sovereign subject.”⁴⁷ She laments that violence is “justified” or “legitimated”

even though its primary purpose is to secure an impossible effect of mastery, inviolability, and impermeability through destructive means.⁴⁸

In other words, the goal of sovereignty, whether for an individual subject or for a nation state, is never ending. To remain the unmoved mover, capable of guarantees and contracts that recede into the future, the state must constantly expand and refine its efforts to remain in control.

Wendt and Duvall have gone to extraordinary lengths in an analysis of sovereignty to think about its limits.⁴⁹ They argue that for the contemporary state,

power flows primarily from the deployment of specialized knowledges for the regularization of populations, rather than from the ability to kill. But when such regimes of governmentality are threatened, the traditional face of the state, its sovereign power, comes to the fore,⁵⁰

Many of us enable this ideological obfuscation through our own behavior. Thinking about the vast power wielded by the contemporary state is unsettling.

In the developed world many of us have grown used to relying on passwords to unlock our computer files, credit card monitoring to protect us from identity theft, and home surveillance systems to guard our property. However, there is an important difference beneath our day-to-day experiences of security. Our computer passwords, identity theft insurance, and home security systems are all efforts to protect our private property and us, as individuals, from other citizens. In contrast, the state has the tools and the authority to do whatever it likes to us. None of the tools available to the private citizen can defeat the powerful instruments and unlimited resources of the state. Events that reveal this stark difference and expose the older sovereign face of the state, with its link to coercion and violence, are unsettling.

Yet, how could any of us survive without this protection? Our longing for the security of our property and ourselves logically leads us to shelter beneath the state. The risks posed by other states also lead us to form and maintain the military power of our own. This paradoxical relationship is clearly described by Butler,

To be protected from violence by the nation state is to be exposed to the violence wielded by the nation state, so to rely on the nation state for protection from violence is precisely to exchange one potential violence for another.⁵¹

In many ways, the iron-clad logic of Hobbes' Leviathan is still with us. We surrender ourselves to the state to escape from all the risks we face without it.

Another unpleasant fact is that individuals can benefit from immediate increases in "governmentality." This somewhat loose example of academic jargon refers to the increase in the ability of the state to govern society. Thus, as the infrastructure of the state improves, it can dramatically increase or reinforce the state's ability to regulate society. In this sense, the vast security and surveillance of the state enables many things to happen.

For example, consider the project in India to register its entire population into a new identity database. Many privacy advocates fear the long-term consequences of registering every individual's fingerprints and retina pattern with the government. At the same time, many anti-poverty organizations have long sought a new method of providing the poor in India with a

reliable form of identification.⁵² With this reliable identification, poorer Indians, often in rural locations, will be able to access government services and obtain credit that was impossible before. The Indian government also expects that it will allow for greater mobility within the country, enabling workers to migrate away from home villages (and the local government registry there), without losing access to government services. Thus, the Leviathan state does in some ways empower individuals within its borders. In India, a piece of identification recognized anywhere opens up many new possibilities.

Yet, there is an important difference between our contemporary Leviathans and Hobbes'. In Hobbes' world, there was still the idea that the individual remained free wherever the law is silent. Hobbes could never imagine the size and comprehensiveness of modern governments. The reach of contemporary economic regulation and the depth of surveillance that citizens tolerate (from the "private sector" and the state) are obviously beyond the scope of what any observer could imagine from even a few decades ago, much less Hobbes' time. Explaining why any entity should have this absolute power becomes more difficult as that power becomes invincible. Thus, our contemporary ideological turn is to attempt to conceal the state even here, in its traditional domain of sovereignty and coercion.

The engines of oppression available to the contemporary state have advanced quantitatively to the point that a qualitative change has occurred. The unsettling invincibility of developed states' arsenals and surveillance technologies are a challenge to traditional methods of legitimating state sovereignty. By concealing these facts behind the fiction of an autonomous market and the myth of individual choice (and possible individual resistance), we continue to enjoy the shelter of state protection while denying this disturbing trend.

Returning to an earlier theme of this chapter, there have been other periods in history where a huge gulf existed between the military capabilities of the state and the individual. As discussed earlier, the medieval period saw an overwhelming difference between a peasantry and mounted knights. Despite periodic bursts of violence in the countryside and more organized uprisings, the peasantry was no match for the coercive powers of the state. We too live in an age where the state's military capabilities have qualitatively leaped beyond the plausible opposition of society. This raises an interesting question, are we similar in any other ways to the peasants of the past?

Notes

- 1 Of course this is a reference to Max Weber's famous definition of the state. "A compulsory political organization with continuous operations (*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*) will be called a 'state' insofar as its administrative staff

- successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order.” Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), p. 54.
- 2 For a concise overview, see Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 391–4.
 - 3 Although these peasant uprisings have often been commented on by more radical theorists, and sometimes forced to fit Marxist class analysis, the millenarian element and religious commitment of those involved deserves more attention than it often receives. For a good discussion of this point, see Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (New York: Verso Press, 2010), pp. 68–92.
 - 4 For a wide-ranging discussion, see Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
 - 5 John Sifton, “Drones, A Troubling History,” *The Nation*, vol. 294, no. 9, February 27, 2012, pp. 11–15.
 - 6 Mark Mazzetti, “The Drone Zone,” *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, July 8, 2012, p. MM32.
 - 7 Speech by Secretary Robert Gates at Duke University, September 29, 2010. Available at: <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4691>
 - 8 See my earlier discussion in Jason Royce Lindsey, “America and the New Dynamics of War,” *Peace Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, April 2007, pp. 255–60.
 - 9 Eighmey, John, “Why Do Youth Enlist: Identification of Underlying Themes,” *Armed Forces and Society*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2006, pp. 307–28.
 - 10 David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal, “America’s Military Population,” *Population Bulletin*, vol. 59, no. 4, December 2004.
 - 11 Ole R. Holsti, “A Widening Gap between the U.S. Military and Civilian Society? Some Evidence, 1976–1996,” *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 3 (winter, 1998–1999), pp. 5–42.
 - 12 The pioneering study of this new development is P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).
 - 13 Atul Gawande, “Casualties of War—Military Care for the Wounded from Iraq and Afghanistan,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 351, no. 24, 2004, pp. 2471–5.
 - 14 For scholarly studies, see George A. Bekey, *Autonomous Robots: From Biological Inspiration to Implementation and Control* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); and Alex Roland and Philip Shiman, *Strategic Computing: DARPA and the Quest for Machine Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
 - 15 See Susan Brown, “Stealth Sharks to Patrol the High Seas,” *The New Scientist*, no. 2541, March 1, 2006, p. 30; and satirically, Tom Engelhardt,

- “Shark and Awe,” *Salon*, March 10, 2006. Available at: <http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2006/03/10/sharks/> Nonetheless, this odd line of research is derived from serious science. See, for example, Shaohua Xua, Sanjiv K. Talwar, Emerson S. Hawley, Lei Li, John K. Chapin, “A Multi-Channel Telemetry System for Brain Microstimulation in Freely Roaming Animals,” *Journal of Neuroscience Methods*, vol. 133, nos. 1–2, February 2004, pp. 57–63.
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5

A postindustrial peasantry?

The contemporary state possesses practically invincible instruments of coercion and surveillance. The state's weapons and machines are enormously expensive and their operation requires specialized training. In this sense, the possibility for individuals to resist the state resembles the condition of the peasantry of an earlier age. For the peasant living in medieval Europe, it was almost inconceivable to challenge armored knights or besiege a fortified castle. Such weapons and fortifications represented an unimaginable (for the peasant) investment of wealth, specialized training, and more than anything else time spent on their development rather than agricultural labor.

Later, the peasants of the early modern period did rebel, sometimes with temporary success. Their inspiration ranged from local injustices to new forms of religious fervor. However, all of the peasant uprisings from this period share a similar fate: they were eventually crushed by the superior organization of the state. Kropotkin vividly describes the outcome of the sixteenth-century German Peasants' War:

And it was only by the stake, the wheel, and the gibbet, by the massacre of a hundred thousand peasants, in a few years, that royal or imperial power, allied to the papal or reformed church—Luther encouraging the massacre of the peasants with more virulence than the pope—that put an end to those uprisings which had for a period threatened the consolidation of the nascent states.¹

The power gap between the German princes and their peasants was not as great as in the medieval period, but still decisive nonetheless.

Today, the citizens of the most developed, postmodern states inhabit an eerily similar context. Instead of armored knights and fortified castles, drone aircraft, vast intelligence agencies, and professional standing armies loom over the contemporary citizen. As with earlier periods of history, these

coercive instruments represent a level of investment far beyond what any individuals could possess. The idea that individuals could somehow resist such powerful states is not credible. The power gap between individuals and contemporary states instead resembles a much earlier age. This observation raises an interesting question. If we resemble the early modern peasantry in this aspect of our relationship to the state, then what other parallels are there?

The usefulness of an analogy

Comparing contemporary individuals to the pre- and early modern peasantry may seem facetious. We currently live in societies with increasingly complex economic interactions linked by accelerating technology. The literacy levels of contemporary societies are a world away from that found in even the most developed countries prior to the late nineteenth century. Both the physical and social mobility offered by today's global economy are beyond what was available in even the early to mid-twentieth century. Thus, the idea of peasant cultural characteristics surviving or being replicated in the contemporary developed states seems like an inflammatory slogan rather than a reasoned critique.

Furthermore, it risks distracting us from thinking about the “real” peasants of our time in the developing world. Peasants are still engaged in subsistence agriculture in many parts of the world. We should also remind ourselves of the “peasant-like” conditions endured by immigrant labor living at the margins of the richest societies ever known. In this sense, comparing the living conditions of individuals in the most developed countries to peasants seems grotesque.

However, what we are considering is the possibility of a *postindustrial* peasant, living in postmodern states. Other observers have proposed this characterization because of the contradictions posed by postindustrial economies. For example, Leicht and Fitzgerald have used the idea for a broad analysis of the situation faced by the middle class in the United States.² Particularly striking to them are the high levels of debt US middle-class consumers take on, evoking memories of the always-indebted peasantry of early modern Europe. As they explain,

Stagnant incomes, rising taxes, the pocketing of productivity gains by the corporate elite, a surplus of available credit, globalization, privatization, and labor market changes have altered what it means to be part of the American middle class. This combination of factors has produced a “post-industrial peasant”—someone who is so in debt that those to whom they owe money (and the employers and economic elites who provide the investment and consumption capital for the system) control them.³

Leicht and Fitzgerald attribute continuation of this situation, in part, to the dominance of neoliberalism and supply-side economics in the United States. However, they are also critics of the culture associated with modern consumerism.

While structural questions such as the organization of labor are important for the analysis presented here, to a large extent, the possibility of a postindustrial peasantry is a cultural question. We know that the living conditions of individuals in the developed world are much better than those found in poorer countries. Stark statistics on child mortality and life expectancy suffice to show that the conditions we are looking at in the most developed countries are an order of magnitude better for human thriving compared to poorer societies. Nonetheless, this fact does not rule out the possibility that cultural similarities between the two examples exist.

Like the peasantry in an earlier age, citizens in many contemporary political systems feel little connection to the state and believe they are self-reliant. In public opinion surveys, individuals in the United States overwhelmingly identify themselves as middle class despite huge differences in wealth. Hostility toward welfare is another common finding of public opinion surveys in the United States. Despite the fact that a majority of individuals receive some sort of benefit ranging from farm subsidies, student loans, and mortgage guarantee programs to traditional welfare benefits, many citizens insist that they are self-reliant.

The most extreme outcomes of this pattern in the United States have been the rise of the gated community and incorporated suburbs that maintain separate police, schools, and other services. The appeal of such neighborhoods is that they provide better and more efficient services than traditional, local government. An echo of this desire for “self-sufficiency” can be found in the archaeological evidence of medieval peasant households. The long-term trend of that era was for peasant homes to become more elaborate (with the introduction of subdivided rooms) and attempts to enclose a private lot.⁴ In both cases, the desire for independence is reflected in these attempts to build a freestanding home.

Of course, today’s perception of independence and self-reliance in the American suburbs is highly ironic given that it is enabled by the state. In the United States, the state-backed mortgage lenders Freddie Mac and Sallie Mae (though quasi-independent) have funded the vast majority of mortgages across the country. Without government support from these two institutions, few individuals in the United States could have obtained financing for their suburban homes. Thus, the concealment of the state here carries a great deal of irony. Many suburban homeowners, skeptical about state services, would never have obtained their property without the vast infrastructure and state subsidies the US government provided. However, consciousness of this close dependency on the state is rare. Instead, the concealment of the state allows

individuals to ignore the question of why state subsidies are increasingly necessary for citizens to be able to afford homes.

For different reasons, the world of the early modern peasant was also very far removed from the state. The key demand of the peasantry across cultures has been ownership of the land, and thus, an end to rents. For the peasantry the idea of ownership of land on which they did all of the work was always an alien, imposed law. Thus, the state was an impediment, a force supporting the landowner's claims. What was missing from the peasant's conception of the state was an understanding of what the state could be doing for the peasant. The possibility of influencing the state, or using it to redistribute the land, remained an almost religious hope.

In both cases, the state is something far removed from daily consciousness. Even in cases where the state provides some sort of assistance, there is little awareness of this link to authority. Instead, the state is viewed as a probable impediment. For the early modern peasantry, the state upholds the artificial claims of landlords to the fields the peasant maintains. If only the rents could end, then the peasant would be free. For the postmodern citizen, the state is suspected of always playing the role of a taxing, regulating, interference. Thus, if you can afford it, a gated community with private services is a better solution. If only the state would get out of the way, then people could keep their hard-earned money and pursue their interests in the market.

The idea of using the state, or changing its direction for the benefit of the peasantry, seems less realistic to contemporary citizens as well. For the early modern peasant, the hope that the situation would change was an almost mystical one. For example, in the Russian empire, generations of peasants hoped that the Tsar would one day grant the mythical "black reparation" giving the land to the peasants. The firm belief of many was that the divine Tsar would already have done so if not for the false council and corruption of his advisers.

Contemporary citizens are obviously much more sophisticated, yet what are their hopes for public policy? Increasingly fewer individuals belong to political parties in the West. In Great Britain, the numbers are particularly striking, "from respective figures of around three million and one million 50 years ago, Conservative and Labour membership is down to around 177,000 and 194,000; the Lib Dems are at 50,000, down from 100,000 20 years ago."⁵ The increasing expense of elections in the United States, and the huge amounts of money used to influence them, appears to be fueling cynicism about government there. In Spain and Greece, vast demonstrations opposing austerity policies have occurred. When these austerity policies are nonetheless implemented, most Greeks and Spaniards logically conclude that they have little influence over public policy. Why should such disaffected citizens hope for much at all from their distant governments?

Thus, the idea of describing contemporary citizens as a postindustrial peasantry is not far-fetched if our concern is examining individuals'

relationship with the state. In this way, the comparison of contemporary citizens to a peasantry serves a useful purpose. The analogy provides some insight into the current cultural dynamics that form the wider context for the ideology of concealing the state. This is an important source of support for the ideology's success since contemporary culture works against the creation of any political challenges to the state's concealment. For many citizens, the state is a remote entity that is perceived either as not having much influence on their "real life" problems or as a distant regime that fails to listen to everyday people's complaints.

Cultural similarities

A key characteristic of any peasant society is the lack of mobility.⁶ Depending on the society (and historical period) under consideration, this can mean either social mobility or an actual lack of physical mobility. However, the two are closely connected since individuals who are unable to move cannot seek out opportunities elsewhere.⁷ With peasant communities of the past and present, financial burdens and complex agreements tied the peasant to the site of his agricultural work. The web of debt the peasant enters keeps him rooted to this spot despite the possibility of better opportunities elsewhere.

How different is this from the fate of many current working-class people in the developed world who cannot afford to move? In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, many mortgage holders found their complex financial arrangements now holding them hostage to a particular place. For many their home was no longer worth what they borrowed, or they simply could not sell a home in a market flooded with repossessed (and thus marked down in price) properties. In a complex postindustrial economy, success depends in large part on one's participation in an increasingly national, indeed global, labor market. Following the great recession of 2008, the inability to move, due to high levels of housing debt, has crippled the flexible postindustrial labor market in many developed countries. The nimble, ever-changing employment scene associated with the most developed countries demands a high level of individual mobility. Job seekers that cannot keep up are quickly left behind.

On a deeper level, there is evidence for declining social mobility in the most developed countries. Compared to even a generation ago, fewer individuals are likely to leave the class they are born into. Although various measures show that economic growth worldwide has increased overall incomes, the gap between the richest and poorest has also grown. This increase in extremes began in 1980 following a period from the 1930s in which the income gap closed worldwide.⁸ In the most developed countries, part of the explanation for this change has been the loss of manufacturing jobs. This

form of work provided an important career track for the middle class in the twentieth century. Now in our postindustrial economies intergenerational social mobility has declined.⁹

Another surprising parallel to the peasant past can be found in the sophistication of contemporary marketing and advertising. In the peasant world of early modern Europe, one's social status was visibly obvious through dress, food, and credit the peasant received, or not, from local merchants. In our world, past purchases and even the things we look at on the Internet can affect what sort of offers we receive and whether some companies bother to advertise to us at all.¹⁰ As the sophistication of this technology increases, we may find that the sorts of services we can easily access are predetermined by this filtering. Thus, in a technological parallel to the past, it is increasingly difficult to pass ourselves off above our station in the consumer hierarchy; we simply don't have access to the same goods and services.

Furthermore, contemporary and historical experience contradicts the assumption that a peasant population is incompatible with a modern industrial, or postindustrial, economy. In the case of Russia in the nineteenth century, we see industrialization adapting to the conditions of a peasant workforce.¹¹ Obviously, too, we find populations in the developing world today who can be described as peasants despite the effects of contemporary global capitalism. The existence of more modern economic organization and technology does not eliminate the possibility of individuals living in conditions of unredeemable debt, low or nonexistent mobility, and convoluted agreements over labor that characterize peasantry.

For example, some observers have pointed to the intriguing similarities between contemporary society and feudalism raised by the technology that makes our society so advanced. David Carr has raised the point that many social network companies and Internet content sites derive much of their value from the contributions users provide for free.¹² Yet, these contributors, much like peasants of an earlier age, only obtain the use of "space" given to them. Few of us own part of Facebook or Twitter, yet we are allowed to use the services for free in return for the content we provide, while the owners reap profits. Specifically, the profits for these services lie in advertising to a large audience, drawn by the content we all create.

Interestingly, in opposition to this monetization of Internet activity we find the open-source software movement. This call for creating alternative, noncommercial computing resources is oddly similar to the calls for empowering labor in an earlier age. In both cases, the call is to give away the tools and resources needed for productive labor through cooperative ventures rather than for profit ones.

Nor is education an absolute, objective remedy for peasant-like conditions. Increasingly in the United States, there is concern over an impending student debt "crisis." Some commentators worry that this area

of finance is as unsustainable as the real estate bubble that collapsed in the United States beginning in 2008.¹³ In an effort to provide guaranteed access to this credit, the US government has created increasingly draconian rules regarding this financing. Federal legislation prevents student loan debt from being forgiven by individuals taking personal bankruptcy. Individuals failing to pay back their student loans can have their wages garnered and be ordered to turn over financial information so that an amount to be paid from each paycheck is determined. Such modern arrangements to provide access to higher education include a level of oversight and absolute, unredeemable debt that seems more akin to the one-sided arrangements of a peasantry.

The experience of daily social interaction in contemporary societies also bears remarkable similarities to the peasant's world. The peasantry of the past was connected, intensely, to a local community.¹⁴ Inside that world, privacy was rare to absent under the surveillance of all. It was also a sphere in which information, and rumor, spread very quickly though locally.

Many of us use communications technologies that are beyond the imagination of early modern peasants. However, with this technology we lose much of our privacy and it empowers the spread of wild rumors and conspiracy theories. Social networks like Facebook and micro-blogging services like Twitter lead many of us to reveal our daily lives in depth to a large, though virtual, audience. Although we may live at a greater physical distance from others, we can instantly relay gossip to thousands of people at once.

Another intriguing parallel in this area is the rising problem of cyber bullying or cyber stalking. Although communication technologies enable us to link with more people, they can also empower local feuds and antagonisms. In the world of the early modern peasant, we know that the intense emotions of those isolated communities led at times to shunning and even the vilification of individuals as witches. For the individual in this isolated environment, it became impossible to escape from this relentless persecution. This experience is eerily similar to the isolation and intense persecution many individuals describe in our contemporary cyber communities by victims of bullying.

These pernicious side-effects of modern communications are very disheartening. It is considered a truism today that the world is more interconnected and that an individual can travel anywhere via the Internet. We are told the world is flat, that the world is a village, or another similar metaphor. The rise of network societies and communication technologies was hailed at the beginning of this century as the foil of authoritarian regimes and a way to put power back into the hands of the individual, allowing free association.¹⁵ The often-expressed hope was for a new era of enlightenment as individuals engaged in communication across not just political boundaries but life worlds.

However, this same technology provides new ways for individuals to segregate themselves and create their own boundaries. As one early critic pointed out,

Even as our media technology becomes increasingly global, seamless, and interconnected, it is also individualizable, atomising, privatised and commercialised.... Though the Internet and e-mail are changing what we understand to be communication and social interaction, replacing passive television viewing with networked dialogue, there is nothing automatically democratic about this kind of interactivity.¹⁶

Pariser has warned that some of this segregation is happening without our awareness, thanks to targeted Internet advertising.¹⁷ The most insidious form of this filtering to Pariser includes increasingly customized Internet search results so that we are seeing less and less of the total information, and by extension a narrower breadth of views, available online.¹⁸

The more commonplace form of this new boundary drawing is familiar to all of us who go online and consciously choose which media we will consume. How many of us still make an effort to listen to voices strongly opposed to our own beliefs? Increasingly, we choose narrower seams of information about our world and have less conversation with individuals outside of our cultural subgroups. Perhaps one of the most complicated of these new, chosen boundaries is religious belief.

In many of the most developed countries, those individuals committed to fervent religious ideals seemed to be a dwindling minority, concentrated in the lower class.¹⁹ The largest successes for most missionary organizations are concentrated in the developing world, especially among the poorest and most marginalized. Of course, for many individuals in the contemporary world, religious inclinations have become very fragmented. Yet the extent to which intense superstitions and beliefs can still take hold of individuals in the most developed countries is striking.

Consider the fervor with which some Americans in 2011 took up the cause of Harold Camping, a radio host and entrepreneur who predicted that the “rapture” would occur on May 21, 2011.²⁰ These fervent but odd religious associations are reminiscent of peasant characteristics described by Fossier. In his analysis of daily peasant life in the medieval period, Fossier explains that “peasant worship was irregular, their knowledge and understanding of dogma scanty in the extreme.”²¹ Thus, the peasantry in this earlier period lacked more thoughtful, theological knowledge, but also had a fervent faith that led to “feverish outbursts of millenarianism.”²²

Ironically, the advanced communications technology and ease of publishing in today’s world also enables individuals to segregate themselves. Again, religion is an interesting and complex case. In the United States, the evangelical denominations have, to a surprising degree, established parallel

institutions and cultural content that is disconnected from the broader arts and sciences.²³ This subculture spans institutions, including universities, and content like bestselling books and curriculum for home schooling. Thus, despite growing interconnectedness, we also find increasingly independent subcultures in contemporary society as well.

Popular conspiracy theories and other end of the world prophecies, which often trivialize or completely ignore scientific realities, reflect a tendency that hearkens back to the pre- and early modern peasantry. Such theories and cult-like beliefs seem to be a projection, as they were in the past, of collective hopes and fears. Interesting examples include the various conspiracy theories in the United States that questioned President Obama's place of birth or the events of September 11, 2001. In these two cases, the fear of otherness directed at President Obama from a nativist, conservative leaning strain of politics and in the latter, ongoing suspicions of "big government" from more extreme libertarian outlooks coalesced into ornate conspiracy theories.

The transmission of these odd ideas across an educated society illustrates the ability of individuals, in our always-connected world, to use contemporary social networking and communications technology to delineate new borders. Despite the advocacy of philosophers like J. S. Mill and other advocates of free speech, the freedom of speech and instant availability of information found in much of the world does not lead to a coherent set of rational conclusions. Instead, we find societies drifting and subdividing into different cultural segments that can ignore one another. This outcome resembles the isolation of the homogeneous peasant villages of an earlier time, despite the fact that individuals are not as spatially segregated.

In contemporary culture, we see a widespread fetishization of technology. Devices are routinely adopted and updated by individuals not because of any intrinsic utility but because they are status objects. The rush to be a first adopter is related to status seeking rather than to exploiting the new possibilities of technology. By adopting the latest consumer device before others, many of us are trying to prove something about who we are. What is this something? It is the status that comes from being connected. Like other consumer-driven status symbols, it is constantly fleeting as the market rushes to create new status objects for us to buy. In his commentary on the meaning of gizmos and gadgets, Baudrillard observes that

In a world dominated by communications and information, the sight of energy at work has become a rarity.²⁴

Indeed it has, so how do we prove that we are working and that this work is important? We do so by being connected all the time. In daily life, we see individuals striving to show their importance by being tracked, connected, and "on." They are needed at all times and situations. This subtext is clearer if one examines the marketing behind such devices and services.

For example, Blackberry tells us that its phone, the Storm, “makes a great impression as you travel across town or to almost any corner of the world.”²⁵ Google’s latitude service allows for users with GPS on their phones to “see where your friends are right now.”²⁶ Facebook provides us with a handy widget so that we can tell everyone what we are doing “right now.” Another example that has elicited more commentary is Twitter. This popular service allows individuals to send constant updates about what they are doing moment to moment. On the other hand, cultural critics have noticed that it also seems to be a popular cry for attention.²⁷

The odd tribal allegiances to brands that we see in contemporary society appear to be at their most potent here. How often do we see individuals camping out now to be the first in line for a new electronic product? Are these items scarce? Only initially, thus conferring the status sought upon the early adopter. This behavior reflects an apparent desperation to distinguish ourselves within the cacophony of consumer noise. Yet, rather than distinguishing our individuality, this behavior settles for standing out as a member of a somewhat smaller, yet fleeting subgroup. As soon as one item gains cachet with consumers, another arrives to replace it.²⁸

We can consider cultural writing on the current generation of young people. Many of them express the opinion that technology gives them access to information in a transformative way. Yet, they do not seem able to explain how this transformation should translate into their education or into the workplace. Something is happening with technology and access to information, but it is unclear what practical difference this makes in their lives.

Thus, in many ways, the relationship individuals have to the technology around them is magical.²⁹ Objects seem empowering and important. However, these status objects are created and work through scientific principles that the general public is ignorant of. Ironically, we find much vocal, though at times incoherent or contradictory, opposition to scientific findings (evolution, global warming, etc.) while individuals rapidly embrace the technological artifacts and medical procedures this world of science provides.

While this modern peasantry objects to the science behind such improvements, the state quietly funds the research. In a pattern similar to the enlightenment of the past, the sovereign worries too much about falling behind the competition. Thus, the peasantry is reassured that various functionaries in government share their less rational worldviews, while the state quietly funds a scientific race against the rest of the world for future breakthroughs.

Thus, describing contemporary citizens in the most developed countries as a postindustrial peasantry is plausible if we consider two broad cultural patterns. First, individuals in these societies, despite their modern and postmodern comforts, are increasingly captive to a never-ending cycle of

debt. Like peasants everywhere, they have little hope of ever becoming economically independent. Debt also limits their mobility and is increasingly part and parcel with the pursuit of higher education.

Second, despite our access to technology, contemporary communities seem to be returning to a past of fragmented worldviews. We could use communication technology to reach out to people very different from us. Instead, most use this capability to associate with others “like us.” We can drop out of larger national cultures and embed ourselves within narrower subcultures. For most of us, our relationship to this technology is magical. We see the devices and services as transformational, but have not articulated quite how or why. Nonetheless, association with this technology confers status, so we rush to be seen with it. We are moving backward toward a time of vulnerable individuals living in fragmented cultural communities with little privacy.

Finally, the combination of debt, credit instruments, and technology is creating a daily environment similar to the peasant’s past. Access to goods and services (and even our ability to “pass” as someone realistically in the market for such things) is increasingly predetermined by our highly visible credit histories. This contemporary equivalent of sumptuary laws may even be determining which goods and services we see and know about in the first place.

Peasants and politics

The common thread to all of these developments is that our worldview is becoming narrower and our social mobility reduced. Aside from technology and esoteric beliefs, individuals also segregate themselves through more traditional market activities. The starkest example of this behavior is in the dynamic of suburbanization so prevalent in the most developed countries, and now spreading to the developing world. In an earlier age, the peasantry was separated by both cultural and physical boundaries from the upper classes. Today, we see a combination of these factors coming together to sort the population by income and the “private market” in housing.

Indeed, some political analysts looking at the United States attribute increasingly homogeneous communities, including electoral districts, to the mobility individuals enjoyed there before the market crash of 2008.³⁰ According to this commentary, the ease with which individuals could move in the United States did not lead to increasingly diverse communities. Instead, individuals tended to segregate themselves into communities with similar cultural, economic, and political outlooks. We see this behavior reflected in the political system with the ever-rising number of noncompetitive political districts of the United States.

In contrast, a number of political scientists, such as Abrams and Fiorina, challenge this claim that individuals in the United States are sorting

themselves spatially, with concomitant political effects.³¹ After reviewing various survey data, they conclude that

neighborhoods are not important centers of contemporary American life. Americans today do not know their neighbors very well, do not talk to their neighbors very much, and talk to their neighbors about politics even less. And they do not see themselves swimming in a sea of like minded people who have intimidated or cast out anyone who believed otherwise; they are aware that their neighbors differ politically.³²

However, Abrams and Fiorina also point to survey evidence that shows fewer Americans know who their neighbors are. In addition, when they do talk to their neighbors they rarely discuss politics. What is interesting about this last point is that many Americans still think they know whether they differ from their neighbors politically despite not talking about politics.³³ Though they may often be wrong, they think that they know their neighbors' political affiliation from other indicators.

What sorts of indicators tell us an individual's political affiliation? Cultural commentary indicates that brands of consumer products are one possible source. Increasingly, the choices individuals make in the marketplace, such as buying a hybrid car rather than a gas-guzzling SUV, are seen as a tell for their political sympathies. In an eerie parallel to the very visible economic sorting described earlier, many now think they can determine a fellow citizen's politics just by looking at them. Thus, the question of geographic sorting may be moot. Either way, citizens are increasingly not talking about politics with their neighbors. Yet, despite this lack of political speech, they think they know where their neighbors stand politically. The classic idea of politics as speech is subsumed by a cultural politics.

Nor is this trend limited to the United States. In quasi-authoritarian systems like Russia, there is a similar political stratification occurring. President Putin has attempted to paint opposition to his regime as the symptom of a Westernized urban class. In Ukraine, opponents of the Orange Revolution described its supporters as cappuccino revolutionaries, invoking the stereotype of the urban, laptop-carrying, and hence Westernized coffeehouse patron. In China, the recently fallen politician Bo Xilai attempted to inject an odd-class politics into his program by promoting "red culture."³⁴ This nostalgic movement for China's more communist past made Bo Xilai popular with many who resent China's growing economic inequalities. Yet, rather than openly addressing this politically volatile topic, the nostalgia of the "red culture" movement provided a largely symbolic commentary and outlet for these concerns.

It is at this point, where culture feeds back into politics, that we see the long-term consequences of this situation. Politics is taking a cultural turn within very different political systems. In some cases, like the United

States, the same political institutions are present, but behavior seems to be changing. Does this simply reflect the evolution of a vibrant culture and society? Or, does this shift signal an attempt to get by or make do with a shallower politics, one where I know my opponents just by looking at them? Are we changing our politics because of some deep shift in our culture? Or, are we trying to continue practicing politics in a cultural context that is inhospitable to political participation?

On this last point, much of the “culture war” in the United States seems to be a substitute for the state. There is much dissatisfaction in the population, but who is to blame? With the state increasingly less visible, the venom directed at “Liberal Democrats” or “Right Wing Republicans” seems to be a search for the guilty. Here there is an eerie similarity to the peasants of old attempting to take back control of their lives by finding the guilty witch or other scapegoat. In this sense, the deepening culturalization of politics in the shallows may reflect a search by a postindustrial peasantry for the real culprits, since the state has removed itself as a suspect.

Does our current culture in the most developed countries pose an additional hurdle for challenging the ideology of concealing the state? In an earlier chapter, I described the dynamics between the deep and shallow state and how this aids concealment of the state’s agency. Do we also face a set of cultural dynamics that reinforce these political maneuvers of state institutions?

Arguably, criticism of contemporary mass culture, and the preferences of most people, simply reflects an elitist strain of thought. From an anti-elitist perspective, one could argue that having more of the population behave like a postindustrial peasantry reflects progress in eroding antiquated social and class divisions. After all, from what possible foundation can one criticize these cultural trends other than one rooted in the false consciousness of asserting that some cultures (or aspects of culture) are higher and better than others? If politics seems shallower today, then maybe this reflects the progress we have made toward exposing the long-standing hollowness of our political systems.

However, the political salience of these cultural observations becomes apparent when we turn to a classic question. What does a citizen need to know, so that he can participate in a democracy? Perhaps for some of us this seems weak. From the anarchist tradition one could just as easily ask, what does a citizen need to know to be co-opted into a liberal democracy? However, from this more radical perspective, the question becomes even harder. What does an individual need to know to challenge their political system effectively? It is on this point, the political challenge presented by a postindustrial peasantry, that the previously presented criticism moves beyond elitist prejudices.

In various forms, what a citizen needs to know is an old question often used against participation. The claim for many centuries was that the

common person could not participate responsibly in government due to their ignorance about public affairs. For example, Edmund Burke worried that the expansion of suffrage in Britain would lead to the manipulation of ignorant voters by unscrupulous political entrepreneurs. For Burke, the dangers of expanding participation too quickly were all too apparent in the excesses of the French Revolution.

Despite the misgivings of Burke and others, revolution and reform expanded suffrage during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries across Western Europe and its settler societies. Eventually, the twentieth century saw some of the great promise of these changes reach minorities and women. Thus, the question, then, of whether the citizenry is capable of participating in a democracy appears to have been answered decisively long ago.

Yet, contemporary surveys of the public in the United States have shown widespread ignorance on a variety of topics: foreign affairs, political knowledge, historical knowledge, science, and basic health. Comparisons with other nations show different strengths and weaknesses across the developed world. The United States has become notorious for particularly striking examples, such as the widespread rejection of evolution and other basic scientific knowledge. As these policy areas increasingly come together in very complicated ways, the positions advocated by politicians seeking popularity in the shallow state can be strikingly disconnected from practical constraints.

The response from the left and progressive areas of political commentary in the West has been worry over the “dumbing down” of the citizenry. Within various countries, the literature often focuses on specific manifestations of the problem. For example, in the United States, Barbara Ehrenreich has written on the popular belief and faith in positive thinking.³⁵ A more scholarly dissection of America’s self-help industry and obsessions is provided by Micki McGee.³⁶ In both of these examples, the authors follow a similar vein of thought. The cultural behaviors they document are linked to individuals attempting to cope with the vicissitudes of a complex economy, and an increasingly complex society beyond our control. Yet, much of the American myth rests on the belief that we are autonomous individuals, capable of forming a life of our own choosing. Thus, for the left, cultural degradation is linked to the tensions between our belief in individual autonomy and the reality of the pressures of global capitalism.

Drawing links between political activity and cultural patterns is of course fraught with difficulty. For example, Connolly in his attempts to unravel the links in American politics between the evangelical, Christian right, and the Republican Party quickly encounters this difficulty.

Does, say a corporate-Republican elite manipulate the evangelical wing of this assemblage, leading it to subordinate its economic interests to spurious appeals to faith? Or are leading parties to this coalition linked

above all by economic interests, with evangelical and corporate leaders together manipulating their followers? Or, alternatively, do the two groups share a general doctrine or creed, which defines common interests and allegiances? My sense is that none of these explanations, nor others like them adequately fills the bill.³⁷

These complications lead Connolly to pose a more complicated model of resonance rather than cause and effect. His difficulty with drawing firm links between two closely allied forces in US politics, one a party and the other a cultural movement and its institutions, illustrates the complexity of connecting culture and politics.

Nonetheless, if we focus on political participation, then this line of thinking returns us to an older, but also more solid, debate. Burke and many political theorists worried about the capabilities of the common citizen. More broadly, philosophers such as J. S. Mill also worried about the negative effects of a broader, popular culture. In Mill's case, he worried that the public opinion of Victorian England weighed down upon the most creative and independent individuals of his day. In the twentieth century, Ortega Y. Gasset voiced these worries within a continental European conservatism.³⁸ More recent worries about popular culture and its corrosive effects are found cutting across the traditional fault lines of left- and right-wing political commentary. In the United States, right-leaning intellectuals like Alan Bloom have fretted over similar concerns. For the right, cultural degradation is often tied to perceptions of a decline in cultural standards linked to the erosion of social institutions like the church or the family. From the left in the United States, there is criticism of a populist, anti-intellectualism associated with the right.

Such criticisms, then and now, often veer into elitism. On the other hand, they do raise the question of what minimum levels of education and civic awareness are necessary for democratic institutions to function. For example, James Mill and Burke argued that "common" individuals could serve in local-level institutions like juries. From this experience, they argued that citizens would gain familiarity with the law and governing institutions. More conservative thinkers also saw participation in juries as a means of forcing citizens to think more broadly about the social good or "national interest" as compared to their narrower individual interests.³⁹

It is difficult to imagine where individuals in the most developed societies are acquiring this experience today, other than juries. Declining rates of participation in political activity, aside from voting, show little progress from this earlier elitist suggestion of how to train the citizenry. Recent studies that show declining levels of "social capital" reinforce this disturbing idea.⁴⁰ As Putnam explains succinctly,

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections

among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.⁴¹

Thus, if individuals are increasingly segregating themselves into separate subcultures, then where do they learn about their broader political community?

We can phrase this issue even more provocatively. What additional means of civic education are available to citizens today compared to the nineteenth century? Jury duty is still a possibility. Public education in many countries is now universal and typically provides some form of civic education. However, because of the contentiousness of school curricula, efforts at civic education are usually lukewarm. This holds true even for countries where schools are important agents of political socialization. In a study of civic education in Great Britain, Derricott describes the weak nature of the national curriculum. This noncontroversial approach to civic education consists of courses in “political literacy.” On closer examination, political literacy is primarily a passive discussion of issues such as voting.⁴² This blandness was intended to avoid the political controversy of more substantial political discussions. Not surprisingly, a large-scale study of civic education in sixteen countries found that while students understood the basic mechanics of democracy like voting, they had a much weaker understanding of other forms of political participation.⁴³ The authors’ explanation for this finding is that:

Although some schools attempt to foster discussion of issues, there are constraints on teachers against making statements that might be interpreted as politically partisan.⁴⁴

Thus, evidence from large studies of civic education in democracies show that teaching students about relatively noncontroversial political values is usually ineffective at improving students’ political knowledge and subsequent interest in political participation.

Similarly, political philosophers for at least three centuries have agonized over the question of how a common person could ever be informed enough to participate in questions of foreign affairs or weighty issues like war and peace. With the rapid rise of the phenomenon of globalization, we should expect this to be an ever-more pressing question. Much of the literature on globalization envisions the possibility of greater participation by individuals around the world as globalization creates connections between the international and the local. The use of new communications technology by various peoples in their efforts to bring down authoritarian regimes is often trumpeted as an example of globalization changing politics.

However, it is difficult to see where these new chances for democracy are becoming institutionalized. Common to all political commentaries is the assumption that individuals will be participating in state institutions.

In examples of people bringing down authoritarian regimes, like the Arab Spring of 2011, the goal of these movements has been to recapture the state. Thus, the core objective of such movements is to take the state back from someone else. In the most straightforward cases, this someone else is the strongman dominating an authoritarian regime.

The pessimistic voices to these events typically worry about whether the country in question is ready for democracy. Often these arguments have been phrased in the terms of “realism” about political development versus the needs of international security. Thus, the elitist thrust of such arguments has often been how to transform the citizenry so that they can participate in such institutions, rather than asking how to change institutions to meet the needs of citizens. Ironically, this seems to be the same debate from the early modern and modern period. On one side the question becomes, how can the people take the state back from the elites? On the other side, are the people ready or capable of running the state themselves? Thus, even when a popular uprising retakes the state from an authoritarian leader, we still find skepticism about democracy.

Leaving aside the long battle over this in Western intellectual history, our contemporary context presupposes some different rules. In democratic, developed states, the assumption is that all adult individuals should participate in governance. This assumption has expanded to include significant participation in national politics as well as local representation. The well-institutionalized political systems of the developed North and West have settled, long ago, on the structures for this political activity. Nonetheless, a fundamental contradiction remains. If individuals are participating less effectively within these structures, then what needs to change? Is the issue one of failing civic education? Or, is the explanation one of failing political structures?

In either case, less effective participation empowers the concealment of the state. If individuals do not effectively participate within the shallow state, then the ideology of concealing the state faces few conventional challenges. If our contemporary political institutions are failing to address urgent policy problems, then the deep state, under the pressure of maintaining sovereignty, will attempt to fill this vacuum.

For example, in the United States in recent years, there has been a large increase in homeschooled students. Although there are many reasons for parents to choose this option, the overwhelming majority of these students come from deeply religious, usually evangelical Christian, families. A growing body of evidence indicates that the parochial education these students receive is hostile to various scientific concepts. Religious hostility to evolution is the most prominent concern of these families with various lesser objections a distant second.

Given the guarantees of religious freedom in the United States, and the civil liberties protections expected in the society, there is little the state can do about this trend. And to a large degree, most citizens in the United States are

skeptical of state interference in this area. On the other hand, this behavior places the state in quite a bind. Increasingly, societies are facing pressing ecological and technological risks. If significant portions of the population turn their backs on science, then the state, for pressing functional reasons including the need to protect its sovereignty, will have to rely on the experts it does have at hand.

It is in this area of contemporary science that the tension between technocracy and the practice or ideal of democracy is most visible. However, can we expect states to sacrifice scientific progress, and by extension their competitiveness in global capitalism, based on the population's varying belief systems? Or, should we expect the state to do what it has come to rely on, redefine the scientific challenges as an area of "national security" and subsequently, an area to be managed by the deep state?

A postindustrial peasantry?

If this comparison between today's citizenry and the peasantry of the past is apt, then what outcomes should we expect? Should we expect to see similar political effects to the past if the situations of both groups parallel one another? In the modern period, the peasantry in Europe was excluded from politics. In much of the world and for the vast part of humanity, participation prior to the nineteenth century was limited to periodic bursts of political upheaval. Examples include both world-shaking events like the French Revolution and smaller *jacqueries*. Eventually, the European peasant made the long journey of becoming a voting citizen.

However, even this process can be viewed as something other than political. The great peasant uprisings in Germany during the sixteenth century and the more radical groups such as the "Diggers" and "Ranters" during Britain's seventeenth-century revolution and Civil Wars were inspired in large part by cultural change. The religious shock of the Protestant Reformation set in motion the ideas that inspired these earlier peasants to rebel.⁴⁵ In both cases, the state eventually triumphed over the peasants with its superior organization. As Christopher Hill has argued, the "Glorious Revolution" in England was almost superseded by a much more radical revolution that was stopped by Cromwell's new state and army.⁴⁶

Arguably, the peasantry had to come to the city before gaining political access. In cases like Britain, there was no smallholders party for the countryside's poorer residents. Instead, the new working class finds representation in the new and urban Labour Party. These developments emphasize the deep process of cultural and social change necessary for the peasantry of an earlier age to become political participants. In contrast, what economic development or cultural changes would politicize (or perhaps more accurately, repoliticize) today's postindustrial peasantry?

The continuing trend of suburbanization suggests that we will not see the public living closer together in the most developed countries, at least not anytime soon. Continued ecological stress may make this lifestyle, with its long commutes to work and heating/cooling expenses for large freestanding homes, increasingly expensive. Arguably, this separation of communities into self-contained spaces works against improving the social capital needed for more robust political participation. Would a countermigration back to city centers act as a catalyst for new political activism?

Perhaps the question of urbanization and social space is less relevant today, thanks to new communication technologies. Yet, as discussed earlier, these technologies appear to fragment the public as much as they can bring it together. The overall impact of these new technologies is still ongoing, but early signs are that social networking, blogging, and the ubiquitous presence of smart phones have largely been co-opted by marketing and conventional political campaigns. Thus, rather than opening up new avenues for political activism, these technologies are becoming another channel for the conventional electoral messages of well-established parties and groups.

In contrast to many hopes, the question of globalization does not appear to be radically transforming politics either. Contemporary examples of democratic struggle in the context of globalization have restarted the long-standing trope in political theory of two possibilities. The first is the progressive campaign and idea that the people need to take the state back from elites. Examples here include various “take back the state” movements in the developed world including the recent Occupy protests. A more recent theoretical twist to this type of political activism is the argument that corporations have captured the state. This line of political engagement ignores the ideology of concealing the state. Instead, it continues to insist on a distinction between the public state (which should be used for progressive ends) and private corporations attempting to “take over” this public state.

The second is a “realistic” concern with whether the people are ready or capable of such responsibility. Typically this line of political elitism is directed at politics in the developing countries. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring we find evidence of this commentary. Two decades earlier, similar “realistic concerns” were voiced about democratic upheavals in Eastern Europe. The political transitions of Spain, Portugal, and Greece were also received with such doubts decades ago.

Can the people take back the state? Are the people capable of democracy? Both of these questions are false choices. They suppose two political outcomes that have arguably never been fulfilled. Which state in human history has actually been administered by “the people” versus various elites? When has a democracy ever been safely introduced after careful analysis of whether the citizenry was ready for it? Obviously, these questions ignore the reality of our common historical experience. At best we can ask to what degree the population held the state accountable in a specific period of time.

Since the nineteenth century, the anarchist tradition has argued that society's reliance on the state has pernicious effects. From this perspective, the state's organizing role is a hindrance to social cooperation. Rather than resolving problems in society through free, individual collaboration, the state becomes a crutch that grows ever larger as we abandon more and more initiatives to it. Our contemporary situation, with the state's agency increasingly concealed, compounds this moral dilemma. Not only are we ever-more dependent on the state, but this dependence has reached such a pitch that we not only deny it, we do not even recognize it.

In the nineteenth century, the anarchist concern was with the ability of the state to move into more and more areas of social policy. This expansion came with the cost of innervating alternative forms of social organization and cooperation. State oversight of workplace conditions immediately removed one motivation for union participation. Public education supported by the state undermined the efforts of worker organized education. Arguably, this trend has now taken on an additional dimension of complexity. Not only are we more dependent on the state today, but many of us prefer to ignore this fact as well. If we are pressed to think about policy innovation, then we immediately turn to the one alternative the ideology of concealing the state recognizes, the market.

For example, the United States has seen its rankings in international standards of education plummet. The response has often been attempts to spend more per pupil in public education or spend money differently. More recently, budget cuts have undermined many public schools, leading to calls for unleashing market innovation. As in other cases described in this book, market innovation translates into shifting taxpayer money into less accountable areas of private enterprise. In this example, we find private companies rushing to offer consulting services for establishing charter schools, turnaround services for failing schools, packaged curriculum content to replace current offerings, or offers to run entire school systems on a contract basis.

We can compare this contemporary trend of "privatizing" public education with the innovative approaches of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There we see an explosion of innovation such as Montessori and Waldorf, as well as ideas driven by the needs of various religious communities. The pedagogy of these new schools often reflects Godwin's call for experiential and noncoercive learning.⁴⁷ Arguably, the Sudbury school model represents the most coercive-free product of this movement. In contrast, today we find across the United States Colleges of Higher Education that are geared to producing teachers for an increasingly standardized public school system. The alternative to this failing state system are various "market solutions" where the concealed state funds similarly trained, or less trained, individuals engaged in similar efforts, but contracted as "experts."

This pattern of undermining and innervating institutions is deflected in part by relying on the political ideologies of another age. We have come to live inside vast nation states interconnected with one another through global capitalism. Our older ideologies of representative democracy seem increasingly inapplicable to these contemporary Leviathans. The classical ideals of independence and liberty seem increasingly implausible given the degree of social organization that contemporary capitalism requires.

Faced with this situation, the concealment of the state allows our political systems to continue drawing upon the symbols and ideals of representative democracy. We continue to vote in regular elections, despite the fact that increasingly obscure organized interests provide massive funding to political campaigns. In the popular mind, and among quite a number of our elites, our political debates are organized into the categories of the nineteenth century. For example, we find supposed left and right positions on the usefulness of the market, the role of religion in public life, and the size of government. Concealing the state, and its growth beyond the boundaries of such debates, allows this political culture to survive.

In addition, the risk of catastrophe faced by all societies has deepened our dependence on the state's coercive and regulatory powers. Concealing the state allows us as individuals to carry on believing in our autonomy and that progress in life comes solely from our abilities and efforts. Many of us are rabidly committed to lifestyles, beliefs, and cultural interests that obscure our dependence on the state. The intensity of our commitments seems to increase with the risk of exposing these activities and comfortable ideas in one of two ways. We fear seeing them as either dependent on or undermined by the state.

The ideology of concealment relieves these tensions, but at a cost. Just as the anarchists in an earlier critique of the state warned that reliance on the state has pernicious social outcomes, so too the concealment of the state leads to corrosive consequences within contemporary culture. The long-term effect of concealing the state is that individuals are beginning to resemble a disconnected peasantry rather than a politically active citizenry.

This trajectory seems self-fulfilling. If the state's agency is increasingly concealed from the population, then we can expect that the state is receding from the citizenry's consciousness. The state becomes an increasingly remote entity from individual, daily experience. Another source of strength for the ideology of concealing the state is the dynamic of the state's withdrawal followed by the adjustment of our contemporary culture to this fact. In this sense, the comparison of today's population to the disconnected peasantry of the early modern period is more plausible than we would wish.

Regardless of one's ultimate political preferences, all of these scenarios suggest that the outcome most likely to draw a postindustrial peasantry back together into a stronger citizenry is crisis. We have seen crisis bring

down a number of authoritarian regimes. As argued earlier in this work, crisis can also bring out authoritarian behavior from more democratic regimes. Political history shows that crisis is the time when the largest political changes occur for both good and ill, much like the state itself.

If waiting for a crisis is an unappealing idea, then is there another option for challenging the state? The contemporary ideology of concealing the state presents a formidable challenge. If many of us today are living in conditions that resemble the structural challenges of an earlier peasantry, then what should we do to expose the state's agency? Furthermore, once we expose the agency of the state, how can we change what is done with the enormous power of contemporary, postmodern states?

To address these questions, we need to think about political activities that expose the hidden agency of the state. We also need to think about how to challenge the state's use of this agency. The suggestive idea of a postindustrial peasantry shows the need for new political tactics to address the cultural dimension of concealing the state. Arguably, this is a key need missing from the arsenal of modern political tactics. What sort of politics can supply this missing need?

Notes

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- 45 For a discussion of this in England's case, see Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (New York: Routledge, 2002). The literature on the German Peasants' War is vast. However, a good example of linking the conflict to religious ideas can be found in James M. Stayer, *The German Peasant's War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- 46 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).
- 47 For a concise introduction to Godwin's thinking on education, see William Godwin, "The Evils of National Education" and "Education through Desire," in *The Anarchist Reader*, ed. George Woodcock (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Harvester Press, 1977), pp. 267–73.

6

Conclusion

We all possess a significant motivation for acquiescing to the concealment of the state. Concealing the state frees us from admitting the unpleasant truth: in today's world we are utterly dependent on the state. We prefer the comfortable illusion that we are autonomous individuals pursuing our plans in a free market. If we hold fast to that idea, then our distance from policy makers and dwindling political influence doesn't seem so important. Instead, many of us like to believe that there is an economic reality detached from politics. This belief frees us from the responsibility of political action, and we can prioritize our private life concentrating on careers, family, and other projects without guilt.

Yet, the environment within which we pursue these individual goals is shaped by the state in both a positive and negative sense. After all, the state can empower us. This influence includes the state's investments in infrastructure that allow for economic growth, educational policies that benefit many, and retirement guarantees for our long-term planning. This positive area of state involvement is what we stand to lose first as the state's agency is concealed, leaving us with what the marketplace will sell. However, we know that the state can change the parameters of the marketplace. The state can intervene in our daily lives and provide guarantees and support that radically alter our quality of life.

On the other hand, the negative influence of the state consists of its failures. Concealing the state allows us to ignore the state's increasingly frantic efforts to control risk. Our world faces ecological limits that mean the status quo of global capitalism is unsustainable. The growing possibility of catastrophe, whether from an industrial or technological accident (we can think of GM food nightmares, artificial organisms, nuclear power plant accidents, or terrorism with weapons of mass destruction), forces us into the arms of the state. We are dependent on the decisions of the state as never before. The concealment of the state papers over this grim reality.

Aside from these common motivations and distractions, elites in our societies are also strongly attached to the ideology of concealing the state. Many politicians, so visible in the shallow state, have an immediate interest to continue this concealment. With the current dominance of free-market ideology across the world, it is easier to appeal to voters by accepting this trend rather than challenging it. In those policy areas where the state's self-preservation is itself at risk, the visible policy makers know they can rely on the deep state to quietly implement difficult policies. In complex policy areas that attract less public attention, political elites have little incentive to risk their careers. Thus, there is a clear political logic behind the ideological conformity we find among governing elites.

Yet, this reliance on the deep state is less a strategy and more of a delaying tactic. An important question is at what point will shifting policy to the deep state completely hollow out political meaning in the shallows? In many states, the increasing tendency of politics to devolve into lifestyle, consumer, and *de facto* entertainment questions points the way. This erosion of political content undermines the efficacy of political participation. Our ability to hold the state accountable is at risk as it denies having the capacity to act on our concerns.

The danger for democracy within this context has received a growing level of scrutiny from political scientists and political philosophers. For example, Jeffrey Edward Green has argued that the idea of participation within democracy should be recast as one of spectator rather than participant.¹ His point is that it is increasingly unrealistic to hold on to the classical idea of a citizen as an active participant within the deliberations of our vast, complex nation states. Instead, Green argues that we should rethink the role of citizen as one who critically observes the deliberations of those elites who are actively participating in governance. This leads Green to advocate for elevating the virtue of candor within contemporary democracies to the place formerly held by direct citizen participation.

In a narrower study of the American presidency, legal theorists Posner and Vermeule reach a similar conclusion.² They argue that the executive in the American system (and presumably most political systems) has become completely dominant despite constitutional checks on executive authority. To a large extent, Posner and Vermeule see this development as irresistible given the challenges faced by modern "administrative" states. However, they argue that the presidency in the United States is still constrained by public opinion and the constant scrutiny that Green discussed in his broader study of contemporary democracy.

What is striking about both of these studies is their apologetic themes for the contemporary state. Both Green's broad study and Posner and Vermeule's analysis of the American presidency concede that classical theories of democracy and popular participation no longer match reality. Yet, rather than criticizing contemporary institutions from this foundation, they

argue that new realistic theories of democratic participation are required. In Green's case, he attempts to revive the idea of plebiscitary democracy in a positive form. For Posner and Vermeule, the power of the modern executive becomes acceptable because it still faces the constraints of popular opinion expressed in polling and elections.

In contrast, a number of political theorists have developed more critical, activist arguments about contemporary democracy. For example, Nadia Urbinati has argued that the classical ideal of democratic representation is unrealistic but she has also attempted to develop a critical replacement.³ In an earlier stage of her argument, Urbinati compared two major philosophical views on representation from John Locke and Edmund Burke.⁴ In Locke's social contract theory, my representative was a delegate, a stand-in for myself so that I do not have to devote myself full time to government business. On the other hand, Urbinati points out that few of us would be willing to represent Burke's contrasting view of a "trustee" representative. Burke famously argued that a representative must be willing to tell his constituents "no" and overrule their wishes for their own good. However, the shortcomings of these classical views of representation have led Urbinati to reformulate democratic representation as an idea of advocacy. Urbinati has in mind the role of other expert advocates in contemporary society such as lawyers, teachers, social workers, or medical professionals. While we must rely on these advocates' expertise to make our case for us, Urbinati argues these roles are not as paternalistic as Burke suggested, or as unrealistic as Locke's delegates.

Thus, a great deal of contemporary scholarship in political theory, political science, and more activist social criticism senses that there is something wrong with our current understanding and practice of democracy. However, most of this commentary is oriented toward returning the state to accountability. From the argument of preceding chapters, this goal of accountability is made ever more difficult by the ideology of concealing the state. How can citizens regain and keep any oversight of a concealed state? Furthermore, what sort of common strategies can we pursue in confronting this ideology given the fact that it has become dominant across widely varying political systems? This last point is especially challenging. The larger the number of political systems adopting the ideology of concealment, the more this state of affairs seems "natural" rather than ideological.

On the other hand, despite the growing trend of concealing the state, not all states are equal in both a literal and moral sense. Just as some states are more powerful in the world, so too some are better for human flourishing. At times in this text my description of the concealment of the state implies that all regimes are fundamentally the same ideologically. However, it is easy to see on pragmatic grounds the relative advantages and disadvantages of different states. We can compare the broad free speech protections and very open media of the United States to the self-censorship

and state manipulation currently present in the authoritarian regimes of Russia or China. Many of us admire the better social justice available in Scandinavia from the governments there. Few of us would willingly opt for the authoritarian regimes found in many places. The fact that not all states are the same should be seen as a source of inspiration.

If there are such differences in the quality of life under various states, then this shows that there is the possibility of improvement. The fact that authoritarian regimes have been overthrown by popular action proves that significant political change is possible in today's world. The difficulty we face for reform or improvement obviously depends on the starting point. As we have seen most recently in the Arab-speaking world, and two decades earlier in Eastern Europe, facing down authoritarian regimes often calls for great risk and sacrifice. In some cases, the regime is so bankrupt that it must be displaced in entirety. On the other hand, those of us fortunate enough to be living under open and democratic regimes face a more subtle set of challenges within highly developed and pluralistic political systems. Regardless of which type of state we live under, there are two broad challenges for contemporary political action: revealing and challenging the state.

Revealing the state

Arguably, the best way to challenge the ideology of concealment is to expose the agency of the state. If the state can deny from the outset that it has the ability to act on our concerns, then it is difficult to imagine how any new theory of democratic accountability can influence it. Regardless of our tactics, the concealed state can stonewall us by insisting that there is nothing it can do. Thus, the most important challenge to the ideology of concealing the state is to expose the state's unused, or misdirected, power.

However, a source of strength for concealing the state is the increasing "transparency" found elsewhere in our contemporary society and culture. In the sphere of consumption, individuals are increasingly accustomed to instant feedback, user reviews, and the constant scrutiny a world of users can bring to bear upon private companies and services. In addition, the rise of social media has created the appearance of a constant flow of information about everyone in real time. All of this activity gives the impression of much transparency in our daily lives. The distraction of our consumer activities, and perhaps the self-satisfaction we derive from being smart consumers, is an obstacle to tuning into state activity.

These cultural changes also seem to be eroding our older distinctions of private and public spheres. This erosion implies that our sense of a separate, civic area of life is becoming lost in the collision of our private acts of consumption with public interaction. Some commentators have expressed concern that the growing popularity of social media like Facebook may lead

to future legal decisions where the reasonable expectation of privacy is much reduced.⁵ Similarly, Lyon has expressed concern about the cultural changes that make increased surveillance more socially acceptable. He is concerned that the increasing acceptance of voyeurism in our popular culture

...helps to explain further why companies and governments seem to have so little trouble selling and installing surveillance technologies.⁶

With all of this noise, it is easier for the state to recede into the background. Our daily life seems increasingly transparent compared to the past. Since it is so difficult to keep anything private in today's interconnected world, we assume that the state and politics must also be increasingly transparent.

Thus, an ironic outcome of our current communications technology is that the state is harder to see than ever. The increasing universe of information available to us seems a likely resource to expose the state, but its sheer volume undermines the efficacy of this information. Rather than greater transparency, this wilderness of information from traditional and new sources enables the state's concealment. For example, a recent report by the US Federal Communications Commission expressed alarm over the decline in local reporting.⁷ The study found that despite the abundance of new media outlets, the decline of local newspapers is leaving a vacuum at the local level in the United States. The report warns that this loss of oversight at the local level risks leaving citizens in the dark about local government activities. Citizens may feel that they have more choice than ever for information and news, but in many political systems, much of this information has become centralized in its focus, despite its fragmentary delivery. Any one of us can blog online about local government and community affairs. However, who will listen to us among all of the choices out there and why should they respect our particular opinion?

This point is the central difficulty with making use of new technologies to reveal the state. Despite the cacophony of voices we find in this new landscape, recent examples of technology and social media have led some observers to conclude that we are entering a new era of radical transparency. The best example of this trend is the media coverage and commentary surrounding the WikiLeaks case. In one commentary on the WikiLeaks case, Umberto Eco suggested that we have entered an age where the citizen can now turn the tables and spy upon the state.⁸ The plausibility of Eco's claim seems to be enhanced by the reaction of many web activists who supported the activities of WikiLeaks by hosting its servers, and by the retaliation of online hackers to the pressure placed on WikiLeaks.

Despite this high-profile case, it is difficult to imagine that these sorts of efforts can lead to larger political transformations. Already the state is attempting to adapt to these new forms of communication technology. A prime example of these efforts was the recently revealed US program of

placing propaganda on social media through the use of false Facebook and Twitter identities.⁹ The rapid pace at which marketing has taken over social media also suggests we should be skeptical. The new tactics for commercial companies in the social media age include the interesting examples of companies paying individuals to start up “buzz” about products and write positive reviews.¹⁰

How do we know whether to trust this information we see online? Initially it seemed that simply the scale of feedback encountered online, such as a very large number of posted, anonymous reviews about a product, could insure that, despite some planted fakes, an overall clear picture would emerge. Now with the increasingly sophisticated tactics of advertising, relying on simple rules of scale do not ensure reliable information.¹¹ Without the voice of trusted media sources, it seems that all of the information coming from our new technology risks becoming more unreliable noise. Thus, despite the excitement surrounding new communications technology and less hierarchical means of organizing the media, a critical piece of resolving this problem is the role of intermediaries.

A growing body of political science research points to the need for strong intermediaries to enable effective democratic participation. For example, in an exhaustive study of accountability in Italy, political scientists found that even criminal charges failed to dislodge incumbent representatives, unless local media were effective at communicating the situation to voters.¹² The need for intermediaries in a political system emerges once we move beyond small-scale interaction. This is an important point because, as was discussed at the beginning of this book, critics of the state since Rousseau’s time have contended that scaling down to direct democratic participation is the best way to check the power of the state. A similar vein of argument can be found in contemporary political theory. Philosophers like John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas have attempted to elucidate the procedures needed to insure that outcomes are democratic by focusing on smaller scale interactions. One consistent challenge to the project of such theorists hearkens back to Rousseau and the anarchists. How can the positive forms, procedures, and outcomes of small-scale interaction ever be scaled up to the complexity of a contemporary state?

For example, consider Habermas’ extremely well-developed theory of discourse ethics.¹³ Despite the complexity and subtlety of his work, the main point of Habermas’ philosophy is easy to grasp in a small-scale interaction between individuals. If I present a paper at an academic conference, then I enter a discourse with others. Habermas argues that in such a setting all of us participating in this event entered with assumptions of mutual intelligibility. In other words, we would not rationally engage in this activity if we did not expect some sort of end result. Hence, there is some form of reason present in our efforts to communicate with one another. Furthermore, this is not just instrumental thinking, participating for the sake of some outcome. We also

have a prior, deeper commitment to reasonable intelligibility. If we did not, then we would not have a basis for interacting with each other.

However, even in a small-scale interaction questions can emerge. Why did I travel to and participate in the conference? Was it because I wanted to debate an important issue with others and get to the bottom of it? Did I go because I felt a conference appearance would help my quest for tenure? Did I want an excuse to visit a different city, while drawing upon departmental funding? Habermas argues that this initial motivation for joining the conversation does not matter. Regardless of why I attended, participation would be based on some common procedures and debate about my paper would be on “reasonable” grounds. I may have hidden motivations and be engaged in some double game, but the rules of the discourse will produce a reasonable end despite that.

This idea seems plausible in a small-scale interaction like a conference. However, it seems much less plausible when we apply it to larger forms of political activity. The difficulty is the qualitative difference that emerges when we apply communicative action to broader issues on a social scale compared to smaller individual interactions. Politics introduces an important moral dimension that requires some judgments about the original motivation of discourse participants. Central to Habermas’ overall argument is the idea that reason is integral to human communication because I wish to convince or explain to others some goal.

But as stated earlier in this work, we can find many examples of human interaction that rely on subterfuge. Most cultures accept some form of white lies in personal relationships and a degree of exaggeration in the marketplace. Our judgment about the use of dishonesty in these situations is influenced by the motivation of the individual. A white lie to avoid unnecessary hurt among friends is very different from commercially motivated fraud. Politics is an even better example of the disconnect between the motives, speech, and actions of individuals. Yet, politics also differs from other examples of human deception because the stakes are so much higher.

For some guidance on this issue, we can turn to classic political philosophy. A point that has deep roots in this tradition is the difference between the way things are and the way they seem to be. In the case of Machiavelli, he urges a prince to take advantage of this dichotomy. It enables a prince to maintain the facade of being good, and reaping the advantages of such an appearance, while doing what needs to be done. More generally, the classical idea of remembering this distinction enables one to look critically at the motivations of political actors. This cynical position enables us to expose hidden motives and influence.

Consider Thucydides’ description, in *The Peloponnesian War*, of Diodotus’ speech for leniency toward Mytilene before the assembly at Athens. As one commentator points out, “the intellectual attitude of both Cleon and Diodotus is determined by their immediate purposes, and their

speeches are essentially dishonest.”¹⁴ If Diodotus appeals to the Athenians on the grounds of justice, then they will assume that he has instrumental motives. On the other hand, we know that the Athenians are concerned about the justice of their previous decision to harshly punish the Mytilenes. In the end, Diodotus argues for leniency on the cold grounds of political expediency. He argues that leniency now toward democratic elements in Mytilene may encourage rebellious elements in other cities to defect or surrender to Athens later. Ironically, he must lie to the assembly to get it to do the right thing. He conceals his concern for justice within an argument of power politics. As another commentator points out,

In our conclusions about the causes of this Athenian decision, we must weigh the subtle force of this style of argument—with this specific audience—in addition to its context.¹⁵

Thus, to understand what happened in this political discourse at Athens, it is important to weigh the stature of the individual speaking and how he presents his argument.

How has this historical example been handed down to us? Would I know if the individual is participating in a double game? In Thucydides’ example, Diodotus misleads the assembly with the rhetoric of political expediency so that they make a humane decision. We know about this classic double game of discourse, not because of the assembly exposing it among themselves, but thanks to the authority of the author, Thucydides. He applied analysis to this situation and reveals the facts to us. Did the members of the assembly recognize all of this? Did they reveal the hidden motives in their midst? Perhaps they did, but used Diodotus’ argument as political cover while really voting their conscience.

This ancient example of politics may seem odd to think about when discussing contemporary concerns. Nonetheless, it illustrates the problem Habermas’ discourse ethics has when weighing the normative content of politics. His theory’s foundation in the pragmatism of communicating to solve common problems is difficult to scale up. It is easy to imagine individuals working together on a common, well-defined problem. It becomes much more difficult to accept when we move to broader, high stakes politics. In the latter case, the motivation of individuals does have a moral bearing on the questions we consider. Yet, who can expose these motivations other than intermediaries like an authoritative commentator?

If this is the case for a society on the scale of ancient Athens, then we can expect more complications in our contemporary setting. In our experience of contemporary democracy, it takes someone with stature to engage effectively with the state. An individual citizen’s voice, regardless of how rational, cannot expose double games like a media authority of national stature. We are dependent upon *The New York Times* or a similar voice of authority

to weigh in. Other possible voices are respected commentators and critics. In addition, we increasingly see celebrities adopting political causes. In all cases, we are dependent on voices with stature. This intermediary's stature may be highly imaginary, such as celebrity support of political causes, but the voice of such intermediaries is necessary for a discourse to reach and engage citizens.

How do these intermediaries acquire such stature? There seem to be two routes. The first and obvious is a long track record in exposing the hidden motivations and double games of political participants. Here we can think of established media that are recognized for their independence and past efforts. If one doubts their importance, then the easy example is to look at the lengths to which authoritarian and totalitarian regimes go to silence such critics.

Under authoritarian regimes, any media willing to speak the truth can become an important intermediary quite suddenly. The wealth of documentary evidence available from the former totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe shows that even one individual voice can undermine a tightly closed, ideological regime. What is much more difficult to imagine, and establish, is how such truth-telling intermediaries can emerge within developed, postmodern states. This conundrum brings us to the other option for establishing an intermediary's legitimacy.

This second route is to comment on politics from an area of clear autonomy. The best example is the arts. Recently, political theorist Benjamin Barber has devoted some effort to exploring why the arts are important for a democracy.¹⁶ Barber argues that the fine arts form an important interest-free space that escapes our contemporary consumer culture. From this more autonomous area, the arts can critique society, and government, with a voice that is much more authoritative than political or popular commentary.

However, it is difficult to imagine how either of these routes toward becoming an intermediary could be a strategic decision. The occurrences in life that drive an artist, or the many incidents that establish the track record of an authoritative voice in journalism, are impossible to create as a political response to the immediate. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine how the state can be exposed politically without using an intermediary. How could just any discourse, like all of the chatter we find in our current communications media, perform this task without establishing itself as an authority of some sort?

In the example of discourse on a small scale that I discussed earlier, the setting was presenting a paper at a conference. At the end of a presentation, the audience will reach its own conclusions about the merits of the paper. The idea of needing to reach mutual understanding and intelligibility among such a small group of actors, regardless of individual motives, seems plausible. Whatever reason I had for coming to a conference and giving a paper, the audience will judge the paper on reasonable grounds. So, even if

my individual motivations are of a baser sort, they will be transcended by the activity of discourse. A similar logic applies to much of our activity in social media and across the Internet.

What is less clear is how these simpler discourses could be built up into something as complicated as the politics we find in democratic societies. Consider a simpler example such as misleading research in medicine compared to political theory. On an abstract level, we may argue that concealing contrary results or misleading others in our findings is the same academic transgression in either field. Nevertheless, the consequences of dishonesty in medical research are much more harmful to others. In the realm of political theory, only my reputation and the squandering of other experts' time are at risk.

In the example of medical research, the motivations of actors matter more because the stakes are so high. So the relative weight of effort and performance matters depending on the field. Similarly, it is important to know what motives a politician has for advocating war or peace. In the case of war, we are deciding the morality of taking human lives. The motives of individuals debating such a topic matter in a way the motives of those debating an academic paper do not. Thus, the ability to recognize double games and hidden motives is morally necessary when we engage in politics at this level.

Furthermore, continued participation in political discourse requires motivation. If the individual's real motivation (an emotional attachment) is disguised, then how much commitment does he have toward democratic participation? How do we know if others are participating authentically in the discourse? Over time, will the requirements of a double game undermine the individual's commitment to participating in democratic institutions? Will this harm the legitimacy of democratic institutions?

After all, the use of double games reduces communication based on practical reason to an instrumental strategy. Couldn't an individual engage in a double game of reaching conclusions for emotional reasons, then dress up his arguments in a rational disguise like the ancient Diodotus? Perhaps to Habermas this does not matter. As long as the individual uses practical reason in public discourse, others will be convinced, or not, on the grounds of practical reason rather than the emotional commitment concealed underneath. Thus, the individual's internal motivation could be detached from her external activity.

Nonetheless, I suspect that Habermas would admit that it is important to discover the motives individuals have for advocating war, peace, or even more mundane political topics. Yet, is it through discourse over time that we uncover these hidden interests? Habermas often refers in his work to the tension between participant and observer perspectives. For Habermas this point is important because discourse ethics rests on the thin foundation of reason motivating the participants. Thus, Habermas asks,

How can we appropriate naïve, everyday ethical knowledge in a critical fashion without at the same time destroying it through theoretical objectification? How can ethical knowledge become reflective from the perspective of the participants themselves?¹⁷

Unfortunately, it is precisely the jaded “observer” perspective of intermediaries that is required to expose the moral dimension of discourse participants’ motivations.

Habermas’ theory is often interpreted as a philosophical argument that advocates civil society as a means of keeping the state accountable. Concerns with keeping the state accountable have driven much scholarly discussion of civil society in recent years.¹⁸ However, reliance on civil society is not a guarantee of democracy or democratic outcomes. Movements from below can also be destructive calls for nationalism or other political programs that Habermas would criticize.¹⁹ Much of the civil society scholarship is also weak on explaining how this area avoids co-optation in contemporary postmodern states. Instead, the available scholarship tends to focus on the use of civil society against authoritarian regimes or its reemergence with the collapse of totalitarian regimes.²⁰

The situation within postmodern states is very different. As discussed, the challenge within these political systems is not asserting the right to speak or publish. There is a world of tools available for such activity, and a free online forum waiting for political speech. Instead, the challenge within the postmodern state is raising a critical voice above all of the background noise. For this reason, we need to think about the role of critical intermediaries that expose the state’s agency.

Does the idea of using intermediaries to challenge the state seem paradoxical? After all, the suggestion implies that one needs a different set of authorities to challenge state authorities. Such a program does not sound very new or different than the scrum of traditional politics. Nor does it sound like a tactic at home within the anarchist tradition.

On the other hand, we have had a recent example of an intermediary emerging from obscurity and challenging the state with the WikiLeaks case.²¹ After the disclosure of a large trove of classified US diplomatic cables began, various officials from the United States and other governments reacted with a sort of hysteria. Secretary of State Clinton claimed the leaks represented an attack on democracy, and several American officials quickly attempted to outdo each other in their calls for severity. Unsubstantiated claims that WikiLeaks has blood on its hands from these actions have been referred to in calls for prosecution. These extreme reactions showed the extent to which the WikiLeaks disclosures struck at the concealment of the state.

Furthermore, this example of an intermediary revealing the state shows the moral difference that emerges when the stakes under consideration are higher. Many officials and political commentators argued that the

exposure of “private” diplomatic activity undermined its effectiveness. The comparisons they used were to individuals having private details made embarrassingly public. But the governments of nation states are not individuals. Nor are officials acting as diplomats (and filing cables filled with advice and suggestions) mere individuals swapping private opinions. The diplomatic activities of these states have repercussions for millions of citizens. Unlike an assumption of privacy for individuals, we should expect government activity to err on the side of openness.

Furthermore, in the democracies, we expect individuals to be able to make an informed choice when voting. If we learn that our governments and elected officials have in fact been engaged in a double game—that is, reassuring us in public while quietly engaging in very different calculations—then how can one plausibly claim with a straight face that this is the same as private information becoming public? Should citizens not know what their government is “really” thinking, planning, and doing? Should citizens’ knowledge of their government be confined to a need-to-know basis?

In the WikiLeaks case, involving diplomatic cables, there may be a Machiavellian argument for secrecy in effective diplomacy. However, the US and other government’s reactions to the case are very telling of how widely accepted the ideology of concealing the state has become. After all, how is WikiLeaks different from traditional journalism? Exposing the state’s real opinion, planning, options, and concerns is not the same as outing the foibles of a person. The stakes for citizens are extremely high with the policies pursued by contemporary states. The potential for catastrophic results from bad policies is pressing. Every citizen has a stake in the activity documented in the cables.

The revelations from WikiLeaks point to a much larger, uncomfortable question. What is the moral argument for a democracy keeping its citizens in the dark? I am not referring to the age-old argument about keeping things on a need-to-know basis on a particular issue, or in one clearly sensitive policy area like counterterrorism. In the case of the State Department, one can try to argue that secrecy and double-dealing is the nature of diplomacy. Maybe, but what would we learn if we could see what our government really says and thinks in its additional fourteen cabinet departments and scores of agencies with thousands of public officials?

The real philosophical question is the morality of systematically saying one thing in public while doing something else across the entire spectrum of policy areas. On this last point it is interesting to note that the authoritarian governments named and shamed in the WikiLeaks cables seem much less concerned than the democracies. The WikiLeaks case is interesting because it serves as an example of an intermediary suddenly emerging and credibly exposing the agency of the state.

The idea that intermediaries need some sort of authority or stature to expose the state seems counterintuitive to the anarchist tradition. However,

the idea of intermediaries returns us to the deeper philosophical question of the anarchist tradition, the problem of representation and the possibility of a “real” authority of politics. For many anarchists the question of challenging the state is not one of abandoning politics, or any form of authority. Instead, the issue is challenging the false form of politics and authority the state perpetuates. From this perspective, the call for intermediaries to expose the state may be less counterintuitive to the anarchist tradition than it sounds.

Intermediaries, representation, and anarchism

Even as unimpeachable a voice of the anarchist tradition as Bakunin says that there are some forms of legitimate authority. For example, consider Bakunin’s response to the question of authority: “Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer.”²² The authority of such specialists is limited by reason. As Bakunin explains further,

I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason. I am conscious of my inability to grasp, in all its details and positive developments, any very large portion of human knowledge ... Thence results, for science as well as for industry, the necessity of the division and association of labor.²³

This insight into where *real* authority lies is at the heart of the anarchist and syndicalist traditions.

When combined with the subject of political representation, this perspective on authority undermines most traditions familiar to political theory. From a broad anarchist or syndicalist perspective on the realities of authority and power, traditional politics within state institutions is a ruse that avoids the *real* struggle of class in the economic arena. The political arena is used to inhibit the working class from fighting the class struggle within the economic sphere, where they have potential power to organize. The foundational assumption of this line of thought is, of course, the kind of membership that we believe to be most salient for politics. A good example of the alternatives is provided in Jennings’ account of the syndicalist critique of political parties. As he explains in his history of syndicalism in France,

The class based nature of the *syndicat* was deemed to be in marked contrast to the pattern of support and membership of all political parties. What distinguished the political party (including those of the Left) was precisely that it grouped people according to opinions and not interests...²⁴

Thus, for syndicalists the *syndicat* was superior to the political party because it understood the significance of class allegiance. Similarly, *syndicat* industrial action and worker-centered activities were superior to traditional politics within the parameters allowed by the state. This logic informs the syndicalist call for industrial rather than political action. Arguably, this perspective also applies to what many political theorists would consider the cultural activities of the *syndicats*. Even social activities and organization could have a role to play in this struggle if those activities contributed to the education of the working class.

From this anarchist and syndicalist perspective, real politics is likely to take place outside of state institutions on economic and cultural fronts. In an early attempt to describe the ideas of syndicalism to a general audience, Bertrand Russell explained in *Roads to Freedom* that syndicalism “aims at substituting industrial for political action, and at using trade union organization for purposes for which orthodox socialism would look to parliament.”²⁵ Indeed, this is the logical strategy to pursue since, from the syndicalist perspective, parliament is a distraction: How could a state institution based on an idea of territorial representation and class co-operation possibly be effective other than as a diversion from real politics?

In contrast to continental syndicalism, the more institutionally minded proposals of the Guild Socialists in Great Britain provide us with a slightly different perspective. Here the focus is how to institutionalize real representation within a broadened political sphere. As G. D. H. Cole explains,

the Guild Socialist conception of democracy, which it assumes to be good, involves an active and not merely a passive citizenship on the part of the members. Moreover, and this perhaps the most vital and significant assumption of all, it regards this democratic principle as applying, not only or mainly to some special sphere of social action known as, “politics,” but to any and every form of social action, in especial, to industrial and economic fully as much to political affairs.²⁶

To this end, some varieties of guild socialism eventually proposed the creation of an alternative institution to parliament based on functional representation. Bertrand Russell explains the idea:

Guild socialists regard the state as consisting of the community in their capacity as consumers, while the Guilds will represent them in their capacity as producers; thus Parliament and the Guild Congress will be two coequal powers representing consumers and producers respectively.²⁷

Thus, the Guild socialists in Great Britain differed from Continental syndicalists in their attempt to take functional representation inside the

state's political institutions. This move would convert (or restore) the political sphere into a functioning place of *real* politics. According to G. D. H. Cole, the plan opened the possibility for the state to truly wither away as the functional representation of society replaced the "debris of a decayed system."²⁸ This change would happen gradually as traditional politics was replaced with the real political action required by class or functional interest.

Real politics seems to lie closer to the economic functions individuals perform and to the interests they hold in everyday life. Hence, we find the argument that contemporary political concerns are connected to more concretely defined interests such as our economic role, our environmental needs, or the needs of our cultural or ethnic membership. Second, both perspectives appear to blur the boundaries between the political and the cultural. In the case of contemporary political theorists, we see this trend in the growing focus on identity politics, while in the syndicalist tradition, it is more closely associated with educational, consciousness-raising efforts such as the cultural initiatives of the *syndicats*.

Recently, political theorists from the post-foundational (or sometimes still labeled "postmodern") camp have attempted to distinguish between "the political" and "politics."²⁹ As Oliver Marchart points out in a recent study of this school of contemporary theory, this distinction has radical implications since it opens up a broader range of cultural, economic, and social questions outside of mainstream politics. This turn toward identifying a broader range of issues as political bears a striking resemblance to earlier anarchist and syndicalist efforts to define a *real politics* as opposed to the political institutions of the state.

Just as the anarchist tradition posed the idea of a real politics to the sham of mainstream political activity, perhaps so should we think about Bakunin's idea of *real authority*. In this sense, the intermediaries who can expose the concealed, postmodern state are authorities in Bakunin's sense. Of course, for Bakunin there should always be an element of individual judgment. We should consult several boot makers or engineers and choose for ourselves which one convinces us with their skill and expertise.³⁰ So, too, a broad range of intermediaries is needed. We can then make choices between these voices and support those that expose the state.

Thinking about intermediaries this way also provides an important flexibility. In the case of differing political regimes, we can expect to find a variety of sources for this real authority. In the twentieth century under totalitarian regimes, even high art could acquire a political meaning within the highly charged ideological context of those societies. Under twenty-first century authoritarian regimes, anyone brave enough to speak out will immediately acquire the sort of stature that this simple act alone cannot expect under a freer democratic government. In this latter case, an intermediary would have to be a person who speaks out about the truth of

power, but in a way that distinguishes them from the cacophony of other voices citizens hear.

The role of an intermediary is not that of simply being another expert. Instead, it is a highly fluid role that various individuals can acquire within the political context of the state. The tools that the intermediary draws on to expose the truth about power and the state may be highly symbolic acts, satirical commentary, civil disobedience, or academic prose. What remains true in each case is that an individual who acquires this real authority can, perhaps only briefly before the political context shifts again, use it to expose the state.

Challenging the state to act

On that last point, perhaps we can look at the search for a real politics as an effort to challenge the state to act. In this sense, asserting a real politics becomes the effort to force the state to use its agency to address the policy problems it ignores. The idea of forcing the state to act does not fit well with the anarchist tradition. After all, for the anarchists the question is not how to improve the state, but the best means of replacing it. However, our postmodern situation may require the use of the state to address problems that the anarchist tradition did not imagine. Many of the catastrophic risks discussed earlier, like the looming threat of ecological disaster, may require us to harness the power of states to take urgent action. In addition, as Iris Young has pointed out, in the face of powerful, private economic power, democracy seems dependent on state power. Contemporary civil society is unlikely to defeat injustice alone without state assistance.³¹

On the other hand, there are many policy areas where using our agency from below can become a challenge to the state. This tactic of self-organization outside of the state is much closer to the anarchist tradition. But the ideology of concealment complicates the use of this more traditional tactic. The difficulty is in organizing action so that we expose the state's neglect in an area of policy, or challenge the state's claims of sovereignty by doing better than the state. The risk is always that the state co-opts our efforts and thus adds the policy concern to the list of issues it can ignore. So, we need to do it better than the state (and publicize the fact to shame the state), but not aid the state's concealment by allowing it to withdraw from yet another area of need.

How do we challenge the dominance of the contemporary state? Some observers think that individuals acting as consumers can have an impact. This idea lies behind claims that all of the consumer information and feedback now available online can be used for activist purposes. In a sense, this idea holds out the promise of bypassing the state in areas of environmental regulation or work conditions and instead applying direct

pressure on industry. However, despite the appealing logic of this idea, scholarly evidence is mixed. Early research indicated that such boycotts of activist pressure are much more dependent on capturing the media's attention rather than actually forcing corporations to act due to market pressure.³² More recent scholarship has pointed to the difficulties of using consumer power in the first world to influence conditions in the developing world.³³ In the past, boycotts of a particular business were effective. But in the future, with chains of capital so difficult to follow, and with businesses present all over the world, economic action would seem to require an ever-greater degree of international organization to be effective.

The other difficulty with using consumer activism is that it easily plays into the ideology of concealing the state. Consider the recent example of a call for mass action by bank withdrawal in Europe.³⁴ The celebrity advocate (French soccer player Eric Cantona) for this idea proposed that a bank run triggered by mass withdrawals coordinated on the same day would have a greater effect than any mass demonstration on the streets. Although Mr Cantona's call appealed to some activists, it failed to trigger any mass event. While the idea of organized consumer action for political ends remains an intriguing one, would even a successful action like this challenge the state? What is the policy or action that the protesters wish to see changed?

The weak regulatory framework that these banks exploited is a product of the state. If one organized a successful boycott of a large bank, then does it follow that the state will change this framework? Does bringing down a bank put pressure on the state? The ideology of concealing the state will argue in such a situation that consumers are directing their ire at a private economic enterprise rather than the state. Crippling such an organization leads to job losses for other citizens, not state officials.

On the other hand, consumer activism directed toward a whole segment of the economy could force the state's hand. However, we should expect such an outcome only in cases where the state fears a loss of economic competitiveness. This suggests that consumer activism would have to be organized on a scale that we have not seen. The marketplace in the most developed states mitigates against this as well with its bewildering diversity of products and services. Contemporary capitalism has created extremely complex chains of ownership within developed economies. The vastness of contemporary corporations makes it difficult for a consumer to determine which company or firm is ultimately behind a product.

If the point of challenging the concealment of the state is to expose its agency, then a more promising possibility is to expose the state's action (or lack of action) through counter organization. The logic behind this strategy is straightforward. If we fear becoming dependent on the state for our survival, then we should try to organize solutions outside of the state. One of the ideological motives for the concealment of the state is that none of us want to admit this dependence. By organizing outside of the state we can

reduce this dependence and remove one of the principal motivations for the ideology of concealing the state.

Again, there is a fundamental challenge to any organizational effort. By providing a service, or helping others outside of state structures, are we merely enabling the state's retreat? Consider the use made by conservative political parties of such efforts. In the case of the United States, President Bush Senior appealed for a "thousand points of light," that is a new grassroots voluntarism to fill the gaps left by budget cuts and trickle-down economics. Similarly, his son, George W. Bush, started his presidency with a call for "faith based" organizations to shoulder this burden rather than the state. More recently, Prime Minister Cameron in the UK has talked about the need for a "Big Society" and a smaller state in the face of looming austerity budgets. What does the call for voluntarism from these ideological sources demonstrate?

If we wish to revive the ideal of individual independence and liberty, then we need to work toward solutions on restraining growth, ecological improvement, and social justice that reduce our dependence on the state. We need to do this for ourselves to remove the inevitability of the state. On the other hand, the state pursuing the ideology of concealment would be only too happy to shift the burden of other responsibilities back upon society. The social work of NGO's funded by charitable contributions can be a useful shell game for the state. Claiming to reduce the tax burden, the state can instead hold hostage the conscious of the citizenry.

From this perspective, we need to think about grassroots organization in areas that expose the state rather than enabling its concealment. We need to avoid making the concealment of the state easier. Thus, we face a difficult challenge in structuring our efforts and assistance to others in a way that highlights the choices the state makes rather than covering for it.

Because of this dilemma, some activists have wrestled with the difficult question of tactics from an anarchist perspective. For example, Day has advocated the use of "Temporary Autonomous Zones" (TAZs) as an effective tactic.³⁵ Day turns to this tactic, originally envisioned and described by Hakim Bey because, if politics today is not about capturing the state, then what should it be about? The TAZ is a consciousness-raising tactic in that a space (either real physical space, an activity of some sort, or an imaginary space) is temporarily organized from below. The fact that these places are temporary in itself makes a point when challenging the state, which strives for permanent sovereignty. Day and others stress the transformative, education effects these experiences have on participants. For a brief period of time, a way to organize human activity outside of the state is enjoyed by participants. This suggests the possibilities that exist for a politics that is outside of the state.

This line of anarchist thought points to a possible tool to combat the declining social capital we see in the most advanced postindustrial societies.

If individuals are increasingly segregating themselves economically, through the housing market, and technologically, by social networking with like-minded others, then there is a clear need to bring people back together. This fits with the longstanding anarchist idea of consciousness raising through experience.

The recent experiences of the Occupy Wall Street movement seem to confirm this view. On the one hand, the movement seemed to rely on media attention, much like consumer activism, to get its message out. The fact that the movement relied most on the tactic of occupation also seemed to limit its broader effectiveness. One critical observer notes that Occupy was able to gain such notoriety because of its centralized location in the media focal point of Manhattan.³⁶

Nonetheless, the early evidence we have from these events is that the more lasting impact of the movement on participants was their experience with self-organization.³⁷ For the participants in the Occupy movement, the experience of maintaining the various Occupy sites as a community was very empowering. The various Occupy encampments required individuals to cooperate effectively to feed, shelter, and care for the common community. The key difficulty became transforming this small-scale experience into something much broader.

There is a parallel here to the earlier discussion of exposing the state's agency. As discussed above, it is difficult to imagine exposing the state's agency without some sort of intermediaries. Arguably, we face a similar problem when challenging the agency of the postmodern state. Scaling up the community action of something like Occupy so that it has a longer-lasting political impact is difficult to imagine without some form of authority emerging. The Occupy movement's attempt to be leaderless and outside of mainstream politics, from fear of co-optation, also made it very difficult to sustain or expand.³⁸ Yet, it is also difficult to imagine Occupy continuing to have an impact without engaging in politics.

If we are no longer operating within the state, then are our activities still politics? For many in the anarchist tradition, breaking free of the state means escaping from politics and its limitations. In classical Marxism, the nonpolitical "administration of things" is what Marx foresaw once the state withered away. Yet, political scientists would expect conflict in human society even if we live together differently than today. We know from the anthropological record that all human societies, or at least those beyond a simple complexity, had some form of politics—that is, if we understand politics as a set of practices that enable human beings to settle their differences without violence.

The lesson from the recent examples of WikiLeaks and Occupy Wall Street is that it is indeed possible to expose and challenge the contemporary postmodern state. However, it may be ineffective to try and argue that these are examples of change coming from outside of politics or without authority.

Instead, they seem to be examples of what the anarchist tradition would consider *real* authorities emerging to expose the state's agency in the case of WikiLeaks. Rather than being outside of politics, Occupy can be better understood as an example of a successful politics. Occupy points toward a politics that is capable of bursting through the noise and fundamentally challenging the ideology of concealing the state.

What is difficult to conceptualize is how to create and sustain such intermediaries and real political movements within our contemporary society. In many ways, the examples of WikiLeaks and Occupy struck even informed observers as having come from nowhere. How can we produce similar efforts in a more deliberate manner? Furthermore, can such breakthroughs be turned into something more sustainable?

The delusion of violent resistance and so-called direct action

In December 2011, security employees at Deutsche Bank intercepted a letter bomb sent to the bank's chief executive. Initially, suspicion fell upon fellow travelers of the Occupy Wall Street movement. However, this attempted act of violence was immediately denounced by the German branch of the OWS movement and a subsequent letter from the Italian-based, self-proclaimed, Informal Anarchist Federation claimed responsibility.³⁹ This group had claimed responsibility for a series of letter bombs sent to foreign embassies the previous December. The next day a letter bomb exploded in the offices of Italy's tax collection service, wounding an employee there.⁴⁰ These incidents seemed very similar to actions claimed in 2010 by a Greek anarchist group that called itself the "Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei."⁴¹

What can this sort of violence possibly accomplish? Nothing. Political change through conspiratorial violence is a delusion. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the forces of coercion and powers of surveillance available to contemporary states are virtually invincible. Spectacular acts of terrorism, or pathetic attempts at terrorism (which nonetheless manage to maim employees opening the mail), cannot change a contemporary, developed postmodern state. These actions may redirect the state's coercive power toward the source of the disruption, but the idea that randomly killing individuals, or even attempting to target famous individuals will ever lead to substantive political change within a stable, contemporary state is a chimera. The only thing that comes from this violence is further claims that our reliance on the state for safety and security is inevitable.

Aside from the practical futility of such actions, meaning they cannot obtain their object, there is also a moral failure. By committing violence for a political objective, one is not challenging the state. Instead, political violence

can be read as simply an attempt to replace the current state with another. Claims that a political program justifies violent action are a mirror image of the state's claims to its use of violence being legitimated by various theories of political legitimacy. Kropotkin pointed this parallel out in a 1920 letter to Vladimir Lenin. Condemning recent acts by Lenin's Bolshevik government, including the taking of hostages, Kropotkin warned that the Revolution was turning back into a state.

With all of its serious deficiencies (and I, as you know, see them well), the October Revolution brought about enormous progress.... Why, then, push the revolution on a path leading to its destruction, primarily because of defects which are not at all inherent in socialism or communism, but represent the survival of the old order and old disturbances, of an unlimited, omnivorous authority?⁴²

Thus, Kropotkin considered Bolshevik violence as the revolution lapsing back into the behavior of a state.

A similar argument can be heard a generation earlier in a letter from Proudhon to Marx. Writing in 1846, Proudhon admonishes Marx on the risks of establishing a new form of dogmatism. He then makes the following comment on the idea of direct action:

I have also some observations to make on this phrase of your letter: *at the moment of action*. Perhaps you still retain the opinion that no reform is at present possible without a *coup de main*, without what was formerly called a revolution and is really nothing but a shock. That opinion, which I understand, which I excuse, and would willingly discuss, having myself shared it for a long time, my most recent studies have made me abandon completely. I believe we have no need of it in order to succeed; and that consequently we should not put forward revolutionary action as a means of social reform, because that pretended means would simply be an appeal to force, to arbitrariness, in brief, a contradiction⁴³

Thus, from an anarchist perspective, political violence can be read as a moral failure. It is in fact a return to the claim that states have always made, that a theory of politics can somehow legitimate force.

Of course, violent resistance can be successful in changing odious regimes. Organized resistance from below can topple authoritarian states like Gaddafi's in Libya. Consistent resistance from grassroots, organized demonstrators brought down the sclerotic regime of Mubarak in Egypt. However, these are not examples of states on the cutting edge of development: ideological or economic. Violent resistance can still topple a modern, authoritarian state. In these cases the state is not concealed. Instead, the state is a very real force in the lives of citizens, and embodied in the personality of a strong man.

Within this context, resistance to a clearly defined opponent can be made concrete.

The other disadvantage modern authoritarian systems struggle with, when challenged by organized resistance, is that the regime's interdependence with the market is also easy to personalize. If we look at the Arab Spring in Egypt or Tunisia, one point of the demonstrators was that the ruler's family and assorted cronies enjoyed dominant positions across the economy. Thus, when challenging a modern authoritarian political system from below, resistance can point to a concrete set of individuals, easily identifiable by their bloodlines and clan ties, dominating the economy as unfairly as they do the state.

Therefore, violent resistance may succeed against modern, authoritarian states because of the difficulty of concealing the state under those conditions. Modern authoritarian regimes are heavily reliant on state intervention and it is easy for opposition to rally people against such a visible opponent. In addition, the claim of the resistance in these cases is not a complicated appeal to some ideological commitments. Instead, resistance to modern authoritarianism is based on the appeal to end concrete, human suffering at the hands of a very visible regime.

In contrast, this form of resistance has no moral legitimacy or political efficacy within a postmodern state practicing the ideology of concealment. If we imagine this context for a moment, then who is the opponent of the resistance? There is no authoritarian strong man in the most developed nation states. In the United States and other democratic systems, there is a rotating cast of politicians spread across visible institutions. In more advanced authoritarian regimes like China, there is a party and its *apparatchiks* spread across visible and hidden institutions. What is not present is a leader that can become the enemy for a movement from below. Attempts to cast politicians from the democratic systems in this role can only create laughable propaganda. Attempts to cast the party in China for this role run aground in their inability to give a face to the remote bureaucracy of that system.

Can we identify a similar set of individuals in a postmodern state? In the recent case of the Occupy Wall Street movement, the slogan of the 1 percent quickly caught on. However, could anyone in the United States or Western Europe concretely identify this 1 percent? Is it easy to link the same personalities from the political system to the heights of the economy? Furthermore, who among us, living within such political systems can show that we are not incriminated in some way? The Occupy Wall Street protesters were often seen using the technological tools produced by the system they were protesting.

The complexity of the postmodern state will always frustrate attempts at personifying the contemporary integration of states and global markets, because we are all complicit in many ways. Most of us continue to participate in the economic system of advanced, global capitalism despite our political convictions. Many of us continue to use products and services that are less sustainable despite our ecological fears. As Žižek points out, we

often aggressively insist on some smaller practices (recycling, buying local, etc.) in a way that makes us feel better, without really resolving these larger problems.⁴⁴ This dilemma is the challenge we face when confronting the postmodern state.

Thus, what would be the rational target of so-called direct action in a postmodern state? Ourselves because of the complicity we show when behaving like consumers in the market? The rotating cast of politicians in the shallow state who have delegated much of their agency to the deep state? The compartmentalized bureaucrats of the deep state who struggle to maintain some semblance of a national interest in increasingly complicated policy environments?

Aside from the moral failure of political violence, Violence marks the failure of politics. When a society has failed to resolve its differences through other social mechanisms, violence is the result. Thus, anarchism in a postmodern state should focus on establishing a real politics within the society. Violence means giving up on politics and claiming a source of absolute authority as difficult to legitimate as any state's.

Some final questions

Increasingly, we all face threats from political violence (i.e. international terrorism), environmental degradation, and economic disruption that ignore borders. Our societies are increasingly diversified through international flows of immigration. Culturally, we live in a time of unprecedented collision between varying worldviews. Amidst this new dynamism, should we be surprised that nation states seem paradoxical? We remain citizens of states with borders dividing us “politically” despite our increasing economic and cultural integration. The resulting deficit in legitimacy for these nation states leads to the contemporary ideology of concealment.

Nation states are struggling to make themselves relevant and acceptable to populations that are caught in a precarious middle. We are increasingly connected to each other through a brutal, uncaring market mechanism whose ruthless efficiency has become part of the competition between nation states. When we turn to our political institutions for relief from the burdens of this inhuman market, we are told that nothing can be done. The state claims to lack the agency to control the market. Yet, many things are being done by the state out of sight, including the maintenance of this supposedly autonomous global market.

How long can the state's current ideology of concealment reconcile these tensions? The answer depends in part on how we, the citizens of the various nation states, choose to confront this ideology. This chapter provides some initial suggestions on exposing and confronting the ideology of concealment. So far, I have suggested that we need to find new intermediaries with *real*

authority who can expose the state. In addition, we need activism that challenges the state by doing things better than it can, without falling into the trap of monetizing our activity in the market. Finally, for those of us living in postmodern states, I have attempted to point out both the moral failure and the utter futility of political violence.

We can speculate further on the future of the postmodern state by asking some pointed questions about our current situation. In a sense, these questions are more theoretical than practical. However, challenging a dominant ideology requires countertheory. This means that we need to think about the bigger questions related to the concealment of the state.

First and foremost, if states are concealing their ability to act, so that some questions are removed from political contestation, then what is contemporary democracy? From a classical perspective, political organizations have often placed some questions and policies out of bounds by agreement. The rights enshrined in constitutions are in a sense agreements to set some areas of life beyond politics. Yet, with the concealment of the state, we are now seeing traditional political questions about economic management and social policy quietly removed from the public arena.

Does this mean that we are all heading for an authoritarian form of “managed democracy”? The importance of this question can also be seen in the way that concealment short-circuits so many mainstream ideas about keeping the state accountable. In much of the political science literature on democracy, the focus is on accountability and transparency. The ideology of concealing the state thwarts the best-intended policy efforts with its definition, from the outset, of what can realistically be done. The fact that an increasing number of states (with supposedly very different political regimes) are adopting the same policies should be of greater concern to us than it is.

Second, if states are invested in global capitalism because of their mutual competition, then is there a way to reduce this struggle? Would a reform of international relations remove our dependence on the life support of global markets? Is it then possible for citizens within democracies to decide for greater investment in social services rather than cutting budgets to be competitive? An attractive dream is to imagine how competitive such societies might be in the future after recasting their social arrangements in favor of more humane, internal investment in people rather than focusing on competition in global markets.

With the strategy of concealment, the shallow state increasingly focuses on cultural politics and symbolic actions. This is an unfortunate turn since it means that, at precisely the moment societies everywhere are being transformed by unprecedented levels of global migration, politicians are attempting to popularize their commitments to specific cultural traditions. Thus, we see the rise of right-wing political parties calling for the maintenance of “national identities” or “true nature of societies” around the world. This dynamic has emerged in many democracies including those

traditionally seen as very progressive and tolerant. What political outcomes can we expect from such deep internal contradictions?

If we cut through the ideology of concealing the state, then what are we left with? We see that a technology for organizing society is reaching its limits. There is an urgent need for more effective political participation. Yet, individuals face an uphill fight today over, what were in the past, very common political issues. As citizens find that representative government is less responsive, and that even local governance claims to be powerless over an increasingly large area of daily life, what will they conclude? As voices are not heard or ignored, the citizenry must resort to more confrontational tactics outside the norm of our current political institutions. However, as the Occupy movement showed, even successful political confrontation raises the question of what comes next.

What are our first steps out of this situation? First, we need to expose the deep state and its agency. As discussed above, intermediaries are needed to authoritatively expose the state. These intermediaries are also necessary to provide the expertise that can expose the complex activities of the deep state. The challenge here is for such intermediaries to show that they are a *real* authority in the anarchist sense discussed above. This suggests that we should look for new, disruptive voices rising from the more open media our contemporary technology provides. We should also look to that second route of establishing autonomous authority, the arts, for voices and actions that expose the state. These new intermediaries can (one hopes) expose the state's concealed agency effectively to the public because they are free from the political biases that undermine older channels of political commentary.

Second, our politics needs to highlight the ability to organize and get things done without the state. Such activities undermine the ideology of concealing the state because they teach us that our current dependency on the state is not a dead end. However, there are two potential pitfalls here. One is that the state, concealing its agency, may be all too happy to claim that its support in critical policy areas is no longer necessary, thanks to volunteer and charitable action. The second risk is that by turning away from the state, we fall into its ideological alter ego, the market. Thus, we need to create organizations that resist the co-optation of both the state and market. The first of these needs means that charitable organization needs to assist others while asking how much more could be done if the state applies its resources. The second of these needs means that charitable organization should reject the limitation that it must be self-supporting.

More concretely, both of these requirements suggest that organization from below should be iconoclastic. The rules of the market, with its conformity to "professional behavior" and business norms, should be rejected. Instead, an important alternative could be provided to the public imagination if public goods can be provided by radically different forms of human self-organization. Are there ways to provide education to working

families that do not look like traditional schools, or in our contemporary setting, for-profit charter schools? Can we imagine charities that break down the walls of client and provider in a new institutional form? In other words, can we imagine organizations powered by human agency that do not look like those of the state or the market?

Third, we should, as citizens of various political systems step forward and demand that the state *does* act in policy areas that we prioritize. Such a call seems contrary to the anarchist tradition drawn on in many places throughout this work. However, this call for pressuring the state to act satisfies two important, contemporary needs. The looming ecological threats of our time require the decisive, coordinating action that nations states have provided historically. The challenge though is for all of us to push our respective states to coordinate policy action on a planetary scale to avert universal disaster. Acting in concert is not what states are good at. Even with their current consensus on global capitalism, we see nation states still angling for the competitive advantage, or particular interest that allows them to “win.” Breaking this habit, and harnessing the power of the state to stave off ecocide, will require mass action by citizens across borders.

In turn, an effort to use the state effectively in policy areas like ecology can challenge the ideology of concealing the state. Tackling our current environmental crisis should show the citizens of the world that relying on markets does not produce optimum outcomes, but can instead lead to mutual degradation. If we can harness the power of the state to protect our ecological commons, by constraining market forces, then we could perhaps revitalize popular consciousness of the state’s agency.

By reviving our consciousness of the power of the state, we may also be working toward its obsolescence. Nation states have provided human beings with enormous power to coordinate, and thus exploit, the potential of society. Now that we live in a period where that exploitation has reached a dangerous pitch, through ecological ruin and technological risk, perhaps we will reconsider the utility of this invention. Such speculation may seem outlandish as we still live in a world of borders and states. Nonetheless, we need to accept that our old/modern politics, with its modern forms and institutions, is failing to fit our postmodern situation. We must try to re-imagine politics in this contemporary condition, and perhaps postmodern states are not part of that future.

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