

Analyzing the boundaries between the state keeping control of a situation and usi...

[Government](#)



Recently, states such as Saudi Arabia, China, and Russia have come under criticism for their alleged use of excessive force, extreme acts of violence, and human rights violations. Consequently, questions have arisen as to whether or not 'the state' has wized up and outlived its usefulness, or that it has gone 'mad with power' and lashes out any perceived threat to itself. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, political theorist Max Weber defined 'the state' as it " maintains a monopoly of legitimate violence... and the state offers protection to all, even if it also often fails to deliver." (Wolff) 'The state' often refers to the census of all people living within a confined area and is inherently responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of everyone living within the space. Succinctly, the state is the only political entity entitled to wield violence in order to enforce the rule of law. 'The state' is a permanent, proactive force that transcends the boundaries of a nation, and coupled with its capacity to use the threat of violence to maintain social order, it holds a high position of power which supersedes that of the average individual.

Cases have been made for the necessity of 'the state' and stressing the importance of its role in the postmodern world. Firstly, 'the state' is the protectorate of 'the people', meaning it's basic function is to assure 'the people' that their safety and security is prioritized above all else and accounted for. Without Hobbes' Leviathan wielding violence to reinforce man's better angels, people would wage war with one another and we would be living in a dog-eat-dog world: " Nothing could be worse than life without the protection of the state, Hobbes argued, and therefore strong central government is essential to ensure that we do not lapse into the war of all

against all.” (Wolff) Secondly, ‘ the state’, along with its agents, lay the groundwork for civil society at the benefit of ‘ the people’ and establish rules and regulations on the social, economic, and political institutions at play. ‘ The state’ is the world-builder, creating and rearranging civil society in their image and for the citizenry to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Finally, ‘ the state’ is the lesser of two evils when compared to anarchy and the complications that stem from it.

‘ The state’, embodied by the institution of a centralized government, is necessary because it preserves the ‘ natural order of things’ with the promise of equal protections and securities on behalf of the people. Without ‘ the state’, humans would live in perpetual fear of everyone else depriving them of their life, liberty and property, and so anarchy should be averted at all costs. Hobbes argued that that a strong, centralized government would have the proper authority to maintain every individual’s natural rights and to ensure that we do not lapse in a “ war of all against all” (Hobbes), and essentially the social order, delicate as it was, would collapse like a tower of cards and society would be in shambles: “ The Leviathan ensures order, law and preservation with a sword and any means necessary to keep the public at peace.” (Wolff) Concisely, the absence of government has farther-reaching negative consequences as opposed to the short-term pitfalls of a central government, or Leviathan, and its enforcement by threat of violence. Mans’ worst enemy is himself and so self-conflict, along with conflict with other, would occur in the process. Thus, the central government that is ‘ the state’s serves the purpose of ensuring the good behavior of the populace

through lawmaking, backed by ' the state' and its manipulation of violence as a means of behavior-control.

Since ' the state' is comprised of the people and their elected, representative officials, it has an overwhelming political obligation to meet its end of the bargain and provide its protection to the best of their ability, and so we the people must also live up to our end and abide by the law of the land. In a perfect world, if ' the state' were to deny their responsibility and/or explicitly refuse to extend their protections to all or selective groups of the citizenry, then law-abiding residents of ' the state' are not obligated to fulfill what is expected of them; subsequently, ' the state' would be dissolved and anarchy would ensue once more. However, in the imperfect world we find ourselves in, ' the state' is generally not quick to yield their power without a fight; and in the case of insurrection, ' the state' is far more willing to go to the lengths they need to in order to enforce their authority over the people through exercising their monopoly on violence. Locke's theory of the ' social contract', which differs from that of Hobbes and Rousseau's, argues that ' the people' have a tacit agreement with the ' the state' which requires both parties to give an inch, so to speak, and sacrifice a few of their powers for the greater good, moving our ancestors forward from the ' state of nature' to the civil society found today. Unfortunately, over time, ' the people' inevitably forego more of their rights in favor of lending ' the state' the necessary authority to protect the rights they have left. Although we don't necessarily consent to the current status of the social contract, the consent of our ancestors to be governed by ' the state' predates any single person's disagreement and so is upheld as the status quo.

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Also, 'the state' is very much needed for the continuity of socioeconomic mechanisms that lead to a stabilized job market, social mobility, education etc., all of which are typically accredited to the well-oiled machine that is 'the state' and its agents. Anarchy consists of innate equality of 'the people'; however, this equality is in the sense that everyone is scraping from the bottom of the barrel due to death, conquest by another party or parties, or theft of property at the hands of said parties. For all intents and purposes, 'the state' turns the proverbial wheel and sets civil society into motion by way of infrastructure, lawgiving, welfare etc. all of which contribute to the consolidation of 'the state', followed by the escalation of violence needed to sustain its growth. Even 'the market', often thought of as a domain mutually exclusive from 'the state', is heavily influenced and regulated by 'the state' to guarantee that wealth distribution does not become unequal. "Before deciding how best to justify the state, we had better be sure roughly equal distribution of resources, rather than the inequalities of income." (Wolff)

Therefore, 'the state' has moved away from direct intervention in the market to a more supervisory approach.

Several arguments are often made against the existence of 'the state'. One such argument is the problem of hereditary consent. According to Locke, 'the state' derives its higher power and political dominion from the consent of the governed. But if later generations of the governed that did consent to 'the state' are no longer around, is it fair that their authority should remain intact and unquestioned? Shouldn't the nature of the social contract change over the course of generations as new people with varied opinions comprise the majority of 'the governed', while the extent of authority and standards

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held of ' the government' has remained relatively unchanged since its founding. Why then should the current citizenry fall in line with a social contract made with their far-flung predecessors? There's also the problem of adjusted burdens. If the existence of ' the state' is premised on its function as lawmaker and law-enforcer, what happens should it no longer be able to fulfill this obligation, delegates one of its function to lower political entities, or shifts the burden so that ' the people' are now responsible for their own safety. Lastly, there's the problem of empowerment. If the nature of the social contract should change such that whatever liberties ' the governed' have left are further relinquished to give ' the government' more leeway in exercising their higher authority, at what point do our rights simply vanish or the government crosses a red line? Who or what has equal or greater authority to challenge ' the state' in the event such a power grab is made?

Though there's no clear-cut, definitive answer on whether or not ' the state' is necessary, it has been a long-term instrument for ensuring the safety of its citizens, generating self-sufficient mechanisms that give way to opportunity and success, and for preventing the collapse of civil society back into anarchy, where the odds of survival are never in your favor.