

On the Source of Government and Power

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Abstract. Power relations exist among all people and all social organizations. Power is the basis of responsibility and interest relations, and also the basis of all political relations. Power stems from violence. Only by relying on sufficient violent means can a government obtain adequate power and executive capacity. The main content of political science is to study the problems of social organizations that hold the highest power. The earliest ancient governments, in terms of the ways they obtained and maintained power, were no different from criminal organizations. The theory of social contract reverses the relationship between means and ends. The purpose of bandits or pirates establishing a regime was not to enter into a contract; entering into a contract was merely a means to maintain their rule. The formation of a contract is mainly not through negotiation but through military conquest. The Marxist theory of the origin of state correctly pointed out that the state is produced through violence and is a tool for class oppression. The mistake of Marxism was to replace political struggle with class struggle. Political struggle not only includes conflicts arising from economic interests but also those from ethnic, marital, religious, and organizational interests.

Key words: Political science; Government; Origin; Power; Violence.

1. The Universality of Power Relations

Power relations exist among all people and all social organizations. Power is the basis of responsibility and interest relations, and also the basis of all political relations. However, power itself is not only a political concept, the earliest power relations originated from families and clans. The predecessor of the state was the clan society. Both matrilineal and patrilineal clans needed power to maintain. After power relations exceeded the scope of clans and clan alliances, the state emerged.

Aristotle believed that only the politics of the city-state was politics, and that household management was not politics, how a person managed his wife, children, slaves and property was not politics. [1] This view of Aristotle was completely wrong. All power relations are political relations. Not only the relationship between slaves and slave owners is a political relationship, but also the relationship between husband and wife and that between father and son involve political issues. Today's issues of women's rights and the protection of minors are extremely influential political issues that require government legislation. In China the Confucian thought held that only after self-cultivation and managing the family well can one govern the country and the world. Self-cultivation and managing the family are themselves forms of politics.

Aristotle might have been emphasizing that the politics of a state could not be like the family relationship established by blood ties, which must have clear power relations and a relatively complete system. If the power relations were not clear and the system was not complete in a family, there usually would not be too many problems. However, if the power relations were not clear and the system was not complete in a state, major problems would arise, even leading to coups, riots or wars. But Aristotle failed to notice the close relationship and similar laws between the family and the state. Clear power relations and a complete system can be applied to the management of every family and can form a relatively complete family science, making the family harmonious and efficient. Emperors needed to have clear power relations and establish a complete system even more when handling family relations.

2. The Source of Power

The legitimate rights of family members and enterprise employees stem from the authority of national laws, which in turn originates from the power of the government. Where does the government's power come from? Mao Zedong said: "Government comes from guns." This means that power of government originates from violence. A government without power is not a government; if a government lacks sufficient means of violence to uphold its power, it will collapse. The government's power must be obtained through violence and must also be maintained by violence. Only by relying on sufficient means of violence can the government acquire sufficient power and enforcement. Marx said: "The weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons." The proletariat has to overthrow the bourgeois government to achieve liberation, rather than relying merely on theory and votes. Other forms of social progress often cannot rely solely on theory and votes but must also rely on violence.

The main content of political science is to study the problems of social organizations that hold the highest power. International organizations do not hold real power and therefore are not governments. If international organizations could hold real power, they would become governments. The United States of America was originally just an international alliance without federal government institutions. Later, federal government institutions emerged and their power grew increasingly significant, thus transforming it into a government. A country's border is a line that its rulers have the authority to control. It is neither a boundary of ethnicity, language, nor culture, but rather a boundary of power. Borders are often determined by wars and have little to do with ethnicity, language, customs, or geography.

The earliest ancient governments were no different from criminal organizations in terms of acquiring and maintaining power. There were many criminal organizations in the world, and if one criminal organization overcame other criminal organizations in a certain area and maintained its dominant position, then this criminal organization became the government of that area, and that area turned into a country. The organizational culture of modern governments has changed from being self-centered to being public-spirited, which is the main difference between modern governments and criminal organizations. Even the organizational culture of ancient governments had to include elements of benevolence and righteousness, appropriately taking care of the interests of the majority; otherwise, it would be difficult to survive. Even if a government was as powerful as the Qin Dynasty of China, without benevolence and righteousness, it could only end up with a short-lived reign.

3. The Contract Theory

In chapter thirteen of *Leviathan*, Hobbes discussed the famous concept of the State of Nature. Before arguing for the necessity of establishing a state, Hobbes traces back to the origins of human beings in a state without government, society, law, or morality. In this State of Nature, each person was an independent individual, ostensibly equal but in reality akin to beasts, filled with strife and mutual slaughter. Hobbes argued that among human nature, competition, suspicion, and honor were the three primary causes of conflict. Without a common authority to awe everyone, people were in a state of war, a war where every person was against every other. People acted on animalistic desires, burning, killing and plundering. In this state of war, industry and creativity could not exist because the fruits of production were extremely unstable; once someone produced something, it would be taken away. Art, literature, and wealth could not be preserved.

Hobbes pointed out that it was precisely because people feared the days of uncertainty and anxiety, yearning for a comfortable and stable life, that rational individuals proposed solutions to achieve a peaceful state. The solution proposed by Hobbes was called the social contract. What is a contract? Hobbes did not mean that we actually sign a written agreement on paper; here, "contract" is more like a transaction, where people voluntarily cede some rights to a sovereign for the sake of self-preservation, while accepting the sovereign's protection. The sovereign is an absolute authority, a *Leviathan*, it is a state with public power.[2]

Hobbes's theory of the social contract addressed the necessity of the state and the origin of law, which was its greatest contribution. Many people in modern society still advocate anarchism, and Hobbes's theory serves as a severe critique of anarchism. At the same time, there were significant errors in Hobbes's theory.

First, Hobbes's theory turns the means and ends upside down. The primary aim of establishing a government was to safeguard the power and interests of the rulers, and the government's role in society is a means to maintain its own rule.

Second, the absence of a central authority does not necessarily lead to an immediate outbreak of war; the presence of a central authority cannot completely prevent war. In fact, over the millennia following the establishment of central authorities, the scale of wars had often increased. The social role of government not only includes preventing wars but also enhancing various public interests, such as the construction of public works like water conservancy projects and ensuring the survival and rights of the poor.

Third, the theory of contracts failed to find the primary method of contract formation. While rulers and subjects can indeed enter into some form of agreement, the formation of contracts is primarily not through negotiation but through military conquest. The law of the jungle is the main source of contracts. Each social revolution first establishes a regime and then forms a contract. If the new regime cannot win in war, then the contract formed is useless.

Fourth, the theory of contracts reversed the order of the creation of contracts and power. It is not that contracts were established first and then rulers acquired power, but that rulers first acquired power and then established contracts to ensure its long-term maintenance. The emergence of states could avoid war under certain conditions, yet states generally arose from wars and grow through continuous conquest. Bandits or pirates established regimes by relying on violence, and if they gained public support, the regime could persist. Public support is essentially an acknowledgment of a contract. After being conquered, the ruled relinquished power; slaves relinquished all power because they were completely conquered, while commoners and nobles relinquished some power because they were not entirely conquered and retained significant resistance capabilities. Therefore, when they relinquished power, certain conditions must be met, some guarantees must be given, which were recognized by the rulers to form political institutions, which constituted the main content of contracts.

The Marxist theory of the states emergence correctly pointed out the relationship between means and ends, arguing that the state relies on violence and serves as a tool for class oppression. Hobbes's theory of the social contract can be unified with Marxism of class struggle under certain premises. Everyone loves freedom, and no one is willing to voluntarily give up power and interests to accept the rule of others. The contract can be forced or semi-voluntary. Semi-voluntary means that after being forced to accept it, one finds that this contract is somewhat beneficial to oneself and thus gives up resistance. Therefore, the contract can be reached through negotiation or through violent struggle.

The error of Marxism is substituting class struggle for political struggle. The class struggle refers to the struggle between people divided by economic interests, while the political struggle encompasses all struggles arising from the pursuit of power, including those triggered by economic interests as well as those arising from interests related to ethnicity, marriage, religion, organizations, and other aspects. After all these forms of struggle, contracts can be formed, so the state is not necessarily the product of class struggle.

4. Bandits Turned into Government

Yi Zhongtian once told a story. From 1913 to 1917, there were frequent commercial travelers on the Sichuan-Shanxi road, and bandit raids were also common. As raids increased, the number of travelers gradually decreased. The bandits realized that continuing this way would cut off their own source of wealth, so they decided to charge protection money according to certain standards in different areas, and no longer plundered the farmers in surrounding towns, turning it into a form of protection fee. If there was a robbery, they would investigate and punish it; if other bandit groups

came to rob, they would suppress them. This way, the people in surrounding towns began to produce normally, the number of traveling merchants gradually increased, and the income of the bandits steadily increased. Yi Zhongtian said that the essence of ancient governments was similar to that of bandits. At first, they all wanted to plunder the people, but later they replaced plundering with collecting protection money, which became the government. [3]

Yi Zhongtian's viewpoint is correct. The process of generating a government is a process of achieving win-win results. Ancient emperors were all bandits who fought for the purpose of dominating the wealth and beauties of the world. However, modern governments are different, almost all governments in modern societies claim to be representatives of the people, serving the people. But we must understand the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon. A bandit gained power through violence, established an organization, and relied on this organization to dominate a region. As long as the bandit could dominate a region, the organization he established became the government of that place. However, most governments lacked vitality and were easily eliminated. How could they enhance their own vitality? Some bandits relied on religious power to strengthen their regime, Chinese emperors all claimed to be sons of heaven. This method had some effect, but its impact was limited. Some bandits found that if they could do good things for their subordinates, it would strengthen their regime's vitality, so they restrained themselves, did less bad, and did more good. Historical facts repeatedly proved that those who win the hearts of the people rule the world, so wise rulers in later generations all claim to be representatives of the people, serving the people.

With the development of social theory, people gradually awakened, and the ideas of democracy and public ownership gained deep roots in peoples hearts. The masses gradually developed the desire, confidence, and ability to resist oppression. In ancient times, common people lacked the confidence and ability to resist oppression, did not know how to organize and manage themselves, thus they could only be exploited by bandits. In modern times, ordinary people have the ability to resist oppression and also have the ability to choose their government. Therefore, governments that serve the people receive more support, while those harm the people face stronger resistance, and governments established by bandits become fewer.

5. Win-Win

People can obtain resources and benefits from nature as well as from others. There are two methods for obtaining resources and benefits from others: deprivation and win-win. Commodity exchange is a kind of win-win, political interest exchange or the exchange of political interests with economic benefits is also a win-win.[4] No leader or political party can only contribute without taking anything. In modern states, rulers can no longer deprive the ruled but still gain significant benefits through win-win, so people continue to strive for power with all their might.

The interests of rulers and the ruled are both contradictory and unified, both in conflict and cooperation. Even in communist societies, there are contradictions between rulers and the ruled. However, it is inaccurate to regard the struggle between rulers and the ruled as the main thread and primary driving force of world political development. Even in primitive and slave societies, there was mutual benefit between rulers and the ruled.

The rulers of barbaric societies mainly relied on depriving others to gain benefits. But with the development of civilization, the resistance of the ruled has become increasingly intense and frequent, forcing the rulers to rely less on deprivation and more on win-win cooperation. After modern states transitioned from private to public governance, the method of deprivation was prohibited by law, leaving rulers to seek benefits through win-win cooperation. This shift from deprivation to win-win cooperation is the main thread of global political development.

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