tionaux comme la Banque mondiale et surtout sur le FMI ont facilité sa tâche. Dans le cas du FMI, l'imposition des aménagements structurels, avec la baisse des programmes sociaux et la privatisation forcée, à rabais, des entreprises d'État dans plusieurs pays, a ouvert la voie au capital international, surtout américain, dans son contrôle des activités dans ces pays.

Cette réorganisation du capitalisme mondial a renforcé le capital financier au détriment du capital industriel. Ce n'est pas que l'industrie a régressé, du moins au niveau mondial. Mais un déplacement géographique de grande envergure est survenu, avec la délocalisation de pans entiers de l'industrie vers la Chine ou les pays d'Asie du Sud-est. Dans ces pays, comme Castells (1998) l'a souligné, la production industrielle a connu une expansion fulgurante, à mesure que les pays occidentaux et le Japon se désindustrialisaient et se tournaient vers la spéculation financière, facilitée par les transactions en temps réel. Ce réaménagement a entraîné, d'une part, une polarisation accrue de la richesse, les opérations financières permettant aux capitalistes d'accumuler encore plus, et, d'autre part, l'enrichissement de classes dominantes locales dans les pays non occidentaux.

Il ne fait pas de doute que, dans ces processus, les États nationaux n'ont pas tous eu la même latitude et la même efficacité. L'État américain peut être vu comme une sorte d'exception. Mais tous les États des pays occidentaux ont pris le même type de mesure, avec des résultats qui ont cependant divergé. De son côté, le gouvernement du Japon, pris dans une crise économique durant les années 1990-2003, causée par l'intense spéculation des années 1990, n'a pas pu intervenir aussi efficacement, la plupart de ses mesures, fondées sur les dépenses de l'État dans le but de relancer l'économie, donc sur l'endettement public, allant à l'encontre des politiques adoptées de gré ou de force par à peu près tous les États. La reprise après 2003 a vu l'État japonais submergé sous une dette accumulée qui dépasse 190 % de son PIB annuel, limitant ainsi sa marge de manœuvre.

Ce que j'ai voulu démontrer ici, dans la lignée du texte de Gavin Smith, c'est la nécessité de tenir compte de l'économie politique dans la compréhension de l'État actuel, et donc dans les tentatives de mettre en place des solutions de rechange au capitalisme et au fonctionnement politique actuel. Ces solutions de rechange se formeront à mesure des mouvements historiques, il n'y a pas de recette prédéterminée. Mais il est urgent de proposer des voies de développement hors du marasme actuel, qui ne profite qu'à une petite minorité, protégée par les États nationaux.

Bernard Bernier, Département d'anthropologie, Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale Centre-ville, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3J7, Canada. Courriel : bernard.bernier@umontreal.ca.

Références

Appadurai, Arjun
1996 Modernity at Large. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Bernier, Bernard
2009 L'expansion du travail précaire, conséquence du système japonais de production flexible. Anthropologie et sociétés 33(1):229-244.

Castells, Manuel
1998 La société en réseau. Paris : Fayard.

Harvey, David
2003 The New Imperialism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David
2005 A Brief History of Neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel
1985 Le capitalisme historique. Paris : La découverte.

"Overstated" Objections?

Akhil Gupta *University of California, Los Angeles*

I presume the editors solicited my input concerning Gavin Smith's provocative essay because they expect me to defend myself against some of his charges. However, what I wish to do here is to broaden debate about the multiple, varied and interesting questions that he raises.

Because the tenor of Smith's essay is so much against extensions of post-structuralism, let me make a post-structuralist point that he would perhaps appreciate. Because I take it as a dictum that all readings are mis-readings, I will not focus on places where I feel he has misread my work or that of other scholars. Instead, I take his misreadings as symptomatic of a tension in his own essay between the need to recover a (largely unreconstructed) left-socialist tradition and the desire to address the current crisis of global capitalism, with its attendant new forms of the management of life and death, and the colonization of the life-world.

Smith thinks "we have lost the balance" between cultural aspects of the state, and its role as a site for political struggle, as a regulator for capitalism, and as a key player in the international arena. He offers a number of arguments about how the state has been understood. He accuses anthropologists of playing the cultural card and of leaving those aspects of the state that deal with capi-

talism and politics to disciplines like sociology and political science. There is no doubt some truth to that, but would he have it otherwise? Very few anthropologists for example have the technical knowledge to write about the transformation of value into price. I agree with Smith that anthropologists ignore economic and political processes involving the state at their own peril. However, the question that needs to be asked is whether scholarship is best advanced by repeating what others have said about fields in which you have lesser expertise or by making original arguments in the area in which you are most qualified.

Smith does contrast the approach he favours, which he labels an encultured political economy and whose flowering he locates in the mid-1990s, to what he dislikes, the post-Foucauldian approaches that have made the production of subjects by state effects their chief preoccupation. He raises a trenchant objection to the idea of state effects, arguing that it constitutes a theory with an unbounded domain ("if one believes in God, then surely everything is a God-effect"). I am sympathetic to Smith's frustration with this line of reasoning. However, from Althusser (whose absence in Smith's essay is curious), one could take the central idea of articulation, and the failure to think about articulation and overdetermination is perhaps where Smith's impressive array of opposites appears least persuasive.

Surely the point is not, as Smith argues, that one can contrast the creation of subjects as the result of the state to the state as the outcome of struggles by people. However much Smith would like to pigeon-hole the post-Foucauldian approaches to the former position, he would find few takers for his formulation among post-structuralists. When Das and Poole (2004) praise Foucault for his attention to statistics and the management of the population, they do so because they find that paying attention to institutional practices gives you better insights into why subjects act the way they do, what forms their praxis takes, and where its direction and limits might lie. If you do not pay attention to the fact that the state is now more involved with the management of life, then it becomes hard to make sense of everything from legal and legislative (state) battles over abortion, debates over stem-cell research, the executive, legislative and military (state) actions of extraordinary rendition, and the legislative (state) changes from welfare to workfare, among many other things happening in the world today.

Smith finds two additional contrasts in understandings of the state: one between a formalist, culturalist perspective versus a historical realist tradition; and the other between a U.S.-centric suspicion and hatred of the state and the left socialist tradition (rendered in the singular) which sees the state as a "crystallization of popular sovereignty." He positions the formalist understanding of the state as "discursively constituted and constituting" in opposition to an approach in which the state is seen in its relation to other social formations such as production relations, gender relations, et cetera. He does not explain why he thinks an understanding of the state that focuses on its discursive constitution is not about production relations or gender relations. Only a very formal understanding of "the discursive" would see it in opposition to "real" relations, rather than as a material practice in itself that had material effects on material agents in the material world.[1]

Smith outlines four sets of divisions: between culturological, anthropological approaches to the state versus the insights of sociologists and political scientists; between post-Foucauldianism and political economy; between formalism and historical realist understandings; and between a U.S.-centric populist hatred of the state and the left-socialist embrace of its centrality to popular sovereignty. However, in Smith's hands, the anthropological and post-Foucauldian approaches are elided with formalism and the hegemonic U.S. suspicion of the state, yielding only two stances for a politics of the state.

I see no clear, logical reason why Smith ignores the other possible positions that could emerge from his own analysis. Where would Smith fit the political scientist James C. Scott, who practices encultured political economy and deals with the discursive construction of the state (1998) as much as the flow of surplus value (1985), but is suspicious of the left socialist tradition? What about the Comaroffs, who are anthropologists in the encultured political economy tradition and share a broadly left socialist orientation, but whose historical realism does not exclude discussion of discursive practices?

Smith's suspicion of the new approaches to the state that focus on the constitutive role of culture and to those positions that he broadly labels as "post-Foucauldian," leads him to disregard some of the most important changes happening in the current global (dis)order. He suggests that the post-Foucauldian emphasis on forms of governance in Hansen and Stepputat (2006) carves off such forms from the political economy in which they are embedded, but it is not clear if this is seen as a *necessary* consequence of post-Foucauldian analytics or whether he thinks that this is an unfortunate lapse on the part of the authors. If the former, then I am afraid that I fail to see why this is the case, although one could equally ask if political economy is not embedded in forms of governance.

Smith criticizes Das and Poole (2004) for asserting that *gamonales* (rural bosses) in Peru live in the margins of the state. Instead, he wishes to locate them within a

"highly disarticulated Peruvian political economy" or in terms of "an informal economy operating in the spaces between formally recognized states." If we pause a little over the concept, "informal economy," we can see that it is a statist concept: it defines activities that are framed in terms of what they are not, namely, as part of the formal economy. Smith might wish to argue that to understand why gamonales live on the margins of the state, Das and Poole necessarily have to speak of the gamonales' position in a highly disarticulated political economy, but, instead, he offers these as competing and mutually exclusive positions.

Although Smith approves of encultured political economy, he sees the cultural and the political-economic at odds with each other, implying that the cultural is somehow less important in the last instance than the economic. His notion of transformative politics is presented without cultural and contingent specification. For example, in referring to the crisis of the liberal democratic state, he never specifies where in the world he is talking about, thus smuggling in "the West" as the subject of history at the very time that he is criticizing others for ignoring the specificities of different states. In what follows, I will elaborate on why my understanding of politics is necessarily cultural and why I argue that efforts to remake the state are necessarily cultural struggles.

But first, we need to begin with the category of "the state" itself, which is used extensively in Smith's article. All claims about "the state" should be countered with the question, "which state?" When analysts refer to "the state," do they mean the state at the federal level, at the regional level or the local level? Which branch of "the state" are they studying—the administrative, legislative or judicial? Which bureau are they focusing on: the police, the revenue department, the education department, the bureau of worker safety, the electricity department, et cetera? What geographical area is being studied? What policies, programs and people do they see as constituting "the state"? When we are faced with claims about "the state," we need to ask whether such claims are true of *all* levels, departments, functions, and programs of the state. My point is that any understanding of "the state" is a form of misrecognition. Rather than see this as a problem, however, I argue that we should accept the partiality of our vision as a necessary starting point for analysis. Yet, the real danger lies less in the fact that our understanding of the state is located and partial than in the illegitimate claims to completeness and holism often made by analysts about "the state."

Scholars, no less than policy makers, are prone to make authoritative pronouncements about the nature of the state, its constitution, its intentions, its capacities and its abilities (or lack thereof) to deliver on its promises, and so forth. I think of such claims to knowledge as illegitimate, not because they intentionally set out to reify the state, but because they do so by default. The indiscriminate use of the term *the state* is problematic because it unwittingly draws the analyst into projects employed by dominant groups and classes to bolster their own rule. Reifying the state is an important means of rule and of obtaining consent for rule, which consists of representing that reification as reality. Using "the state" as a generic analytic category may thus unintentionally co-opt the analyst into the political task of supporting the status quo. Not representing the state as singular may expose a reality that elites have an interest in concealing, namely that, as Gramsci taught us, their control of the state apparatus is historically contingent, incomplete and perhaps even tenuous. Such an acknowledgment opens up new avenues for subaltern politics.

The state is an important object of sociological inquiry precisely because it is a significant and highly consequential social phenomenon: politicians, citizens, courts, bureaucrats, militaries and legislative bodies might use it to justify their decisions and actions. On occasions, different branches and levels of "the state" may act cohesively. Leaving aside extraordinary events, the boundary between state and society may actually be constructed through the everyday practices of state offices and representations created by officials (Mitchell 1991). The commonly held notion of "the state," as Mitchell suggests, may be the *effect* of thousands of humdrum, routinized practices rather than the result of some grand illusion, act of magic or even a collective national fantasy. Indeed, we ought to think of the manner in which routinized practices enable such phantasms to be created, sustained and resisted.

Given that "the state" is really a congeries of institutions, agencies and agendas at different levels that are not necessarily well connected with each other, the important question to ask is the following: when is the attempt to *represent* these disparate, conflicting, pluri-centred, and multi-levelled sets of institutions as singular and coherent *actually successful*? What are the conditions that allow or enable "the state" to appear as a commonsensical entity? Particular branches of the bureaucracy may rely on the notion of a unified state in their practices, politicians may invoke the image of a singular state, and judicial decisions may both illustrate and depend upon the stature of a unified state for their effectiveness. Everyday actions of different bureaus, to the extent that they

(implicitly) invoke a singular state, all help officials and citizens imagine such an entity. "The state," therefore, can be seen as a social imaginary that comes into being through practices and discourses.

Once we see that it is often small but powerful groups whose interests are served by reifying "the state," we can acknowledge that not all attempts to represent the state as cohesive are successful. To the contrary, we must recognize that it is most often political leaders and economic elites who attempt to represent the state as purposive, unitary, and cohesive despite the fact that such a condition is rarely realized. The effort to represent the state as a unified actor both to members of the public and to themselves involves a constant ideological struggle. However, it is not only state officials who have an interest in representing the state in this manner. Poor people may also represent "the state" as singular at particular sociohistorical conjunctures. There are times when groups of citizens may represent the state as unified in order to organize in opposition to particular policies or regimes, to make certain claims, or to argue for limits to government intervention. Political and economic elites may not be united in the project of reifying the state and different fractions of capital or the political class may have an interest in representing "the state" as fractured and split rather than united and cohesive. When I say that these groups most often have an interest in a stable and unified state, I am referring to periods of relatively settled hegemony rather than periods of disruption and change. In such periods of relative stability, preserving the status quo ("the rule of law," "law and order," "a predictable business climate") is usually tied to tightening the hegemonic hold of elite groups.

This approach has several advantages. First, it does not presume the existence of "the state" as a unified actor and purposive organization. Rather than take the existence of the unified state for granted, it takes the articulations of such a state as a "social fact" that requires anthropological investigation. Second, it draws attention to the fact that a great deal of cultural and political work goes into any successful effort to represent a state as singular. Third, it brings issues of representation into the foreground, particularly representations engendered *through* those routinized and repetitive practices that constitute the inner workings of everyday bureaucratic activity. Finally, such signifying practices raise the critical question of the audience for whom such significations are intended to make sense. How representations of the state are understood, by whom, and to what ends, are critical issues that must be attended to in any theory of "the state."

Questions of representation have not been central to theories of the state; this is especially true when we think of policy areas such as poverty and development. Yet, what I am suggesting here is that any discussion of "the state" must consider the articulation of representations with political economy, institutional design, social structure and everyday practices.

My argument emphasizes less the traditional area where scholars tend to look for representations (that is, the public sphere and the media), and instead focuses more on the everyday practices of state agencies. The routine operations of bureaucratic agencies have very important signifying functions and their representational effects should be taken seriously. Such practices, which mediate citizens' contact with state officials and bureaus, may have a greater impact on engendering particular representations of "the state" than any explicit statement circulating in the public sphere. Poor people in rural India encounter state officials in a number of contexts in the course of their daily life—"the state" is neither remote nor unapproachable. I contend that the representational efficacy of these encounters in constructing an image of "the state" far outweighs spectacles and exceptional events. Thus, as Gramsci underlined in his work, a tremendous amount of cultural work goes into representing "the state" *as if* it were a singular and purposive entity rather than a set of disparate and only loosely connected agencies and bureaus at various locations. But, *to whom* are these representational practices addressed and, specifically, how do they address heterogeneous groups of poor people?

The approach I take to the state complicates the dichotomies Smith makes between approaches that focus on the constitution of subjects and those that see subjects as agents creating history, including the state. In a forthcoming book (Gupta In press), I use Agamben (2005) and Foucault to inform the analysis of an eminently political economic question, the relation between poverty and "the state." One can write about liberal states, ignoring *State of Exception*, of course, but why would one *not* want to be challenged by that depressing and exceptionally insightful book? My own position is that even if one wishes to centre an analysis of "the state" in 1990s-encultured political economy, one would be well served by incorporating the insights of Foucault and post-Foucauldian thinkers like Agamben to deepen such an analysis.

Akhil Gupta, Department of Anthropology, UCLA, 375 Portola Plaza, 341 Haines Hall, Box 951553, Los Angeles, CA, U.S.A. E-mail: akgupta@anthro.ucla.edu.

Note

1 Readers will recognize this sentence's origin in Althusser's (1971) germinal essay on the state.

References

Agamben, Giorgio
2005 State of Exception. Kevin Attell, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Althusser, Louis
1971 Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards and Investigation). *In* Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. Pp. 127-186. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Das, Veena, and Deborah Poole, eds.
2004 Anthropology in the Margins of the State. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Gupta, Akhil
In press Red Tape. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat
2006 Sovereignty Revisited. Annual Review of Anthropology 35:295-315.

Mitchell, Timothy
1991 The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics. American Political Science Review 85(1):77-96.

Scott, James C.
1985 Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press.
1998 Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Where Failure Is Not an Option, Just a Bad Choice: A Comment on the (Over)stated

Hermann Rebel *Professor Emeritus, University of Arizona*

During the mid-1980s one could no longer avoid the change in discourse at North American and EU academies. Accompanying the increased pace of deal-making among university governments, corporations, state agencies and the physical sciences and engineering faculties, there were also leaders in the so-called policy sciences, with economics out front, to furnish paradigms and projected outcomes for these new bloc formations. Many of us working in such "helping" sciences as anthropology, psychology, geography or history found ourselves increasingly having futile conversations with colleagues, often claiming the space of a Left-after-1989, falling in line to espouse circular notions of agency, identity, diversity, memory, choice, "culture," et cetera, as the new bankable languages for managing post-Cold War capitalist globalization. To this day, anyone who speaks in terms of class, structure, political economy, power, hegemony, et cetera, is, by this dispensation, deemed out of touch with the unavoidable "necessities" of current developments.

One focus for this moment of academic perestroika was, and still is, "the state." The new kid on the bloc was something called "the strong state," a tricky formula that, by claiming roots in Hobbes, Machiavelli, the neo-Stoics, Locke, Bentham, et al., and in "culture" (Britishness for example) had crossover appeal among neo-conservative, neoliberal and left academics. Promising to transcend obsolete Cold War divisions, the "strong state" actually provided a paradigm for the conservative-revolutionary Reagan-Thatcher-Kohl agenda and was eventually bought into by New Labour and Democratic politicians to survive well into the fatal Blair-Bush conjuncture. It was a sly move by which heads of state could promise "to get government off our backs" while simultaneously expanding executive and military bureaucracies (hence the "strong" state) to purge "markets" and the attendant political processes of allegedly unsustainable labour and welfare "interferences" (Gamble 1988; Panitch and Leys 1997; for a prefiguration see Donzelot 1979).

Gavin Smith's fatigue with the quality of the attention being paid to the state in related current formulations is understandable given the contortions and shadow boxing required to distract from this reactionary modernist foundation. The fact is that the historical roots of strong state conceptions are in the corporatist-absolute states of early modern Europe (Lüdtke 1990) which are now almost universally celebrated as historically necessary agents for a "disciplining for modernity" (Oestreich 1982; Raeff 1983) and the line taken by Foucault since his epistemological break in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) was very much in accord with a widespread "disciplining" perspective on the state among historians. This paradigm was never brought under sustained critical scrutiny and instead became part of strong state discourses on "governmentality" and was incorporated into very suspect and yet politically resonant models for integrating the private or local experiences of purportedly empowered and "entrepreneurial" selves into public and global action (Rose 1989).

I share Smith's frustration with what he perceives as the limited gains of such a turn compared to what has to be the more satisfying and deeper understanding offered by a sustained political economy perspective—as when the latter at least gives us an opening *to weigh analytically* what happens to people, or for that matter to "fledgling democracies," who play by governmentality rules only to find that they were set up for a confidence game