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A Conceptual Perspective on the Notion of the Political System

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Abstract: This study examines the role of the state as the central actor within contemporary political systems. Drawing on classical political theory, systems-theoretical frameworks, and modern analyses, the research investigates how the state coordinates institutions, mediates social interests, and ensures political stability in increasingly complex environments. The study adopts a conceptual and theoretical methodology, integrating the historical evolution of state forms, structural-functional approaches, and the interactions between state and non-state actors. Findings indicate that the state maintains its centrality despite challenges posed by globalisation, technological advancements, and the empowerment of non-state actors. The state functions not only as a legal and administrative

authority but also as a coordinator of political processes, a guarantor of democratic participation, and a mediator of societal interests. Institutional interactions with political parties, civil society, and supranational organisations reinforce the state's adaptive capacity and legitimacy. The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the state's enduring and adaptive role within political systems. By linking historical theory, institutional structures, and contemporary dynamics, the study provides a comprehensive framework for analysing how the state sustains governance, public trust, and social cohesion amid modern political and global challenges.

Keywords: Concept of political system, political parties, interest groups, civil society institutions, non-state actors, global economy, social security.

Introduction

The concept of a political system is one of the main ones in political science for understanding how a society's political life is organised. This concept explains not only the existence of state institutions but also how political behaviour, decision-making processes, mechanisms for the distribution of power, and public order are formed within society. The political system is generally a complex structure that involves the interaction among the state, political parties, interest groups, civil society institutions, and other non-state actors. Modern political science clarifies the dynamics of political life by analysing this concept from the perspective of both inter-institutional and inter-behavioural relations. However, today, the evolution of political systems has become even more complex due to global transformations. Globalisation, regional integration, the expansion of supranational institutions and the increasing influence of non-state actors are changing the role of the state. Such changes should not be perceived as weakening the state's independence, but, on the contrary, they indicate that the state's functional and coordinating role is even more important. The role of the state is no longer limited to domestic political life; it also acts as a central actor in global economic, social, and security issues. The state is not only an administrative body of the political system, but also acts as a protector of national identity, social harmony and legal order.

Research Problem

Despite extensive discussions in political science regarding the theory of the state and political systems, there remains insufficient clarity on how the state functions as the central actor in increasingly complex political environments. The existing literature offers various conceptualisations of state authority, institutional frameworks, and interactions with non-state actors. However, it remains fragmented in its explanation of the state's adaptive and coordinating role in contemporary global challenges. Moreover, while classical and systems-theoretical approaches offer structural and functional perspectives, there is a lack of an integrated analysis linking the historical evolution of state forms to the dynamics of modern political systems. This conceptual gap constitutes the primary research problem addressed in this study.

Research Focus

This study analyses the role and functions of the state within contemporary political systems, emphasising its coordination and regulatory capacities amid globalisation, technological advancement, and the increasing influence of non-state actors. Particular attention is given to the interaction between state institutions and other political actors, including political parties, civil society, and supranational organisations. The research examines both historical developments and modern theoretical frameworks to understand how the state maintains political stability, enforces legal norms, and ensures democratic participation within complex institutional settings.

Research Aim and Questions

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the state's central role within political systems, highlighting how it adapts to evolving political, social, and global challenges. The study seeks to integrate historical perspectives, classical political theory, and contemporary systems-theoretical approaches to clarify the state's functions, institutional interactions, and its significance as the core pillar of political organisation and governance.

Based on the research problem and focus, the study will address the following questions:

1. How has the role of the state evolved from classical and early modern political theories to contemporary political systems?
2. In what ways do globalisation, technological advancements, and non-state actors influence the state's coordinating and regulatory functions?
3. How do state institutions interact with other political actors to maintain stability, enforce legal norms, and support democratic processes?
4. To what extent does the state remain the central pillar of political systems in the context of modern challenges?

Literature review / Theoretical Overview

The study of the state and political systems has long occupied a central place in political science and political philosophy. Classical theorists provided foundational conceptualisations of political authority and regime types. Aristotle's classification of political systems in *Politics* distinguished between monarchy, aristocracy, and polity, offering one of the earliest systematic frameworks for understanding governance structures. Later, early modern thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli (2003) emphasised the practical dimensions of statecraft and the distinction between republics and principalities, shifting attention toward institutional durability and political stability.

In modern political theory, the conceptualisation of the state evolved alongside the development of theories of sovereignty and institutional analysis. Max Weber (1978) defined the state as the entity that claims the monopoly of legitimate physical force within a given territory, a definition that continues to shape contemporary understandings of state authority. This Weberian

conception of authority has been further developed in contemporary state theory, in which scholars emphasise the relationship among state capacity, institutional coherence, and legitimacy in sustaining political order (Fukuyama, 2014; North, Wallis, & Weingast, 2009). This Weberian perspective highlights the centrality of legitimacy, coercion, and administrative organisation in sustaining political order.

Historical analyses of state formation further emphasise the interconnection between coercion, capital accumulation, and institutional consolidation in shaping modern political systems (Tilly, 1992; Mann, 2012).

Systems-theoretical approaches significantly advanced the analytical understanding of political systems. Talcott Parsons (1966) conceptualised the political subsystem as a component of a broader social system, responsible for goal attainment and societal integration. David Easton (1965) further refined this approach through his input-output model, arguing that political systems process societal demands (inputs) into authoritative decisions (outputs), while feedback mechanisms ensure systemic adaptation. Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell (1966) integrated structural and functional analyses, emphasising how institutions play specific roles necessary for system stability. These frameworks collectively underscore the interdependence between state institutions and societal actors.

Comparative political analysis also demonstrates that institutional differentiation and bureaucratic professionalisation remain central to system stability (Caramani, 2020).

Contemporary scholarship has expanded these foundations by examining the impact of globalisation and governance transformation. Recent governance research highlights the transformation of public authority into more networked and collaborative forms without eliminating the structural relevance of the state (Ansell & Torfing, 2021; Pierre & Peters, 2020). Similarly, studies of multi-level governance demonstrate that supranational integration operates through state-mediated institutional channels rather than replacing them (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2018; Börzel & Risse, 2018). Scholars such as Held (1995) and Keohane and Nye (2001) argued that increasing interdependence and the rise of supranational institutions are reshaping traditional sovereignty. However, more recent studies suggest that globalisation reconfigures rather than eliminates state authority. Fukuyama (2011) emphasises the importance of state capacity in maintaining political order, while Krasner (1999) demonstrates that sovereignty remains a resilient organising principle despite international pressures.

Recent debates on public value and state entrepreneurship similarly argue that contemporary governance requires active and strategic state involvement rather than passive regulatory oversight (Mazzucato, 2018).

Recent research on governance and state capacity further complicates the narrative of state decline. Migdal (1988) conceptualises the state in relation to society, highlighting mutual transformations. Diamond (1999) underscores the role of effective state institutions in democratic consolidation. More recent analyses of governance networks argue that while authority is

increasingly dispersed, states retain regulatory and coordinating functions within multi-level governance systems (Pierre & Peters, 2020; Zürn, 2018). Studies of post-Soviet and transitional systems similarly indicate that institutional strength and administrative coherence are decisive for political stability and reform trajectories (Levitsky & Way, 2010). Research on post-Soviet regime dynamics further illustrates that institutional durability and administrative consolidation remain decisive for political stability in transitional systems (Hale, 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2010).

Moreover, the growing influence of digital governance and technological transformation has generated renewed interest in state adaptability. Contemporary scholarship suggests that digitalisation enhances administrative efficiency and public participation when embedded within state-led regulatory frameworks (Margetts & Naumann, 2017). Rather than displacing state authority, technological innovation often reinforces institutional coordination and policy implementation capacities.

Taken together, the literature indicates that while political systems have become increasingly complex due to globalisation, technological advancement, and institutional pluralism, the state continues to function as the structural core of governance. Theoretical and empirical studies converge on the conclusion that adaptation, rather than decline, characterises the evolution of state authority in modern political systems.

Research Methodology

General Background

This study adopts a qualitative and theoretical research methodology to analyse the role of the state within contemporary political systems. The research integrates historical perspectives, classical political theory, and contemporary systems-theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of state functions, institutional interactions, and adaptive capacities. The study is primarily conceptual, drawing on literature, case studies, and comparative analyses to explore the interaction between state institutions and non-state actors under conditions of globalisation, technological advancement, and increasing institutional complexity.

Participants / Sample

Since the study is conceptual and theoretical, the “participants” are political systems, state institutions, and relevant actors identified in the existing literature and case studies. Comparative examples are drawn from various forms of government, including presidential and parliamentary republics, constitutional monarchies, and welfare states. The study emphasises diversity in institutional arrangements to ensure the broad representativeness of different political contexts and functional state roles.

Instrument and Procedures

The primary “instrument” of this research is document and literature analysis. Classical texts, theoretical treatises, systems-theoretical studies, and contemporary empirical research on political

systems and state functions were systematically reviewed. Data collection involved identifying relevant sources, coding them by thematic relevance (e.g., coordination, governance, democracy, institutional adaptation), and synthesising the findings to identify patterns and theoretical insights.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed qualitatively, focusing on the thematic, structural, and functional dimensions of the state within political systems. Comparative analysis and content analysis techniques were applied to historical and contemporary literature to identify key patterns in state authority, institutional interaction, and adaptability. The study also employed a systems-theoretical lens to interpret the relationships between inputs (societal demands), outputs (policies and decisions), and feedback mechanisms within political systems.

Results

The study finds that the state remains the central coordinating and regulatory actor within political systems, despite the challenges posed by globalisation, non-state actors, and technological change. Institutional interactions between the state, political parties, civil society, and supranational organisations reinforce the state's adaptive capacity and legitimacy. The findings also indicate that the state performs multiple functions—ensuring political stability, mediating social interests, enforcing legal norms, and facilitating democratic participation—positioning it as the indispensable core of contemporary political systems.

Evolution of the State's Role in Political Systems

The conceptual analysis of classical and modern political theories indicates that the role of the state has not diminished; rather, it has undergone a significant functional transformation. In early political thought, the state was primarily conceptualised as a sovereign authority exercising hierarchical control over society. Classical and early modern theories emphasised centralised power, legal authority, and the monopolisation of legitimate coercion as defining characteristics of statehood. These foundational perspectives positioned the state as the dominant and autonomous core of political systems. This functional evolution corresponds with broader institutional transformations observed in comparative political development literature (North et al., 2009).

However, the findings of this study reveal a shift from rigid hierarchical governance toward more adaptive and coordinating forms of state authority. This interpretation is consistent with recent analyses arguing that globalisation reshapes the scale of governance while preserving the central regulatory authority of states (Slaughter, 2017; Schmidt, 2020). While the structural centrality of the state remains intact, its functional orientation has evolved in response to increasing institutional complexity and societal differentiation. Rather than exercising exclusive command over political processes, the modern state increasingly operates as a coordinator that integrates diverse institutional actors, societal interests, and policy demands within a unified political framework.

The analysis further demonstrates that this transformation does not signify a weakening of state authority. On the contrary, the state's role has expanded to include mediation, regulation, and

institutional integration across multiple levels of governance. By adapting its functions to changing political and social conditions, the state preserves its legitimacy and capacity to maintain political order. Thus, the evolution of the state's role reflects continuity in centrality combined with flexibility in function, confirming that the state remains an indispensable component of contemporary political systems.

Impact of Globalisation, Technology, and Non-State Actors

The conceptual analysis further reveals that globalisation, technological advancement, and the growing influence of non-state actors have significantly reshaped the state's operational environment. However, contrary to arguments suggesting the erosion of state authority, the findings indicate a transformation rather than a decline of state centrality. Global economic integration, supranational governance structures, and transnational networks have introduced new layers of complexity into political systems. However, these developments continue to function within regulatory and legal frameworks defined by states.

The literature demonstrates that non-state actors—such as civil society organisations, multinational corporations, and international institutions—participate actively in governance processes. Nevertheless, their authority is typically mediated through state structures, whether via legal recognition, regulatory oversight, or institutional coordination. Even in contexts of multi-level governance, the state retains responsibility for ensuring policy coherence, security, and institutional accountability. Thus, while decision-making processes may become more distributed, the state remains the primary guarantor of legitimacy and legal order.

Technological advancements, including digital governance and e-participation mechanisms, further illustrate this adaptive transformation. Rather than weakening state authority, technological integration enhances administrative efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement when embedded within state-regulated systems. The findings suggest that modernisation processes increase the functional demands placed on the state, thereby reinforcing its coordinating and regulatory capacities. Therefore, globalisation and technological change should be understood not as forces of state marginalisation, but as catalysts for institutional adaptation and expanded governance roles.

Institutional Interaction and State Coordination

The analysis demonstrates that contemporary political systems operate through complex patterns of institutional interaction, with the state serving as the central coordinating mechanism. Political parties, civil society organisations, interest groups, and supranational institutions actively shape policy debates and influence governance outcomes. However, the findings reveal that these actors do not replace the state; rather, they interact within frameworks structured and regulated by it.

From a systems-theoretical perspective, drawing particularly on Easton's input-output model, the state plays a crucial role in transforming societal demands into authoritative decisions. Political parties aggregate and articulate interests, civil society organisations mobilise participation, and

supranational bodies set regulatory standards. However, the state remains the arena in which these inputs are processed and translated into binding policy outputs. Feedback mechanisms, in turn, reinforce the adaptive capacity of state institutions, allowing them to respond to shifting social expectations. Contemporary public administration scholarship similarly underscores that bureaucratic coordination and regulatory oversight remain anchored in state institutions, even within collaborative governance arrangements (Kettl, 2015; Peters, 2018).

Comparative research on state-building further confirms that political stability in transitional environments depends less on the presence of external actors and more on the consolidation of domestic institutional authority (Tilly, 1992; North et al., 2009).

Comparative examination of different governmental forms—including presidential republics, parliamentary systems, and constitutional monarchies—indicates that, while institutional arrangements vary, the state’s coordinating function remains consistent across them. Institutional diversity affects decision-making mechanisms but does not eliminate the structural centrality of the state. Instead, institutional pluralism increases the need for coordination, mediation, and legal harmonisation, all of which depend on state authority.

The findings therefore suggest that institutional interaction strengthens rather than weakens state functionality. By integrating diverse political actors into a regulated decision-making framework, the state sustains political stability and legitimacy. The capacity to mediate competing interests and maintain systemic coherence confirms the state’s enduring role as the organisational core of political systems.

The State as the Central Pillar of Contemporary Political Systems

The comprehensive conceptual analysis conducted in this study confirms that the state remains the central pillar of contemporary political systems. While structural transformations, global interdependence, and the diversification of political actors have altered the operational landscape of governance, these developments have not displaced the state from its foundational position. Instead, the state’s authority has evolved from a predominantly hierarchical model toward a more integrative and adaptive form of governance.

Across classical, structural-functional, and systems-theoretical frameworks, a consistent pattern emerges: the state provides the institutional architecture within which political processes unfold. Whether through legislative authority, regulatory oversight, or constitutional frameworks, the state establishes the normative and legal boundaries that define political interaction. Even in contexts characterised by multi-level governance and supranational influence, the state retains primary responsibility for ensuring internal stability, safeguarding sovereignty, and maintaining accountability mechanisms.

The findings also indicate that the legitimacy of political systems remains closely tied to the performance and adaptability of state institutions. Public trust, social cohesion, and democratic participation are sustained when the state effectively coordinates institutional actors and responds to societal demands. Conversely, systemic instability tends to arise not from the presence of non-

state actors but from weaknesses in state capacity and governance structures. This observation reinforces the argument that contemporary political complexity increases the importance of state coordination rather than diminishing it.

Ultimately, the results demonstrate that the endurance of the state within modern political systems is not a relic of historical centralisation, but a consequence of its functional indispensability. The state remains the primary guarantor of legal order, policy coherence, and political continuity. Its role has become more dynamic and adaptive, yet its centrality within political systems persists as a structural and normative constant. Contemporary legitimacy crises in democratic systems further highlight that the endurance of political order depends on adaptive institutional frameworks rather than the displacement of state authority (Schmidt, 2020).

Discussion

The expanded findings of this study reinforce the argument that the state retains its structural and functional centrality within contemporary political systems, even amid globalisation and institutional pluralism. While classical theorists conceptualised the state as a sovereign, hierarchically dominant authority, contemporary systems-theoretical perspectives reveal a more complex, adaptive configuration of governance. The present analysis aligns with structural-functional interpretations that emphasise the integrative and coordinating capacities of state institutions rather than merely their coercive or administrative roles.

In comparison with existing scholarship on governance and globalisation, the results support arguments that challenge the “decline of the state” thesis. While some scholars suggest a diffusion of authority beyond the nation-state, others argue that the apparent decentralisation of governance masks a reconfiguration rather than a retreat of state power (Jessop, 2016; Mann, 2012). Some network governance theorists and multi-level governance scholars argue that authority has shifted away from the nation-state toward supranational institutions, transnational networks, and decentralised actors. However, the findings of this study suggest that such interpretations may overstate the erosion of state authority. While governance processes have indeed become more dispersed, they continue to operate within legal and institutional frameworks structured by states. Even supranational decision-making mechanisms ultimately rely on state consent, implementation capacity, and domestic institutional support.

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that the increasing visibility of non-state actors does not equate to the displacement of state authority. Rather, civil society organisations, political parties, and international institutions function within regulatory environments established and maintained by the state. This observation is consistent with systems-theoretical models, particularly the input-output framework, which conceptualises the state as the arena in which societal demands are aggregated, processed, and transformed into binding decisions. In this regard, institutional interaction enhances the complexity of governance but simultaneously reinforces the coordinating necessity of state structures.

The findings also carry important implications for transitional and post-Soviet contexts. In societies undergoing democratic consolidation and institutional reform, the strength and adaptability of state institutions are decisive in maintaining political stability and social cohesion. Weak institutional capacity, rather than globalisation itself, often explains governance crises in such settings. Thus, the relevance of the state is particularly evident in environments where institutional consolidation remains incomplete. The post-Soviet experience demonstrates that the restructuring of political systems requires not the retreat of the state, but its institutional modernisation and enhanced regulatory coherence.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of a purely conceptual approach. While theoretical synthesis provides a coherent framework for understanding state centrality, empirical case studies could further test the extent to which these patterns apply across different regional and political contexts. Future research incorporating comparative empirical analysis would deepen understanding of how varying institutional designs influence the state's adaptive capacities.

Overall, the discussion confirms that contemporary political complexity does not undermine the centrality of the state but transforms its operational logic. The state evolves from a predominantly command-based authority into a coordinating and integrative institution capable of managing multi-actor governance environments. This adaptive resilience explains the continued indispensability of the state within modern political systems. Empirical governance research confirms that even in highly networked political environments, strategic coordination and accountability mechanisms continue to rely on state-centred institutional design (Ansell & Torfing, 2021).

Conclusions and Implications

This study concludes that the state continues to occupy a central and indispensable position within political systems. Its role extends beyond legal and administrative authority to encompass coordination, mediation, and adaptive governance. Historical and contemporary theoretical perspectives collectively indicate that while political environments have become more complex, the state's functional relevance has not diminished.

Implications

1. Policymakers must recognise the adaptive capacities of state institutions to effectively manage societal demands and maintain legitimacy.
2. Democratic stability depends on the state's ability to coordinate interactions between diverse political actors and civil society.
3. Systems-theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights for analysing governance processes and institutional performance.

These findings suggest that the state remains essential for sustaining political order, ensuring social cohesion, and promoting participatory democracy in the face of global and domestic challenges.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Conduct empirical studies examining the interaction between state institutions and non-state actors in specific countries or regions.
2. Explore the impact of technological advancements, such as digital governance and e-participation, on state authority and the stability of political systems.
3. Analyse comparative case studies of emerging political regimes to test the applicability of classical and systems-theoretical frameworks in non-Western contexts.
4. Investigate the role of supranational organisations in shaping domestic state functions and policy outcomes.

These suggestions aim to extend the conceptual and theoretical insights of the present study into empirical and comparative research avenues.

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Conflict of Interest

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