
THE IDEA OF THE “STATE” IN CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THEORY

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Traditional theories of the “state” in public administration theory focus on the governmental apparatus. However, over the last 40 years several forces, such as the rise of neo-liberalism, the dismantling of communist regimes, and the global economic crisis of 2008 have forced a redefinition of the state and challenge contemporary public administration theory. This paper does two things. First, it describes and examines how the rise of neo-liberalism and the fall of communism have produced a crisis in public administration theory through a redefinition of the boundaries between traditional governmental and non-governmental activities. Second, the paper will examine what impact globalization and the economic crisis of 2008 has had on public administration theory and practice. The conclusion will be that contemporary public administration theory is in need of a new theory of the state to reflect the changing political economic order that emerged after the economic crisis of 2008.

Key words: Neo-liberalism, state, globalization, communism, post-communist, global financial crisis, politics, economics.

1. Introduction. The state did not wither away. Contrary to the predictions by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, communism did not lead to the abolition of the state. If anything, 70 plus years of the dictatorship of the proletariat consolidated state power and produced powerful state apparatus and regimes both in what used to be called the First and Second Worlds. In the Second Worlds of the Soviet Union and communism, political ideology created strong state bureaucracies as governments took ownership of the means of production and distribution of basic goods and services, in addition to performing traditional state functions such as national and domestic security. In the non-communist west, many governments also grew powerful, assuming what Charles De Gaulle once described as the "commanding heights" of the economy.

But while communism did not lead to the abolition of the state, other forces have challenged tradition notions defining the line between the state and non-state structures. First, in response to the economic pressures of the 1970s, Thatcherism in England and then Reaganism in the United States led to the emergence of Neo-liberalism and the hollowing out or dismantling of many state functions. Second, globalism, and then the 2008 global recession also challenged theories about the state. Third, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the USSR dictated

a crisis in theories of the state in that it forced a rethinking of the relationship between the economy and the governmental apparatus.

Theories of the economy, state, and public administration are interrelated. As conceptualizations of how markets operate change, so do theories about the role of the state or government in relation to economic activity. The global recession of 2008 along with other changes in the economy have challenged more than a generation of beliefs about free markets and global trade, thereby necessitating a rethinking about the role of governments in promoting policies such as deregulation and privatization. This article examines six forces affecting current conceptions of the state and how they have challenged theories of public administration. It concludes by contending that there is a need to rethink the state for the twenty first century.

2. Markets and Government. Governments and markets are intertwined and connected in at least four ways. First, they represent the two dominate ways to distribute goods and services [12]. Except in the case of face-to-face barter economies, free market and government distribution of goods and services provide rival ways to coordinate their production and distribution. They do that either by decentralizing and privatizing these decisions (in the case of market mechanisms) or centralizing them (as with planned economies). Often these decisions are not dichotomized; in most societies there is a continuum or hybrid of market-government and decentralized-centralized mechanisms that operate.

Second, public power is necessary to create free markets. Polanyi argued that free markets are not architectonic. They did not just arise and develop on their own [16]. Their establishment, especially during the nineteenth century in Europe, was the product of significant uses of governmental authority and power in order to enforce the rules of free markets. Even Milton Friedman, a conservative free market economist from the United States who was best noted for his arguments in favor of privatization and minimal governmental intervention into the economy, conceded that public authority to enforce the basic rules of the market place [7]. Max Weber’s writings on bureaucratic behavior are often read as lessons for organizational theory [24]. But it should be remembered that he discussed bureaucracy and authority within the context of capitalism and the role of the former in helping to sustain it. Modern bureaucracies and economic orders, specifically capitalism, are interconnected.

Third, governmental authority is required to address and regulate market failures, such as free rider problems, (negative) externalities, information asymmetries, and monopolies [5]. For many economists, unregulated free markets produce problems that only government regulate can correct. These may be problems surrounding maintenance of demand [10], distributional issues, or other pathologies that impede efficiency or the ability of markets to react to disequilibrium [14].

Fourth, government intervention may be necessary to provide public infrastructure investment or insure profitability of private businesses [13]. While Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* is best remembered as the first statement

defending free markets and capitalism, the book also offers an important defense for government investment in basic infrastructure (roads and canals in Smith's day and perhaps schools and telecommunications today) in order to sustain and support private investment [19]. Moreover, James O'Connor has argued that modern capitalist states serve two basic functions—promote legitimization or support for the regime and undertake activities that make it possible for private businesses to maintain profitability or maintain capital accumulation [13. P. 3–5].

Describing these four theories of market-state connection is important for two reasons. One, it establishes an interdependence or connection between markets and governments (or public and private power) that is often overlooked. Two, if markets and government are interconnected, changes in one necessitate changes in the other.

3. The Rise of Neo-liberalism. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed significant evolution and change in theories regarding the relationship of markets to the state. The most notable point of contrast between the two was highlighted in the ideological struggle between Soviet communism and American capitalism in the post World War II cold war era. The USSR and the USA represented rival theories about economies and politics, creating a bi-polar world that divided along a host of principles that extended beyond markets and the state. Francis Fukuyama described the two models offered by the USSR and the USA as competing metanarratives to structure the world [8]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and soon thereafter the collapse of the Soviet Union, Fukuyama declared the West (capitalism) as having won, leaving it as the lone metanarrative to order and structure the world.

But Fukuyama was not the first to describe the end of history or the triumph of capitalism. During the 1950s, American sociologist Daniel Bell wrote of the end of ideology [3]. Capitalism won and those in the west had figured out how to live the good life. The question was not about ideology only technique; not the ends but only the means to secure the good life.

The conclusions reached by Fukuyama and Bell were rooted in belief that the post-World War II rising prosperity of the United States was proof of its superiority. This prosperity, based on liberal-democratic political values and Keynesian economic theory, placed western governments at the “commanding heights” of the economy [25]. This model of the state and public administration included regulation of the many aspects of the economy, a social welfare safety net, limited economic redistributions through transfer payments, and use of government investments and purchasing power to stimulate demand.

But the 1970s shook the foundations of the post WWII political economic order of the capitalist west. A combination of high unemployment and inflation produced what James O'Connor argued was a fiscal crisis of the state. For O'Connor, the “tendency for government expenditures to outrun revenues” is what he calls the fiscal crisis of the state [13. P. 2]. The reason for this crisis is rooted in contending class interests that make demands upon the state, necessitating that the

government perform two mutually contradictory functions. The first, the accumulation function, demands that the state create the conditions that help to maximize the accumulation of private profits. Accumulation is articulated on behalf of one class, and it involves socializing certain investment costs or making other expenditures or purchases that increase profitability. While the government may be pressured into increasing spending or cutting expenditures to maintain profit accumulation, this profit is not socially consumed by is retained by businesses.

While the state is pressured to support business profitability, there is a contradictory demand to make some expenses, such as for welfare, in order to maintain social harmony and peace among unemployed workers. O’Connor sees expenditures for this purpose as fulfilling a legitimation function [13. P. 6–7]. From capital’s perspective, legitimation expenditures are not productive; they are simply expenditures to purchase peace.

O’Connor contended that the capitalist state faced a short and long-term fiscal crisis that perhaps could not be remedied. Yet the rise of Thatcherism and Reaganism as a response to the legitimacy and solvency of the Post WWII order provided one avenue to addressing the fiscal crisis. Their solution was to shed many core state functions that would reduce expenditures. This was a privatization strategy. But additionally they advocated deregulation, a cutting back of the social welfare system, an anti-union strategy, and tax cuts. The combination of all these were meant to cut expenses businesses had to burden, thereby increasing their profitability and mitigating the fiscal crisis.

The apparent and temporary resurgence of the USA and UK economies led many to believe that the strategy had worked. Their economic resurgence, along with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of European Communism, and the apparent triumph of capitalism led some to conclude that the West had won, Liberalism had vanquished all its foes, and the end of history had arrived. It is out of these twin events that the core of Neo-liberalism emerged, along with a theory of public administration.

4. Neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is a political economic theory committed to the laissez-faire market fundamentalism ideology that traces back to Adam Smith and David Ricardo [15]. It includes a belief in comparative advantage, a minimalist state, and market freedom, and is, as articulated in the 1990s and 2000s, driven by finance capital. At the state level, neo-liberalism defines a theory of public administration. If neo-liberalism includes a commitment to market fundamentalism, then that also means that it is dedicated to a politics of limited government. This includes privatization, deregulation, and a scaling back of many traditional functions that capitalist and communist states had performed since at least World War II.

As a theory of the state, neo-liberalism dictated specific roles for government officials. It meant, in the case of privatization, that managers would either become contract administrators who oversaw previously performed state functions now being delivered by private actors, or they would be in charge of the sale of state-

run businesses to private entities. A neo-liberal state commits managers to cut regulations or make them more business friendly, crafting them in ways to encourage private capital accumulation. In the United States, one example of this meant adoption in 1999 of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act which deregulated banking, and the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). One can similarly argue that the European Union, especially its emphasis on the free flow of capital across borders, embodies many neo-liberal theories about trade and economics. Finally, neo-liberalism, at least in the United States, would also facilitate anti-union rules and those which would make it more difficult for individuals to secure welfare benefits from the state [9].

A neo-liberal theory of the state in the traditional capitalist west also elicited theories of management such as New Public Management and Reinventing Government [18]. Both of these theories sought to import traditional private sector management theories stressing efficiency into the public sector. In the former communist countries, neo-liberal ideology, especially during the transition period, emphasized cold shock therapy and a rapid conversion from central planning to market economies that included privatization, dismantling of price supports, and rapid sell-off of state-owned industries [1, 2].

But neo-liberalism as a theory transcends the state, providing also an international economic theory committed to free trade and globalism. Manfred Steger distinguishes between two phenomena [21]. He describes globalization as a social process or material process referring to a form of a means of production and attendant social relations to organize the forces of production [21. P. 3]. He contrasts that to globalism which is the dominant political ideology of the day that serves neo-liberal interests. Globalism and neo-liberalism is best understood through the lens of New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman's work, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* [7].

Friedman is not the first writer to describe the emergence of a world global economy. Historians such as Fernand Braudel [4] and Peter Spufford [20] describe its development during the Middle Ages. Political sociologists such as Wallerstein [23] discuss it in terms of the emergence of a world capitalist system, and Marxists including Rosa Luxembour, Rudolf Hilferding, and Vladimir Lenin charted its rise in terms of emphasizing finance and banking. But Friedman is unique in terms of celebrating globalization's emergence in terms of a neo-liberal globalism (in Steger's use of the term).

Friedman saw globalization as having gone through three stages that have metaphorically reduced the world from large to small. Version 1.0 (1492–1800) shrank world from large to medium. The agent of change was brawn and it was about countries and muscles. Globalization 1.0 was pushed by “how much horsepower, windpower, or steampower your country had and how creatively you could deploy it.” Version 2.0 (1800–2000) shrank world from medium to small. It was directed by multinational corporations going global for markets and labor. It was first driven by falling transportation costs, and then the telecommunications

revolution and then the Web. Version 3.0 (2000 – present) shrinks the world from size small to tiny and flattening the playing field. It is directed by individuals seeking to collaborate and compete globally and it is made possible by software and fiber optic networks.

Globalization Version 3.0 driven by what Friedman calls ten flatteners, such as the fall of Berlin Wall, the creation of Microsoft Windows, and Google. These ten flatteners are subject to three Convergences [6. P. 176–177]. Convergence I is the “complementary convergence of the ten flatteners, creating this new global playing field for multiple forms of collaboration.” [6. P. 178]. Convergence II is the rise of business schools, IT specialists, CEOs, and workers comfortable with and able to develop horizontal collaborations who developed “business practices and skills that would get the most out of the flat world.” [6]. Convergence III is the introduction of new players – 3 billion – into a new playing field with new processes and horizons for collaboration. Overall, the 10 flatteners and three Convergences are yielding a frictionless flat world.

A frictionless flat world is the world of GATT, the European Union, and open borders. For Friedman it is one that makes it possible and easy for business and commerce to cross borders. The question Friedman says countries need to ask is: How flat do you want to be? How much friction should government remove via deregulation to make for a flat world [6. P. 216]. The line between those who are in a flat and non-flat world is the line of hope [6. P. 376]. Overall, the task for governments and public administrators in globalization Version 3.0 is to create a world that is immune to political-geographic borders. It will create a free flow of capital, have minimal government regulation and restrictions, and include the development of tax policies to enhance wealth accumulation and profit taking.

Global neo-liberalism takes the theories of state and public administration found at the state level and expands it to the world. It encourages creation of borderless states integrated into a larger national economy. Thus as a theory of public administration it almost demands surrender of nationality and the national interest to the service of a world economy.

A central contradiction thus facing neo-liberalism is its almost anti-statist theory from an internal and external point of view. Internally, states privatize former governmental functions. In some cases this privatization is truly privatization whereby governments turn over the markets free reign to deliver goods and services. But in other cases, privatization meant the state contracting out with private actors to perform state functions. Thus, private actors, including NGOs (non-governmental organizations) would be paid or given authority to perform a host of what was previously considered to be governmental functions. Such privatization across the world included the creation of private prisons and security forces, health care, and the maintenance of roads and other infrastructure. This type of privatization did not actually shrink the state per se, but instead it lead to the creation of many private governments or the heavy regulation of private actors by public administrators. It meant that governmental power was being exercised by

non-governmental actors, subject to varying levels of supervision by public administrators. As a result, the clear line between the government and non-governmental actors and authority was blurred.

From an external point of view, neo-liberalism and globalism also challenged state authority with the rise of international governing bodies and treaties. If Friedman and Steger are correct, neo-liberalism demands that both that individual states minimize their functions and subordinate their authority to broader global regulatory bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). For countries seeking financial bailouts or restructurings such as Hungary, Greece, and to lesser extents Spain, Portugal, and Cyprus, domestic policies were dictated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Neo-liberalism thus demanded both a restructuring of state authority and effective sacrifice of sovereignty to global or trans-national entities.

So think about the challenge to public administration theory that neo-liberalism produced. It forced states to eliminate governmental functions in order to address the profitability squeeze and demands for more market control within a country, while at the same time it required states to cede authority to international trade agreements or organizations such as the European Union or the WTO in order to promote free trade and open borders. The pressures both internally and externally upon states thus challenged notions or theories of what public administration and administrators were supposed to do.

5. The State and the Fall of Communism. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the breakup of the USSR in 1991 also challenged theories of public administration. The two events did so by the fact that across Europe numerous regimes simply collapsed. They collapsed for many reasons that need not be discussed here. But the collapse forced many questions for public administration theory.

Perhaps the most fundamental question that the collapse of these regimes forced was to ask what role the government would have in a new political order. This is a question that asked questions regarding what functions the state should perform. This involves asking basic questions about what role the market should have in a country and to what degree the government should regulate it. Here, many regimes had to confront issues such as which if any state-owned enterprises should be privatized or retained and if the latter, how should they be regulated or controlled. In addition, state officials and public administrators had to be asked about how markets are related to the creation of stable democratic regimes.

But in addition, the fall of communism drove other related questions. For example, should the government guarantee basic goods such as health care or housing or should they be addressed by the free market. There were also questions about how to integrate national economies into a global economy or into regional associations such as the European Union, Council of Europe, or even NATO. These choices had implications for state sovereignty. And finally, there were also issues about the transition from a communist to a post-communist regime, including tackling problems of corruption, administrative law reform, reform of the civil

service, and the installation of a respect for rule of law and constitutional norms and not simply a continuation of rule by nomenklatura (номенклатуры) [11]. In short, the fall of communism demanded creation of a new political and administrative culture if post-communist countries were to successfully transition and become stable democracies. Approximately 20 years later, some formerly communist countries have done better than others in transitioning to democracy.

Overall, the fall of communism and the transition to a post-communist regime challenged public administration and the role of public administrators in many regimes. These were challenges distinct from the pressures of neo-liberalism and globalization. But neo-liberalism and globalization also affected post-communist regimes because they too were subject to pressures from them. As a result, post-communist regimes were forced to transition while also facing many of the same internal and external pressures that other regimes from across the world were confronting.

6. The Crisis of Neo-Liberalism. From the 1990s until approximately 2006–2007, neo-liberalism appeared to reign supreme but now the world economic crash and the rush for state intervention suggest that Fukuyama and Friedman may not have been so right and the rumors of end of history might be premature. Neo-liberalism’s deregulation and surrender of the state to the market and transnational bodies created the forces that led to its own destruction.

In the United States, the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act repealed the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act. Glass-Steagall had created two classes of banks—commercial and investment. The former would be barred from engaging in stock speculation and instead would be limited to making money generally through home and other types of loans. Investment banks would be permitted to speculate on Wall Street. Glass-Steagall was considered a major banking reform; it erected a firewall to prevent the type of speculation that occurred in the 1920s from repeating itself, thereby protecting financial institutions and the public from the problems that destroyed them with the crash of 1929. Some argue that repeal of this Act laid the groundwork for the world economic crash of 2008 as the credit crisis that began in the United States swiftly moved to banks across the world, affecting financial institutions and credit across Europe, including the Russian Federation. The frictionless flat world that Thomas Friedman and other neo-liberals desired literally made it impossible to contain the financial problems from jumping across borders. Globalization means not just the good crosses the borders, but also the bad.

The 1999 protests in Seattle, Washington at a meeting of the WTO were an early warning sign of the crisis facing the neo-liberal state. Here social and political protests confronted WTO trade, labor, and environmental policies. But the global crash of 2008 is challenging not just neo-liberal thought in several ways. First, the prevailing paradigm of government and its officials taking a minimalist approach to government regulation was questioned. Such tactics were not neutral but perhaps a major cause of the world financial meltdown. Second, the government responses to the meltdown also raise a challenge to public ad-

ministration. Specifically, the significant public bailouts of banks and businesses question whether the market fundamentalism of Milton Friedman makes sense in light of the fact that deregulation had created the forces leading to the crash. Conversely, the subsequent bank bailouts implicate significant questions about the sustainability of such a strategy without bankrupting the state. Third, the world financial crisis beginning in 2007-8 raises questions about the desirability of a frictionless, flat world of open borders described by Thomas Friedman. Had there been in place circuit breakers or regulations to prevent the spread of the American financial crisis to the rest of the world the crash might not have occurred. Contrary to Friedman then who argued that the winners of the new economy would be those inside the flat world, the real winners to be those outside of it.

But at the same time that the global recession of 2008 produced one crisis for neo-liberalism, the response to it yielded another. Financial bailouts in the United States and across the world by the IMF, World Bank, and the European Central Bank, for example, raised questions about the viability of globalization, open borders, and minimal state regulation. The bailouts and financial restructuring that followed both raised questions about state or regime-specific capacity to protect itself or regulate transnational actors such as multi-national corporations. In effect the crisis and response to the crisis demonstrated that the minimal neo-liberal state had failed and that regimes also seemed powerless to regulate and isolate themselves from global financial trends.

Taken these points together, the crisis of the neo-liberal state goes back to raising some fundamental questions about the role of the state in relationship to markets. Are governments merely inferior partners in the delivery of goods and services? Are they only regulators of economic behavior to prevent market failures? Or are they critical agents to construct and enforce markets and perhaps even serve as viable and necessary economic participants in service and goods delivery? To ask these questions is to challenge neo-liberal orthodoxy for the last 20–30 years, including the desirability of deregulation, privatization, and the sell-off of state-owned enterprises. This is the challenge to the neo-liberal state posed by the global crash.

But another challenge neo-liberalism asks if the current vision of globalization (globalism for Steger) remains a viable world economic system (in the way Wallerstein uses the term). Globalism has demanded significant sacrifice of state sovereignty to appease the demands of the WTO and GATT, for example. Were states able to articulate their own policies to protect their markets, banks, and borders, perhaps many of the problems that transpired across the world would not have moved from the United States and to other countries as a result of faulty and risky lending policies in one nation. Thus one prong of the crisis of the neo-liberal economic crisis demands reinvigoration of state power. But conversely, a different critique of neo-liberalism is that the current world economic order remained too unstructured, therefore necessitating something similar to global Keynesianism to save it. This at least is the contention of Stiglitz [22]. Creation of this type of

Keynesianism would necessitate the establishment of world or transnational institutions with far more authority than states current enjoy. Thus, the problem of neo-liberalism may be that states need to have both more and less authority than at present.

Another problem faces the neo-liberal state depends on its location within a world economic system. The options that a United States has versus a country such as Hungary, Greece, or a Lithuania are very different. In the case of the United States, its relative wealth and size of its economy may allow it to ignore or bypass demands of the IMF and the World Bank to restructure its own domestic policies. Yet for other smaller economies that may not be the case. In 2010 the sovereign debt crisis in Greece forced it to make significant cuts to many social programs and to restructure its government bureaucracies in order to appease lenders. Hungary, and to some extent, Spain and Portugal faced similar pressures. In the case of Lithuania, it opted to cut spending and slash government services. In all of these cases governments had to enact policies that went contrary to the express demands of its population, creating a political crisis threatening the current ruling coalitions and defying majority preferences. Neo-liberalism thus creates a democratic deficit or crisis.

7. Conclusion: The Need for a New Theory of the State. This article has identified several forces or trends that challenge current conceptions of the state and public administration theory. These challenges include: (1) the rise of the neo-liberal state, (2) globalization, (3) the fall of communism, the (4) transition to post-communist regimes, (5) the collapse of the global economy in 2008, and (6) the bailout of many states and financial institutions thereafter. These six events over the last 40 years implicate questions about what the state should look like in the future and what role governmental officials and public administrators should have in it.

Elsewhere I have argued that in part the crisis of contemporary public administration theory is a multi-level level asking normative questions about why we should have government, what government should do, how can we produce more efficient and equitable public policies, and what are the tasks of public administrators [17. P. 453–464]. These are part of the questions that are at the heart of concerns about what is the current crisis facing public administration theory. But all of these questions presuppose or are connected to the basic question being posed by this paper – what is the theory of the state in contemporary public administration theory? What we do not have presently is a theory of the state that defines its role in the global economy for the twenty-first century. It is a theory that needs both to define its internal role within a country and also in relationship to other states and international or trans-national entities that operate across the world.

This article thus closes by arguing that the state has not withered away but that theories about it have. We do not have a clear theory of what governments should now do, thereby leaving public administration too unclear regarding what

we expect government workers should do, and also unclear what public administration programs should be teaching their students.

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ИДЕЯ «ГОСУДАРСТВА» В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ТЕОРИИ ПУБЛИЧНОГО АДМИНИСТРИРОВАНИЯ

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Традиционные теории «государства» в теории государственного управления сосредотачиваются в большей степени на правительственном аппарате. Тем не менее в течение последних 40 лет несколько тенденций, таких как подъем неолиберализма, упразднение коммунистических режимов и глобальный экономический кризис 2008 года, заставили переосмыслить идею государства и бросить вызов современной теории государственного управления. В статье автор описывает и исследует, как подъем неолиберализма и падение коммунизма создали кризис в теории государственного управления через переосмысление границ между традиционными правительственными и неправительственными организациями. Кроме того, в статье проведена оценка степени влияния глобализации и экономического кризиса 2008 на теорию и практику государственного управления. Автор приходит к выводу, что современная теория государственного управления нуждается в новой теории государства, которая способна отразить изменения политическо-экономического порядка, возникшие после экономического кризиса 2008 года.

Ключевые слова: неолиберализм, государство, глобализация, коммунизм, посткоммунистический, мировой финансовый кризис, политика, экономика.