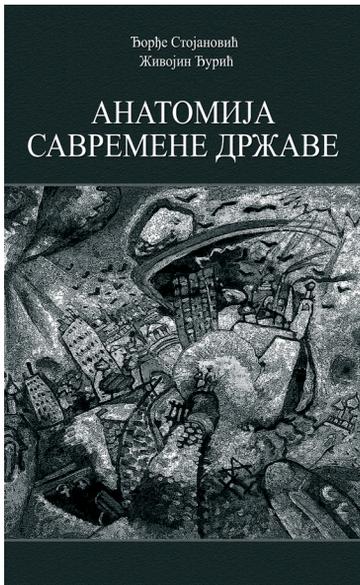


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## Anatomy of the Modern State

Djordje Stojanović, Živojin Djurić  
*Anatomija savremene države (Anatomy of the Modern State)*

Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2012.



The ancient Greeks called the ones who lived out of state i.e. stateless persons idiots. This word, that has taken on another mean-

ing today, is therefore, etymologically derived from the word idiots meaning: alone, stateless. The extent to which living in a state, i.e. belonging to a polis was an essential element of identity for the ancient Greeks is obvious in the existence of the institutions of ostracism and excommunication. Therefore, since ancient times the state as a concept and entity has been a subject of theoretical (and not just theoretical) interest, and even today the issue has not lost on its actuality, intrigue and relevance (both on the planes of *vita contemplativa*, and *vita activa*). The state as a subject has also always played a role in theoretical debates on the eternal struggle between liberty and order. In the history of ideas this protean word,

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therefore, has an important role, thus making the significance of this monograph titled *Anatomy of the Modern State* undeniable. Relevance of the problem of the state is also illustrated by the position of the authors in which a state can be seen as an “ideological cage”, i.e. as something neither ourselves nor others, can be perceived without, either as individuals or as members of a collectivity (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 5). This is not a purely academic issue, as shown by a bit of a rhetorical question asked by the authors in the preface to their monograph, which reads: “Is our state really our fate?” (Stojanovic and Djuric 2012: 5). This question also tells us of the authors’ incentive and inspiration to address this issue.

The monograph titled *Anatomy of the Modern State* by Djordje Stojanović and Živojin Djurić, published by the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade represents a significant contribution to the clarification of key issues related to the theory of the state. As the title suggests, this monograph contains all relevant elements i.e. aspects of this complex and multidisciplinary theoretical question. The authors have raised many important questions and issues, and elaborated on the answers to them. Among them, particularly prominent are questions like: what is the position of the state within the framework of

different theoretical approaches, whether one can speak of the universal theory of state, and finally, what is the position of the nation state in the globalization process. Also analyzed were relevant issues and phenomena of contemporary political theory and practice, such as: the complex relationship between the state and the society, the concept of state capacity and its relationship to the processes of democratization, modernization and globalization, followed by the phenomenon of public bureaucracy, and the concepts of weak and strong state.

The monograph *Anatomy of the Modern State* consists of five thematic sections titled: *Theoretical Approaches to the Modern State*, *Problem of State Capacity*, *Phenomenon of Public Bureaucracy*, *Responsibility, Implementation*, *Weak and Strong States*, and *Serbia as a Weak State*. The first part, as the very title suggests, discusses the definition and determination of the state, and emphasizes the theoretical novelty in the conceptualization of the modern State. In this section the authors also cover the relationship between the state and the society, despotic and infrastructural power of the state, as well as the cultural perspective on the perception of the state. First of all, definitions of the state are given, as they have evolved throughout history, from pre-modern for-

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mulations of Plato and Aristotle, through Weber's definition, a classical reasoning of the Modernism, to the formulations of relevant contemporary authors. According to these analyses, the authors come to the conclusion on the inability to scientifically establish a universal theory of state; one can not talk about the theory of state that would be valid regardless of time and space. As the authors note, the concept of state is somewhat elusive and complex, because the state can not be identified neither with an individual nor a group, as it can not even identify with its citizens, its Constitution, neither with its powers nor purposes. And yet, it is undeniably real, as real as taxation, punishment, or warfare, so it can be talked of certain ambivalence in the concept of the state (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 15). The distinctive features of the modern state by Christopher Pierson are: monopoly of the means of violence, territory, sovereignty, constitutionality, impersonal power, public bureaucracy, authority/legitimacy, citizenship and taxation (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 26).

As the product of the process of modernization commenced by the Enlightenment, there is a principled separation of state and civil society, and their relationship is one of the fundamental issues of political science. One of the inspiring definitions of civil society

is that it presents an ethical vision of civil life, so it can be said that there is a certain juxtaposition of the state to civil society. The next question that arises is what is the position of the nation state in the era of globalization: is it discredited or just in need of a radical change in its role and function? The authors point out: "Somewhat unexpectedly, the conceptual and value-related fatality of the state (is) intensified by the globalization paradigm" (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 5). Further, they present their conclusion: "Alteration of the political efficiency of the nation state does not suggest that the politics or sovereignty are in the shadow of economy: politics is not gone, gone is any perception of autonomy of the political. The novelty is that sovereignty acquires the form composed of a number of national and supranational organisms connected by a unique logic of governance" (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 93).

The second part of the book, titled Problem of State Capacity is devoted to the analysis of the concepts of modernization and national capacity, followed by the concepts of functional and dysfunctional state, as well as the analysis of the relations between state capacity and the process of democratization, modernization and globalization. The authors here offer different conceptualizations of state capacity, emphasize

ing the importance of studying the issue. Two aspects stand out as main aspects of capacity: the relative autonomy of the state in relation to social stakeholders and professionalization i.e. “weberization” of state bureaucracy. The high level of state capacity is manifested through the following indicators: monopoly of the means of violence; secure environment for the conclusion and implementation of contractual obligations; harmonization and regulation of institutions, distribution and extraction of resources, as well as continuous production and delivery of public goods. (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 116). State capacity is, therefore, reflected in the institutions: capacity building involves the institutionalization and empowerment. It proves to be relevant to the explanation of a number of different phenomena: economic growth and development, democratization, political culture, and civil violence.

In this chapter, the authors also attempt to identify the nature of modern social institutions, demonstrating where they present continuity and where discontinuity in comparison to the traditional social order. New institutionalism, according to the authors, insists on a more autonomous role of political institutions, without neglecting the importance of social context and motives of individual stakeholders. (Stojanović

and Djurić 2012: 105). The state is not only influenced by the society any longer, but it also affects it. What new institutionalism also brings is the view that political democracy is not just based on economic and social conditions, but also on the design of political institutions. The authors note that institutions are important because they shape people’s behavior and give legitimacy to certain rules, as well as establish cultural and social norms.

The third chapter of the monograph titled Phenomenon of Public Bureaucracy is dedicated to the analysis of the historical genesis and the modern understanding of bureaucracy, and to an analysis of the politicization of the democratic legitimization of the public bureaucracy, as well as the analysis of the concepts of the new public management and public administration. In the fourth section of the book named Responsibility, Implementation, Weak and Strong States the authors provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept of democratic accountability, good public policy and implementation process, as well as the concepts of strong, weak and failed states.

Based on these fundamental studies, in the fifth and final chapter of the monograph the authors deal with the analysis of the democratic transformation of the Serbian state and society, assessing

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Serbia as a weak state. Here the authors cite numerous problems faced by Serbia at the beginning of its democratic metamorphosis: incomplete democratization of the political system, political instability, the so-called party Ottomanization, lack of strategic consensus, and finally, political corruption that is so widespread that, as the authors note, it gained the status of the “cultural code” (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 260). Also present, as the authors bravely note, is the so-called criminalization of politics i.e. instrumentation of institutions for private purposes by both political management structure, and cryptic, parallel power structures located around it (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 259). The authors, therefore, assess Serbia as a weak state, citing the following factors: structural economic crisis and dependence on loans and grants; corruption; discrepancy between the state and the society, with very low levels of social cohesion, as well as the problem of ethnic and regional fragmentation; the party Ottomanization; political suitability of bureaucracy, and finally, the problem with territorial definition, and a high degree of external conditionality and pressures (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 267). According to the foregoing, the authors conclude on the need for reconstruction of the Serbian state, by proposing the following measures: security against exter-

nal and internal threats, legitimate representation within the liberal-democratic order on the grounds of social justice, as well as the increase of the overall and individual economic well-being and prosperity (Stojanović and Djurić 2012: 251).

Summa summarum, in this monograph the authors deal with the issue of the state in a fruitful and comprehensive manner, the issue under discussion since ancient times, that is more than current in contemporary circumstances. Revealing of the state is for the authors, as they put it in the preface to their book, a “risky” exploratory adventure, for its image is, paradoxically, both strong and kaleidoscopic (Stojanović and Djurić 2012:7). The aim of this monograph is, the authors continue, to critically present this power and medley of the state, which it manages to do. The book *Anatomy of the Modern State* provides answers to many important questions of modern political theory, drawing on relevant global and domestic literature in this field, so it can be concluded that it will be inspiring to all those intrigued by this topic.