Processing the Conceptual, Theoretical and Semantic Structure of the Term “State” and its Components

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf 1
Associate Prof., Political Geography, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Mohammad Hadi Pooyandeh
PhD. of Political Geography, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Mosayeb Ghareh Beygi
MCs., Political Geography, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran

Received 3 December 2014 Accepted 25 June 2015

Extended abstract

1. INTRODUCTION
The term “state” owing to its simultaneous presence in two epistemological and scientific fields named political science and political geography has assumed multiple meanings, applications, natures and synonyms, in a way that it has stirred a kind of chaos and lack of consensus, especially among political geographers. According to various texts, “state” is an abstract entity, intertwined with a selection of notions, values, and thoughts concerning human and spatial issues. Accordingly, the present research tries to analyze the spatial-philosophical aspects of the word “state” and answer the question as to the reasons why this word has gained varied and sometimes contradictory synonyms and meanings (especially in the fields of political science and political geography in Iran).

2. METHOD
In terms of collecting the data, the present research is a qualitative one, and in terms of its nature is regarded as a foundational research. With respect to the method of processing and interpreting the data, Meta-analysis has been used. Meta-analysis is a collection of methods used to resolve the contradictions created by researches conducted concerning a single topic. Meta-analysis converts the findings of various researches to a joint scale, investigates the relation among research specifics and the findings and finally, proposes an overarching suggestion for converging the studies. The present research, in line with its objective which concerns the investigation of divergences and conceptual, theoretical and semantic contradictions of the term “state” among political geography’s thinkers and theorists and its attempt to bring viewpoints, in an overarching manner, together can be categorized as a meta-analysis.

1 Corresponding Author: mghalibaf@ut.ac.ir
3. DISCUSSION

Every concept in geography, considering the comprehensive and holistic epistemological nature of this science, gains a “comprehensive and universal feature, where no other rational trajectory neither can nor should be traversed, before unwinding the interwoven elements and components of this twisted skein. Nonetheless, it seems that any attempt to resolve such a conflict would be irrational. The only rational thing remains paying attention to the “spatial, comprehensive, holistic and multiplicity” basis in geographical concepts which stem from its epistemology. It seems that incorporation of spatial, geographical structures and factors such as “land”, “country”, “nation”, “regime” and “governance” have paved the way for its plurality of sense and profusion of meaning, to the degree that meanings and concepts of “state” are closer to reality that in addition to structure-agency views, incorporate “spatial” and “holistic geographic” views.

So on the basis of the epistemological feature of geography (to which political geography belongs) the conceptual expansion and long range of inclusiveness in political geography is neither too surprising nor paradoxical. The word “state” contains simultaneous and multifold other meanings such as “land”, “government”, “governance” and “people” and unless these elements are included and combined in creating a whole, we cannot use the word “state” for it. Thus, only when the biologic and cultural feature specific to humans, i.e. territoriality, adopts a national (concerning a population with a given and fixed identity) and political (a country, when all the elements of the administration, governance, execution and management or government are organized) quality can it represent a word called “state” in the political geography.

4. CONCLUSION

State is an abstract concept, intertwined with a collection of concepts, values, and thoughts regarding human and spatial issues and owing to its simultaneous presence in two disparate epistemological and scientific fields called political science and political geography it has assumed multiple meanings, applications, natures and synonyms. The word state, in its general sense, has a meaning of “condition” and “situation”. This concept, in order to materialize in the fields under discussion, has no other way than to be manifested in its material components. Among the components of “state”, the concepts of nation, regime, and country has been used, many times, interchangeably thus causing multiple meanings for the concept of “state” such as country, regime, administrative, executive branch and etc. The findings of this research indicate that each of these concepts (country, regime and nation), in different situations where the concept of “state” can be situated, can carry its semantic features. For instance, when there is a geographical and territorial understanding of “state”, it comes very close to the concept of “country” and when its administrative-executive aspect is intended, it refers to
the government. So, the profusion of the meanings of “state” is not in contradiction with its main sense. To put it simply, “state” in some situations is synonymous with country and in others with government or political society. This does not damage its abstract and main meaning, since without these components, “state” has no meaning and in order to become materialized and manifest in various situations, it is dependent upon its constituent elements.

**Keywords:** State, Country, Government, Nation

**References**


