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AGRARIAN SOUTH SUMMER SCHOOL
8-12th FEBRUARY 2027, HARARE



The State in the Late Neoliberal Era

The nation state in the global south has remained resilient despite legitimate discontent with its late modern tendencies towards narrow nationalisms, politicized ethnicity, exclusionary citizenship, fascism and the erosion of state sovereignty in the current geopolitical conjuncture. The problems of the postcolonial state manifests most markedly in relation to the failure of redistribution, especially land redistribution, a demand flowing from primitive colonial accumulation and its legacy of uneven development across the Third World today. The post-colonial state has remarkably failed in delivering meaningful agrarian transitions, structural transformation and equitable delivery of public goods. The result is that in the peripheries, while the state has failed on multiple fronts, it has also disembowelled working people of their capacity to participate in politics and public life generally.

The structural barriers that were historically imposed on periphery countries have led to their uneven integration into the global capitalist political economy, and the problems of peripheral capitalism today take on profoundly political forms, in addition to the social and economic marginalisation that it portends. As Samir Amin pointed out, an understanding of the political relations that organize the dominance of central capital over the world system is necessary, especially since in the peripheries, such relations enable the rise of rentier bureaucratic bourgeoisies and dependent petty

bourgeois strata while reinforcing some of the negatived tendencies, for example, corruption, of state capitalism. The task as such, of organization or reorganization of peripheral economies functioning under the undue influence of international financial institutions and the pressures of globalization reasserts the centrality of the state even under neoliberalism. Yet neoliberal discourse has pushed to the back burner the earlier debates on developmental states and their role in economic development.

It is also the case that amidst economic dispossession and political disenfranchisement, the national question regains relevance as the basis for the resolution of contemporary questions of uneven development, not least of which are reflected in the new agrarian questions emerging in the Third World. As Moyo and Yeros (2005) observe, under the pretext of a 'crisis of development', a standard surgical operation has ensued and paved way for: the deregulation of national currencies and prices; the commercialization and privatization of previously state-controlled industries and public services; the cutting of social services entailing diminution social wage; the unilateral withdrawal of support for agriculture; the titling and commodification of peasant agricultural land; and the flexibilization of labour relations. The resulting socioeconomic degradation is related also to the reinforcement of the peripheral tendency of crisis, and to an unprecedented degree of dependence since the

end of formal imperialism. These crises demand renewed commitment to anti-imperialist struggles and attention to the capacity of states to weather them, including economic, social, ecological and political capacities.

Related to this, a major casualty of extraverted development under monopoly financialised capitalism has been the social capacity of the state, in part a legacy of economic liberalisation implemented via Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in Africa from the early 1980s, which fundamentally altered the role and capacity of the state in social provisioning and care. The wholesale displacement of the social reproductive burden onto households and communities means that 'development' continues to rely on a substratum of unequal gender relations that are entrenched but marginalized in considerations of the 'economy proper', and therefore of the state. The social depletion that is characteristic of a 'crisis of care' is in fact an acute expression of the social reproductive contradictions of financialized capitalism. The neoliberalism that has characterized the West's approach to weak economies from the late 1970s onwards tends towards an almost complete negation of a social state, compelling a reflection of the capability of the existing state to foster the care economies – a concern that marks a distinctive shift in the relationship between women's movement and the state in the global south today. Access to state-provisioned social grants and good social policies are generally viewed as central to processes of political stabilization, and therefore the conditions of possibility of the welfare state or welfarist regimes ought to constitute our enquiries and receive due consideration.

Furthermore, the food crises that have ensued under neoliberalism have created a speculative bubble in land prices, further impoverishing and driving more peasants from the land, with most countries of the Third World now tending

towards permanent informalisation and semi-proletarianisation of labour. In addition, a huge surplus population is now apparent, who are more or less irrelevant to capitalist accumulation but who by the sheer force of numbers, remain political subjects to the state. The fact that the survival of surplus populations now depends to a great extent on the ability of the state to subsidize sections of the economy and households suggests the urgency of thinking through the socialist possibilities that exist in the Third World at present.

A final point relates to the ideological tensions that are deepened by high rates of unemployment, the redistributive failure, and the general crisis of reproduction that these portend that now confront the state. Across the world we see how racial, ethnic, caste and gender ideologies are increasingly deployed as a response to underdevelopment and dispossession, and we witness the structural violence against political minorities which these ideologies sustain. Furthermore, in light of so many imperialist wars being fought or manifesting in very localized ways in the global south, we must retain concern and clear analysis regarding state sovereignty, the promise of Pan-Africanism, and capacity of working people to survive, given that wars decimate the capacity of states and destroy the social and cultural knowledge systems of entire peoples.

Under late neoliberalism, we are witnessing a tendency towards the rise of a securitariat state in which the security-intelligence apparatus rises above political apparatuses like the parliament, the judiciary and the civilian executive. This calls for a retheorization of the state and its class character.

We also need to look and analyse closely the role of the state in facilitating extraction of nature and natural resources entailing devastating consequences on climate and community lives.

The issues outlined above will form the basis of the forthcoming Summer School of 2027, whose theme on the state is broadly concerned with searching for socialist possibilities amidst multiple ongoing social and political crises and in the context of emerging geopolitical reconfiguration. Among the major sub-themes are:

- The State, land and agrarian reforms, questions of the agrifood system, industrialisation and structural transformation.
- Labour migrations, territories, borders, nationalisms and the national question.
- Decolonization/ Anti-imperialist struggles and pan-Africanism in the global south
- Theorising and revisiting theories of developmental, socialist and capitalist states of the global south: heterodox and feminist perspectives.
- Labour relations, surplus populations, working people and the socialisation of the care economy
- Gender, class, caste and kinship relations and the state: Intersectional perspectives
- The state and protests politics, social movements and struggles.
- The State and the social question: social policies and the struggle over public goods and services and public spaces
- The State and Extraction of Nature

Abstracts should be submitted via the online form <https://forms.gle/5jk8EfopttqDhbWT8> no later than **1 November 2026**. Women are highly encouraged to participate. The selection of proposals will be made public by the **7th November 2026** via our social media. Authors of selected abstracts will be invited to send their draft papers by **15 January 2027**. The results will not be communicated individually. Please consult our social media below.

The Summer School will be held in hybrid (physical and virtual) format in the week of **8–12 February 2027**, in Harare, Zimbabwe. Funding for physical participation is limited. Participants who wish to join physically in Harare are encouraged to access own institutional funding.

Papers presented at the Summer School may eventually be selected for publication in **Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy**, subject to normal peer review process.

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