



CHARRSUTERIE  
Alsocienne  
RESTAURANT  
TREE 56 RDS MICHE

# The END of the DEMOCRATIC STATE

Nicos Poulantzas,  
a Marxism for the 21st Century

★ EDITED BY JEAN-NUMA DUCANGE & RAZMIG KEUCHEYAN ★  
TRANSLATED BY DAVID BRODER



# Marx, Engels, and Marxisms

Series Editors  
Marcello Musto  
York University  
Toronto, ON, Canada

Terrell Carver  
Bristol, UK

The volumes of this series challenge the 'Marxist' intellectual traditions to date by making use of scholarly discoveries of the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* since the 1990s, taking on board interdisciplinary and other new critical perspectives, and incorporating 'reception studies'. Authors and editors in the series resist oversimplification of ideas and reinscription of traditions. Moreover, their very diversity in terms of language, local context, political engagement and scholarly practice mark the series out from any other in the field. Involving scholars from different fields and cultural backgrounds, the series editors ensure tolerance for differences within and between provocative monographs and edited volumes. Running contrary to 20th century practices of simplification, the books in this innovative series revitalize Marxist intellectual traditions.

More information about this series at  
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14812>

Jean-Numa Ducange · Razmig Keucheyan  
Editors

# The End of the Democratic State

Nicos Poulantzas, a Marxism for the 21st Century

palgrave  
macmillan

*Editors*

Jean-Numa Ducange  
University of Rouen  
Mont-Saint-Aignan, France

Razmig Keucheyan  
University of Bordeaux  
Bordeaux, France

Translated by David Broder, Paris, France

Marx, Engels, and Marxisms

ISBN 978-3-319-90889-2

ISBN 978-3-319-90890-8 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90890-8>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018942209

Translated with permission from the original French language edition: *La Fin de l'état Democratique: Nicos Poulantzas, un marxisme pour le XXI siècle* by Jean-Numa Ducange and Razmig Keucheyan. Copyright © Presses Universitaires de France/Humensis 2016 All Rights Reserved

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2019

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: Everett Collection Historical/Alamy Stock Photo

Cover design: Laura de Grasse

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company

Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

The English version of this book was supported by the “Groupe de recherche d’histoire” (GRHIS Université de Rouen-Normandie) and the “Institut de Recherche Interdisciplinaire Homme et société” (IRIHS Université de Rouen-Normandie).

## SERIES FOREWORD

### THE MARX REVIVAL

The Marx renaissance is underway on a global scale. Whether the puzzle is the economic boom in China or the economic bust in ‘the West’, there is no doubt that Marx appears regularly in the media nowadays as a guru, and not a threat, as he used to be. The literature dealing with Marxism, which all but dried up twenty-five years ago, is reviving in the global context. Academic and popular journals and even newspapers and on-line journalism are increasingly open to contributions on Marxism, just as there are now many international conferences, university courses and seminars on related themes. In all parts of the world, leading daily and weekly papers are featuring the contemporary relevance of Marx’s thought. From Latin America to Europe, and wherever the critique to capitalism is reemerging, there is an intellectual and political demand for a new critical encounter with Marxism.

### TYPES OF PUBLICATIONS

This series bring together reflections on Marx, Engels and Marxisms from perspectives that are varied in terms of political outlook, geographical base, academic methodologies and subject-matter, thus challenging many preconceptions as to what ‘Marxist’ thought can be like, as opposed to what it has been. The series will appeal internationally to intellectual communities that are increasingly interested in rediscovering

the most powerful critical analysis of capitalism: Marxism. The series editors will ensure that authors and editors in the series are producing overall an eclectic and stimulating yet synoptic and informative vision that will draw a very wide and diverse audience. This series will embrace a much wider range of scholarly interests and academic approaches than any previous ‘family’ of books in the area.

This innovative series will present monographs, edited volumes and critical editions, including translations, to Anglophone readers. The books in this series will work through three main categories:

*Studies on Marx and Engels*

The series will include titles focusing on the *oeuvre* of Marx and Engels which utilize the scholarly achievements of the on-going *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, a project that has strongly revived the research on these two authors in the past decade.

*Critical Studies on Marxisms*

Volumes will awaken readers to the overarching issues and world-changing encounters that shelter within the broad categorization ‘Marxist’. Particular attention will be given to authors such as Gramsci and Benjamin, who are very popular and widely translated nowadays all over the world, but also to authors who are less known in the English-speaking countries, such as Mariátegui.

*Reception Studies and Marxist National Traditions*

Political projects have necessarily required oversimplifications in the twenty-first century, and Marx and Engels have found themselves ‘made over’ numerous times and in quite contradictory ways. Taking a national perspective on ‘reception’ will be a global revelation and the volumes of this series will enable the worldwide Anglophone community to understand the variety of intellectual and political traditions through which Marx and Engels have been received in local contexts.

## TITLES PUBLISHED

1. Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank, *A Political History of the Editions of Marx and Engels’s “German Ideology” Manuscripts*, 2014.
2. Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank, *Marx and Engels’s “German Ideology” Manuscripts*, 2014.
3. Alfonso Maurizio Iacono, *The History and Theory of Fetishism*, 2015.
4. Paresh Chattopadhyay, *Marx’s Associated Mode of Production*, 2016.

5. Domenico Losurdo, *Class Struggle: A Political and Philosophical History*, 2016.
6. Frederick Harry Pitts, *Critiquing Capitalism Today: New Ways to Read Marx*, 2017.
7. Ranabir Samaddar, *Karl Marx and the Postcolonial Age*, 2017.

### TITLES FORTHCOMING

George Comninel, *Alienation and Emancipation in the Work of Karl Marx*.  
 Robert Ware, *Marx on Emancipation and the Socialist Transition*.  
 Vladimir Puzone and Luis Felipe Miguel (Eds.), *The Brazilian Left in the 21st Century: Conflict and Conciliation in Peripheral Capitalism*.  
 John Gregson, *Marxism, Ethics, and Politics: The Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*.  
 Xavier LaFrance and Charles Post (Eds.), *Case Studies in the Origins of Capitalism*.

## PREFACE

In the preface to this volume, we state the importance of Nicos Poulantzas's thought for the understanding of the contemporary social world, and especially the relationship between capitalism and the state in the neoliberal era. Poulantzas's ideas are analytical as well as political: they aim to understand so as to transform. They are also interdisciplinary, as shown by the variety of contributors to this volume: historians, philosophers, geographers, economists and sociologists. Poulantzas's thought is the culminating point of a century of Marxist debates about the nature of capitalism and the state. It is also a starting point for those who, in the twenty-first century, try to imagine alternative, postcapitalist, futures.

Revisiting Marxist thought is never an innocent matter. When we study the texts, what we are trying to grasp is the political conjuncture in which they were written. By definition, Marxism asserts its connection to the emancipation processes and the political and social movements harbored within a given era; indeed, it seeks to help bring them to fruition. In this sense, reading a Marxist thinker's works is also a way of posing ourselves questions about these processes themselves. More than that, drawing on tradition is also a way of shedding light on elements that come from a seemingly completed period, yet might also be politically productive in our own time. This being so, history is inextricably linked to thinking about possible futures. Such was the ambition of the international Poulantzas conference held at the Sorbonne (Paris-IV) in January 2015, from which this book results.

Born in Athens on 21 September 1936, Nicos Poulantzas was one of the great Marxist thinkers of the 1970s. He grew up in a Greece ravaged by the 1946–1949 civil war, before he pursued his law studies in Athens; he then went to Munich where he began a philosophy Ph.D., before making his home in Paris, where numerous left-wing Greek intellectuals also lived. He defended his doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1961. It was published three years later under the title *Nature des choses et droit: essai sur la dialectique du fait et du valeur*. He here began his far-reaching reflection on the state; a reflection also conveyed by Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps Modernes*, which published several of Poulantzas's articles. Through his posthumous dialogue with Gramsci and his engagement with Althusser, Poulantzas became one of the most unique thinkers on the question of the state. He elaborated his thought across several works, from 1968's *Political Power and Social Classes to State, Power, Socialism*, published in 1978, soon before his death. Poulantzas killed himself in 1979.

This trajectory was the focus over two days in January 2015 as a packed hall at the Sorbonne—a good part of it consisting of young students and researchers—devoted its attentions to Poulantzas's thought, and moreover posed questions as to its implications for our own time. The opening address at the conference was given by Álvaro García Linera. Bolivia's vice-president and himself one of today's most important critical thinkers, García Linera had come to France especially for this occasion. All the key themes of Poulantzian thought were addressed at the conference, from the nature of the modern state to capitalism's crises, fascism, globalization, and the European project.

The reader will recall that January 2015 was also the moment of Syriza's victory in Greece. For the first time in Europe, a party of the radical Left had arrived in power through the ballot box. The fact that this conference was devoted to a Marxist of Greek origin—and, indeed, a theorist of the 'democratic road of socialism'—meant that it could be immediately 'plugged into' the current conjuncture. Moreover, a large part of Syriza's leadership and cadres was itself steeped in Poulantzas's ideas, and Syriza's own research institute is called the 'Poulantzas Institute'. It has been said that the emergence of Syriza and Podemos on the European political stage was, in a sense, the 'revenge' of the Eurocommunism to which Poulantzas had subscribed in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Escalona Fabien, 'Syriza, Podemos, et l'héritage eurocommuniste', *Mediapart*, 28 January 2015.

A volume devoted to Nicos Poulantzas is necessarily an interdisciplinary one. The authors who have contributed to this book belong to all the disciplines of the human sciences, including philosophy, sociology, history, economics and geography. If Poulantzas is usually considered a political scientist or political philosopher, he also made decisive interventions in debates regarding sociology (for instance, on the question of the ‘new middle classes’), geography (‘spatial-temporal matrices’) and history (the nature of fascist and authoritarian regimes). This explains why debates devoted to Poulantzas’s theses have taken place in a number of these disciplines, indeed at the international level. But this has perhaps rendered rather more difficult the circulation of his ideas in France, where disciplinary divisions are more rigid than they are in the English-speaking world.

Many Marxists have resisted the disciplinary division of intellectual labor, and Poulantzas’s *oeuvre* itself bears witness to this. This critique has a specific theoretical foundation. Capitalism is a totality (a contradictory totality, i.e. an open one) whose logic tends to impose itself on all sectors of social life. If we are to understand and combat this logic, we must indispensably situate our critique at the same level at which capital itself operates, i.e. the level of the system as a whole. For this reason, for Marxism the fight against the fragmentation of knowledge is an intellectual and political battleground of primary importance. However, this is becoming all the more difficult over time, as the disciplinary division of labor continually deepens.

We should thus consider as one of Poulantzas’s most important contributions the fact that he was able to intervene in several disciplinary fields, and more precisely to tie together problematics which disciplinary straitjackets usually keep divided. Establishing such interconnections requires a theoretical equipment that is constantly being refined, and put to the test by the most varied objects of empirical inquiry.

This book is but part of the current movement of (re)discovering classical and contemporary Marxism in France. This movement consists of two main aspects. The first has been the translation, over the last fifteen years or so, of works by foreign Marxists—most of whom are either English-speakers, or publish in English. These figures range from David Harvey to Frederic Jameson, Perry Anderson, Mike Davis, Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, and more. In passing, it is interesting to note that Poulantzas is an important source of inspiration for many of these thinkers. For instance, a lot of Poulantzas’s ideas have made their journey

toward the English-speaking intellectual field by way of the *New Left Review*, long edited by Perry Anderson. This latter's own works on the state consist, among other things, of a critical dialogue with Poulantzas's approach to the state.<sup>2</sup>

The other aspect of this renewed interest is the re-publication of 'classic' Marxist texts: Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and a few others, or the publication of books that have to do with these figures. Through this intervention, new generations of students and researchers have been able to discover some of the treasures that the Marxist tradition contains. In the 1980s and 1990s a virulent anti-Marxism was on the march. Fortunately we have now emerged from this phase, and today we can well see that without Marx and Marxists you cannot explain capitalism and its crises, or indeed contemplate the conditions of going beyond it. As Jacques Derrida argued in his *Specters of Marx*,<sup>3</sup> one may be for or against Marx, but one cannot do without Marx. We can say the same of Poulantzas.

In classical Marxism, the theory of the state reached its high point of sophistication in the works of Gramsci. He fundamentally reassessed the question that the late Engels had left abandoned in the early 1890s, as he was confronted by a new political situation in which the insurrectionary road alone no longer seemed appropriate. Engels had begun, but never completed, a reflection on the forms that the transition to socialism could take in a context different to the model that had arisen from 1848.<sup>4</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*, Gramsci worked to think through the 'great transformation' of capitalism that took place the first decades of the twentieth century, a process in which the state played a central role. Just as Gramsci sought to think through how the state had developed in the 1920s and 1930s, Poulantzas strove to understand the way in which the state had evolved in the post-World War II period during the *Trente Glorieuses*. As several contributors to this volume note, this was the context in which the Greek Marxist developed his 'relational' theory of the

<sup>2</sup> See for example his *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London: NLB, 1974.

<sup>3</sup> *Specters of Marx*, London: Routledge, 1993.

<sup>4</sup> See in this regard the contributions by Jacques Texier, for instance 'Les innovations de Engels, 1885–1891', in Mireille Delbraccio and Georges Labica (eds.), *Friedrich Engels savant et révolutionnaire*, Paris: PUF, 1997, pp. 162–164.

state, in which the state is not a ‘thing’ or a ‘substance’, but a rather set of power relations which overlap in a complex fashion. This is what led him to formulate his famous definition of the state as ‘the condensation of a relationship of forces between classes and class fractions’.

This formula, and the whole theoretical apparatus that underpin it, is a fruitful starting point if we are to analyze the evolutions of the contemporary state—the *neoliberal* state. Our task, today, is to pick up the thread of the Marxist debate on the nature of the capitalist state, which fell away in the 1980s—a debate in which Poulantzas’s theses had been one of the organizing focuses.<sup>5</sup> One of the ambitions of this present volume is to contribute to debates on this very question.

The book consists of three parts. The first brings together contributions by Álvaro García Linera, Isabelle Garo, Alex Demirović and Stathis Kouvelakis. This part has to do with the question of the state, and more precisely the strategic implications of Poulantzas’s theory of the state. The second, featuring articles by Serge Wolikow, Marco Di Maggio and Ludivine Bantigny, is of a more historical key. It seeks to reconnect Poulantzas’s ideas to some of the major political debates of his time. The third part, which consists of contributions by James Martin, Costis Hadjimichalis and Tristan Auvray and Cédric Durand, is devoted to the theoretical-political disputes in which Poulantzas himself participated.

While this division helps our reading insofar as it allows for an organization of ideas, inevitably it is also rather artificial. For Poulantzas’s thought was extremely consistent, with each of its components closely linked to all the others.

Mont-Saint-Aignan, France  
Bordeaux, France

Jean-Numa Ducange  
Razmig Keucheyan

<sup>5</sup>For an introduction, see Razmig Keucheyan’s ‘Lenin, Foucault, Poulantzas’, in Nicos Poulantzas, *L’État, le pouvoir, le socialisme* [1978], Paris: Les Prairies ordinaires, 2013.

# CONTENTS

## Part I State and Strategies

- 1 **The State and the Democratic Road to Socialism** 3  
Álvaro García Linera
- 2 **Nicos Poulantzas's Strategic Reflection Between  
Economics and Politics** 25  
Isabelle Garo
- 3 **The Capitalist State, Hegemony, and the Democratic  
Transformation Toward Socialism** 43  
Alex Demirović
- 4 **Specters of 'Totalitarianism': Poulantzas Faced with  
Fascism and the State of Exception** 61  
Stathis Kouvelakis

## Part II Histories and Communisms

- 5 **The Comintern's Uncertain Heritage** 81  
Serge Wolikow

<b>6</b>	<b>The Eurocommunism of the Intellectuals: Poulantzas and the Third Way to Socialism</b> Marco Di Maggio	93
<b>7</b>	<b>The <i>Ligue communiste révolutionnaire</i>, Nicos Poulantzas, and the Reception and Discussion of His Theory</b> Ludivine Bantigny	109
<b>Part III Theories</b>		
<b>8</b>	<b>Poulantzas: From Law to the State</b> James Martin	123
<b>9</b>	<b>Geographies of the State: Nicos Poulantzas and Contemporary Approaches to State/Space</b> Costis Hadjimichalis	135
<b>10</b>	<b>A European Capitalism? Revisiting the Mandel–Poulantzas Debate</b> Tristan Auvray and Cédric Durand	145
	<b>Index</b>	167

# EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

## About the Editors

**Jean-Numa Ducange** is Assistant Professor in Contemporary History at University of Rouen-Normandie, France, and Co-Director of “Actuel Marx”.

**Razmig Keucheyan** is Professor in Sociology at Université of Bordeaux, France.

## Contributors

**Tristan Auvray** is Assistant Professor in Economy, Université of Paris XIII, France.

**Ludivine Bantigny** is Assistant Professor in Contemporary History at University of Rouen-Normandie, France.

**Alex Demirović** is Fellow of the Institute for Social Analysis at Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung, Germany.

**Marco Di Maggio** is Adjunct Professor in Contemporary History at University of La Sapienza, Italy.

**Cédric Durand** is Assistant Professor in Economy, Université of Paris XIII, France.

**Alvaro García Linera** is Vice President of Bolivia.

**Isabelle Garo** is Professor in Philosophy at Lycée Chaptal, France.

**Costis Hadjimichalis** is Professor Emeritus in Geography at Harokopion University of Athens, Greece.

**Stathis Kouvelakis** is Professor in European Studies at King's College, UK.

**James Martin** is Professor of Political Theory at University of Goldsmiths, UK.

**Serge Wolikow** is Professor Emeritus in Contemporary History at Université of Dijon, France.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 10.1	Relations of property and possession in the era of financialized capitalism and the fragmentation of production processes	157
Fig. 10.2	Juridical property in the European Union (% of national stock market capitalization) (Didier Davydoff, Daniele Fano and Li Qin, 'Who owns the European economy? Evolution of the ownership of EU-listed companies between 1970 and 2012', op. cit.)	158
Fig. 10.3	Foreign (EU and non-EU) shareholders' share of total stocks on EU exchanges (Didier Davydoff, Daniele Fano and Li Qin, 'Who owns the European economy? Evolution of the ownership of EU-listed companies between 1970 and 2012', op. cit.)	161
Fig. 10.4	Openness rates of France, Italy, United Kingdom. Openness rate = $[(\text{imports} + \text{exports})/2]/\text{GDP}$ , OECD data	162
Fig. 10.5	EU 28 openness rate and share of foreign trade within and outside EU since 1999. Openness rate = $[(\text{imports} + \text{exports})/2]/\text{GDP}$ , OECD data	163