The State, the Power Bloc and Capitalist Accumulation: A theoretical approach

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Abstract

This article aims at elaborating a theory, based on Poulantzas, about the role of the state in a capitalist economy through a relational perspective that perceives the state as a field and as a strategic process for the disputes of class fractions into the power bloc. In order to do so, it exposes the relation between state and accumulation in an abstract-formal level, emphasizing the limitations of studies that use only this dimension. Next, it analyses the role of the power bloc in mediating the abstract and concrete levels of the state, observing that public policies are elaborated as a result of the clashes within the power bloc. Finally, it draws a discussion on the external constrains (international system) that are affected and affect the state and, consequently, the dynamics of the power bloc.

Keywords: State, Power Bloc, Capitalist Accumulation

JEL: P10; P16

1This article is an extended version of subsections 1.3 and 1.4 of the doctorate thesis entitled “The Power Bloc and the Lula Administration: Socio-economic groups, economic policy, and the new Sino-American axis,” which was defended in the Department of Economics at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in 2010 – Pinto (2010). We would like to thank Mauro Santos Silva for the critiques and suggestions, though we assume exclusive responsibility for the final version.
1 Introduction

Contemporary studies from a variety of schools of thought almost always conceive the state as the creator (elevating it as the main source of the reproductive process) or as a creation (reducing it to a bourgeois committee or a neutral arena that simply reflects the market and the electoral process). After adopting these suppositions, these studies minimise the political (or circumstantial) aspects at the real-concrete level because they disregard the analysis of the internal constraints of the state (its structure and its internal contentions – its political locus where the disputes between the dominant and popular sections stall), which are fundamental to the understanding of the construction and adoption of state measures, particularly economic policy.

Thus, this article aims to present a theory regarding the role of the state in a capitalist economy through a relational perspective that sees the state as a field and a strategic process where class fraction nuclei and networks meet within the power bloc. In order to do so, this article will use the development approach from Poulantzas's final writings as a reference. The concept of the power bloc will be used in order to mediate between abstract-formal levels and concrete-real levels of the state when they act as a unifying mechanism for accumulation (capital in general) and class fractions (plurality of capitals).

In a synthetic way, the second section of this article describes the relationship between the state and accumulation on the abstract-formal plane (of capital in general). It highlights the fact that analyses of the state (structural, class-based, and evolutionary analyses), which are performed only on this analytical plane, cannot grasp the circumstances of political conflicts that are stalled within the state. The third section of the article seeks to analyze the role of the power bloc in mediating between the abstract and concrete levels of the state, and discusses the mechanisms and internal conflicts that influence public policy management. The fourth section seeks to analyze how the power bloc can, through the state, project its class-based power upon the international system,

2The abstract-formal approach corresponds to a methodological resource used within the sphere of the knowledge-producing process. Though it does not exist in reality, it can be employed for operational ends in the construction of a theoretical model focused on the interpretation of social reality. That which does exist, the true dimension to be learned through knowledge, is a concrete-real object that has been historically and geographically determined.
given the degree of sovereignty that the state itself enjoys relative to other nations. Finally, in the fifth section, the commentary is summarized and a conclusion is offered.
2 The State and Accumulation: An abstract-formal analytical plan (an analysis of capital in general)

The conflict between capital and the state in the capitalist mode of production (CMP)\(^3\) is perceptible only when one considers capitalists individually (class fractions) in both their disputes and their relations with the state within a determined spatial and historical context (a concrete-real plan at the circumstantial level), because in the case of capital in general (within the abstract-formal plan), there occurs a "virtuous and happy" discourse. In this plan, the state "is the 'political shape' of the bourgeois society" in which "the power of the state' is clearly identified as the power of the class," while, "in determined historical situations," the autonomy that the state acquires "does not make the state 'autonomous' or 'distinct' from the society" (CODATO & PERISSINOTO, 2001, p. 17)\(^4\).

In one of the first major studies by Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848, p. 03), we can already find a reference to equality between class power and state power; it is a famous passage that affirms that "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." That is to say that, though often contrary to the immediate interests of individual capitalists, the state acts on behalf of capitalists as a collective group in the long term. According to Poulantzas (1985), the problem is that certain Marxists (particularly members of the II and III internationals) have incorporated this perspective only in isolated cases, and have disregarded Marx's political/historical works, including *The Eighteenth Brumaire*

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\(^3\)The mode of production represents a specific combination of diverse structures and practices. It is comprised of various levels or instances, such as economics, politics, ideology and theory, with economics being the ultimate focus. Above all, this entire complex (the mode of production) represents an evidentiary scheme that, in analytical terms, can be utilised through a more detailed division of its parts. In other words, it is an abstract-formal approach that does not exist in reality, but that meets the operative ends of the construction of a theoretical model of analysis that can be used to interpret social reality (POULANTZAS, 1977). In reality, what exists is a historically determined social formation (SF) that is "a social whole -- in the broadest sense -- at a given moment in its historical existence: the France of Louis Bonaparte, the England of the Industrial Revolution" (POULANTZAS, 1977 p. 14-5).

\(^4\)With the exception of Marx's works, which have been published in English, the translations of all citations are based on the Portuguese versions of the texts (Translator's note).
of Louis Napoleon and Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850, without realising that this is a more abstract level of the state, and, for this reason, the most recommended for an analysis of capital in general. Upon adopting such a path, they reduced the state to a political domination (state-power) in which each dominant class (or fraction) would be capable of forming its own configuration of the state based on its conveniences and interests. However, it pertains to a purely instrumental conception in which every state, on whichever analytical plane, would always be class dictatorship, thus becoming an appendix of the structural base. Therefore, in light of this conclusion, it would not make any sense to consider the state as a theory.

However, it is necessary to point out that we do not want to deny the analytical importance of the relationship between the state and capital in general, especially when considering the process of accumulation, but that we do want to show that this analytical level in itself does not allow for the understanding of the state as a political locus in which political struggles of the fractions of the dominant classes, as well as those of the populace, manifest.

Let us come back to the role of the state at the abstract-formal level: it actually functions as a large organiser of both accumulation and a capitalist order in the way that it acts upon the construction of institutional and economic elements that favor the accumulation of capital. Generally speaking, the state's main tools of action are focused namely on: (i) the monopoly on the use of violence to guarantee and protect private property; (ii) the development and enforcement of laws (particularly those involving state management of the workforce) that both create the legal tools for adhering to contracts and regulate the form of labor through labor discipline and job insecurity; and (iii) currency management, taxation management, and control of public debt (monetary and fiscal policies) that guarantee the stability of the real value of currency and the regulation of distributive conflict, and which assure the predictability of returns (private business calculations, etc) (BRUNHOFF, 1985; PANITCH & GINDIN, 2005; CARDOSO JR & PINTO & TARSO, 2010).

At this analytical level, the virtuous dialogue between the state and capital takes on different forms throughout the many phases of capitalism. During the originating accumulation phase, the important pre-capitalist period between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the absolutist European state resorted to extra-economic forms of
violence with the intent to open spaces for the assertion of capitalism through expropriation and expulsion of the people from the countryside. In this way, the state created the conditions to both "[transform] the small peasants into wage laborers, and their means of subsistence and of labor into material elements of capital and [create], at the same time, a home-market for the latter," or capital. This action radically separated the peasant producers from their means of production (MARX, 1867, p. 283).

With the advancement of the separation between politics and economics within the CMP, the state (especially in countries where the productive forces had advanced the most) generally reduced its direct involvement in the organisation of production, in investments, and in the appropriation of surpluses. However, it remained active in order to guarantee judicial order, the regulation of infrastructure and of capital-labor relations, and also to manage the macro-economy and to act as a lender of last resort (PANITCH & GINDIN, 2005).

Following this logic, capitalism would not exist without the state, since it is the equivalent of an institution that is intrinsic to and indistinguishable from society itself, as well as from its historical trends (the power bloc, class struggles, etc). Thus, the ways in which the state acts, as well as the state's organisational structure (both its framework and its centers of power) should not be understood as a simple passive reflection of a society that is regulated by the markets, much less as an idealised, autonomous or outside element that defines society as a primary source of the reproductive process. This supposed dichotomy between theory and analysis of the understanding of the state

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5For Poulantzas (1985), this separation was the result of the division between manual and intellectual labor, of the individualization of law and of a nation that has adopted the capitalist mode of production, since the productive process under capitalism separates and individualises workers. At the same time, the state reintegrated the workers into the people-nation, which required them to submit to a set of institutions and which, at the same time, distinguished them through a series of laws, values, norms, traditions, languages, and concepts of knowledge that emerged in the dominant classes.

6According to a liberal perspective, the political system would be a market in which the decisions of the voters would be based on the political utility of those decisions, since the state would be neutral or passive (i.e., a reflection of the economic and voter market, and, as a consequence, of its impersonal, competitive, and free exchanges) and would also work to serve the electorate. That is to say, the state would be an arena in which various groups of the society would compete among each other with supposed equality according to rules that would technically be established by the state. In this way, the configuration of the state would actually function by simply "mirroring" the society.
is the result of a problematic separation (both in form and in content) between civil society\(^7\) (within a liberal definition) and the state, which is kept alive even today.

It is also important to note that, even at the level involving the analysis of capital in general (the abstract-formal level), the role of the state toward the society cannot be assumed (that is to say, assumed to be an active role, which is the structuralist perspective, or a passive role, which is the instrumentalist perspective), nor can it be a derivation (referring to the school of thought on logical-historical derivation). The idea of understanding the state is "a historical, concrete task that is approached in different ways depending on each social formation." After one adopts either the presupposed path or the path of derivation of the state, then at the structural level, one will be "bringing forward the results of concrete political processes," and will also give less consideration to "specific historical events, which will result in one sparing [us] from the material research itself" (CODATO & PERISSINOTO, 2001, p. 17).

The debate over the role of the state, which is present in much of Marxism, saw two distinct points of view: one instrumentalist (functionalist) perspective, and another structuralist perspective, both of which were derived from a wide range of opinions. According to the instrumentalist perspective, the state functions as a "tool in the hands of the dominant classes, or, more concretely, of their various bourgeois fractions." However, according to the structuralist perspective, the state can be understood "as nothing more than something seen as being above class conflict, or as a body that has been given total autonomy relative to these classes" (OLIVEIRA, 2004, p. 216).

The theoretical discussion of these two schools of thought was renewed during the 1970s and continued into the beginning of the 1980s. It was first renewed in the analytical debate between the structuralist vision and the perspective of class struggle. It was most evident in the debate between Poulantzas (a structuralist)\(^8\) and Miliband (who

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\(^7\)The term "civil society" used herein involves a liberal perspective seen both in economic writings (those from Adam Smith, among others) and in political writings (those from Rousseau, among others). Its use here suggests that civil society would be the result or consequence of the right to property, the acceptance of which would require a supposition of liberty that could be achieved only through democratization of access to property, itself achieved through a pact between citizens and the state.

\(^8\)During this time, Poulantzas's on writings were very tied to structuralism (under the influence of Althusser), and the idea of class struggles played a role that was subordinate to the structures of the state.
argued for class struggle\(^9\). For Poulantzas (1977), the state would participate in social coercion, and its actions would be in line with the political interests of the dominant class. However, he also believed that the state had relative autonomy regarding classes and class fractions of the power bloc. Offering another perspective, Miliband (1970) considered Poulantzas's idea of relative autonomy to be a weakness, because he believed that the CMP presented "structural superdeterminism." Bonefeld (1987), however, affirmed that structures (the state among them) should be understood through the antagonism between labor and capital; that is to say, as a result of struggles.

For Mollo (2001, p. 357), Poulantzas's structural analyses and Miliband's classical analyses were unsatisfactory – an assessment both "of class struggles and of the structure of the relationship between the state and civil society needs to be developed as aspects of a single unitary process." This does not occur within the two perspectives, given the fact that the focus of each is concentrated on the "existence or absence of a class's ability to change the structure." According to Mollo (2001), an explanation of these two levels through a unitary process can only be achieved using the laws of motion of capitalism (or of capital in general), according to that which was achieved using the "derivationalist" view of the state.

Therefore, according to this school of thought (which is largely represented by Hirsch), the logic of the state is determined by the logic of capital in general through the objective laws of capitalist development. In other words, an analysis of the mediation between society and the state should occur through the derivation of the state's form as a result of the contradictions of capitalist society. According to Hirsch, this contradiction is clearest in the decreasing occurrence of the rate of profit. Other derivationalists describe other examples of this contradiction; however, all are based on the objective laws of capitalist development. Thus, according to Hirsch, the state would have been "born" (logical-historical derivation) to neutralise this occurrence through spending on

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\(^9\)A detailed review of the debate between Poulantzas and Miliband can be found in the Portuguese-language article entitled, "A concepção marxista de Estado (The Marxist Conception of the state)" by Maria de Lourdes Rollemberg Mollo (2001) and in The state and Political Theory by Martin Carnoy (1986).
fiscal and financial infrastructure, as well as on human resources that would act against this occurrence (CARNOY, 1986; MOLLO, 2001).

The instrumentalist and functionalist schools of thought conceived of the state as creator and creation, respectively. Depending on the school of thought, the state is either elevated to a status as the original source of the productive process, or reduced to nothing more than a bourgeois committee. Both perspectives almost completely do away with the political aspect at the concrete-real (or at the circumstantial) level, because they eliminate the possibility of the state acting as a political locus where the clashes between the dominant class fractions (as well as those between the dominant classes and the populace) occur, and also where the power of one of the dominant fractions is established.

With regard to the "derivationalist" view of the state, the question of politics (struggles between class fractions) at the concrete-real level is almost completely eliminated, since both a state's political space and capitalist power are exclusively derived from relations of production (economic categories of capital in general) and are also established as a type of economic determinism. For Poulantzas (1985, p. 58), "this problem lies in the rather traditional conception of capital as an abstract entity with intrinsic logic (economic categories), and it culminates into insufficient areas of research to explain the material specificity of this state."

In this way, the understanding of the state as a creator or a creation (or the derivation of the state) almost completely eliminates the question of politics, since these opinions refuse to consider specific historical events, while at the same time will bring forward the results of the political process exclusively through an abstract-formal approach. Thus, it follows that the understanding of the role of the state in capitalist accumulation and reproduction cannot be restricted to only the accumulation of capital in general (at a higher level of abstraction or abstract-formal understanding). It must also incorporate an understanding of the ways that fractions and classes (in their political struggles) exert their power in their attempts to maintain or increase their shares of income and wealth, as well as their legitimacy through their influence on the state, and, as a consequence, through public policy proposals.
Therefore, it is necessary to understand the type of domination in the locus of the political class struggle (the state), which goes far beyond the binary concepts of dominant and dominated sections of society – social formation suggests the existence of various classes and fractions that are in constant struggle. In order to achieve this understanding, one must use the concrete-real concept of the power bloc to try to illuminate the material specificity of the state, which is given by the historical specificity of the political struggles among the dominant class fractions.

Thus, this article tries to find a connection between the concrete-real and the abstract-formal levels of the state using the concept of the power bloc in order to grasp the historical materialist level of the study. In doing so, we will eliminate results that have been determined a priori, as well as those found using only the concept of capital in general.
3 The State and the Power Bloc: A concrete-real analytical plan (a contradictory unity among class struggles)

Before moving forward, we must explain the notion of the power bloc: we primarily define this concept as an expression of a historical configuration of the relations between dominant classes and the results of these relations within a capitalist state (a specific political unit, according to concrete-real ideas). This complex of relations suggests a specificity of the capitalist state. It is one that, according to Poulantzas (1977, p. 224, author's note) consists of:

[...] the relation between, on the one hand, a private institutional game integral to the structure of the capitalist state (a game that functions in the sense of a specifically political unity of power of the state), and, on the other hand, a specific configuration of the relations between dominant classes. In their relation with the state, these relations function within a specific political unit that is included under the more general concept of the power bloc.

Based on certain political texts from Marx (1850 and 1852), Poulantzas (1977) affirms that the power bloc can be outlined using the three following elements:

i. The set of determined and historically marked institutions of the capitalist state in relation to political class struggles. Here, the state should be understood in a broader sense using Gramscian terms (political society + civil society). As one of the capitalist institutions of the state, universal suffrage can be seen as an example of this situation – within the context of a capitalist state, suffrage represents expanded relations between the state and the coexistence of various classes or fractions of dominant classes;

ii. The field of political practices employed by dominant classes and fractions within a specific capitalist situation. In other words, the power bloc depends on the plurality of the dominant classes or fractions within a given historical formation. This condition involves a definition of dominant class fractions in which the classes must possess a certain autonomy, which itself depends on
political/ideological and economic cohesion within a specific historical and spatial context; and

The division of the bourgeoisie into fractions within the capitalist mode of production. These commercial, industrial, and financial fractions are not related to the specific effects of political events in a simple way. There are therefore certain circumstances in which the consequences of political events may generate class fractions only at the level of the classes' political practices.

Through these three elements, Poulantzas (1977) thus defined the power bloc: a contradictory unity among distinct classes or class fractions based on their interior hegemony in their relations with the capitalist state. Thus, the concept of the power bloc is tied to the political level in that it overlaps the class's political practices, a status which reflects a given set of circumstances – one involving mediation and the levels of class struggles within a given historical context. At the concrete-real level, the power bloc ends up playing a role equivalent to the concept of the state. It is also important to point out that this restricted hegemony of one of the fractions within the power bloc is determined by the fraction's ability to work for the economic, political, and ideological interests of the other fractions and classes within the bloc. When this hegemony reaches the society and encompasses both the dominant and the dominated groups, it changes from restricted to widespread\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{10}This point requires a quick digression on the concept of widespread hegemony used throughout this article. This term is used in the same way that Gramsci used it (1949). That means that widespread hegemony occurs when the dominant class (or one of its fractions) occupies a decisive spot within the accumulation pattern during a given moment in history. Based on its economic, political, and ideological interests, this class is able to create an organic unity ("historic bloc") among the other dominant class fractions with their consent, thus instilling its interests among the dominated classes. Given the fact that Gramsci's definition of hegemony is equal to the concept of widespread hegemony, why would he choose to use one term rather than the other? This decision is actually due to the fact that hegemony can only be restricted to the sphere of dominant fractions. This was a situation that Gramsci did not consider in his definition, since, for him, "political society" (the state) was fundamentally coercive, while this concept would only fit under "civil society" (POULANTZAS, 1977). Today, it is no longer feasible to think in terms of "political society" (the state) as only a level of political coercion in the way that Gramsci presented it. Poulantzas (1977), among others, showed the need for incorporating hegemony into studies on "political society" (the state). Even so, Gramsci used the term "hegemony" to analyze two concepts: political society (and the power bloc more specifically), and the fractions outside of the power bloc. In this article, it was considered more convenient to differentiate between these terms. To do so, they have...
It is also important to mention that unification achieved through the power bloc does not eliminate its conflicts, since "class struggles, or the rivalry of interests between social fractions, are found to be ever present, and they retain these interests to their antagonistic specificity [...]" (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 233, author's edits). In this context, the restricted hegemony of a class or fraction does not form by chance, but is possible 

[...] through the unity of institutionalised power of the capitalist state. [...].

Hegemonic classes or fractions polarise the specific contradictory interests of the diverse classes or fractions in this power bloc, and they treat their economic interests as political interests by representing the overarching common interests of the classes or fractions in the power bloc: general interest that consists of economic exploration and political domination [...]. The process of developing the hegemony of a class or fraction differs when this hegemony is exerted over the other classes and dominant fractions – the power bloc – or over the set of a formation, even over the dominant classes [...] (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 233-234).

The power bloc is actually formed by the classes (and fractions) that occupy the locus of domination in political class struggles; that is to say, the classes that possess their own areas of power (the center of power = real power) within the apparatus that is the state. Even so, it is necessary to clarify that "power bloc" does not mean a set of layers that support (classes-supports) the power of the state, but instead as layers that participate

been separated as restricted hegemony (that is, restricted to the power bloc), a situation in which the hegemony of a fraction is restricted to the dominant power bloc, and widespread hegemony, which refers to a situation in which a fraction of the power bloc consolidates organic unity between the dominant and the dominated (the historical bloc).

11The classes-supports are fractions or classes that, despite their involvement in dominated sections of society, support a capitalist state under specific historical circumstances. They include fragmented peasant groups and the lumpenproletariat from the time of the French Bonaparte state and the petty bourgeoisie that existed at the end of the first period of France's parliamentary republic. The two main elements that can explain the factors that led these dominated classes to maintain the power bloc are: 1) The process of ideological illusions, since "[... ] the support of a given class domination is not generally based on any real political sacrifice of the interests of the power bloc." However, "this support is indispensable in class domination [...]" (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 238). A typical case: the
in the space of political domination. In general, the dominant class or fraction that exerts restricted hegemony upon the power bloc is also the one that assumes widespread hegemony when it comes to the case of society at large. However, the general rule of the dual function of widespread and restricted hegemony of a given dominant fraction depends on the circumstances of social forces. Thus, there exists the "[...] possibility of discrepancies, of disassociation and of the displacement of these functions of hegemony in different classes or fractions [...], which has capital consequences at the political level" (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 235).

In this way, the power bloc (as well as its dynamic and historical progression in time) is changed within a class's political practices, which are different from the political scene, since the latter involves the notion of political parties. Despite the differences between political practices and the political scene, these elements (in specific historical and spatial circumstances) can be interpenetrated, which creates the false idea that practice and scene constitute an inseparable unity, especially in historical situations in which a large part of the classes and fractions are represented by political parties within the representative system. Additionally, according to Poulantzas (1977, p. 264), a situation such as this within much of contemporary political science generates a dual sense of confusion when it "reduces class relations to relations between parties, and relations between parties to class relations." This reduction limits the analysis of social formations (which are historically marked and spatially determined) in that it does not indicate the limits or the discrepancies between a class's political practices (actions of

Poulantzas (1985, p. 38) pointed out that the relationships held by the masses with power and the state, which is often called "consensus," always possess a material substrate. Among other reasons, this is because the state (which is working toward widespread class hegemony) acts to achieve the unstable balance of compromise between dominant and dominated classes. Thus, the state repeatedly undertakes a series of positive material measures to benefit the masses, even when these measures reflect the concessions imposed by the class struggles of the dominated."
the power bloc) and the political scene (the representation of political parties within a
given type of system).

Marx himself (1850 and 1852) affirmed that the introduction of universal suffrage
motivated the dominant classes to assume an active role in the political-electoral scene
through the organisation of political parties. However, he made this assertion when
confronted with a given historical circumstance – more specifically, France in the first
half of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, both Poulantzas (1977) and Marx (1850 and
1852) affirmed that behaviours similar to these can occur in any given historical
circumstance and in particular spatial situations in which there exist discrepancies
between the place of a class or fraction within the scope of political practices and the
political scene. They concluded that even a given fraction may deter restrictive
hegemony (i.e., the power bloc) – the politically dominant fraction – but it may not be
represented in an organic way by any party in the political system, which is dominated
by the ruling fractions\(^\text{13}\), nor can it make up the ruling fraction\(^\text{14}\) of the state
apparatus. These three concrete-historical levels can be made into a variety of
combinations, and they can even occur in a situation in which the class fraction can be
ruling and dominant without necessarily forming part of the power bloc.

Thus, considering the three dimensions or places (hegemonic fraction within the power
bloc; ruling fraction; dominant fraction) that allow for relations between these instances,
it is necessary to identify the differences between political practices and political scenes.
In this context, the power bloc and the relationship between its internal fractions is
presented as a fundamental tool for locating and deciphering the true meaning of a given
class's political practices, as well as (i) its relations with the parties that operate within
the political scene and (ii) its relations with the ruling political fraction of the state
apparatus.

\(^{13}\)The ruling fraction is that which presents a political party in the domination areas of the political scene
(MARX, 1850 and 1852; POULANTZAS, 1977).

\(^{14}\)The ruling fraction here is one that recruits politicians, bureaucrats, and military officers from various
other class fractions (in some situations, even from the dominant sections) so they can occupy the many
bodies of the state, and also so they can hold the "nucleus of power" (MARX, 1850 and 1852,
POULANTZAS, 1977).
It is important to highlight the fact that political practices, therefore, can only be perceived through an analysis of power bloc dynamics within its concrete spaces of action. That is to say, the power bloc should not be used at only a more elevated and abstract level, but as a useful (concrete-real) analytical category for observing economic circumstances and the politics of class struggles, which themselves materialise within the locus of the political struggles of the classes (the state), and which are fundamentally connected to the locus of economic class and fraction struggles.

Based on this interconnection (the locus of the economic and the political), the state is not defined here through pre-conceived notions regarding its active or passive role, nor is it conceived as a derivation. In fact, according to a relational perspective\textsuperscript{15}, the state is considered to be a combination (to a greater or lesser degree) of these two interpretations (central administrative autonomy vs state acceptance of certain interests), which is determined by a given spatial and temporal circumstance. Oliveira (2004, p. 334, author’s edits) clarifies this type of analysis of the mediation between civil society and the state:

\begin{quote}
The relationship between the state and society in socioeconomic formations requires something more than a simple confrontation between the creator and the creation – something that makes it clear who causes whom to come forth. [...]. Their reciprocal influences do not allow for analytical simplifications or an underestimation of roles, let alone affirmations about sovereignty of entities such as states. It is more important to unveil
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15}“Understanding the state as a material condensation of a relationship of force [relational perspective] means understanding it as a notion and a strategic position where nuclei and networks of power cross. These nuclei and networks simultaneously articulate and express contradictions relative to each other. From there, contradictory and shifting tactics result, the general objective and institutional solidification of which are embodied in the state apparatus. This strategic notion is analyzed by tactics that are often very explicit at the restrictive level where the state is involved. These tactics cross each other, go against each other, meet at points of impact within certain apparatuses, cause short-circuiting in others and configure what is known as state policy – the general line of power that crosses the confrontations within the state. At this level, this policy is certainly decipherable as a strategic calculation, though it is more the result of a conflictual coordination between micro-politics and explicit and divergent tactics than of a rational formulation of a global and coherent project” (POULANTZAS, 1985, p. 157).
how the elements of a state's profile are outlined within the organisational model of society itself [...] 

For Poulantzas (1985) and Codato and Perissinotto (2001), Marx's historical works as a whole do not present the determinism of class as something presupposed, nor as the overdetermination of the state. In fact, these works signal the type of mediation between civil society and the state through which the reproductive role of the state seems to be at both (i) the abstract-formal level ("general theory regarding the capitalist mode of production," as seen in the last section) and (ii) the concrete-real level. At this more reduced abstract level, the analysis of the role of the state must consider the possibility of a distinction between "state power" and "class power", since at this level the state is the locus at which "the political struggles of groups, factions, and class fractions" are configured. Thus, the state comes to assume the ability to decide and offer relative initiative when confronted with the fractions of the power bloc (CODATO & PERISSINOTTO, 2001, p. 17), and is even able to become more influenced (to a certain degree) by the sections that are placed outside this power bloc. This does not mean to say that the state ceases to be the dominating space in the power bloc, but it does mean that, in certain historical and spatial situations, the state is more or less prone to certain demands from sections outside the power bloc (more specifically, from dominated sections). In fact,

[...] popular struggles have crossed the state, and this does not happen because an intrinsic entity penetrates it from the outside. If political struggles that occur in the state pass over its apparatuses, it is because these struggles are already written into the story of the state, from which they acquire these strategies. Certainly, the struggles of the people (and, more often, powers) go beyond the idea of the state; however, as much as they are properly political, they are truly outside of the state. Strictly speaking, if the struggles of the people are inserted in the state, it is not because they are absorbed by an inclusion of a totalising state, but because the state is immersed in the struggles that continually submerge it. It is understood, however, that even the struggles (and not only class struggles) that extrapolate the state are not "outside of power," but are forever involved in the apparatuses of power that
bring them into existence and that, like them, condense into a relationship of force (factories-companies [economic groups], an average family, etc) (POULANTZAS, 1985, p. 162, author’s edits).

In this way, it is possible to imagine "state power" as something distinct from the "class power," but we must point out that these two powers are in constant conflict when they reach the concrete-real level. At this level, the state is therefore the space of conflict for the fractions of the power bloc that generally have the goal of maintaining or increasing their income and wealth and their involvement at political and ideological levels (authority, influence, and legitimacy) (GOLÇALVES, 2005). Beyond the power bloc's inner dispute, at this analytical level, the state is still passed over in its apparatus by popular struggles.

Given this wide array of disputes and interests, state policies show up, in the short term, as the result of relations between the forces within the state; that is to say, the policies reflect "extremely contradictory processes involving measures, countermeasures, blocks, and scaled cuts" (POULANTZAS, 1985, p. 96-97). If we only considered state operations at the concrete-real level, we would conclude that state policies and their results are extremely chaotic and contradictory. However, after combining concrete-real considerations regarding the power bloc with the idea of capital in general, we see that the results of the policies are the manifestations of the restricted (or widespread) hegemony of the power bloc, which lead to both increased capitalist accumulation in general and a higher degree of hegemonic fractioning.

In his last work (The State, Power, and Socialism), Poulantzas reformulated his first analyses regarding the capitalist state by emphasising class struggles and tried to "break away" from his partial analysis in his first works (particularly Political Power and Social Classes), which held significant structuralist influence. In this reformulation, Poulantzas (1985) defends the idea that the state can simultaneously adopt the roles of producer and "molder" of objective relations under a given, specific circumstance in the

16 For Carnoy (1986) and Coutinho (2007), Poulantzas's theoretical reformulation distanced him from the structuralist influence of Althusser, and, at the same time, brought him closer to Gramsci's ideas.
way that it functions as the main locus of political class struggles. In Poulantzas's own words (1985, p. 147):

[...] In a capitalist case, the state should not be considered to be an intrinsic entity, but (as is also the case of 'capital'), a relation, and more exactly, a material condensation of a relation of class forces, as capital always specifically expresses within the state.

After analyzing capitalist society, Poulantzas (1985) observed that, given the separation between the economic structures and the state (which were due to isolation and the disappropriation of direct producers from their means of production), it became necessary to promote capitalist ideology, which touts the equality of individuals in political life as an element of maintaining the status quo. Because the inequalities of economic relations with the greatest concentration and centralization of capital are fixed, capitalist ideology promoted the concept of formal democracy at the political level as a necessary prerequisite of capitalism, since, at this level (which included the judiciary apparatus), all members of the society are equal (one head, one vote). Panitch & Giden (2005, p. 102-103), make this very clear in the passage below:

[...] the separation of state from society within capitalism entails the constitutional distancing of political rule from the class structure. This also allows for the organization of class interests, and their representation vis-à-vis opposing classes and the state. One aspect of this is the establishment of the rule of law as a liberal political framework for property owners. Another, only fully asserting itself in the postwar period, is the establishment of liberal democracy as the modal form of the capitalist state (PANITCH & GIDIN, 2005, p. 102-103).

In this context, the state "must seem autonomous and neutral, while at the same time keeping the dominated classes divided and representing the interests of the power bloc of dominant classes" (POULANTZAS, 1985). Poulantzas makes it clear that the state becomes the object of struggle through the relocation of economic class struggle to the political locus. This is even clearer after one considers the fact that, with its relative autonomy, the state possesses (remembering that state power is distinct from class
power) the ability to guarantee class representation and the organisation of restricted or widespread hegemony.

According to this perspective, the state should not be understood as a monolithic entity, nor as something less homogenous, since it is founded in an institutional system of different apparatuses (in other words, within a state system that presents different levels of power. The apparatuses where the ability to make decisions ("effective power") is concentrated are the "centers of power" of the state. In fact, they make up the institutional locus where fundamental decisions are effectively made, even without any hierarchical concessions to another bureaucratic agency within the state system. Consequently, these are the institutional locations of the state where the main demands of the dominant classes or dominant class fractions are directed (CODATO, 1997).

It is necessary to point out that the centers of power in the state system can be modified over time, and they can also assume more or less autonomy relative to certain dominant class fractions within a given historical context. This is because its power does not come from its possession of its own force, distinct from class power (in the Weberian style), but from its relations within the scope of class struggles. In this context, the political predominance (political practices) of a given class fraction is the result of "control or influence that this class (or its representatives) can exert upon the apparatus where effective power is concentrated" (CODATO & PERISSINOTO, 2001, p. 23).

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17 For Coutinho (2007, p. 187), Poulantzas dialectically overcame Gramsci after adopting this understanding of the capitalist state, because Poulantzas gave more weight to "the struggle for hegemony and for the conquest of positions" in addition to the understanding of civil society (private hegemony apparatuses) that Gramsci had presented. Poulantzas also incorporated "state apparatuses in a restricted sense" into this struggle for hegemony (a concept which Gramsci called "political society").

18 The same concept of the state system adopted by Codato (1997, p. 36-37) is adopted herein: 'The 'state system' or, more exactly, the 'institutional system of state apparatuses', can be understood as a set of public institutions and their specific (functional, sectoral, and spatial) ramifications that are responsible for the day-to-day management of government affairs. I use this notion here descriptively, because I do not intend to suggest that state agencies possess a perfect integration among themselves or any "rational" cooperation, according to abstract bureaucratic logic (...). [In this context,] the executive branch (the 'government' itself), civil administration (or 'bureaucracy') the judiciary branch, the parliamentary assemblies, local governments, and the repressive apparatus (armed forces and police) all make up the 'state system.'
It is important to make another quick digression here regarding the different dimensions of political practice and the political scene so that we can explain the institutional system of the state and its consequences with relation to the power bloc. When a representative of a given class fraction takes on the "centers of power" of the state, it does not necessarily mean that this fraction becomes the ruling fraction; it almost always means that it is the hegemonic fraction within the power bloc. The occurrence of this fact shows that dominant fractions are able to impose their strategies and objectives, even without becoming a ruling class. In other words, for this class or fraction (whether dominant or dominated) to be able to control the centers of power of the state, much more than a "simple" electoral victory is necessary.

Poulantzas (1985, p. 159) clarified this with the following:

Given the complexity of the network that is comprised of the many apparatuses of the state and its sectors (a complexity which is often translated into a distinction between real power and formal power and which is apparent in the political scene), the fact that the left is leading the government does not forcefully or automatically mean that the left truly controls all or even some of the state apparatuses, especially because this institutional organisation of the state allows for the bourgeoisie to trade places of real power and formal power in the case of the populace's attempt to access power.

Even in cases in which the left is in power, when it controls the government, and when it also truly controls the sectors and apparatuses of the state, it does not mean that the left forcefully controls those, or even one among them, who hold the dominant position in the state (those who make up the central axis of true power (the center of power)). The centralised unity of the state does not reside in a pyramid in which occupying the highest category guarantees control.

If this ruling class or fraction from the left (in the political scene) truly desires to control the centers of power, it is necessary that they focus on the place where the hegemonical fraction's exploitation of the productive process occurs. This necessarily means changing the coalitions of social forces; that is to say, changing the composition and
structure of the power bloc and that which is outside of it. This situation may almost always generate strong institutional tensions (political crises).

Thus, state policies tend to express the contradictory movements that develop in the state apparatus and which are the result of a given set of social forces within the power bloc. Public policy (particularly economic policy), therefore, cannot be understood only by the idea that it is a specialist design or a neutral ground, and that it is therefore stripped of any value judgments (according to positivist methodology). In fact, the approach advocated herein is that, even if public policy seems chaotic and contradictory in the short term, it originates from the interaction and conflicts of a decision process that, in the long term (understood here as being equivalent to the abstract-formal level), expresses the hegemonic interests of the dominant fraction in the power bloc (OLIVEIRA, 2004).

Thus, state intervention (public policies) is the reflection of the connections between the political forces of the fractions of the power bloc in certain historical and spatial time periods. It is also a reflection of the greater or lesser relative autonomy of the centers of power in the capitalist state.

Until this point, we have disregarded external constraints on the power bloc dynamic. However, we shall try to dispel this supposition, because the internal movements (the power bloc and state intervention) are also almost always strongly influenced by international conditions, which necessarily depend on the central or peripheral position that a given state occupies in the hierarchy of the international system.
4 The State and the International System: Projection of class power (the power bloc) beyond a class's national spaces

State relations derive from the hierarchical position that each state holds in the international system. Consequently, a country's position of "command" depends on the intra-state configuration of productive forces, on the division of labor, and on internal intercourse. In other words, it depends on the degree of accumulation of capital of each nation, and also on the content and the dynamic of the power bloc that is inherent to each nation. In a passage from the book The German Ideology, Marx and Engels alert readers to the impacts and characteristics of a given social formation (considering its internal and external dimensions) on relations with other countries:

The relations between different nations depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labor and internal intercourse. This statement is generally recognised. But not only the relation of one nation to others, but also the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse. (MARX & ENGELS, 1846, p. 28-29).

Though they indicated clues for understanding the relations between nations, and though they have highlighted the internationalisation process of the bourgeois mode of production, Marx and Engels did not elaborate on the relationship between the countries in their studies, nor did they significantly address the question of hierarchy in the modern international system, which, as some say, was consolidated after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. However, because a hierarchy is a decisive trait in the composition of this system, it is important to remember that this trait always was and still is historically marked by interstate conflicts and by an unequal process of capitalist development\textsuperscript{19}. Depending on its position within the hierarchy of the system, a given

\textsuperscript{19}The international system is, at its essence, a dynamic system that involves power and, which, therefore, is a system of permanent conflict (whether open or secret) and imbalance. Thus, the international system,
state can exert its sovereignty (to a greater or lesser degree) on other states using force
(war or preparation for war), and/or using direct and indirect action within international
organisations (the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, etc.).

Particularly when applying the concepts of world-economy and world-system, Braudel
(1987) and Wallerstein (1985) are among the authors who best addressed the
phenomenon of hierarchy within the scope of the modern international system. For
Braudel (1987), world-economy can be defined first by its construction of a given
geographical area, the limits of which may vary over time, and, second by its center and
dependent periphery, particularly in the commercial sphere. Meanwhile, according to
Wallerstein (1985), world-system corresponds to a social structure defined by borders
and member groups that simultaneously enjoy social legitimacy. In this world-system,
forces are present. Though conflicting, these forces keep the system united through the
tension generated internally, since the system itself presents a gradual historical
dynamic that involves the ascension of certain social groups (commercial, productive,
and financial capitalists). Thus, the dynamic of the world-system becomes possible
through its hierarchical construction, which is the image and likeness of a capitalist
society. To summarise, the three characteristics of the world-system are as follows: i) a
worldwide integrated economic system that is polarised from the center of the system;
ii) a political system based on other related sovereign systems, but with well-defined
hierarchical relations among those sovereign systems; and iii) a cultural model that
offers legitimacy and coherence to the system.

However, the debate over the hierarchical character of the modern international system
was preceded by the contribution of Marxist theories on imperialism. Among the
authors, Hilferding, Bukharin, and Lenin stand out. They raised important questions on
how to understand the interconnections of the internal dynamic of accumulation and of
class disputes. However, they did not explicitly address the concept of the power bloc.
Another relevant issue addressed by Marxist theorists regarding imperialism is trends

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outside the state, a concept which refers to the role of national state command within the international system.

Let us consider some of these issues. Hilferding (1910) made an important contribution to the development of Marxist economic theory when he formulated the concept of financial capital. He affirms that phenomena involving the concentration and centralisation of capital originate in the transformation of the structure of accumulation dynamics, a change which occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (mainly in the core countries of Europe) through the interpenetration among industrial capital and banking institutions through corporations. Thus, financial capital (a totalising structure) corresponds to a fusion process between the bank (the large banking bourgeoisie) and industry (the large industrial bourgeoisie), in a way that made the constitution of a new form of capital fraction possible.

In this sense, financial capital constitutes a historical and institutional category; i.e., a dominant fraction within a given class struggle. In this way, if we employ the theoretical developments presented in the previous section, it can be affirmed to a certain extent that financial capital would have assumed the hegemonic position in the power bloc.

The emergence of financial capital should be considered a necessary measure for the conservation of capitalism. It is the action from which capitalism's primordial objective of maintaining and increasing profit rates (surplus value) is derived. Hilferding (1910) notes that financial capital has adopted a policy that articulates three objectives: i) the creation of an economic territory that is as vast as possible; ii) the defense of this territory through customs barriers and iii) the transformation of this territory into a space for exploiting monopolies in the country. The advance of financial capital progressively concentrates production. This phenomenon is evident through the lower number of large capitalist associations, through the separation of company ownership from company management, and through the maximum socialisation of production within capitalist logic.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, a new relationship between monopoly system dynamics and interstate conflicts arose. According to Hilferding (1910), Lenin (1916), and Bukharin (1918), the advance of monopolies and cartels necessitated the revival and increase in protectionism in an
attempt to reduce and eliminate foreign competition within the domestic market. Within a context of less domestic capitalist competition, an increase in prices from monopolies tends to cause a decrease in domestic sales, which justifies the move of domestic production to locations abroad. Thus, exports become progressively more important for maintaining and increasing large-scale production in main capitalist economies.

However, when it comes to bonds with the international market, the logic of financial capital has, in its need to export, a second variable: exporting capital becomes the most important objective among advanced capitalist nations. The expansion of the area of influence in economic regions under the rule of these capitalist nations allows financial capital to expand the scales of production of the core countries to peripheral countries, where the value of the labor force is lower. This contributes to the maintenance of higher profit rates for the monopolies. Such a dynamic requires a strong expansionist policy that can only be achieved through the support and active intervention of the state. This intervention is directed toward the acquisition and maintenance of control over new economic areas. In other words, national expansionary policies become necessary. This, in turn, generates intensified conflict among larger capitalist states, because each of them has the goal of progressively increasing their areas of influence and/or control over socioeconomic territories.

If we accept these assertions, we can begin to discuss the question of the relationship between the state and the international system that is implicit in Hilferding's model. To do so, we will make use of José Luis Fiori's contributions. He is a Brazilian scholar who stands out in his studies on international political and economic relations. Fiori argues that Rudolf Hilferding's model is only an elaboration of Marx's argument in that it disregards the analytical method of "capital in general" in order to replace it with the idea of "the national state" as a basis. Hilferding would have brought "the national states and their wars into his theory of capitalist development of financial and monopoly capital" and, thus, would have been able to understand the dynamics of competition and expansion in the world system. However, according to Fiori, the question of expansive dynamics of the system is a controversial theme that is present in this formulation, since the imperialism theorists describe expansion as a specific phase of capitalism when, in fact, it is an ever-present characteristic in the modern international system (FIORI, 2004, p. 43).
Along this vein, Fiori (2004, 2007) argued that, when the imperialism theorists adopted the national state as a methodological basis, they made it clear that the expansion of the capitalist system would not have been the work of "capital in general," as Marx would have concluded, but that it would have happened as a consequence of expansion and competition among the states and national economies "that are able to impose their currency, their 'public debt,' their credit system and their taxation systems as monetary security of their financial capital upon these foreign and ever-expanding economic territories" (FIORI, 2004, p. 46).

Yet as an alternative, it is possible to affirm that the expansion of the capitalist system (within its repercussions in historically determined social formations) was really not due to "capital in general," nor can it be attributed to a rational state (in the Weberian sense, in which the state emerges as a rational creator and generates the conditions for the creation of an internal market), as Fiori (2004, 2007, 2008) asserts. In fact, this expansion came from the dynamics of the various power blocs that predicted their forces through their states and beyond their national territories, specifically in the arena of disputes within the modern international system.

In Fiori's analysis of the modern international system (2004, 2007, 2008), it is important to highlight two important elements in order to understand the question of hierarchy: currency and weapons. In the case of currency, Fiori argues that the state that leads the accumulation of capital is the one that is able to impose its monetary unity as an international currency, which thus allows the state's public debt and credit system to function as monetary securities for the expansion of the state's fractions of capital (power bloc) beyond its territorial spaces. Fiori argues that weapons (war and preparation for war) function as tools as much for conquest and the accumulation of power as they do for defense and preservation. Therefore, the more sovereignty a state

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20 For Fiori (2008, p. 30), "the states that expand and conquer or overpower new territories also expand their 'monetary territory' and internationalise their capital. At the same time, however, their capital and wealth are expressed in their national currency and can only be internationalised by staying linked to a national currency, whether it's their own or that of a more powerful state."

21 Based on this logic of competition, it becomes necessary for the units of power to remain in a constant arms race focused on the preservation of the security, peace, and tranquility of their populations. Thus, "it can be said that the need to expand power in order to conquer peace ends up transforming peace into
has (given its currency and international currency, and given the fact that its armed forces are superior), the greater capacity its power bloc (a term Fiori did not use) has to expand its accumulation space beyond its borders.

Though it highlights very relevant issues, in our opinion, Fiori's mode of interpretation is limited in its explanation because it leaves out other relevant factors. One of them is the question of mediation between the state and the power bloc's internal dynamic. We believe that, by attempting to avoid the economic mediation between the state and social classes, Fiori (2004) ended up going to the other extreme and adopting a political stance. In this stance, the state appears as a creator (in a combination of the Hegelian and Weberian visions) that is displaced by the material, economic, and ideological bases of society, and it possesses a political and economic rationale above the sections of society.

Based on this idea, it is necessary to point out that weapons and currency explain only a part of the issue of power in the modern international system. Therefore, it is necessary to also incorporate the mediation between the state and the class fractions following what was previously presented on the concept of the power bloc and the role of international arenas (international organisations), where the strategy of persuasion is used as a powerful weapon for the dominant state and its class fractions.

In addition to the use of force, the hierarchy in the modern international system is maintained through the mobilisation of international organisations (the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, etc.) that play at least two fundamental roles in the international political game: i) they act as political regulatory arenas where international laws that facilitate the expansion of economic and socially dominant forces are enacted – according to Cox (2007), the laws that are adopted generally originate from the dominant state, though they also have to be supported by other states; and ii) they ideologically legitimise the cultural rules and values of the international order, which the primary justification for war itself." The imminence of war, or, as it can be described, "the continual presence of this virtual war," acts as a stimulus for the internal and permanent mobilization of resources for war on the part of each of these original 'imperial units.'” This tendency "was reinforced over time in that resistance and barriers to expansionism grew” (FIORI, 2004, p. 27).
originate from the most powerful state (and its power bloc) through the directives and political policies for many other national states.
5 Conclusions

This article sought to develop a theory of the state supported by Poulantzas and guided by a methodology referred to here as a "relational perspective." It also sought to identify the role the state plays at both the abstract-formal level, which corresponds to the important dimension of the accumulation of capital, and the concrete-real level, which represents the locus of the political disputes between the power bloc and the populace, as well as a central space in the competitions for power in the modern international system.

First, we highlighted the limitations of certain important approaches to the role of the state within the capitalist mode of production, particularly those referred to as structuralist, classist, and derivationalist schools of thought. The focus of these approaches involves accumulation (of capital in general) at the abstract-formal level, and it is assumed that this focus limits the power of pro-capital function and state actions, but leaves out the real-concrete level. Thus, as was emphasised herein, the phenomena that are manifested in a given situation (such as unavoidable disputes between different class fractions) correspond to a complex scenario that must be incorporated into an analytical framework that can characterise the state functions discussed previously. It was also pointed out that analyses of the state that focus only on the abstract-formal level cannot incorporate the political conflicts that are ever-present within the state.

In light of these conclusions, it is important to highlight another important argument regarding the benefit of integrating the abstract-formal level and the concrete-real level. This would involve the assimilation of state policies (particularly economic policies). Unlike many other theories on conservative exploitation and even some that criticise capitalism, this article has concluded that state policies (public policy or economic policy) always possess neutral content in one way or another. In fact, in the short term, these theories express the conflicting trends within the power bloc that are developed within the state. Although these trends often seem chaotic, in the long term, it is possible to see the hegemonic interests of the dominant fraction in the power bloc, which necessarily goes after its primordial objective of increasing its accumulation of capital as a whole.
Finally, we call attention to the consequences of the application of the concept of the power bloc at the level of interstate relations within the modern international system. In this way, the theory broke away from the classical model of Marxist thinking on the interpretation of the structural changes of capitalism. We see, then, that the formulation of capital finance (an idea that was elaborated by Hilferding) allows for us to grasp the transformations of capitalism in specific periods during its development, since, in our opinion, this formation implicitly contains certain analytical elements that are equivalent to categories of the concept of the power bloc. Though it was based on the idea of capital in general, Hilferding's model also emphasised the existence of an international hierarchical order among nation-states, and argued that this order was equally recognised in the world-system approach (of which Braudel and Wallerstein are notable supporters).

The worldwide capitalist economy presents as one of its principal norms the permanent attempt to expand domination of the power bloc of core capitalist countries beyond their national spaces. However, Fiori, one of the most important Brazilian authors in the formulation of theoretical approaches regarding international state relations, presents a divergent opinion when he argues the contrary: that Hilferding inverted Marx's original justification for international expansion of capitalism (capital in general), and that it was, in fact, competition among states and national economies that justified the international expansion of capitalism. In this way, Fiori unfortunately ends up placing too much importance on a supposed "state rationale," and in doing so, loses sight of the decisive action of class fractions, which make up the power blocs, and the way that they ensure the characteristic hierarchical scenario seen in the world economy, as well as within the international nation-state system.
References


