

according to Poulantzas, emphasizes the formulation of the State as "the organization of maintaining both the conditions of production and the conditions for the existence and functioning both of the unity of a mode of production and of a formation."⁸¹ Poulantzas, here, is not different from Bukharin who, in his Theory of Historical Materialism formulates the conception of a social formation as "a system of unstable equilibrium inside which the State plays the role of regulator."⁸²

The global function of the State as the cohesive factor in a formation's unity (common to the various Marxist conceptions of the State quoted above) takes on different forms depending on the mode of production and social formation under consideration.

According to Poulantzas,

"This function of the State, becoming a specific function, specifies the State as such in the formations dominated by the CMP [Capitalist Mode of Production] characterized by the specific autonomy of instances [the political, economic, and ideological] and by the particular place which is then allotted to the region of the State. This characteristic autonomy is the basis of the specificity of the political: it determines the particular function of the State as the cohesive factor of the levels which have gained autonomy." 83

It is to be emphasized that despite this relative autonomy, the State continues to be a relation and does not become a thing in itself. In fact, the function of the State as the cohesive factor in a formation's unity, which makes it the place in which the contradictions of the instances are condensed, becomes still clearer when we consider that an historically determined social formation is characterized by an overlapping of several modes of production, specifically during a period of transition from the dominance of one mode to the dominance of another. We are then in the presence of "a true relation of forces" between the various modes of production present and the permanent