BLOCK III

State in Comparative Perspective

STATE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Irrespective of the society we live in, be it liberal, capitalist, or socialist, the State is the dominant political institution standing above all other institutions, which has an influence in politics, economy, culture and almost all aspects of the contemporary society. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that we begin and end our lives within the confines and jurisdiction of the State. It is so ubiquitous that perhaps no other institution impacts our lives in a way the State does. Aristotle, who lived in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens asserted that a man who can live without a State is either a beast or a God.

The centrality of the state in all spheres of public life also makes it elusive. This explains the intense debates surrounding the way the state has been conceptualised in political theory and comparative politics. In this block, we examine the states from the perspectives two dominant schools of thought, the liberal and the Marxist.

We begin by examining the origin of modern states in Western Europe. Keeping the theme of democratization that informs this course, the first unit of this block examines how the modern state evolved from being absolutist under monarchical forms to that of liberal representative democracy. The unit clearly brings out that this has been a long drawn and uneven process.

The experience of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America with modern state systems has been quite different. Having emerged as sovereign independent states only a few decades back, the post-colonial state in these countries was confronted with enormous challenges of overcoming the distortions arising from colonial rule and meeting the growing aspirations of their people. The second unit in this block focuses on the specificities of the post-colonial state bringing out their historically rooted distinct social and political features. The unit also examines the debate on the nature of the post-colonial state, its social formations and capacity for relative autonomy from classes.

In the recent decades, the state is confronted with new challenges. Externally, these challenges are arising from the rise of a number of non-state actors on the international stage. Internally, there has been a growing assertion of identity by several groups belying the widespread assumption that the processes of modernisation and secularisation will erode the salience of ethnic identity. With some of ethnic assertions taking the form of self determination or autonomy movements, they pose a challenge to the integrity of the state. While the external challenges to state sovereignty are addressed in the course on Global Politics, here we focus on the domestic challenges arising from heterogeneity, particularly focusing on the importance of pluralism in national building.

UNIT 8   EVOLUTION OF STATE IN WESTERN EUROPE*

Structure

8.0   OBJECTIVES

The aim of the unit is to introduce the evolution of the modern nation state system in Western Europe. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the features of the modern-state

- Contextualize the formation of the state in Europe

- Describe the foundations of the modern-state

- Describe the importance of Sovereignty

- Explain the evolution of the state from an absolutist state to a liberal democracy

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

Different types of socio-political communities have emerged in different times and places throughout history. These range from tribal groups, agricultural communities, nomadic groups, empires, kingdoms, vassal cities and others. Some of these organisations have been centralised and powerful while others have been loosely organised or decentralised. The modern nation state as a political community is one of the most recent forms of human institutions. After a long drawn out and uneven process of formation, the state system was finally entrenched in Europe by the Seventeenth century. The states themselves evolved from being absolutist under monarchical forms to that of liberal representative democracy. From Europe, this state system spread to the rest of the world mainly through the process of colonialism. The decolonization process in Africa and Asia in the Twentieth century further increased the number of modern states in the world. This is reflected in the dramatic rise of the membership of the United Nations- from the initial 51 member states in 1945 to 193 in the year 2020.

We begin this unit by identifying the core features of the modern state and then proceed to delineate the evolution of the modern state in Western Europe.

8.2 FEATURES OF THE STATE

"The state- or apparatus of 'government'- appears to be everywhere, regulating the conditions of our lives from birth registration to death certification." (Held 1989:28). In between birth and death, we are bound with the processes of the state on multiple occasions. For a lot of people, education is given through government schools and colleges, health services provided at government hospitals when ill and if required, and essential food supplies are met through public distribution system. Once one is a citizen of any country, s/he is bound by the rules and regulations of that state. This is true for both our conduct in public sphere, as well as our conduct in some aspects of our personal sphere. To travel to another state, one has to be granted a passport and visa. Our fundamental and human rights are guaranteed by the Constitution of the state and ought to be implemented by its institutions. These examples go on to show the pervasiveness and omnipresence of the state in our lives (Das 2008:171).

A state has to possess four features: first, a permanent population; second, a defined territory; third, government and fourth, capacity to enter into relations with the other states (sovereignty). These features were set out in the 'Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States' signed in 1933. Although this convention was specifically signed among countries belonging to North and South America, the convention is considered to be part of 'customary international law'. This means that the norms and principles set out in this convention apply not only to signatories but to all other similar subjects of international law.

8.3 FRAGMENTARY POLITICAL SYSTEM IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The beginnings of the modern state system lie in the geographical territory that we know as Europe. According to David Held (1989:31), "the story of the formation of the modern state is in part the story of the formation of the Europe, and vice versa." From Europe, this system spread to the rest of the world through colonialism. According to Hay and Lister (2006:5), "it is to Western Europe that we must turn if we are to establish the origins of the modern state". Similarly, Thomas Ertman (2005:367) also writes that "though the first examples of state building in the widest sense may have occurred more than four thousand years ago in the ancient Near East and China, it was post-Roman state building in Western Europe, lasting from about the Fifth century until the end of the Napoleonic period, that brought forth the modern state with a modern bureaucratic infrastructure at its heart."

What needs to be underlined is that Europe itself was created through a combination of multiple factors. "A thousand years ago Europe as such did not exist. A decade before the Millennium, [990 A.D] the roughly thirty million people who lived at the western end of the Eurasian land mass had no compelling reason to think of themselves as a single set of people, connected by history and fate" (Tilly, 1990:38). There was neither any common identity nor any unified authority. Sovereignty as such was fragmented and divided. "The [various] emperors, kings, prices, dukes, caliphs, sultans, and other potentates of AD 990 prevailed as conquerors, tribute-takers, and rentiers, not as heads of state that durably and densely regulated life within their realms" (Tilly 1990:39). Hence there were multiple principalities and city states. There was a constant struggle for power among them as there were overlapping jurisdictions. There was frequent use of violence by the private armies. There was no centralized national state anywhere in Europe (Tilly 1990: 40). Although most of the Italian peninsula was claimed by the Byzantine emperor and the Holy Roman emperor, every city inside the Italian peninsula was in reality ruled by their own local political agents. Hence in AD 1200, the Italian peninsula alone hosted two or three hundred distinct city-states (Tilly 1990:40).

In between the Eighth and Fourteenth centuries, the landmass of Europe was dominated by divided/fragmentary authority and this era is referred to as 'feudalism' (Held 1989: 32). The economy at this time was based on agriculture. Since there was no centralised political power, there used to be a constant battle to take or own whatever surplus that would be generated through agriculture (Held 1989:33). This era also saw the emergence of many urban centres which gave rise to greater manufacturing and trade. Examples of such urban centres were Florence, Venice and Siena. Even though hundreds of such smaller urban cities developed throughout Europe, the political power still remained fragmented and more focused on the local power centres spread throughout the rural countryside (Held 1989:33). Some amount of unity began to be provided by the Papacy (the office and jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome, the pope) and the Holy Roman Empire with its overarching call for unity on the basis of religion. "The Holy Roman Empire existed in some form from the Eight until the early

Nineteenth century. At its height, it represented an attempt, under the patronage of the Catholic Church, to unite and centralize the fragmented power centres of Western Christendom into a politically unified Christian empire" (Held 1989:33). The areas under this domain would be now located from Germany to Spain and from northern France to Italy. Such an order has been termed by Hedley Bull (1977) and Paul Kennedy (1988) as the 'international Christian society' (Held 1989:33). However, throughout the Middle Ages there was a constant struggle for power between the Catholic Church and the local level feudal powers centres in the rural hinterland and numerous city states (Held 1989:33).

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the four features of the modern state?

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2) Why is medieval Europe known as a fragmentary?

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8.4 EARLY FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN NATION STATES

The challenge to this 'international Christian society' that was trying to provide an overarching unity to the fragmentary nature of political authority in Europe came in the form of Reformation in the beginning of the Sixteenth century. Also known as the Protestant Reformation, this movement challenged the religious power of the Pope and the Catholic Church. One of its main leaders was Martin Luther who with the publication of a list titled *Ninety-five Theses* in the year 1517 exposed what he regarded as the abusive practices of the Church. These discriminatory practices included the selling or commercialising indulgences to people promising them to rid them of their sins and guilt. Due to the challenge posed by Reformation, the religious power and political hold of the papacy was greatly reduced. This directly led to the development of space for new forms of political power to rise. With this, "ground was created for the development of a new form of political identity- national identity" (Held 1989:34). This can be called the first stage in the rise of the modern nation state.

Two different forms of political regimes started developing from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth century in Europe. These were "the 'absolute' monarchies in

France, Prussia, Austria, Spain and Russia, among other places, and the 'constitutional' monarchies and republics found in England and Holland" (Held 1989:34). Absolutism basically meant the development of an all-powerful bigger state created by engulfing or absorbing the smaller and weaker territories into its larger structural ambit. This ensured that there was a bigger unified territory with a common system of law and order. This was to be led by a single unitary sovereign head which came to be known as the absolutist monarch (Held 1989:35). Political authority hence became completely centralised in the monarch based on the theory of the 'divine right of the king'. This means that the absolutist powers of the monarch/king were justified on the ground that he derived his power directly from God and therefore could not be questioned.

The increased power of the monarch led to the development of a new centralised administrative system involving a permanent bureaucracy and an army. Hence absolutism of the monarch led to a process of uniformity in terms of administration, law and order, economy and society/culture across the territory. Therefore, within these territories, such variations were decreasing but at the same time, these variations/differences were increasing among the territories controlled by different monarchs. David Held (1989:36) writes that "six ensuing developments were of great significance in the history of the states system:

(1) The growing coincidence of territorial boundaries with a uniform system of rule;
(2) The creation of new mechanism of law making and enforcement;
(3) The centralization of administrative power;
(4) The alteration and extension of fiscal management;
(5) The formalization of relations among states through the development of diplomacy and diplomatic institutions; and
(6) The introduction of a standing army".

Hence, the formation of absolute monarchies became the basis for the further development of the state system in Western Europe. The countless wars that were fought to consolidate the power of the monarch in his territory ultimately led to the re-drawing of the map of Europe several times. However, this ensured that the territorial consolidation became a prime motive, thereby establishing the principle of sovereignty among the various monarchs. Hence "absolutism and the inter-state system it initiated were the proximate sources of the modern state" (Held 1989:36).

8.5 RISE OF THE MODERN STATE AND SOVEREIGNTY

Before the formation of the modern state in Europe, common people owed their political allegiance either to the local ruler, the church, the monarch or to other religious/political head. Depending on the shift of power among these parties due to constant strife, the political allegiance of the people also shifted accordingly. This intricate relationship between common people and the religious/political ruler had to break for the notion of the modern state to arise. This is because the foundation of the modern state is based on the concept of an impersonal political

authority/order. Impersonal meaning not related/connected to any particular person. In terms of authority, an impersonal order is deemed to be fairer than a personalised order where favouritism or nepotism is likely to be more rampant. "Similarly, it was only when human beings were no longer thought of as merely dutiful subjects of God, an emperor or a monarch that the notion could begin to take hold that they, as 'individuals', 'persons' or 'a people', were capable of being active citizens of a new political order- citizens of their state" (Held 1989:37).

The modern state is deeply linked to the concept of sovereignty. Sovereignty basically means supreme legitimate power/authority over a polity. The concept of sovereignty mainly developed in the Sixteenth century as a major theme of political thought (Held 1989:38). The major philosophers associated with this concept are Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and others.

8.5.1. State Sovereignty

Jean Bodin is said to have provided the "first statement of the modern theory of sovereignty: that there must be within every political community or state a determinate sovereign body whose powers are recognized by the community as the rightful or legitimate basis of authority" (Held 1989:39). Bodin published his treatise titled *Six Books of the Republic* in 1576 within the backdrop of the religious and civil wars in France. He argued for the establishment of a supreme power/central authority in the form of an absolute monarch for bringing about order and stability. More importantly, Bodin outlined that the sovereign has undivided power to impose laws over its subjects regardless of their consent. For Bodin, law was "nothing else than the command of the sovereign in the exercise of his sovereign power" (Held 1989:40). Hence his theory of sovereignty clearly gave absolute powers to the sovereign over and above the consent of the subjects. However, he also emphasized that this power of the sovereign had to be exercised keeping in account certain rules based on divine law and fundamental customary laws of the political community. Sovereignty may be unlimited, but the sovereign is bound in morals and religion to respect the laws of God, nature and custom (Held 1989: 40). Essentially, he was of the view that "while the sovereign is the rightful head of the state, he is so by virtue of his office not his person." Bodin outlined that sovereignty is a constitutive characteristic of the state and his clear preference was for a monarchical form of government.

Thomas Hobbes further strengthened the notion of state sovereignty in his book titled *Leviathan* (16510. He did so by using the mechanism of the 'social contract' theory which posits that people have consented (either explicitly or implicitly) to giving up some of their powers to a ruler in return for provision of security and stability. Hobbes argued his case by providing a hypothetical situation of the 'state of nature' which is a state of people before the existence of a state/government. According to Hobbes, such a condition resulted in a 'war of every one against every one' and hence life of every person became 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. In order to avoid such a state of war, Hobbes posited that "individuals ought willingly to surrender their rights of self-government to a powerful single authority--thereafter authorized to act on their

behalf—because, if all individuals do this simultaneously, the condition would be created for effective political rule, and for security and peace in the long term" (Held 1989:41). This powerful single authority would be the state which would possess absolute and undivided sovereignty. Most importantly, Hobbes outlined that the sovereign was not a party to this contract among individuals and hence an agent in its own right. It was an " 'Artificial Man', defined by permanence and sovereignty, 'giving life and motion' to society and body politics' " (Held 1989:40). Only such a framework would be able to guarantee the life of life and security of the citizens inside the state. Hobbes has provided one of the most comprehensive justification for the absolute power conferred on the state.

8.5.2. Popular Sovereignty

The arguments advanced by Bodin and Hobbes for absolute sovereignty has given rise to a number of questions. The most fundamental of which was where sovereignty should reside, with the state, the ruler, the monarch or …the people? There were also questions related to the legitimate scope of state action, that is, what ought to be the form and scope of sovereign power? This brought to the forefront the discourse on popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty posits that consent of the people is one of fundamental basis by which the authority of the state can be justified. The main pioneers of this concept were John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. John Locke, an English philosopher who lived from 1632 to 1704, published *Two Treatises of Government* in 1689, where he put forward his version of the social contract theory. According to Locke, sovereignty in reality lies with the people. It is the people who transfer this power to the state so that it can protect its life, liberty and property. David Held (1989:43) writes, "It is important to emphasize that, in Locke's account, political authority is bestowed by individuals on government for the purpose of pursuing the ends of the governed; and should these ends fail to be represented adequately, the final judges are the people—the citizens—who can dispense both their deputies and, if need be, with the existing form of government itself" (1989:43).

Corollary, Locke supported the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that ended with the English crown accepting constitutional limits on his authority. Locke's theory rested on his theory of natural rights where he asserted that human beings are born with the natural rights of life, liberty and property. Natural rights are those rights that apply to everyone irrespective of which place they belonged to and no institution/state/government can take away these rights. Hence "the government rules, and its legitimacy is sustained, by the 'consent' of individuals" (Held 1989:43). Locke's theory propounded that supreme power/sovereignty originates with the people and it is transferred by the people to the state for the objective of protecting their natural rights. This became the foundation for the concept of popular sovereignty.

Jean-Jacques Rosseau (1712-1778) took this concept further by advancing that "a coherent account of political power requires an explicit and formal acknowledgement that sovereignty *originates* in the people and *ought* to stay there" (Held 1989:44). He postulated that this could only take place through the model of the "general will" where individual citizens themselves will enact laws towards the fulfilment of common good after a process of deliberation and

discussion. "All citizens should meet together to decide what is best for the community and enact the appropriate laws. The ruled should be the rulers…" (Held 1989:45).

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1). What role did the rise of absolute monarchies play in the development of modern states?

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2). What is Sovereignty? How did it set the modern nation state apart from other political entities?

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8.6 THE FORMALISATION OF MODERN-NATION STATES AND THE RISE OF DEMOCRACY

"It took a long time for national states-- relatively centralized, differentiated, and autonomous organizations successfully claiming priority in the use of force with large, contiguous, and clearly bounded territories –to dominate the European map" (Tilly 1990:43). In 990 A D, the European landmass was politically fragmented with divided and overlapping authority. However, by "…1490 the future remained open; despite the frequent use of the word "kingdom," empires of one sort or another claimed most of the European landscape, and federations remained viable in some parts of the continent. Sometime after 1490, Europeans foreclosed those alternative opportunities, and set off decisively toward the creation of a system consisting almost entirely of relatively autonomous national states" (Tilly 1990:44). There was increasing centralisation of power in Europe under the rule of the absolutist rulers. Such moves in the practical life of politics were backed in the ideational domain by the theories of sovereignty, especially state sovereignty at this point of time. In due course, with the rise of the notion of popular sovereignty, there was a push for accountability from the rulers and democratic governance. Importantly, the concept of sovereignty underlined the foundation of the modern nation state which was an impersonal structure of governance.

> The Peace of Westphalia is a collection of settlement treaties signed in 1648 in the cities of Osnabrück and Münster located in present day Germany. It "brought to an end the Eighty Years' War [1568-1648] between Spain and the Dutch and the German phase of the Thirty Years' War [1618-1648]" (Encyclopedia Britannica). The Peace of Westphalia has been characterized as a watershed moment in the history of international relations as it propounded that these treaties finally heralded the inter-state system that the world is contemporarily divided into. Hence the conception of the international order based on this inter-state system is often referred to as the 'Westphalian' system (Held 1989:77). It entrenched the principle of sovereignty in inter-state affairs for the first time. The model of Westphalia established that "the world consists of, and if divided by, sovereign states which recognize no superior authority" (Held 1989:78). Sovereignty meant that the state had the sole power of jurisdiction in its own territory, which came to be known as 'internal sovereignty'. It also meant that in relations to other states, there existed formal equality which became the foundation on which to establish independent diplomatic relations among states. The latter came to be known as 'external sovereignty'.

David Held (1989:48-49) has outlined the most "prominent innovations" of the modern state: -

- "*Territoriality* - While all states have made claims to territories, it is only with the modern state system that exact borders have been fixed.

- *Control of the means of violence* - The claim to hold a monopoly on force and the means of coercion (sustained by a standing army and the police) became possible only with the 'pacification' of people- the breaking down of rival centres of power and authority- in the nation state. This element of the modern state was not attained until the nineteenth century, and remained a fragile achievement in many countries.

- *Impersonal structure of power* - The idea of an impersonal and sovereign political order- that is, a legally circumscribed structure of power with supreme jurisdiction over a territory---could not prevail while political rights, obligations and duties were conceived as closely tied to religion and the claims of traditional privileged groups….

- *Legitimacy* - It was only when claims to 'divine right' or 'state right' were challenged and eroded that it became possible for human beings as 'individuals' and as 'peoples' to win a place as 'active citizens' in the political order. The loyalty of citizens became something that had to be won by modern states: invariably this involved a claim by the state to be legitimate because it reflected and/or represented the views and interests of its citizens." (Held 1989: 48-49).

It is argued that the development modern state and its evolution into a representative liberal democracy in Western Europe was a result of many factors and processes. David Held (1989:52) has outlined three "'macro patterns': [1] war and militarism, [2] the emergence of capitalism, and [3] the struggle for

citizenship". Held posits that the nation states went on to become the dominant form of political existence on an international level because of these three temporally long drawn out and complex processes. First, with regard to the role of war and militarism, Gianfranco Poggi (2001:99) has asserted that the modern state was initially intended for purposes of "war making" in order to establish and maintain its might. This "war making" in return played a role in further strengthening the structures and processes of the modern state itself. Charles Tilly (1985:181) has written that the agents of the state carry on four different activities of first, "war making: eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force"; second, "state making: eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories"; third, "protection: eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients"; and fourth, "extraction: acquiring the means to carry out the first three activities -war making, state making, and protection" (Tilly 1985:181). Hence, many "state makers were locked into an open-ended and ruthless competition in which as Tilly put it, 'most contenders lost' (1975, p.15). The successful cases of state-making such as Britain, France and Spain were the 'survivors'" (Held 1989:54).

Secondly, with regard to relationship between capitalism and the formation of the modern state, David Held (1989:71) has posited that modern states "were economically successful because of the rapid growth of their markets from the late Sixteenth century, and particularly after the mid-Eighteenth century…" The sustained process of capital accumulation led to the economic basis of the centralized state to expand. This in turn reduced the war making capacities of other smaller states with fragmented political structures or ones that relied on more traditional forms of coercive power (Held 1989:71-72). Held (1989:60) also underlined that after the decline of the Muslim world which had dominated world-wide trade relations around AD 1000, it was Europe that burst forth outward towards the world. "The growth of interconnections between states and societies—that is, of globalization--became progressively shaped by the expansion of Europe. Globalization initially meant 'European globalization' (Held 1989:60). The states of Europe were helped in the endeavour by their military and strong naval forces. These developments furthered the process of colonising the rest of the world. The Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British and French scrambled for colonies in Asia and Africa. The increases in the resources of Europe by draining the wealth of the colonies further strengthen its own system. "In particular, European expansion became a major source of development of state activity and efficiency" (Held 1989:61).

Third, concerning the struggle for citizenship and the rise of liberal democracy, Held (1989:69) highlights three reasons as to why "citizenship crystallize in many Western polities in the form of civil and political rights" ultimately leading to the rise of the liberal democratic modern nation state. These are, first, the "reciprocity of power" where national governments came to be dependent on the cooperation of the population especially in times of emergency like wars. Second, the weakening of the traditional forms of legitimacy based particularly on religion and property rights. This led to alternative notions of legitimacy of the political authority which was based on a reciprocal relationship between the

governors and the governed. Third, the liberal representative democracy did not threaten the growing autonomy of the civil and economic society. These three reasons collaborated to the ultimate development of the liberal democratic state. However, the path was long drawn and many battles had to be won by different groups of people. Women have had to struggle in a major way for their basic rights in almost all parts of the world, be it in the east or the west. Women were granted voting rights in France in 1944 and in Britain in 1928. "From the pursuit of 'no taxation without representation' in the Seventeenth-century England to the diverse struggles to achieve a genuinely universal franchise in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, advocates of greater accountability in government have sought to establish satisfactory means of choosing, authorizing and controlling political decisions" (Held 1989:70).

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1). Identify the three macro patterns outlined by David Held that led to the development of liberal representative democratic state.

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8.7   LET US SUM UP

The rise and evolution of the modern nation state needs to be understood as a long drawn out and uneven process situated in Western Europe. It needs to be understood against the backdrop of the break-up of the medieval world which was a place of divided and overlapping authority and religious conflicts. Certain developments led to a change in this context. These developments included the Reformation, the rise of international capital, trade and European expansion through colonialism, the rise of absolutist monarchies and the theoretical discourse of sovereignty. These became the foundational backdrop that led to the development of modern nation states. These states have themselves evolved from monarchical forms to that of liberal representative democracies.

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8.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Your answer should highlight following points: i) Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, and ii) Permanent population; Defined territory; Government; Sovereignty

2) Your answer should highlight following points: Divided authority, overlapping jurisdiction, religious conflict, instability and constant war

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should highlight their role in bringing uniformity in law-and order, administration, economy, society and culture within the territory

2) It is supreme legitimate power; Modern sovereign states are characterised by impersonal structure of authority internally; formal equality among states and acceptance of the principle of non-interference in others internal matters.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Your answer should elaborate the following points: i) War and militarism; ii) The emergence of capitalism; and, iii) The struggle for citizenship.

UNIT 9   POST COLONIAL STATE*

Structure

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit analyses the nature and development of a post-colonial state from the liberal and Marxist perspectives. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the nature and characteristic features of the post-colonial state

- Analyse the Dependency theorists' arguments on state and development.

- Discuss the autonomy of the post-colonial state, and

- The changing nature of the post-colonial, and the impact of the Globalisation on the post-colonial state.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Johann Kaspar Bluntschli (1808-1881), a Swiss jurist and political theorist, described political science as a discipline or science concerned with the state.

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Writing almost a century later, Norman P. Barry (1944-2008), the British political theorist, reflected on how the "history of political theory has been mainly concerned with the state". The concept of state was intrinsic to modern society. As the British sociologist Ralph Miliband (1924-1994)) has observed: "there is nothing which is nearly as important as the state". Similarly, the American political scientist Martin Carnoy (1984) drew attention to the growing importance of the state. In his words, "in every society, from advanced industrial to a Third World primary good exporter, and in every aspect of society, not just politics, but in economics (production, finance, distribution), in ideology (schooling, media), and law enforcement (police, military)… the state appears to hold the key to economic development, to social security, to individual liberty, and through increasing weapons sophistication to life and death itself. To understand politics in today's world economic system, then, is to understand a society's fundamental dynamic." It is for this reason that the study of state occupies a prominent place in political science. Within the discipline of political science, however, the state has been subject to intense debate about its nature across different schools of thought.

The centrality of the state in all spheres of public life also makes it elusive. This explains the intense debates surrounding the way the state has been conceptualised in political theory. We begin this unit by examining the main assumptions of the liberal and Marxist perspectives of the state and then proceed to specificities of the post-colonial state bringing out their historically rooted distinct social and political features. In this process, we engage with the debate on the nature of the post-colonial state, its social formations and capacity for relative autonomy from classes.

9.2 THE STATE IN POLITICAL THEORY: LIBERAL AND MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

Sifting through the academic literature, we observe three fundamental differences in the way state and class have been conceptualised in both Liberal and Marxist traditions.

First, Liberal theorists highlight the fundamental harmony in society, whereas Marxist analysts emphasise the inherent conflict that cannot be reconciled within the given frame of state and society. In Marxist theory, the state is viewed as repressive, with its apparatuses representing ideological and coercive domination of propertied classes over the working classes, whether feudal or capitalist.

Second, class in Liberal political theory is conceptualised as a descriptive category based on occupation, income and status. Marxist political theory, however, views class as a conceptual tool to analyse how individuals are placed unequally in the process of economic production.

Third, despite the insistence that the state is neutral and beneficial for all in society, Liberal political theorists are deeply aware of the formidable power of the modern state. They believe that state power needs to be controlled through constitutional mechanisms and political activities of the citizens. Civil society is critical for restraining the uncontrolled power of the state. On the other hand,

Marxist theorists argue that the state in a capitalist society is by nature repressive as it represents the interests of the dominant propertied classes. They hold that dignity and autonomy of the individual cannot be achieved under the existing structure of capitalist society and state. Therefore, they call for the overthrow of the existing state and establishment of a socialist state whose basis of power and authority would rest with the working classes.

Marxist theory grounds the state in class conflict. As a result, the state which emerges as an abstract entity in Liberal theory is given substance and a concrete shape in Marxist theory. Marxists insist that the study of society and social classes is a prerequisite to the study of the state.

Classes have two dimensions: objective and subjective. They are defined by the possession of the means of production or/and lack of such possession. Marxist theory is not blind to the existence of the other classes but focuses on two classes – the capitalist class and the working class – that form the two fundamental classes in society.

Classes become political entities when they are conscious of their class positions, and it is the class consciousness that leads to class struggle. The existence of classes does not directly lead to class struggle as ideology plays an important role in inculcating class consciousness. Class consciousness depends on a variety of factors; many of them are historical. If dominant classes form the basis of the state, class struggle in society constantly threatens that social base. This is because Marxian theory views the state as a political organisation of the dominant classes in society. Thus, the state is a means of maintaining class hegemony. At the same time, there exists a relative autonomy thesis reflected in the writings of Marx and Engels as well as by Marxists such as Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas, among others.

In the *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital Volume 1*, Marx and Engels refer to the state as an executive committee of the bourgeoisie. In other historical political writings such as *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, *The Peasants War in Germany, The Class Struggle in France, The Constitutional Question in Germany, The Prussian Constitution,* they argue that coercive and ideological apparatuses of the state attain relative autonomy from the dominant classes under certain circumstances. When contending propertied classes balance each other's power in a particular social formation; or when the generation of social classes is weak as a result of the characteristic development of a particular mode of production, or because of the military conquest.

Thus, in Marxian theory, what forms the state will take -its subservience to the dominant social class or its relative autonomy in relation to the social classes-does not follow a unilinear path, as is commonly accepted. The Marxian analysis of the state and its relationship with social classes is multi-dimensional and dialectical. It is based on a concrete study of a social formation and the social classes that originate from it, their strengths and weaknesses, and their struggle to capture the state and its apparatuses for their own class interests. This aspect is reflected in the later Marxist and neo-Marxist theorisations that have come up, especially those dealing with the historically and economically distinct post-colonial societies. We will examine this in the following sections.

9.3 HISTORICAL SPECIFICITIES OF POST-COLONIAL SOCIETIES

All states are products of historical trajectories. The political domain is historically constituted, and therefore a historical enquiry is a theoretical prerequisite for a deeper analysis of the nature of the state. For Marx and Engels, the advanced capitalist societies like Britain and Germany. provided the actual empirical material that they sifted for their theorisation of the nature of the state. The concept of relative autonomy elaborated by subsequent Marxists also mainly refers to the nature and role of the state in the advanced capitalist societies situated in the west. The natural question that emerges is whether the classical formulation about the nature of state in capitalist societies as articulated in the writings of Marx and Engels and developed further by the Marxists can be applicable or relevant for historically different states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The question becomes relevant as the social structure as well as economies of these states were distorted by colonial capitalist exploitation.

As is well known, the actual process of class formation and restructuring in Asia, Africa and Latin America as a consequence of the impact of long-term colonial domination has been historically distinct from the capitalist countries of the west. There is a broad agreement among state theorists that the theorisation of the nature of the post-colonial state has to be adapted to the very different circumstances that prevail in the Latin American, Asian and African societies. In the words of Ralph Miliband (1978) 'Marxism primarily fashioned in and for a bourgeois/capitalist context has, to say the least, to be adapted to the very different circumstances subsumed under the notion of under-development.'

The historical specificity of the post-colonial state has also been underlined by the neo-Marxists as they argue that the colonial domination for centuries impacted the social, economic and political structure of the society, imparting them with uniqueness. Colonialism signified the exploitation of the entire society with its complexities, class divisions, internal relations of power, domination, cultural ambiguities by another society, spatially rooted elsewhere. Thus, differences related to the nature of pre-capitalist social formations, mode of capitalist intervention and experience of colonisation have been among the factors which make the transposition of the categories of analysis used for the state in the western societies by the Marxist theorists to these different economic, social, political post-colonial formations problematic.

9.4: POST-COLONIAL STATE: LIBERAL AND NEO-MARXIST THEORY

At the time of decolonisation, few doubts were expressed about the capacity of the state, the intentions of the state elites or the pre-arranged knowledge of the state in knowing what it meant to do or the direction in which it meant to go. The ability of the nationalist elites, which had led the nationalist movements to rise over and above the narrow sectarian interests, was well accepted. These elite also enjoyed wider legitimacy and acceptance among the masses due to their role in

the nationalist movement. Bringing about the social and economic changes was the main political agenda of the nascent democracies in post-colonial societies. This notion of the activist states in line with the colonial statist tradition -allowed the post-colonial state to enjoy enormous power over the personal and collective lives of its social classes.

Anti-colonial struggles were defined as aspiring for state power. The mass struggle in most of the colonies was political in nature. This fact alone gave the post-colonial state a certain degree of legitimacy and authority.

Moreover, any discussion of the limits of state power was precluded as the need was widely felt for a strong post-colonial state to reverse the colonial legacy, bring about nation-building, resist ethnic fragmentation and carry out industrialisation.

There was a strong belief among the elites who came to power after the departure of colonial rulers that post-colonial societies needed to be guided in the channels of reforms as they were incapable of regulating themselves. This belief gave the post-colonial state a certain degree of legitimacy in its attempt to bring in social and economic reforms. As Hamza Alavi has observed: 'the post-colonial state is ...thought of an entity that stands outside and above society, an autonomous agency that is invested (potentially) with an independent source of rationality...and the capability to initiate and pursue programmes of development for the benefit of the whole society.'

9.5 THE MODERNIZATION PERSPECTIVE: DEVELOPING STATES

In the liberal tradition, rich and diverse formulations about political development and modernisation began to take shape in the American universities in the 1950s and 1960s. According to these theories, the political elites in post-colonial states had the enormous task of achieving modernisation by using state as an instrument of change. They believed that the political elite in post-colonial states were capable of rising over and above the sectional interest. The political elite it was believed were endowed with a prescience about what was for the general good and that their actions would be ultimately in the national interest.

Such a view of the state by modernisation/political development theorists was certainly simplistic, grouping together a whole range of possible and actual arrangements. It was also teleological in the sense of assuming a certain end-point for development namely, a pluralistic, liberal democratic state. For the modernisation/political development theorists, the post-colonial state was clearly to be liberal and democratic in nature. However, for the purpose of bringing about modernisation, the post-colonial state must take sides in favour of the modern sector and against the traditional, even if this meant favouring a minority. Thus, those people dependent upon the traditional sectors or whose culture and society were traditional were not to be supported by the post-colonial state by this set of argument. The claim that this was in the national interest was highly questionable as there was considerable evidence that those who run the state

apparatus –the elites - derived a great deal of personal gains from that involvement, often in ways that could not be seen as to the general interest.

9.6 THE DEPENDENCY PERSPECTIVE: UNDERDEVELOPED STATES

In the 1960s and 1970s, a strong critique of the modernisation/political development perspective emerged with the onset of third world nationalism, on the one hand, and the rise of Neo-Marxism, on the other the criticism was both on methodological and ideological ground. It led to a paradigm shift in thinking about the nature of post-colonial state. The shift was visible in the writings of the Marxist theorists from Asia, Africa and Latin America. One factor that led to the shift was the failure of the post-colonial state to deliver even the most fundamentals at a time when the state was the focal point of hopes and aspirations of the people. For the dependency theorists, the underdevelopment of the post-colonial states was a product of the encounter between the capitalist West and the colonised people of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Colonialism gave birth to underdevelopment, and even after the grant of independence, continuing ties of economic dependency served to maintain neo-colonialism in the form of development of underdevelopment. As Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue (1994) have pointed out, the dependency theorists differed from the modernisation/political development theorists and found them ahistorical and excessively formal. They contested the modernisation perspective that the states in Asia, Africa and Latin America were in 'the early stages of development'. They also criticised the modernisation/political development theorists for having an ethno-centric bias in the sense that they sought to provide intellectual cloaks to cover the continued Western agenda for continuing to dominate and exploit the post-colonial states covertly. In any case, by the Sixties, the post-colonial state as an agent of either social transformation or economic reforms or political change was greatly delegitimised. The de-legitimation was very much a product of the peoples' dismal experiences of the role of the state and state elite.

In the neo-Marxist theorisation on the post-colonial state, external determinants were given much more importance, and one aspect was particularly stressed, namely, the history of the relationship of the post-colonial state to colonialism and imperialism. The dependency theorists, by highlighting neo-colonialism, chose to advocate resistance against both capitalism and imperialism.

Arguments for external determinants were derived from underdevelopment and dependency theorists led by Andre Gunder Frank, a Latin American political economist, and the subsequent revisions by Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Arghiri Emmanuel and Cardoso, among others. They believed that the world was an integrated world economic system in which advanced capitalist countries constituted the core and developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America constituted peripheries. Subsequently, the world economic systems theorists added another category of semi-periphery consisting of the newly industrialised countries (NICs) of Asia (known as 'Asian Tigers' i.e., Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Taiwan, among others). These dependency theorists argued that capitalism is an international system characterised by the exchange

between technically advanced developed states and primary product producing underdeveloped states through an integrated world market. The technical and military superiority of developed states (also referred to as metropolitan states) results in the domination, exploitation, and distortion of post-colonial states (also referred to peripheral states). Through the process of unequal exchange, the economic surplus is extracted from the periphery through plunder, repatriation of super profits, deteriorating terms of trade, and monopoly rents for the utilisation of the metropolis technologies, as well as trade and traffic policies that deny the periphery control over internal markets.

The most significant aspect of this dominance in the world economic systems is surplus extraction by the metropolitan countries. Unequal exchange denies the economic surplus to peripheral states which is necessary for their autonomous national development. The economic surplus is appropriated by and invested in the advanced capitalist state. According to the under-development/ dependency, the rapid economic development of the metropolitan states has happened at the cost of the underdevelopment of the dependent states of Asia and Africa.

For the neo-Marxists, decolonisation brought no substantive change to the economy of post-colonial states and the indirect political dominance of the metropolitan bourgeoisie from the former imperial countries has continued unabated. Thus, the post-colonial state, according to the neo-Marxist theorists, was simply a new form; political freedom for the local classes was merely a new cloak under which the basic mechanisms of imperialist hegemony continued to sustain. The post-colonial state remained a dependent political apparatus. The governing class/bureaucracy in the post-colonial dependent state formulated policies that coincide with the long-term interests of the metropolitan/ neo-imperialist states. Governing class in the dependency theory literature is regarded as a comprador class, a client group, an auxiliary bourgeoisie. In the words of A.G. Frank: 'the exigencies of the process of capital accumulation and the international division of labour, worldwide and in the underdeveloped countries themselves thus become the principal determinants of the role and the form of the state in the third world'. Dependency theorists further argue that the post-colonial state may be strong and autonomous in relation to its local bourgeoisie but it remains largely an instrument of the metropolitan bourgeoisie.

Thus, the dependency theorists were of the view that the dominant class alliance in the post-colonial states remained the same as they were in the colonial period. The only difference was that the peripheral bourgeoisie now replaced the old feudal and comprador elements as the subordinate ally. This class, according to Samir Amin, remains in collusion with imperialist forces.

In due course, dependency theorists' argument about the nature of post-colonial state was subjected to the following criticism leading to its decline.

First, independence as many neo-Marxists conceded, did constitute a significant change in power relations in the sense that it made possible the diversion of policy away from the immediate interests of metropolitan capital. Second, even when metropolitan capital was assumed to retain economic dominance, independence allowed some leverage to the indigenous classes in the post-colonial states. Arguably, within limits placed by the overwhelming presence of

metropolitan capital on the 'free choice' of policy, the actions of the state were taken independently. Third, as the post-colonial states were located in the context of indigenous class struggles, they could not be mere agents for transfer of surplus. It would be too simplistic to argue that. Fourth, with the dependency theorists' emphasis on unequal exchange relations between the core and the periphery, social classes become synonymous with geographical entities and problems of inequality and deprivation become confined to these entities. It thus makes the prospect of any practical class analysis in a general way extremely unlikely. Fifth, it was pointed out by later dependency theorists that contrary to the early dependency theorists' position that integration into the world capitalist economic system always produce negative development of the post-colonial state, dependent development was possible within the constraints of a world economy as in case of the South East Asian states. Sixth, of late, there was a greater understanding that the political regimes in the post-colonial states also were culpable for the underdevelopment due to their faulty policies.

Despite these criticisms, the dependency theorists have advanced our understanding of the nature of the post-colonial state and the cause for their lack of development. They drew out attention to the important historical distinctions between the developed states in the West and the post-colonial states of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Second, the world economic theorists underlined how the prevailing world economic conditions place constraints on the newly liberated developing states. Third, the dependency theorists highlighted the importance of analysing the interaction of political and economic variables in the study of development.

As the preceding discussion shows, if the post-colonial state was endowed with extraordinary autonomy by modernisation analysts, it was kept on a tight leash by the dependency/underdevelopment theorists. If the class was conspicuous by its absence in writings on modernisation, control by an external class was taken for granted in the dependency perspective. Thus, with the demise of the development theory model of the state and the eclipse of earlier dependency theory as a paradigm of explanation, an adequate opportunity emerged for examining the relationship between class and state in post-colonial societies.

9.7 THE STATE AND CLASS IN THE POST-COLONIAL SOCIETIES: RELATIVE AUTONOMY THESIS

The concept of the post-colonial state that emerged in the Seventies was epitomised in the seminal work of Hamza Alavi (1972). Alavi provided an early starting point for the analysis of the state in post-colonial societies. He premised his arguments on the historical specificity of post-colonial societies. This specificity, he argued, arose from structural changes brought about by 1) the colonial experiences and alignment of classes and, by the superstructure of political and administrative institutions which were established in that context and, 2) the realignment of class forces which have been brought about in in the context of post-colonial situation.

Alavi argued that the post-colonial state dispenses with the mediation of politics because the state is 'over-developed', a superstructure capable of dominating all indigenous social forces. This allows aspects of the state itself (the military and/bureaucracy) to play the dominant part in the state and among social classes. Alavi ascribed the genesis of the overdeveloped superstructure or state apparatus to the colonial past of the post-colonial societies, where the task of carrying out the bourgeois revolution was exercised by the metropolitan capital in the process of imposition of colonial rule. In that process, it was necessary for the colonial regime to create a state apparatus that was sufficiently powerful to subordinate the indigenous social classes. It was this overdeveloped state apparatus that the post-colonial state inherited after decolonisation. Alavi refers to this syndrome thus: 'the excessive enlargement of powers of control and regulation that the state acquires extends far beyond the logic of what is necessary in the interests of the orderly functioning of the peripheral capitalist economies over which the state presides and specific needs of each of the dominant classes. The centrality of the state in the post-colonial society can be explained with the help of the following three factors.

First, the continued dominance of the state apparatus in the post-colonial societies was due to the matrix of class society. At the time of independence, no single class had exclusive command over the state. Alavi argued that 'the special role of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy has become all too common a phenomenon in post-colonial societies. This role now needs to be interpreted in terms of a new alignment of the respective interests of the three propertied exploiting classes, namely the indigenous bourgeoisie, the metropolitan neo-colonialist bourgeoisie, and the landed classes, under metropolitan patronage...If a colony had a weak and underdeveloped indigenous bourgeoisie, it would be unable to subordinate the relatively highly developed colonial state apparatus through which the metropolitan power had exercised domination over it. However, a new convergence of interests of the three competing propertied classes, under metropolitan patronage, allows a bureaucratic-military oligarchy to mediate their competing but no longer contradictory interests and demands'.

It follows that in the writings of the underdevelopment/ dependency theorists, the state managers, politicians constituting overdeveloped state apparatus mediate into the interests of the propertied classes. For this purpose, the state needs relative autonomy because competing interests have to be reconciled within the peripheral structure. The post-colonial state is thus not an instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and mediates between the competing interests of three dominant propertied classes and preserves the social order based on peripheral capitalist order.

Second, a complementary point that can be drawn from the writings of Alavi is that the state in post-colonial societies directly appropriates a very large part of the economic surplus and deploys it in bureaucratically directed economic activities under peripheral capitalism.

Third, according to Alavi and John Saul, yet another factor that underlines the crucial significance of the state in post-colonial societies is the particular ideological function of the state. In the words of Saul: 'state's function of

providing ideological cement for the capitalist system is one which has gradually evolved in the core countries in step with their economic transformation. However, in post-colonial societies, this hegemonic position has to be created; and created within territorial boundaries, which often appears quite artificial. once the powerful force of direct colonial fiat has been removed.' Like advanced capitalism, even peripheral capitalism requires territorial unity and legitimacy, which has to be created by the post-colonial state.

The above three factors taken together illuminate the centrality of the state to the post-colonial social formations, as the neo-Marxists have argued. In such a situation of high relative autonomy, the bureaucracy figures as an essential component in its own right to determine the state policies. The focus of the neo-Marxist theorisations on the post-colonial state has been on the special role of the bureaucracy/bureaucratic oligarchy in post-colonial societies as state power belongs to the bureaucratic class. This segment was an extension of the colonial state's military bureaucratic apparatus as it maintained and even extended its dominant power in society. John Saul has argued that due to the weak character of the indigenous bourgeoisie, it finds itself enmeshed in bureaucratic control. In fact, in some countries like East Africa, the indigenous bourgeoisie is not even fully developed and cannot formulate its class interests. Thus, given the apparent inability of indigenous capital to constitute a dominant class, state bureaucracy plays a dominant role. Ziemann and Lanzendorfer refer to the central role of bureaucracy in the determination of policy in the post-colonial states. State bureaucracy is all the more likely to govern as a class when formal political institutions are suppressed as it then plays the role of an intermediary between transnational capital and interest groups. The very extent of post-colonial state intervention in a peripheral economy thrusts the state personnel to centre stage. Moreover, being linked to the distributive mechanisms of a state surplus, they appear to have a particular facility for ensuring their relative advantage.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Briefly describe Hamza Alavi's views on the post-colonial state.

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9.8 THE POST-COLONIAL STATE IN INDIA

Having established some general theoretical premises with reference to the nature and dynamics of state in the post-colonial societies, let us move to the nature of the state in India to see how the above formulation about relatively autonomy thesis applies in the Indian context.

One of the most significant efforts in this direction has been undertaken by Pranab Bardhan. Bardhan argues that the post-colonial Indian state is an autonomous actor playing a far more important role in shaping and moulding class power than vice versa. In the early decades after political independence, the personnel of the state elite in India enjoyed an independent authority and prestige that made them the main actors in the process of the socio-economic development of India. 'It redirected and restructured the economy, and in the process exerted great pressure on the proprietary classes' on the pretext of using state intervention to promote national economic development. With the gradual strengthening of the main proprietary classes i.e., the industrial capitalist class and the rich peasantry, the autonomous behaviour of the post-colonial state in India has been confined more and more to its regulatory rather than its developmental functions. Also, in comparison to African and Latin American countries, foreign capital has far lesser importance. The indigenous industrial capitalist class in India is far more autonomous and sheltered from foreign capital in the domestic market, even after implementing the policies of pro-market economic reforms in 1991. Interestingly Bardhan refers to the third proprietary class in India, namely the 'professionals in public sectors', which comprises the public bureaucracy and white-collar employees in the state sectors. The three proprietary classes belonging roughly to the top twenty per cent of the Indian population have a significant conflict of interest though they all have been beneficiaries of state economic policies under the development planning model. As none of the three proprietary classes dominates the others, it increases the autonomous power of the post-colonial state in India, which performs the vital task of mediation among the three competing classes under a democratic system. One finds a similar argument in favour of the state enjoying a relatively autonomous role due to the presence of more than one dominant class and the role of state bureaucracy under the development planning model (See for instance, Sudipta Kaviraj, 1986).

9.9 POST-COLONIAL STATES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

The accelerated pace of globalisation since the early 1990s has raised question about the state's continued centrality. The argument is that state is no longer the prime economic actor as neo-liberal economic reforms have minimised the state's role and the market economy has become self-governing. Also, the concept of good governance imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in conditions over the lending underdeveloped states. The World Bank and the IMF demand the rolling back of the state from the social and economic sectors. Also in the political arena, decentralisation is recommended at the local level and the range and significance of decisions made at intergovernmental or supranational levels has increased in the post-Soviet world. The economic transitions that have happened from the centralised planned economy model to market economy across the states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has brought the global corporate sector to the fore as relatively autonomous of the nation states and has crucial impact world economic system. Since these transnational companies are based and owned by the capitalist class

in the advanced capitalist countries, so the influence of these states over the developing states remains unmistakable (Heywood, 2013)

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) What do you mean by Relative Autonomy Thesis?

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9.10 LET US SUM UP

The states in Asia, Africa and Latin America were lacking in terms of political cohesion and economic dynamism, which enabled the imperial states of the west to colonise them. While colonial exploitation did explain the lack of development in these states, as the dependency theorists argue, it was also 'historically rooted in their distinctive social and political traits... brittle state structures that were overcentralised or fragmented, and control of economic resources by non-productive groups' (Kohli 1986). During colonial dominance, states in Asia, Africa and Latin America witnessed the consolidation of non-productive dominant classes and a centralised state structure to appropriate economic surplus and maintain order. The surplus was used by the imperial states for non-developmental purposes to maintain law and order, further their imperial interests and direct appropriation. All these factors contributed to the economic underdevelopment of the colonies. As Kohli observes: 'colonialism bequeathed a twin historical legacy: the absence of socio-structural dynamism on the one hand, and on the other hand the consequent emergence of political forces aimed not only at the creation of sovereign states but also at remedying the absence of this dynamism' (Kohli, 1986).

Asian, African and Latin American countries inherited the overdeveloped colonial state apparatus and its institutionalised practices, through which the operations of the indigenous social classes in these dependent/peripheral states were regulated and controlled by the imperial states. This allowed aspects of the state itself to play the dominant role in the state. Arguably, no indigenous propertied class in the post-colonial society i.e., the indigenous capitalist class or the landed rich peasantry, was sufficiently strong to assume political dominance within the post-colonial societies. As for the metropolitan bourgeoisie based in the imperialist states, it enjoyed relative economic dominance within the peripheral states. However, the fact of independence precluded it from occupying the role of ruling class as it was formally excluded from party politics. In such a situation, weak social classes found themselves trapped in bureaucratic controls. The running argument in the neo-Marxist literature on the nature of the post-colonial state has been that the state enjoys autonomy mainly due to the weak indigenous propertied classes.

The need felt in civil society to bring about social and economic change and achieve modernisation or development allows the authorities in the post-colonial state to play a central role in all spheres of society. The liberal perspective, as discussed at the outset, also viewed the post-colonial state as playing a central role as modernising state. Being led by the western educated, modern political elite, they were entrusted with the task of following the growth trajectory of the developed western countries. However, the processes of globalisation have led to qualitative changes in the role and significance of the post-colonial state, bringing them under the influence of the transnational capital once again in an incremental manner.

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9.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise-1

1) In his path-breaking work, The State in a Post-Colonial Societies, Hamza Alavi explains that the base of the post-colonial state apparatus lies in the classes existing in the colonial era. The colonial state machinery was to subordinate all the original classes like an indigenous bourgeois, the Metropolitan neo-colonist bourgeoisie and the landed class. It did not rest on any of these classes, and on the contrary, the colonial power established a sophisticated, powerful system with strong armed forces and a robust bureaucratic system. He argues that bureaucracy plays a significant role in addressing the day-to-day issues of society.

Check Your Progress Exercise-2

1) The Relative Autonomy theory of the state is based on the Marxist understanding of the state. It believes that the state plays a limited autonomous role in maintaining and stabilising capitalist society. Nicos Poulantzas argued that the state, though relatively autonomous from the capitalist class, nevertheless functions to protect the interests of the capitalist class. Poulantzas explains that the capitalist state directly serves the interests of the capitalist class and the conditions of domination and exploitation. Based on Gramsci's concept of *Cultural Hegemony*, Poulantzas argues that suppression and domination are not the only functions of the state; it also obtains the consent of the oppressed.

UNIT 10 PLURALISM, NATION AND STATE*

Structure

10.0 OBJECTIVES

With almost all modern states being multi-ethnic, regulating ethnic conflict has become a challenge to ensure the integrity of the state. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concepts of nation, nationalism and state;

- Identify the relationship between ethnicity, nation and state;

- Describe the significance of pluralism in dealing with ethnic diversity within a state; and

- Analyse the mechanisms and challenges of operationalising pluralism.

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

Most of the states are heterogeneous today. The neat coincidence between ethnic groups and territories is hardly ever the reality and hence demarcating a nation is a difficult task. The ethnic diversity in Western liberal democracies such as Canada, the United States and Europe is a combined result of colonisation, settlement, immigration, slavery and the presence of indigenous peoples. In the post-colonial states of Africa and Asia, a major cause of ethnic diversity is the drawing of their territorial boundaries by the colonial powers arbitrarily by taking into consideration colonial geopolitics rather than the actual distribution of ethnic groups. How much ethnic heterogeneity a nation-state can accommodate without destabilising its unity is a long-standing question. Ethnic diversity sometimes results in inter-ethnic violence due to factors such as domination of one ethnic group over others and can result in political instability. Regulating ethnic conflict becomes essential for states to ensure that multi-ethnic reality does not grow into a multi-national scenario.

Recent decades have seen the emergence of a new nationalism in the older, well-established nation-states in the purportedly modern West. Some notable examples are Scotland, Wales and anti-immigrant sentiments epitomized by the Brexit in the United Kingdom, Catalonia and Basque Country in Spain, and Quebec in Canada. Underlying these upsurges is uneven regional economic development. These developments reflect rising regionalism rather than true nationalism. However, they can also be seen as outcomes of defensive reaction to political, economic and cultural changes associated with globalisation. Nonetheless, such upsurges draw on cultural, linguistic and religious identities, thereby blending the ethnic component of national identity with their political agenda.

10.2 NATION, NATIONALISM AND STATE

'Nation' is a deeply contested term. Some scholars define it based on objectives elements such as common history, religion, language, territory and ethnicity. "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people", Joseph Stalin wrote, "formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (as cited in Franklin, 1973, p. 57). Another group of scholars defines it based on subjective elements such as feelings, emotions, self-awareness, common will, loyalty and solidarity. According to Max Weber, "a nation is a community of sentiment which could adequately manifest itself in a state of its own" (1994, p. 25). Still others, like James Kellas and Yael Tamir, believe that a group of people to become a nation must have both objective and subjective elements. As Kelllas has pointed out "nations have 'objective' characteristics that may include a territory, a language, a religion or common descent . . ., and 'subjective' characteristics, especially a people's awareness of their nationality and affection for it" (1998, p. 3). From these objective and subjective definitions, it is evident that there is no consensus in scholarly debates about defining a nation. As a conceptual tool, we define a nation as a group of people who share some features which are bound to

distinguish them from others and who share a common belief in some form of political autonomy or self-determination on sovereign territory. To some extent, this definition resembles Anthony Smith's conception of a nation as "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (as cited in Hearn, 2006, p. 37). Like the concept of nation, nationalism is also a contested term. One group of scholars, such as Gellner, Hechter, Breuilly and Margaret Moore, argue that nationalism is a purely political phenomenon, while others, like Tamir, Connor, Kymlicka, Parekh and Taylor, define it as a cultural entity. To avoid the confusion created by the politics/culture dichotomy, we define nationalism as the conscious identification and solidarity with a national group aspiring to political self-determination or maximum autonomy within an existing state. As Montserrat Guibernau has maintained that "by nationalism I mean the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny" (1996, p. 47).

The term nation is often used as synonymous with the state. However, the two are different concepts. The state is a legal concept describing the presence of a recognised authority within a legally recognised territorial boundary over which it exercises sovereignty through legally recognised institutions. Steven Grosby (2005) has defined a state 'as a structure that, through institutions, exercises sovereignty over a territory using laws that relate the individuals within that territory to one another as members of the state'" (p. 22). A nation is not a state in the sense that it lacks the institutional prerequisites of a state, such as a government, sovereignty and a polity. Furthermore, states represent a legal and political relationship, meaning that they are more impersonal legal structures with membership specified by law. Nations, on the other hand, represent a sentimental form of social relationship, implying that they are more personal, emotive, culturally oriented and expressive. This difference between a nation and a state signifies that there can be many different nations within a single state and nations can exist even in the absence of a state.

Although the state and the nation are distinct from each other, there exists a complex relationship between the two. Through the exercise of its sovereignty, the state creates a nation, implying that a national community arises from a state. But, the state, to gain legitimacy and ensure stability, needs to appeal to the cultural elements of the national community or communities and give legal recognition to it or them. The state, in this case, arises from the national community. "The determination as to whether the nation forms the state or the state forms the nation", S. Grosby (2005) writes, "is depending upon the nation in question, both complicated processes are involved" (p.26). In multinational states, a certain degree of tension between culture and politics becomes inevitable when the majority cultural group sees the state as the state of their particular ethnic group, and the state remains biased against minority cultural groups. In this situation, minority cultural groups feel alienated, generating the emergence of nationalist movements with differing political goals, ranging from devolution and autonomy to secession and separate statehood. To avert the problem of

political instability and partition of the state, states should strike a balance between recognition for cultural groups, while maintaining an overarching liberal political framework to maintain unity and stability in the state.

10.3 ETHNICITY AND THE STATE

Ethnicity is a bounded identity based on the notion of common descent and sustained through the practice of endogamy. It is based on common social characteristics such as language, religion, customs and race. According to Andrew Vincent (2010), "ethnicity usually refers to inborn factors such as kinship, which are understood mostly in biological or genetic terms. Ethnic groups are usually considered to be smaller, more pervasive, exclusive in their membership, and older than nations" (p.228). A nation, conceptually, is not an ethnic group, but it is more than that in that an ethnic group is defined by a collective cultural identity rather than a political one. In other words, an ethnic community usually does not seek separate statehood, but rather is normally content to accept recognition and protection of minority rights within an existing state. When it develops political aspirations for independence (separate statehood) or maximum autonomy within an existing state, it can be categorised as a nation and becomes the basis for the emergence of nationalism. The demand of the Sri Lankan ethnic group, the Tamils, for a separate state of Tamil Eelam is one of the examples of the transformation of an ethnic group into an ethnonational movement or nationalism.

In the years after World War II, it was widely believed that ethnic identity will lose its significance with the process of modernisation in favour of identification with the state. However, since the 1960s, states at all levels of modernisation and economic development, have witnessed a rise in ethnic consciousness and conflicts. According to Walker Connor (2000, 27), the increase in communication and transportation has tended to increase cultural awareness about the differences between one group and others, and awareness about those with the same ethnic identity. In other words, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic communications have created ethnic consciousness and exacerbated the ethnic conflict. The rise of ethnic consciousness as a political force poses a challenge to state borders.

Thomas Eriksen categorises the presence of ethnic groups within a state in the following ways: (a) urban ethnic minorities whereby immigration for better economic opportunities brings people of different ethnic groups in the same urban space, (b) ethnic groups in post-colonial states in which the state boundaries drawn by colonial powers have created an ethnically divided citizenry, (c) indigenous peoples the identities of whom have been embedded and maintained within nation-states, and (d) proto-nations which are politically mobilised and organised in the active pursuit of nation-statehood (as cited in Hearn, 2006, p. 8). There is inter-ethnic competition and cooperation among these groups which varies on the basis of their relative size and strength. The competition between groups for recognition of their cultural specificity in state structures and their resistance either to the state or to the dominant ethnic group sharpens ethnic identity. Such ethnic politics burgeons into nationalism when the

demands of ethnic groups extend to gaining some degree of self-government in a territory or claims to jurisdiction (Hearn, 2006, p. 9). For Hearn (2006, p. 11), "nationalism is the making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to identity, to jurisdiction and to territory". The claim to identity could include demands of recognition of cultural factors such as religious beliefs, language, common history or common descent. The claim to jurisdiction demands the power to make laws. The claim to territory demands rights over the land that the national group has historically occupied.

Ethnic and political borders often do not coincide. Writing in 1972, Connor points out the following statistics: of the then existing 132 states, only 12 could be described as homogeneous in terms of ethnicity (2000, p. 26). In 29.5 per cent of all states, the largest ethnic group did not even constitute half of the state's population. The number of ethnic groups within a state can run into hundreds making ethnic diversity even more vivid. Ethnic diversity poses a challenge for nation-building as evinced by the experience of multi-ethnic states such as Canada, former Yugoslavia, African states such as Ethiopia, Guyana, Kenya, Nigeria and Sudan. Ethnic consciousness can become a barrier to political integration in multi-ethnic states if the different cultural groups in a state are not legally recognised.

10.4 UPSURGE IN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS

Since the end of the Cold war, the world has witnessed multiple ethnic conflicts within states, with instances of ethnic cleansing. Ethnic genocide in countries such as Bosnia and Rwanda show the degree of violence that can be perpetuated in the name of ethnicity.

Genocide in Rwanda

The Hutus and Tutsis are two ethnic groups in Rwanda. When Rwanda gained independence in 1962 from the colonial power, power was supposed to be handed over to the government composed of Hutus which comprises the majority of the population. However, this was opposed by the minority Tutsi group who wanted to remain in powerful positions which they had attained due to favourable treatment by the colonial administration. In 1994, the Hutu people murdered 800,000 people from the Tutsi community and moderate Hutus over three months.

The doctrine of the self-determination of nations holds that any self-differentiating group has the right, if it so desires, to rule itself. This doctrine has acted as a catalyst for ethnic movements. Another element that contributes to the upsurge in ethnic secessionism is the change in the global political environment in which it is very unlikely that a small state will be annexed by a larger state. Independence appears as an attractive option even for small units. It is difficult to dissuade the separatists to abandon their demand for separate statehood on the grounds that the envisaged nation-state being too small may not be economically viable. This is well demonstrated by examples such as Kashmir and Wales. The

emotional appeal of ethnic nationalism can override such economic considerations.

The demand for secession is often attributed to uneven economic development. However, economic prosperity in real terms and relative to other sections of the state's population does not necessarily stop an ethnic minority from demanding secession. The cases of Basque and Catalans in Spain show that economically more advanced groups may also launch a separatist movement. Further, the upsurge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism since the 1960s shows that centuries of acculturation and assimilation can undergo a reversal, and the demand for secessionism can emerge at any point of time in a state's history.

Scottish Nationalism

Scotland is a country within the United Kingdom. After decades of pressure for a greater degree of self-government in Scotland, in 1997, Scottish people voted in a referendum by a strong majority for establishing a Scottish Parliament to legislate over domestic affairs of Scotland. The Scottish Parliament was opened in 1999. While some sections want the self-governing powers of Scotland to increase, others want Scotland to become an independent nation-state. The Scottish Parliament passed the Scottish Independence Referendum Act in 2013. A referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom took place in 2014. 55.3% of voters voted against independence, while 44.7% voted in favour of independence.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

 ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) The basic difference between the state and nation is
....
....

2) What according Walker Connor has led to ethnic consciousness and conflicts?

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10.5 APPROACHES TO NATIONALISM

There are three dominant approaches to nation and nationalism. The **primordialistapproach**sees nation and nationalism as having existed since time immemorial. In other words, it believes that nations and nationalism have deep roots in human associational life. It takes ethnicity as an immemorial feature of groups and regards the categories of religion, ethnicity, race, language and territory as given and primordial organising principles and bonds of human

association. On the basis of this assumption, the primordialists argue that nations and nationalism which are the extension of these primordial ties are perennial, given and natural, not modern. Pierre Van den Berghe, Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz are the main advocates of the primordialist approach.

The **modernist approach** has emerged as a critique of primordialism. The modernists, unlike the primordialism, maintain that nation and nationalism are the direct results of the processes of modernisation, such as industrialisation or capitalism, rationalisation of administration, the secularisation of culture, social mobility and modern state, and that they are purely modern phenomena. Against the primordialist assumption that nations and nationalism are given and natural, the modernists, such as Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Tom Nairn, Michael Hechter, John Breuilly and Paul Brass, argue that nations and nationalism are constructed phenomena and therefore they must be distinguished, both historically and conceptually, from all manifestations of ethnicity.

Finally, we have **ethno-symbolism**, an approach that has emerged as a critique of primordialism and modernism. Its central focus is on the independent role of symbols, memories, values and myths in the formation of nations and nationalism. The ethno-symbolists, such as Anthony Smith and John Armstrong, acknowledge the transformative impact of modernisation on pre-modern ethnic elements and their political implications for statehood. However, they, unlike the modernists, argue that the pre-modern ethnic elements profoundly shape the nation and state-building. Like the primordialists, the ethno-symbolists believe that pre-modern ethnic identities play an important role in the formation of nations and nationalism. Unlike the primordialists, however, they argue that ethnic identities, nations and nationalism are not given and natural, but social and historical, and the pre-modern ethnic identities shape modernisation as much as they are shaped by modernisation. Ethno-symbolism, thus, holds a middle ground between primordialism and modernism, claiming that while nations and nationalism are modern phenomena, they develop on the basis of pre-modern ethnic identities and elements.

10.6 WHY DOES A NATION-STATE NEED PLURALISM

While nationalism is necessary for ensuring the unity and stability of the modern state, nationalism by its nature is homogenising and hence may be problematic in ensuring this. Michael Ignatieff argues that nationalism is a type of collective identity that necessarily overvalues itself and devalues other such identities (as cited in Hearn, 2006, p. 238). Judith Lichtenberg (1997) argues that the partiality towards fellow nationals and their shared way of life may result in clashes of values and interests between ethnic groups that the common political framework of the state fails to resolve.

Charles Taylor (1999) argues that nationalism provides a modern identity to individuals which helps them to realise their self-worth and dignity as equal citizens. As there is systemic marginalisation of the ethnic or nationalistic identities of minorities in the public sphere, this results in the exclusion of such

communities from the entitlements that the modern identity of nationalism promises. The resultant frustrated nationalistic identity of the minorities can result in illiberal forms of ethnic nationalism, such as in former Yugoslavia.

The factors that influence whether ethnic groups coexist peacefully are: firstly, the degree of cultural awareness of the minorities; and secondly, the minority's perception of the magnitude of the threat to its group identity posed by the majority (Connor, 2000, p. 49). The essence of national identity is psychological and involves self-identification; it cannot be imposed on the minorities but has to be made acceptable and appealing. Assimilation is a slow process and can take centuries. Hence, accommodation of diversity is an important way to ensure stability and as Indian policymakers euphemistically called 'unity in diversity'. People can learn tolerance by seeing others as individuals rather than as carriers of hated group characteristics. Maurizio Viroli(1995) holds that patriotism understood as love of the political institutions and the way of life as opposed to nationalism understood as homogeneity of a people can be a cure of malign nationalism. The legitimacy of the modern state lies in ensuring the common good of all citizens and meeting socially diverse needs. It is by accommodating rather than suppressing heterogeneity that the modern state gains wider support.

Many states have built a narrative about their diversity to be their strength. For example, Canada has made pluralism an essential component of its nationhood. It has created a unique national identity based on giving recognition to its heterogeneity. It has adopted pluralist policies. Many nation-states have reframed their national identity as one that accommodates the interests of different groups. This pluralist approach has two benefits. Firstly, it unites the elites and the masses of different groups. Secondly, it depoliticises the ethnic minority groups; the minority groups feel that they are a part of the pluralist nation-state (Winter, 2007). This is how Switzerland has been able to attain a sense of united nationhood among its linguistically divided population.

On the other hand, there are states where the state elites practice ethnic, religious or regional discrimination by favouring the members of their ethnic group. This results in the politicisation of ethnic differences and the creation of ethnic democracy or 'ethnicisation of bureaucracy' (Wimmer, 2002, p. 66). Wimmer suggests two reasons for this ethnicised politics. Firstly, there may be a scarcity of resources, which prevents the state elites from an inclusive integration of all sections of society. Secondly, the state formation may precede the establishment of a democratic civil society; thus, the state elites' function on the basis of political networks often structured along ethnic lines. We often see such ethnicisation of national politics in post-colonial states such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and other states such as Israel.

The politicisation of ethnic identities does not necessarily lead to violent conflict. In democratic states, negotiations between ethnic groups can result in redefining national identity in pluralist terms. Hear, the dominant group realises that it is just one among other ethnic groups that share the state. In other words, the majority does not adopt pluralism on its own. A majority of its own volition rarely grants equal status to the minorities. The minorities must claim and advance their rights. The minorities demanding pluralism must have sufficient leverage to stake their

claims. Thus, a pluralistic state is not free from power relations (Winter, 2007). It keeps on balancing between containing the demands of the minorities and granting concessions to the minorities. There is an ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of defining the national identity (Winter, 2007, p. 503). Pluralism provides the space for such negotiations. Pluralism believes that there are different ways of leading a good life and hence, there is potential for different cultures to learn from one another. Pluralism cherishes diversity.It attempts to redress the ethnic exclusions that are an inherent by-product of modern nationalist discourse. The mechanism through which pluralism is implemented depends on power relations and negotiations between the majority and minority groups.

10.7 MINORITIES AND NATION-STATE

There are different types of minorities within a nation-state. The difference in their history as members of the nation-state gives rise to different claims and demands. Kymlicka categorises minorities into two broad groups. First are the national minorities who have occupied territory within the country since the inception of the nation-state. These are historic communities that are self-governing and have a distinct language and culture (Kymlicka, 1995). They want to live as distinct societies alongside the mainstream culture and wish to have autonomy and self-government. In such cases, there is the coexistence of more than one nation within a state. Such states are multi-nation states, not a nation-state. The presence of different nations within a state may be involuntary that is through invasion, or voluntary when they form a federation through mutual agreement. The national minorities claim rights over land, regional autonomy, political representation and national symbols.

The second category of minorities is that of immigrants who have recently migrated to the nation-state. They aspire to integrate into the state and be acknowledged as full members of society. They demand recognition of their ethnic identity and modification of the laws and institutions of mainstream society. While they seek accommodation for their cultural differences, they do not aim to be a separate or self-governing nation. The immigrant groups are not 'nations' and do not have a homeland in the state. They participate in the mainstream social activities of the dominant culture. They also speak the dominant language. In general, the immigrant communities' demands centre around themes like education curriculum and cultural practices.

Kymlicka argues that for accommodating differences, one mechanism is the provision of civil and political rights for all individuals. However, for the accommodation of national minorities, Kymlicka highlights the need to go beyond common citizenship rights and individual rights; it requires group-specific rights or community rights. He proposes group-specific rights such as the right of self-government and the right of special representation (Kymlicka, 1995). National minorities demand and deserve political autonomy and territorial jurisdiction to ensure the free development of their culture. To avoid secessionist demands from small nationalistic groups, the national minorities have to be provided self-governance rights. One of the mechanisms to provide self-

governance rights is federalism which separates the powers of central government and regional subunits. It protects the national minority from getting outvoted by the majority. However, a major challenge is to find an acceptable form of asymmetrical federalism.

10.8 MECHANISMS OF OPERATIONALISING PLURALISM

Nation-states must recognise group-specific rights of ethnocultural minorities, that is, respect and protect their way of life. Accommodating diversity and ensuring the survival of marginalized cultures of minorities pose several difficulties as there are differences and disagreements between the minority and majority communities. Finding moral and political answers to these questions has proved testing for nation-states. The states need to define what the 'range of permissible diversity' is and evolve a mechanism to ensure fair treatment of the minority communities (Parekh, 1994). The minorities' demands of equality and desire to preserve their identity sometimes pose difficulties to the state in preserving national unity. Maintaining a balance between the minorities' demands and the need for national unity is essential for the stability and legitimacy of the modern democratic nation-state.

Various scholars have explored ways of satisfying ethnonational aspirations within a multi-ethnic state and effective management of ethnic conflicts by the state. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary (1993) suggest ways of ameliorating the problem of ethnic conflict: (a) self-government in cases of territorial segregation, (b) the majority group being secure and not fearing the minorities,(c) demographic stability where a group is not outgrowing another one, and (d) history of cooperation among ethnic political elites. McGarry and O'Leary argue that in cases of extreme ethnic violence, secession may be the solution as it is consistent with the democratic principle of self-determination. Gaining sovereignty may be in these cases the only way to safeguard the well-being of a group. This is particularly relevant for what Sammy Smooha(2002) calls 'ethnic democracy' or 'deficient democracy' such as Israel where the majority group dominates society through the political regime.

ArendLijphart(1991) has given examples of power-sharing arrangements in the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Switzerland as successful models in which ethnic/national groups share the power of the state, have autonomy, veto power on important issues, representation in Parliament and access to social goods. Michael Hecter(2000) suggests a federal system that can balance between centripetal and centrifugal tendencies as a solution to the nationalist conflict. However, 'ethno-federal' systems such as that in Yugoslavia could entrench and politicize ethnic identity. Such policies have been criticised for being prone to reinforce factionalism and misuse by political elites of various ethnic groups. On the other hand, political suppression of the minorities by the state in the name of stability and unity is not justified either.

10.9 CHALLENGES IN OPERATIONALISING PLURALISM

The capacity of the nation-state to ensure equal treatment for all its communities is limited (Parekh, 1997). A nation-state has a specific identity acquired over a long period of time that constitutes its way of life. Hence, a nation-state is inherently partial to a particular way of life and it has a cultural bias (Parekh, 1997). For example, Muslims are disadvantaged in Western societies because Fridays are working days; Christians in Muslim countries face disadvantages because Sundays are working days. Moreover, a culturally heterogeneous nation-state has a wide range of deep differences; it is incapable of being equally tolerant and sympathetic to all the differences. Its understanding of minority cultures is limited and hence it is not willing to constantly change its beliefs and practices to accommodate all the differences. It can be said, therefore, that no nation-state can guarantee complete equality for all its cultural communities; but this does not imply that a nation-state should not attempt to achieve this ideal. Equal treatment may not be possible but fair treatment is. A nation-state should be sensitive not only to its past but also its present, to the needs of both its majority and minority communities, and to reconcile claims of equality with its historical continuity (Parekh, 1997).

Operationalising and institutionalising pluralism pose certain challenges. Parekh asserts that equality requires recognition of relevant differences by the nation-state, while irrelevant differences can be rejected. This is a problematic assertion as the decision of what is relevant and what is irrelevant tends to have a majoritarian bias. Parekh argues that a liberal nation-state does not need to tolerate those cultural practices of minorities that violate the fundamental values that a liberal society upholds and stands for. At the same time, the minority community should be allowed to depart from those values and practices of the liberal society which does not have a morally superior status. The essential practices of a minority community should be allowed to continue. This requires a culturally sensitive and objective test of what constitutes an essential practice. It requires asking questions such as what a group needs to function effectually, how significant a particular cultural tradition is, and whether it can be modified without destroying the identity of the community. Parekh suggests a contextualised and historically sensitive approach to equality and the creation of public platforms representing different communities to discuss such complex issues. Some of the practices which have sparked debate in liberal nation-states are polygamy, the practice of *talaq*, arranged marriages, marriages between prohibited relationships such as first cousins and uncle and niece, the Muslim girls' demand to wear headdresses, the Hindu practice of putting ashes of the dead in water bodies, the Sikh demand of wearing turbans and carrying ceremonial swords, the withdrawing of Muslims girls from sports that require short clothes, and the Jewish demand to trade on Sundays rather than Saturdays.

10.10 PLURALISM IN INDIA

Indian society is very diverse in terms of religion, culture and ways of living. To maintain stability and unity in a nascent state, the political leaders of India promoted the maxim of 'unity in diversity' which means that an underlying unity exists in Indian society that transcends the differences of religion, culture, race and language. While instances of peaceful coexistence can be found in the history of India, there have also been instances of conflict, hostility and violence. The national movement with the common goal of overthrowing the colonial rule brought people from different communities and regions together. However, this unity was fragile and centrifugal tendencies emerged in Indian society. The two-nation theory, the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims and the partition of the country, showed that unity in the context of a diverse society cannot be taken for granted. Unity has to be continuously nurtured and worked for (Mahajan, 2019).

To instil unity and fraternity in the people, leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo emphasised spiritual unity in India (Mahajan, 2019). For example, Mahatma Gandhi emphasised that different religions are different paths to arrive at the same truth. The leaders made arguments for mutual respect, tolerance of differences, living peacefully and the free exchange of ideas. These values have been incorporated in the Constitution of India in the form of various fundamental rights.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the two types of minorities identified by Kymlicka?

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2) The two widely accepted ways to operationlise pluralism are:

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....

10.11 LET US SUM UP

The assumption that the processes of modernisation and secularisation in modern nation-states will result in sweeping aside the salience of ethnic identity has not proven to be correct. Ethnic communities have not only survived but have evolved leading to changing nature of identity politics in the post-Cold War era. While some multi-ethnic states are relatively more integrated, some are struggling with separatist movements and secessionist demands. Numerous factors could transform ethnic groups into nationalist separatist groups which render making generalisations difficult. Each state has its own experience of constructing national consciousness. Pluralism and nationalism in operation are contingent upon its context. Some scholars raise the question of whether pluralist

policies pose a threat to the idea of nation-state. However, the growth of pluralist discourses and policies in states such as Canada, the US and Australia should be seen as a new phase of nation-building in which national identity is redefined to respond to social changes, rather than viewing it as a threat to their national identity.

10.12 KEYWORDS

Nation: A nation is **"**a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Anthony Smith). A nation is "a combination of social solidarity built out of historical contingencies with a voluntary collective will in the present to continue to build on that solidarity" (Ernest Renan).

State: State is a legal concept describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organised under common political institutions and customs and a sense of homogeneity.

Minority: A minority is "a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group" (Parekh). A minority is "a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of the state, in a non-dominant position, whose members- being nationals of the state- possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, tradition, religion or language" (Capotorti).

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10.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise I

1) State is a legal concept describing a social group that occupies a defined territory and is organised under common political institutions. Nation, on the other hand, represents a sentimental or culturally oriented relationship.

2) Intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic interactions facilitated by improvements in transport and communication have created ethnic consciousness and conflicts.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Kymlicka identified minorities who have occupied territory within the country and desire to live as distinct societies alongside the mainstream and those who have recently migrated to the nation and have modest demands from the host state.

2) Power sharing arrangements and adoption of federal system.