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## BLOCK V

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### STATE IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

State has been and continues to be one of the major concerns of the political theory. As the modern state evolved, it has become important in almost all aspects of the society, not just politics. The state appeared to hold the key to development, to social welfare, to security, to individual liberty, and through the advances in weapons and other technologies, to life and death itself. Yet in the last few decades, states have to contend with non-state rivals. Actions of non-state organisations such as multinational corporations, inter-governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations are limiting the state power. These non-state actors have not replaced the state, but they seem to have taken away the power of states to govern their territories. They have emerged as organisations affecting the context in which state pursues power. In some cases, they have limited the ability of state to be the sole decision makers on matters pertaining to their own territories.

Are modern states losing their relevance in the globalised world? Are new forms of political organisation replacing the state? Why did modern states emerge at all and become universal? Why did they emerge at different points in different places? Is there a difference in the role of state in developed and developing countries? What is the right balance between state and society? What is the nature of relationship between state and civil society? As you will notice, despite the efforts in comparative politics to arrive at a common understanding of features, patterns, and processes of the state, consensus on many issues remains elusive. This block will introduce to some of the key contending approaches and theories of the state and their position on the role and jurisdiction of the state, state neutrality and autonomy, individual freedom, and the issue of state-civil society relations.

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## UNIT 10 STATES IN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES\*

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### Structure

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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The objective of this unit is to explore and illustrate the nature, characteristics and functioning of states in developed and developing societies. By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the idea of the State and its different interpretations;
- Identify the components that constitute a State, its power and legitimacy;
- Describe the changing nature of the State; and

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- Distinguish the nature, characteristics and functions of States in developed and developing countries.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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When we look at the map of the world, almost the whole of its surface is divided into separate parts (or territories), where each part represents a neatly defined geopolitical entity, known as the State. And since most of us are citizens of a State and live within the boundary of one, the State is probably the greatest determinant of how our lives turn out. Our interaction with the State shapes and conditions almost every sphere of our daily lives—from cradle to grave. The State also provides a wide range of services for the security and protection of every individual in the society and delivers ‘public goods’ for a better living. On the other hand, the power of the State also compels us to do certain things, and bars us from doing other things. We are obliged to obey the laws of the State and those who disobey are liable to be punished by the State, which exercises the sole legitimate control over violence. Irrespective of the society we live in, be it liberal, capitalist, or socialist, the State is now 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 institutions impacts our lives in a way the State does. Therefore, the State is almost universally considered a necessity for collective living. It exists whenever and wherever men live in organized society. Aristotle said that a man who can live without a State is either a beast or a God.

But then what is the *State*? And what makes a *State* a *State*? A cursory look at the State reveals that the concept is shrouded in many ambiguities. This first unit of the block will introduce you to some critical aspects of the State which are dealt with in greater detail in the subsequent three units of this block. It will explain in particular the different attributes and operation of the State in developed and developing countries of the world.

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## 10.2 WHAT IS STATE?

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This question appears to be simple but the answer is far more elusive than what is normally perceived. In the course of answering it, several definitions have been given to the State by various scholars who ventured to study it, but no definition ever has been able to capture the State in its entirety. The primary reason for lack of consensus on the definition of the State has been the difference in perspectives and views from which the State is envisaged. The Liberals, for instance, viewed the State as an organized social institution or a community of men which stands above all other organizations in the society, while for Marxists the State is an instrument of exploitation and domination of one class over another. Likewise, the Anarchists, Democrats, the Gandhians, all have different perspectives of the State. Some see the State in terms of morality, while others view it as ‘institutionalized political power’. There are others who viewed it as a social

phenomenon or a juristic personality or a monopolistic organization. And for anarchists like Peter Kropotkin or Michael Bakunin, the State is an enemy of man and ‘a great hindrance in the path of human progress’.

Among various definitions given to the State, one of the most authoritative definitions is the given by the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) who defined state as “a compulsory political organization with a centralized government that maintains a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a specific territory”. One fundamental aspect found in Weber’s definition is the power of the State to exercise its authority and use of violence which is commonly referred to as the ‘sovereignty’ of the State. It legitimizes the State to effectively and independently enforce its will over its subjects (citizens) who are obliged to accept the authority of the State as long as they continue to live within its boundary. Weber’s definition, thus, upholds certain fundamental characteristics of statehood—such as the notion of ‘territoriality’ and access to the legitimate use of force within its territorial jurisdiction—which are essential requirements for the existence of the State and also a compulsory element for continuation of its operation. The State, therefore, is the sole authority which has the ‘right to use violence’. The Weberian conception of ‘territorial State’ was a significant development in the contemporary discourse of the modern State. It has influenced the works of many other scholars who gave similar definitions to the State. R. M. MacIver, for instance, called the State a territorial society with ‘power of coercion’.

Another notable definition of State widely cited among contemporary writers was provided by J. W. Garner who defined State as “a community of persons more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent or nearly so of external control and possessing and organized government to which a great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience”.

The State, therefore, has too many definitions formulated in various senses. But, at most, the State is taken to mean as some sort of ‘abstract’ conception but also a ‘concrete’ entity that can be identified with physical elements. From the above definitions, we can observe four fundamental attributes in the State, which are known as the basic elements of State, namely the population, land (territory), government and sovereignty. In the absence of any one of these factors there can be no State.

### 10.2.1 State and Related Terms

In common parlance, the idea of State is often confused and loosely used as synonymous with other terms such as nation, country, government, nation-state and so forth. Though these words are quite close to the idea of State, they are different both in theory and practice. For instance, the term State, one must be sure, is essentially a political concept, whereas the word country is purely geographical. Thus, in a sense, one may say that every State is a country, but unless the country is independent or has a government, it cannot be a State. Again, State is also different from the concept of ‘nation’ which carries a cultural-political connotation that refers to a community of people bound together by some *shared* identity which can be based on language, religion, race, culture,

and any other form of collective identity—often treated as ‘national identity’ that distinguishes one nation from another. In this context, a nation requires a collective ‘sense of oneness’ which is inherently subjective; whereas, State may exist in the absence of this oneness.

And when this ‘national identity’ is attached to a specific State, it creates the concept of ‘nation-state’ which is the most predominant form of State today. However, technically speaking, a ‘nation-state’ is only possible when all the people within the State are collectively bound together by a common national identity. In this regard, there is hardly any State in the world today which can be perfectly called a ‘nation-state’ in its strict sense of the term. Though, there are many ‘community of people’ who identified themselves as a ‘nation’ but without the State. For example, the Jews who are widely recognized as one of the most intelligent people had no State of their own before the present state of Israel was created after World War-II. Others like the Tibetans, Chechens, or Catalans etc. are sometimes considered as ‘people without a State’ though they may live within a State which they do not think their own.

Likewise, another term often misunderstood as the State is ‘government’. It is often assumed that the State and government coincide and most definitions of the State also include a reference to government. However, one should be aware of the distinction between the two. The State is much more than the government. It is the State that has the authority of the legitimate use of force, while the government is merely an agency or apparatus which is expected to function on behalf of the State.

### 10.2.2 Liberal and Marxist Perspectives of the State

As noted earlier, the State is viewed from different theoretical perspectives. The most comprehensive perspectives out of them are the Liberal and Marxist perspectives of the state. The Liberal perspective of the state is based on the principle of liberalism, which primarily focuses on freedom, rights, liberty, modernity, progress, development etc. In fact, it relates to everything that affects daily life (Macpherson, 1973). Therefore, the primary concern of the state, according to liberalism, should be the protection of individual rights, property and upholding the values of democracy, liberty, justice and so on. Thomas Hobbes was among the first to reflect on the liberal perspective of the state. In the Hobbesian conception, the state is regarded as preeminent in political and social life which has emerged from a ‘contract’ of ‘free and equal’ individuals in the society. According to him, while individuals exist prior to the formation of society and the state, it is the State that provides the conditions of existence of the former and pursues their interests. In a slightly similar fashion, John Locke also argued that the state (or the government as he often put it) is an ‘instrument’ for the protection of individual rights and property—which in Locke’s words the *raison d’etre* of the State.

Therefore, for liberalism, the State came into existence not only for the sake of good life but also indispensable for human existence because in the absence of it there will be disorder and anarchy where a condition of war of all against all will prevail. The State acts as an impartial arbiter among competing groups and

individuals, protecting each individual citizen from the encroachment from fellow citizens. Thus, State is viewed as a neutral arbiter, serving the interest of all and upholding what is called the 'common interest' or 'public interests'.

On the other hand, Marxists view the State not as a protector of rights or property of individuals, but an 'apparatus' or instrument of the dominant 'class' to suppress the other class. Unlike the liberal view of the State, Marxism argued that the State can neither represent nor stand for the community as a whole; it can only stand for the dominant class alone. The State, therefore, exists not for all in the society, but for those who belong to the dominant class. The State, in short, is a 'class State' created with the purpose of suppressing its class enemies.

### Check your Progress 1

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

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

1) What is State and what are its essential elements?

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2) Explain the difference between State and nation.

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### 10.3 THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF STATE

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The idea of State had gone through a long and chequered history. Since the dawn of human civilization, mankind has lived a collective life under some form of authoritative political institutions. With this 'collectivized living' people could live a settled life while refraining from the selfish and disorderly traits of human perversity. In different phases of history, such sort of institutions appeared in one form or the other which may have made oblique reference to the 'idea of State'. The Greeks in the ancient times called them *Polis*, the Romans used the expressions like *Civitas, res publica, or res populi*. The Teutons adopted the term *Status* from which probably the modern term 'State' was derived. Yet, the concept of 'State' as it exists and understood in the present form is comparatively modern. It can be traced to the writings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian thinker Niccolo Machiavelli. . In his famous book *The Prince* (1513) Machiavelli defined the State as "the power which has authority over men". Machiavelli, thus, explained the State in terms of the position of the ruler in regard to its subjects. This Machiavellian conception of State then became the focus of attention for many political thinkers of Europe, particularly in Italy, France and England. For instance, Jean Bodin (1530-1596) described the State as a "lawful government with sovereign powers". Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) speaks of the State as a

‘public power’ which gives people their own life. Similarly, Bentham (1748-1832) considers the State as a ‘means of attaining the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people’. Subsequently, the term ‘State’ came into use widely in the vocabulary of politics, first in Europe, and then exported to rest of the world through colonialism.

## **10.4 THEORISING THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE**

As State continues to play a pivotal role in contemporary society, it has received foremost concern of theorization in political theory and comparative politics. But the traditional approaches to the study of State have primarily been from epistemological, historical, and institutional aspects focusing on its origin, composition, or administrative functions. However, the post Second World War period witnessed an outpouring of scholarship which attempts to articulate and theorize the modern State from ‘economic’ and ‘developmental’ perspectives. The idea of ‘development’ was conceived out of two post-War historical circumstances. One was the recovery and rebuilding of post-War Europe and Japan propelled by the euphoria of victory of western capitalism. The second was the beginning of decolonization and the necessity for a new perspective from the newly independent countries. The dominant belief among liberal thinkers was that most societies in the non-Western world were suffering from traditional features which hindered the development process. They argued that economic advancement will not be possible without a firm social base and liberal institutions. In the 1960s and 1970, many social scientists identified two fundamentally different set of States, categorized on the basis of their development level—the State in advanced ‘developed’ countries as distinguished from the State in the ‘developing’ countries. The attitudes and behaviour of these two different categories of States are quite different in terms of their economy, polity or society. Before we go into the specifics, we shall first try to understand the intended meaning of the term ‘development’ on which the reference is made.

### **10.4.1 Conceptualizing the Idea of Development**

The relevance of the term ‘development’ in this context demonstrates two interpretations. The first is that, the idea of ‘development’ is overwhelmingly and often exclusively understood in ‘economic’ terms but less in ‘political’ and ‘governance’ terms. The second interpretation is broader than just economic growth or economic development that also includes the presence of progressive political and social values. While the former conception of development seems narrow, the latter emphasised the development of the State in its totality so that it promotes justice, liberty, equality, freedom of expression, social mobility or any other factor for people to lead productive, creative and fulfilling lives (Cowen and Shenton, 1996, 12-18). It was the former interpretation of the idea of development that dominated in the 1960s and 1970s resulting in emphasis ‘industrialization’ or ‘emulating the West’. It is primarily because of the ethno-centric presumption or approach of western scholars that the West is developed and ideal, better than the rest of the world, and hence the comparatively ‘backward’ states of the non-West can hope to ‘develop’ using the West as the

model. But, nonetheless, measuring development or success of a State requires wide range of markers which includes, adequate housing, access to education, health care, life expectancy, adequate income, successful government policies and planning, and various other parameters to measure of quality of life.

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## 10.5 WHAT ARE DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES?

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There is no universal, agreed-upon criterion for what makes a country developed or developing. It can also be argued that all States are developing simply because no society can afford to remain stagnant or stop developing unless it is degenerating or decaying. Though people may disagree on the precise definition of these terms, they tend to have certain similarity in their interpretation. For instance, if some people are randomly given names of few countries—say, Germany, Namibia, Brazil, Cambodia and the United States—and asked them to identify which are ‘developing’ countries and which are ‘developed’, it is very likely that people will say Namibia, Brazil and Cambodia are ‘developing’ while Germany and the United States are ‘developed’. But how these distinctions are made?

During the Cold War period, most of these countries did not aligned with either of the two blocs, that is, the US-led Western bloc, known as the ‘First World’, and the Soviet Union -led Eastern bloc, known as the ‘Second World’. Therefore, the term ‘Third World’ was used to distinguish the post-colonial countries from those of the ‘First World’ and the ‘Second World’. But after the end of Cold War, the three-world typology has become irrelevant and the concept of Third World has become an ‘outdated’ framework and a term like ‘developing countries’ is seen as preferable and has got wider acceptance. However, there are many scholars who continue to use the term and still keep it alive. For instance, people like Nico Smith (2010) believe that these countries have not completed the process of development and still remain a ‘third world’.

Another way of explaining the developed-developing dichotomy is in terms of ‘North-South’ debate. The term ‘North’ refers to the advanced developed countries of the West as most of them exist in the northern side of the equator and the ‘South’ represents the less-developed countries which are mostly located south of the equator.

There are certain yardsticks on which countries fit these two categories, such as the country’s GDP, per capita income, level of industrialization, infrastructure, living standard of people etc. In the post-Second World War period, colonialism began to decline and countries got independence one after another. As a result, a new group of countries emerged which were formerly under colonialism. These countries became known as post-colonial countries. Mostly found in Asia, Africa

and Latin America, they account for nearly seventy percent of the world's population. To understand the nature of the State in these countries, it is important to look at their historical experience of colonialism and also the challenges faced by post-colonial societies. At the time of independence, these societies faced acute economic crisis, problems of illiteracy, education, public health, social tensions, lack of political awareness, and so on. In short, they are development deficit. Therefore, the primary tasks before post-colonial societies were economic development and socio-political progress. It is due to these specificities that these post-colonial countries have been clubbed together to be called as 'developing countries' or 'developing societies'.

Another set of countries is the 'developed' countries or the industrialized capitalist countries of Western Europe and Northern America. Others like New Zealand, Australia, and Japan are also included in this group due to their level of development and modernization. According to Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (2005), developed countries are those which achieved high level of economic efficiency, growth, and standard of living for their population.

Therefore, as Andrew Heywood suggested, 'economic dependence' and 'widespread poverty' are the defining criteria of states constituting the Third World. According to the United Nations, a **developing** country is one with a relatively low standard of living, undeveloped industrial base, and moderate to low Human Development Index (HDI). The vast majority of these countries still do not enjoy access to education, healthcare, sanitation, portable water, or other things considered as hallmark of modernity in the West. This is not to suggest that the states in developed countries do not share the burdens of developing countries—they do so in terms of poverty, income inequality, and developmental issues. These terms generally imply that the state in the 'developing' countries lack political, social and economic development as compare to the 'developed' countries.

## Check your progress 2

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

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

1) What are the specific features of a developing State?

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## 10.6 NATURE OF STATE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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No doubt, States in advanced developed countries have different histories, cultures, traditions, or institutional structures. Though what distinguishes the State in developed countries from the state in developing countries is not an

absolute, and many of them may face challenges similar to post-colonial developing societies, there are two fundamental characteristics common to them; first, they are highly industrialized, and second, larger portion of the country's economic activities remains under private ownership and control. These two characteristics make them distinct from those in developing world.

According to Gramsci, the state in advanced countries is ruled by perfecting the ideological apparatus rather than through repressive measures like the use of force. According to him, the state consists of two elements; (i) the coercive apparatus like police, army and judiciary to uphold the authority of the ruling class through force and (ii) institutions of civil society such as media, school, colleges, political parties, pressure groups, trade unions which are the instruments of hegemony used by the ruling class to comply to its rule. States in advanced developed countries, therefore, are highly industrialized and have well-established democratic political institutions and stable governments. However, activities of governance are largely in the hands of a relatively small number of non-state private individuals who continue to own and control disproportionate share of wealth and administrative power. These few individuals who enjoy the ruling power form the class which Marxists called the 'ruling class'. This 'ruling class' owns majority of the property and controls the State system. In this regard, Ralph Miliband pointed out that the most significant feature of the State in advanced and developed countries of capitalism is the continued existence in them of private and ever more concentrated economic power. As a result, these powerful people enjoy a massive preponderance in society and control over the State's policies and actions (Miliband 1969).

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## 10.7 NATURE OF STATE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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As noted earlier, States in developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America faced tremendous challenges when they emerged as independent states. The vast majority of these countries faced problems of endemic poverty, economic dependence, ethnic, religious, or tribal conflicts, imperialist exploitation, widespread corruption, illiteracy, political turmoil and glaring inequalities. The main task before them was to fight against this backwardness. But, the newly independent States failed to maintain political stability which was much needed for social, economic, and political transformation. It was primarily because the various institutions, apparatus, and agencies of the modern State, which the developed Western countries had taken centuries to formulate and refine themselves, the developing countries were expected to have them in place almost instantly after their colonial masters left. Many of these societies were in semi-tribal or semi-feudal conditions with diverse cultures, religions, languages, races and ethnic groups. In many instances, ethnic, tribal or religious groups which were traditionally bitter rivals were thrown together in new State, leaving the society prone to instability and civil wars. For instance, in 1967, Nigeria plunged into a vicious civil war when the majority ethnic group Igbo tried to secede and form an independent state called Biafra. Similarly, in 1994, Rwanda witnessed one of the bloodiest genocides in modern history when the majority



Hutus slaughtered minority Tutsis. Likewise, the civil war in Sri Lanka between majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils and the civil war in Kenya were all outcomes of nation-building process in diverse societies. These internal unrests or civil wars often plunged into anarchy or *de facto* collapse of a State—as it happened in Sierra Leone, Yugoslavia, Sudan, Somalia, and more recently in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan.

In such a condition, most developing States have failed to perform their basic functions which include protecting the State from internal and external aggression, better governance, a strong law and order, social development and economic growth. This inability of developing States to fulfil their prescribed duties is what Gunnar Myrdal called the ‘soft state’. The ‘soft state’ of the State, according to Myrdal, is a common nature of the State or societal ‘indiscipline’ prevalent developing world, particularly in South Asian States which are unable to protect their citizens’ interest in the first instance, and in the second, the low capacity of the state in law enforcement and implementing economic policies and programmes.

However, Myrdal’s view of the restricted nature of the soft state is often paradoxical to another aspect of developing States. Hamza Alavi, for example, talks about the expansion of spheres of state control in developing countries which he refers to as the ‘overdeveloped state’. Alavi characterized the post-colonial Pakistan State as an ‘overdeveloped’ state where a complex military-bureaucratic nexus has control over all aspects of society including the civilian government. Similarly, Atul Kohli has also talked about the limited ability of the State to act despite immense expansion in its authority.

Again, in 1960s, the post-colonial states were also extremely obsessive about ‘political independence’ and ‘self-reliance’. They also had little faith in the capacity of private enterprises and free market. As a result, most states focused on achieving self-reliance through ‘import-substituting industrialisation’. They encouraged the public sector enterprises and put massive restriction and regulation on private sector and the inflow of foreign goods and technology through high tariffs and rigorous diplomatic hurdles. In India, for example, restrictions on private enterprise were so strong that the State was often termed as the ‘License Raj’. The primary motive was to restrict foreign interference in the economy and control economic interaction with the outside world.

### Check your Progress 3

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

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

1) What are Soft States?

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2) What is meant by 'overdeveloped' State?

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## 10.8 CHANGING NATURE OF STATE

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Since the 1980s, States around the world, both in developed and developing countries have faced the gale of globalization which led to huge transformations in their polity, economy and society. Globally, trade, rather than production for domestic consumption has become the driving force of the new global economy. This trajectory of globalization coincided with increased internationalized production and rapid advancement in high-quality technology. For example, the advancement in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has connected countries around the world like never before. The implication of all these for the State was to cope up with the forces of globalization.

Other remarkable changes brought by this globalization on the global scene were the free-trade and free-flow of finance and free-market, typically labelled as 'neoliberalism'. As a result, Multi-national Corporations (MNCs) have made significant presence in the global economy. It was also marked by increasing role of global financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. One of the most significant changes brought by these transformations to developing countries was the opening of their markets to the global market. As a result, developing countries were compelled to take different development trajectories guided by what was known as the 'Washington Consensus' in order to adjust and adapt the changing situation. Thus, many developing States adopted various radical reforms on monetary and fiscal policies which were implemented sometimes voluntarily and often under pressure from IMF, World Bank, WTO and other global economic institutions. Though the proponents of Washington Consensus claim that the guidelines were intended to help the countries that faced financial crisis, many critics pointed out that the policies were unhelpful and imposed harsh conditions on developing countries. For example, these financial institutions put pressure on developing countries like, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, etc. to adopt Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in 1980s and 1990s which increased their dependency on global financial institutions. The adjustment programmes and reforms allowed global financial institutions to intervene in their economic affairs, particularly in monetary policy, budgetary policy, policies of trade and commerce and also in the management of State enterprises. These externally-imposed 'conditionalities' compelled the States to change not only their economic policies but also their political, legal and institutional aspects. This has undermined the economic autonomy of the State which Francis Fukuyama described as 'the End of Nation State'.

At the core of neoliberalism is the idea that the self-regulating economy can operate not only at the national but also at the
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international level. This neoliberal ideology is associated with the United States and the Washington based global organizations over which it exerted great control- the IMF and the World Bank. Neoliberalism is often referred to as the ‘Washington Consensus’ because of its linkage to the political and economic position of the United States and the physical location of the IMF and the WB in the nation’s capital.

With all these global economic transformations, States, both in developing and developed countries, have devised for themselves several programmes of action aiming to “roll back the State”. These programmes aim to curb state intervention, cut public welfare expenditures, privatize State-run enterprises, restrict the power of trade unions while promoting the doctrine of free market liberalism and competitive individualism. Such policies led to what is today we called as the “neo-liberal state”. Neo-liberalism is basically a strategy of capitalist accumulation or a specific growth model which undermined the ‘Welfare State’ model while focusing on extra-economic pre-conditions. In short, it may be defined as the liberalism of the free-market. Therefore, neo-liberalism attempts to re-organize the world economy by encouraging trans-national capital and international finance. One of the unique features of neo-liberalism has been the permeable State borders due to decline in State’s power on fiscal matters and facilitated by the free flow of mobile capital. Most States are now under pressure to privatize education, electricity, health, water and many other basic services from demands made by powerful global economic governance institutions like WTO, IMF and more recently, like Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) etc. The decision-making powers of these global financial institutions are in favour of the rich and advanced developed countries. Therefore, the dynamics of globalization and neo-liberalism has strengthened the rich countries usually at the expense of the poor countries of the developing world.

Though globalization may have brought what Kenichi Ohmae (1989) called a ‘borderless world’ since 1990s, it seems that the challenges posed by the 21<sup>st</sup> century global order are increasing the importance and centrality of the State. Take for instance the challenges posed by migration of people across national borders. The fear of mass migration and population influx from neighbours has made the States increasingly conscious of their borders. For example, the soaring of problems along the borders of USA and Mexico, Germany and Poland, India and Bangladesh, India and Myanmar etc. pressurized the States to protect their borders against refugees and illegal immigration. At another level, the notion of ‘statelessness’ experiment of the European Union (EU) with the aim of ‘borderless’ Europe is now breached with the withdrawal of Britain (referred to as ‘Brexit’) from the Union.

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## 10.9 LET US SUM UP

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The concept of State has been an integral part of our political life. There are multiple traditions of studying the State. One such tradition of looking into the

State has been by examining the similarities and difference between States in developed countries of the West and developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America—categorised on their level of development. The developed countries are highly industrialized and have well-established democratic political institutions and stable governments. However, States in the developing countries continue to experience different features of underdevelopment such as high unemployment, low income growth, high inequality, poverty, low literacy, poor health care, high mortality rate and numerous other problems. Majority of the people living in these countries have no access to basic necessities like, potable drinking water, good infrastructures, proper health care, electricity, roads etc. These countries also faced extreme debt and dependency on foreign aid. However, there have been few cases of countries which are rapidly moving towards development. In countries like India, Brazil or Indonesia, we find rapid industrialization and expansion of growth leading to economic growth and improvement in the living standards of the people.

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## 10.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check your Progress 1

1. State may be defined as a community of persons more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent or nearly so of external control and possessing and organized government to which a great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience. Every state has four fundamental attributes, known as the basic elements of State, namely the population, land (territory), government and sovereignty. In the absence of any one of these factors there can be no State.

2. States are geopolitical entities with basic elements like population, land (territory), government and sovereignty. A nation on the other hand, carries a cultural-political connotation. It refers to a community of people bound together by some *shared* identity which can be based on language, religion, race, culture, and any other forms of collective identity—often treated as ‘national identity’.

## Check Your Progress 2

1. Developing States are the post-colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America characterized by a relatively low standard of living, undeveloped industrial base, and moderate to low Human Development Index (HDI).

## Check Your Progress 3

1. Soft States are the States commonly found in developing countries which have failed to perform the basic functions of the State. According to Gunnar Myrdal ‘soft state’ has a low capacity of enforcing law and implementing economic policies and programmes.
2. Overdeveloped States are States with a strong bureaucratic-military nexus that controls over all aspects of society including the civilian government.

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## UNIT 11 STATE - CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS \*

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### Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1. Introduction
- 11.2 Civil Society: A Conceptual Understanding
- 11.3 Civil Society and State: Evolutionary Perspective
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  - 11.5.1 Western Europe: From Exclusiveness to Inclusion
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### 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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The nature of state-civil society relationship has been an important theme in political theory. The democratisation of several polities since the 1980s and the debate on development in the context of globalisation have brought the role of civil society into sharp focus. This unit seeks to throw light on the different understandings of the term civil society and its relationship with the state. After going through this unit, you should be able to explain:

- The idea of civil society;
- The role and purpose of civil society;

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- The attributes of civil society; and
- The relationship between civil society and the State.

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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The relationship between state and civil society has been a core issue of politics, both in theory and practice. In the last three decades or so, there has been a renewed attention in social sciences on the idea of civil society. The concept of civil society is generally identified with the activities of certain non-state and non-governmental organizations which comprise a wide range of organized groups of different forms, size and function, and specifically, groups which share similar views and interests that engaged in a 'collectivized' politics. There are alternative conceptions of civil society which regard it as a type of society and as a public sphere in which issues of common or public concern are deliberated and resolved.

Though one can trace the conceptualization of civil society to the ancient Greek and Roman period, it was only in the last quarter of the twentieth century that the term 'civil society' gained wider acceptance and became an integral part of political and social discourse on democracy and development. With the turn of the new millennium, the civil society-state relationship attracted considerable attention. This is no doubt due to the fact that conditions for the expanding role of civil society were created by the neoliberal doctrine that 'rolled back' or minimised the role of the state. It is in this background that this unit will introduce you to the meaning, evolution, nature and role of civil society, and elucidate the changing relationship between civil society and the state.

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## 11.2 CIVIL SOCIETY: A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

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The meaning of the term civil society, like many other concepts of political theory, has undergone several changes in its history and there is no consensus in the meaning of civil society. How do we make sense of the term that has come into everyday use? Michael Edwards (2004), a British academic closely associated with civil society organisations, says that the term 'civil society' is used as a noun (a part of society), as an adjective (a kind of society) and as an arena for societal deliberations, or a mixture of all the three. Being aware of the several ways the term is being used will help in better understanding different viewpoints in the dialogue on development and democracy in contemporary times.

The widely accepted notion of civil society is that of regarding it as a part of society is relatively of recent origin. It can be traced to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, the Frenchman who travelled across the United States in the 1830s. He linked the peoples 'incurable tendency to form voluntary associations' with emerging democracy in America. He believed that democracy depended on many things besides voting and that voluntary associations had an important role in strengthening democracy by providing a means for solving collective problems. 'Among democratic nations all citizens are independent and weak; they can

achieve almost nothing by themselves and none of them could force his fellows to help him. Therefore, they sink into a state of impotence, if they do not learn to help each other voluntarily'. Besides, voluntary associations indirectly contributed to democracy by drawing individuals out of their private concerns, where they would otherwise stay focused and striving, and enabling them to be part of something larger than the circumstances of their own existence. Tocqueville described these voluntary and other intermediary organisations standing between the individual and the state as civil society. This conception of civil society as a part of society is the one we often encounter in the discussions of policy makers, development planners and those seeking to promote democracy. Some even regard civil society as a part of society that is distinct from the state and the market. For them, civil society is the third sector.

Before the term civil society became associated with voluntary associations and other groups, it was used in political theory- from Aristotle to Thomas Hobbs to represent **a kind of society** that was identified with certain ideals such as good life, political equality and peaceful coexistence. Realising these ideals of course required action across many different institutions, not just voluntary associations or groups.

In recent years, social and political philosophers have developed a new set of theories about civil society **as the public sphere**- the place where citizens argue with one another about the great questions of the day and negotiate a constantly evolving sense of the 'common' or 'public' interest. The term public sphere has a much broader meaning that covers private sector, businesses groups, voluntary groups, which have certain common or shared space. There have been differences among scholars of this group regarding the issue of public sphere. One set of scholars would emphasize the *private vs. the state*, while another would emphasize the *personal vs. impersonal* spheres of life. Scholars of the first binary oppose the growth of the state and its incursion of everyday life. Scholars of the second binary hold personal life as opposed to the growth of the impersonal sphere, which could include corporations as well as the state.

These three meanings of civil society coexist in modern social and political discourse. While they may appear mutually exclusive, they are in fact interrelated. Voluntary, non-governmental or other civil society organisations are generally regarded as agencies that promote democratic ethos. The second interpretation of civil society as the good society sets the contributions of civil society organisations in proper context and guards against the tendency to privilege one part of society over others on ideological groups- civil society over state and market, market over both state and civil society or state over market and civil society. Achieving the goal of good society often requires arriving at a fine balance between all the three sectors of society. In other words, good society requires coordinated action between different institutions all pulling in the same direction. But how are collective choices made, trade-offs negotiated, and ends reconciled with means in ways that are just and effective? It is here that the role of public sphere becomes important. The concept of a 'public' – a whole polity that cares about the common good and has the capacity to deliberate about it democratically – is central to civil society thinking. Public sphere is the arena for



argument and deliberations as well as for associational and institutional collaboration.

Given that the meaning of civil society has undergone significant changes and that different interpretations of the term coexist in contemporary debates, an analysis of the historical development of the concept of civil society would help in understanding its current usage with clarity as well as its relations with the state. We can classify into the following phases.

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### 11.3 CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE: EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

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The classical conception of the idea of civil society was mainly drawn by the Greek philosophers. Aristotle (385-323 BC) used the term *koinonia* which referred to 'free association of peers' formed for the betterment of human life. For Aristotle, a polis was an association of free and equal men bound together by friendship and a common search for justice secured in law. Then in the first century BC, Roman thinker Cicero (106-43 BC) used the term civil society to mean a society whose members live as citizens, abided by the Roman law and led a civilized, cultured and dignified life. Therefore, in his view of civil society, the barbarian communities were not qualified to be described as civil societies.

Thus, in both the Greek and Roman era, the state represented the idea of political life in all comprehensive terms. No other sphere of society other than the state was expected to play a political role. But in the early medieval period, with the rise of the Church as a new political authority, the political sphere came to be seen as one among the many spheres. However, the dual sources of authority, 'the Church' and 'the political authority' soon came into conflict and the relationship between the two became unstable, prone to quarrel (Taylor 2012). It was in this background of power rivalry between the Christendom and the state that the idea of civil society evolved.

The evolution of civil society in the modern period can be divided into two phases. The first phase is associated with the historical events of Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe. This phase was mainly characterized by a long ideological and political battle on behalf of the institution of the state and against the claims of the Church. With the emergence of a powerful modern state with a new idea of sovereignty, we can say that this struggle ended in favour of the state. The second phase which is an outcome of the Enlightenment period of 18<sup>th</sup> century was marked by articulation of political interests of individuals against the authority of the state. The state's monopoly of power came to increasingly be challenged by the individuals (Singh 2008).

#### 11.3.1 Early Modern Period

It is in the writings of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) that we find articulation of the modern idea of civil society. Hobbes used the term '*civitas*' or '*commonwealth*' to refer to a society which was formed by individuals living in a 'state of nature' to overcome the untenable situation that prevailed during the time (Nyar 2005:124). Hobbes believed that in their original

state of nature, people regarded themselves as equal to all others and in competing for scarce resources, lived in a society of 'all against all'. Consequently, life was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'. Upon realizing that such a state of constant struggle for individual power limited the social development and common wealth, people strived for a new basis for society in which civic virtues are derived from natural laws, the first of which is that all persons ought to seek peace and the second, one should respect the rights of others in order to safeguard one's own rights.

Another English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) stressed that civil society should be understood as a body in its own right, separate from the state. In his *The Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1689), Locke related the idea of civil society with political society. Civil Society, in Locke's usages, is the optimal remedy for the state of nature. He observed that when people relinquish the state and set up a government for the protection of their natural right to life, liberty and property, they enter into civil society. The state of nature, according to Locke, is a hypothetical condition of human beings prior to the formation of the political or civil society. Locke also argued that the power of the state should be limited and constrained by dividing its powers into three functional components, carried out by two separate branches- the legislative branch concerned with creation of law and the executive branch with the responsibility for the functions of enforcing the law and conducting foreign policy. He based his ideas on the doctrine of a God-given 'natural law', which posits that individual citizens, even in the state of nature had certain natural rights such as the preservation of life, liberty, and property. Therefore, he advocated that individuals be allowed to meet together, form associations and enter into relations of their choice.

A century later, Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the Geneva based philosopher felt that Hobbes and Locke had too much importance on the rights of the individuals at the expense of common good. He devised the idea of the social contract as a means whereby citizens would make the common good for their highest priority. He argues that since common people are to be the law-makers, they will promulgate laws that result in moderating accumulation of individual wealth and thereby promote equality and trust. The state is the arena for defining the nature of the common good and civil liberty emerges when all people are willing to abide by the 'general will'.

### **11.3.2 Rise of Political Economy and the Enlightenment Concept of Civil Society**

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought about another distinction between the state and society. Society no longer meant the fundamental union between human beings that the state establishes. Civil society emerges as a network of interaction and exchange formed by individuals exercising the right to pursue the satisfaction of their particular needs in their own way. Montesquieu points out that commercialism cures human beings of their prejudices that conceal their true needs. Once human beings realize their true neediness, they will discover their sense of 'humanity' which would supersede the previous religious, ethnic and national sectarianism.

On the other hand, David Hume considers interest rather than the contract as the factor that strengthens individual to the society. Adam Smith, like his contemporaries- Hume, Ferguson and Millar, accept the advantages secured by commerce and mutual support as the bases for forming society. Civil society, by now, is shaped not merely by material desire for exchange, but, also by contract which requires trust and justice. These thinkers provide a new description of civil society, as the expanding material sphere of trade and manufacture, and make a break with the traditional conception of the economy and the political idea of civil society.

Adam Ferguson in his *Essays on the History of Civil Society* (1767) observed that civil society is not a sphere of life that is distinct from the state; the two are, in fact, identical. A civil society is a kind of political order which protects and polishes its cultural achievements and sense of public spirit.

It was however Thomas Paine (1737-1809) who articulated the idea that civil society stood in opposing to the state. Writing in the context of the American Revolution, with its principles of natural rights of man, popular sovereignty right to resist unlawful government and republican form of government, in his *Rights of Man* (1791) Paine argued for restricting the power of the state in favour of civil society. According to him, state is a necessary evil while the civil society is unqualified good. The more perfect civil society is, the more it would regulate its affairs leaving very little for government. He believed that reduction of state power to a minimum would encourage the formation of an international confederation of nationally independent and peacefully interacting civil societies. This is the beginning of a new idea of 'a government being the best which governs the least'.

### 11.3.3 Civil Society as a Part of Society and Life Breath of the State

As pointed out in the earlier section, Alexis de Tocqueville regarded civil society as a distinct part of society comprising of associations. In *Democracy in America* (1835) he gave a new view of civil society-state relationship. He said civil societies need to play its role to safeguard against the tyranny of the state and for the defence of the freedom of individuals. According to him, there is a despotic tendency in modern states which can be controlled only by the developing civil associations which are not under the control of the state. Civil society must find the means to limit state power and hold it accountable. In this regard, plurality of civil associations is necessary for consolidating the democratic revolution. He considers civil associations as arenas in which individuals can direct their attention to more than their selfish. Therefore, a pluralistic and self-organised civil society that is independent of the state is absolutely necessary for democracy to flourish.

### 11.3.4 Civil Society as Public Sphere

The conception of civil society as a public sphere where individuals and groups come together to freely deliberate and identity society problems is a recent one. It can be traced to the writings of Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher. In his

*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas argued that in the pre-Enlightenment years, European culture was dominated by representational culture, where one party sought to 'represent' itself on its audience by overwhelming its subjects. The monarchs, for instance, built enormous palaces and monuments to overwhelm the public. With the rise of capitalism, this feudal stage of representation has been replaced by *Öffentlichkeit* (public sphere) which is outside of the control by the state. Public sphere is an area in social life where individuals come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. The 'public' debate takes place in the public sphere through the mass media, as well as at meetings or through social media, academic writing and government policy documents. In this 'public sphere', civil society becomes the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration. The extent to which such public space is available is a good indicator of democracy as it is only in a democracy that all opinions and viewpoints are represented and no viewpoint is excluded or suppressed.

### Check Your Progress- 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) What are three ways in which the concept of civil society has been understood?

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2) What changes did Enlightenment bring in attitudes towards the state?

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3) With which political thinker would you associate the preservation of life, liberty, and property as natural rights?

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## 11.4 CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS CRITIQUES

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Two principal critiques of the Enlightenment concept of civil society appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the philosophies of Georg.W. Freidrich Hegel (1770-1831)

and Karl Marx (1818-1883). The German philosopher Hegel brought a paradigm shift in theoretical study of state-civil society relationship. He was the first scholar to draw a theoretical distinction between the state and civil society. For him, civil societies are historical products of economic modernization and bourgeoisie driven economy. He conceptualized civil society as a sphere consisting of people involved in the market. In other words, civil society is a specific arena of economic activity, based on property exchange. In this sense, he positioned civil society between the spheres of family and state. He also argued that civil societies are based on the principle of 'universal egoism' and, therefore, it represents conflict of interests in the society. Therefore, according to him, state should represent the whole interest of the society and there is a necessity for the state to constantly supervise and control the civil societies.

Another German scholar Karl Marx further expanded the study of state-civil society relationship. Marx, in his writings such as *On the Jewish Question*, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* used the term civil society to make a critique of Hegel and German Idealism. Marx also claimed that the basic contradiction in modern society is between 'man as citizen' and 'man as private individual'. But, contradicting Hegel, Marx argued that state cannot stand above civil society to protect universal interests against the private interests articulated in civil society. For Marx, civil society included within its sphere the whole of pre-state economic and social life. The true nature of civil society, according to Marx, can be understood by analysing the nature of political economy. Marx's analysis of civil society either dismissed or ignored the incipient signs of communal mutuality to which Hegel attached so much importance (Femia 2001). Marx denied the existence of civil society as an independent sphere, but, saw its origin in the class relations and in the political economy. For Marx, the civil society is the site of class struggle.

Marxist approach to civil society was modified in the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century by an Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). According to Gramsci, civil society is not simply a sphere of individual needs, but of organizations that has the potential for rational self-regulation and freedom. Unlike Marx who had stressed on the separation of state and civil society, Gramsci viewed the two as interrelated. And unlike Marx who argued that economic relations, that is, the base, was the driving force of historical change, Gramsci considered the superstructure, that is, the civil society as equally important. In fact, it is by capturing the apparatus of civil society that is establishing its hegemony that the dominant class exercises control over others and not through coercion. For Gramsci, the superstructure of civil society consists of basically two components: first, 'private institutions' like schools, churches, clubs, journals and parties which are instrumental in crystallizing social and political consciousness, and second, the 'political society' that comprises of public institutions like the government, courts, police and the army, the instruments of direct domination. It is in the civil society that the intellectuals play an important role by creating hegemony. However, this hegemony of the civil society exists differently in different societies or countries. Writing about the former USSR, Gramsci observes:

In Russia, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and galantines; in the West, there was a proper relationship between state and civil society and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earth works.

Thus, Gramsci expanded the Marxian notion of civil society and provides a mode of understanding and classifying states through their civil societies. To Gramsci, all states are coercive power structures, but, states without civil societies are transparent states (Chandoke 1995).

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## 11.5 CIVIL SOCEITY AND STATE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

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The concept of civil society has been debated in different contexts. Within political science research in recent years, the main focus has been on the role of civil society in the political transition towards democracy in different regions of the world. It has already been highlighted that civil society has been an almost a purely Western concept, historically tied to the political emancipation of citizens from former feudalistic ties, monarchy and the state during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Other notions of civil society that might have existed in other regions or at different times seem to be hardly reflected in the international debate about civil society. As a result, there is still much debate on whether these Western concepts of civil society are transferable to non-Western countries or other historical contexts with different levels of democracy and economic structures. In the following sub-sections, we will review the main strands of these debates and look at how various civil society concepts and state-civil society dynamics have been interpreted in politics and practice in various contexts and geographical regions.

### 11.5.1 Western Europe: From Exclusiveness to Inclusion

In its initial stage, during the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, civil society in Western Europe was determined by economic and academic elites that demanded civil and human rights and political participation. In its second phase during 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, civil society widened its area of activity and potential. New actors entered into civil society, for instance, the social movements of the working class, farmers or churches, who not only engaged in social welfare, but, also articulated political and societal claims. In their programmes, these new actors were less universal than the elites of the first phase, focusing instead on specific interests, sometimes stressing societal conflicts and deprivations. A third phase of civil society in Western Europe began with the emergence of new social movements in the 1960s, such as women's liberation, the student, peace and the ecology movements. These new movements considerably expanded both the scope of civil society activities and the reasons for being part of civil society in its various appearances. These developments had far reaching impact in state-civil society relations.

### 11.5.2 The US and Western Europe: Social Capital Debate

Beginning in the United States, a rich debate emerged in the 1990s regarding the performance of major social institutions, including representative government, and its relations to political culture and civil society. Robert Putnam, an American political scientist, regarded social capital, social networks, a rich associational life and the norms of reciprocity and reliability associated with it, as the core element of civil society. He affirmed that the characteristics of civil society and civic life affect the health of democracy and the performance of social institutions. In his empirical study called *Bowling Alone* (1995) Putnam found that there has been a tremendous erosion of social capital in the US since the 1960s. His work has encouraged considerable research on various forms of social capital and its conduciveness for democracy.

### 11.5.3 Eastern Europe: Challenges of a Three-Fold Transition

The countries of the Western Europe went through some social and political transformation in its history of the last century which can be explained in three-folds; the political transformation from dictatorship to democracy, the economic transformation from state to market economy, and the state transformation due to the disintegration of the erstwhile USSR. These transitions drew attention among many European scholars who studied on the role civil society in these transformations. Their studies found that civil society in Eastern Europe plays different roles in different transition phases. Its success varies depending on a variety of factors such as its strength and capacity to fulfil the right functions at the right time; the incorporation of democratic procedures in its own structure, especially after immediate system change, and the extent of bridging societal divides by inclusive membership as well as the civility of its actions. Of course, this must be seen within the context of other factors and power structures civil society has to interact with.

### 11.5.4 Post-Colonial Context

The applicability of the concept of civil society in a post-colonial context has been heavily criticized as arguments against the universal applicability of a concept developed within Western political philosophy. Like the Western and Eastern Europe, in the developing post-colonial countries too, the concept of civil society was revived during the 1980s- the 1990s, particularly when the Latin American countries –including Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay– came under authoritarian dictatorships. These regimes established political and economic domination by tiny elite, effectively excluding large masses of people from the process of decision making. A simmering discontent was present in these countries as the military regimes were extremely repressive. They did not pursue policies that could cater to the economic and social demands of the lower and middle classes of the society. By the early 1980s, most of these regimes were faced with economic and political crisis because of increasing foreign debts and popular discontent. Soon, various kinds of associations, later called Civil Society Institutions (CSIs), were formed to press for the extension of civil and political rights.

Like in East Europe, in the developing countries too, the idea of civil society was invoked as a sphere of freedom against the authoritarian state. It is the decreasing faith in the capacity of the state to cater to people's needs and aspirations along with the democratic struggle against authoritarianism that the concept of civil society in the post-colonial context became popular. Most of the newly independent states in the Asian, African and Latin American countries failed to meet the expectations and aspirations of the people. These states were neither capable of attaining high economic growth nor were they able to institutionalized democratic politics (Singh 2008:120). The crisis of the state led to questioning of the very ideas of political and economic development that had dominated political discourse so far.

In the post-colonial context, since the 1980s, the challenge to the existing model of development appeared in the form of 'new social movements'. They were new in the sense that they carved out an oppositional political space distinct from traditional political parties and pressure groups. They were also new in the sense that many of these movements questioned the model of development that had been pursued by the developing countries.

But civil society in a non-state or even an anti-state domain of protest against the establishment avoids the basic question as to how such protest movements create a public sphere for dialogue and consensus which are the hallmarks of civil society. Some political analysts think that the real tasks facing leaders of diverse cultural and social associations is to establish a community of shared interests and democratic institutions for decision-making through consensus.

In the context of India, Sudipta Kaviraj has pointed three attributes for the growing concern for civil society. First, post-colonial ideas on governance brought the role of the state and its institutions to the centre-stage, because they were viewed as indispensable for reconstruction at a faster rate. Second, unconscious assumptions about fundamentalism led ruling classes to believe that changes in different aspects of social life are symmetrical and are originally linked to one another. Third, western capitalist societies or those in the communist world showed to post-colonial societies the path to modernity and development. Kaviraj also highlighted the gross fallibility of these assumptions about democracy and civil society in a post-colonial society. Rajni Kothari on the other hand posits civil society as an alternative to the state, equating the former with non-state, non-governmental organisations. Yet, as Gurpreet Mahajan has pointed out, such a non-statist conception of civil society in post-colonial context, rests on an imperfect assumption that all kinds of institutions and associations are necessarily agencies of democratization and would safeguard liberty, equal access to citizenship and resources and political participation. Andre Bataille has distinguished between institutions of civil society and other types of mediating institutions in society. The former embodies the modern concern for individual liberty and function more as open and secular forces which are conducive to civil society. Such institutions protect the individual autonomy and freedom in a non-discriminatory manner and are controlled neither by the state nor by religion. Rajesh Tandon, in this context, considers the role of civil society in India as challenging the state in three different ways.



- Faced with the centralized power of the state, civil society first has a role of enabling the hitherto voiceless and unorganized communities' interests to be represented. In other term, the sphere of civil society has a goal of empowerment for local communities. In that specific function, civil society can be considered as a 'space' that is free and accessible to everybody.
- Civil society can also be considered as a 'movement' that has to influence public negotiation on public issues like health, education or security. Contesting the frameworks of development programmes, criticizing the long-term effect of a large displacement of people are examples of this vision of civil society as a contestation movement.
- Civil society finally has a role of ensuring the accountability of the state in different spheres. Ensuring access to information is a first step into the state accountability. In a more general way, civil society has the monitoring function of holding the law and order machinery accountable. This function implies the control of political parties, electoral process and the local bodies etc.

From the above discussion it is clear that there are different dimensions of state-civil society relations in different contexts that have to be taken into account: 1). Civil society apart from the state: Freedom of Association, 2). Civil society against the state: Politicizing the non-political, 3). Civil society in support of the state: Public Sphere, 4). Civil society in dialogue with the state: Schools of Citizenship, 5). Civil society in partnership with the state: More Governance, Less Government, and 6). Civil society beyond the state: Global Civil Society.

## Check Your Progress2

**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 is the contribution of Gramsci to understanding of the concept of civil society?

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- 2) What is 'new' in the new social movements?

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## 11.6 LET US SUM UP

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We have seen in this unit that civil societies are increasingly becoming a significant institution of 'collectivized' social and political life. While the

concept of civil society is often contested and elusive, in its contemporary sense civil society is generally recognized as an organized political community or unit which is neither connected to the state nor managed by the government, formed by some identical group of people in pursuit of their interests. Although Civil societies are associated with certain activities of 'public' affairs, they are distinct from the activities of the state. In this regard, civil society is also regarded as an autonomous realm of social and political existence, where individuals come together to deliberate their societal issues. This deliberation is conducted in the form of meetings, debates, discussions, academic writing, mass media, social media or through any other exercise of debate and discussion. However, the notion of civil society-state relations has been a matter of intense debate in civil society discourse.

It is also observed that civil societies play important roles in strengthening democracy. They provide citizens an avenue where they can participate in the conduct of public affairs freely and collectively. Civil society also ensure that citizens opinions and viewpoints are freely expressed and represented. In this regard, civil society has proved to be an effective mechanism of enhancing democracy. Therefore, the existence of efficient and vigorous civil society is both a precondition for and marker of healthy democracy, and its absence or relative inefficiency is considered to be undemocratic or less democratic.

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## 11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress1

- 1) Civil society has been seen as an actor, as a kind of society and as a public sphere for debate and policy outcomes.
- 2) The expanding material sphere of trade and manufacture make a break with the traditional conception of the economy and the political idea of civil society. The period was marked by articulation of political interests of individuals against the authority of the state.
- 3) John Locke

### Check Your Progress2

- 1) Gramsci modified the Marxist formulation to say that state and civil society are interdependent and not separate. Also emphasise the importance of superstructure. Dominant class obtain consent for their rule by capturing the civil society apparatus.
- 2) They occupy oppositional space along with parties and pressure groups. They also question the existing models of development.

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## UNIT 12 STATE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION\*

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### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 What is Globalisation?
- 12.3 Approaches to Globalisation
- 12.4 Impact on State Sovereignty
  - 12.4.1 Challenges from the New World Economy
  - 12.4.2 Challenges from New International Organisations
  - 12.4.3 Challenges from International Law
- 12.5 Impact of Globalisation and Internal Functioning of States
  - 12.5.1 Democratic Decision Making
  - 12.5.2 Ethnic Resurgence
- 12.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.7 References
- 12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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The dynamics of globalisation have brought sea change in the nature and operational dimensions of the state system in different regions of the world with both opportunities and challenges. This unit will introduce you about the globalisation theories that would help in understanding the character and role of the state in the era of globalisation. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of globalisation and its dimensions;
- Identify and describe the dominant approaches to globalisation;
- Assess the impact of globalisation on state in the developing countries; and
- Identify the major challenges to states in the era of globalisation.

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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Globalisation is a concept for which no standard definition can be given. This is because it stands for a tremendous diversity of issues and has been interpreted from a variety of theoretical and political positions. Yet scholars agree that it is a process that is supplanting the primacy of the state by transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), eroding local cultures and traditions through a global culture and strengthening the dominance of a capitalist economic system. Hence, its importance lies in the change it has introduced in our traditional understanding of the state. Having introduced you to the idea of the state, its evolution, nature and functions in Unit 10 of this block, here we will examine the debate on the state in age of globalisation. The questions central in this debate are: is globalisation associated with the demise of the state power? Does contemporary globalisation impose new limits to politics within nation-states?

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## 12.2 WHAT IS GLOBALISATION?

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Globalisation refers to the economic, political and cultural processes through which the world is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, leading to the creation of a single World Space or system. David Held and his colleagues define it as “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from the cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual” (1999, p. 2). The main actors involving in the process of globalisation are the nation-states, individuals, multinational corporations, international organizations, non-governmental organisations, institutional investors, criminal organizations, mass-media sources etc. It has a dialectical nature in the form of different oppositions such as globalisation-localisation, unification-polarisation, integration-marginalisation, cultural homogenisation-cultural heterogenization, Americanisation-Westernisation, and McDonalidization- indigenisation.

There is considerable difference of opinion among scholars about its impact, yet there exists a shared belief that globalisation is taking place and is affecting the state. A pattern of interconnectedness has always existed since the rise of the modern state in the 15<sup>th</sup> century where internal politics was affected by international events and developments. This is reflected in the writings of Hugo Grotius and Emmanuel Kant who argued that states existed within a ‘society of states’ and ‘international law’ and focused upon cooperation and coexistence of states. However, what we are experiencing today is a qualitatively new phenomenon: vast networks of global interaction and financial flows over which individual states have very limited control, tremendous growth in communication, emergence of international organisations and regimes, trans-governmental action, global military order and the declining role of geographical and physical distance in politics, economics and war due to proliferation of powerful computers, microelectronic technologies and social media.

Globalisation is the end product of a historical process of capitalist expansion that originated in Europe and has covered the world. While there is no agreed

starting point, certain historical epochs over which it has developed can be identified. The first great expansion of European capitalism took place in the 16th century following the first circumnavigation of the earth in 1519 and 1521 by Magellan. But the first major expansion of world trade and investment took place in the late 19th century following the Industrial Revolution in Europe, which made these countries producers of manufactured goods. It was also the golden period of colonialism when the great powers of the West were able to divide the world between them and exploit its resources. This was brought to a halt with the First World War and the bout of anti-free trade protectionism due to the Great Depression of the 1930s. The end of the Second World War brought another great expansion of capitalism with the rise of multi-national corporations (MNCs), which further internationalised production and trade. In the economic field, the new Bretton Woods system helped in the liberalisation of trade. The introduction of floating exchange rate in place of fixed exchange rate in the 1970s led to the rise of international financial markets. In political terms, decolonisation created a New World Order with the emergence of a number of new states. The more contemporary phase of the triumph of global forces dates from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which ended the Cold War between the forces of capitalism and socialism, leaving the former triumphant. With this, globalisation has become a reality for people living in all parts of the world.

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## 12.3 APPROACHES TO GLOBALISATION

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Scholars are divided about the nature of this new process called globalisation and consequently its impact. Three approaches to understanding the ongoing process of globalisation can be identified in the current literature. One approach is that of the Hyperglobalists who present a hyper account of globalisation and regard it as a central and irreversible process. Kenichi Ohmae, a Japanese management guru, defines globalisation as a new epoch of history in which traditional nation-states have become "unnatural, even impossible business units in a global economy". This view privileges economic power or that of the market, where the borderless economy reduces national governments to little more than transmission belts for global capital, or simple intermediate institutions sandwiched between increasingly powerful local, regional and global mechanisms of governance. International markets and multi-national corporations have become strong and impersonal forces driving the world. Consequently, the power of states is correspondingly declining. Now power is diffused. It is the local and the international forces that are important, not states, which have lost their earlier authority and legitimacy and have little control over what is happening within their borders. Hyperglobalists believe that economic globalisation is creating new forms of social and political organisations - international civil society and supra-state government - which will eventually replace the traditional nation-state as the primary political and economic unit of world society. Thus, the old North-South divide, or the core-periphery based international relations, is disappearing and a more complex architecture of economic, political and social power is emerging. In this situation, states that do not globalise or move with the times, it is held, will be left behind. Older welfare state policies or social democratic models of governance are now of no use. A new international elite or

'knowledge' class is developing world-wide which is equipped to benefit from the changes that globalisation has introduced, while others are marginalised. These changes are accompanied by a worldwide consumerist ideology, which displaces traditional cultures and ways of life and imposes a new global common identity within a global civilisation defined by universal standards set by the discipline of markets. The Hyperglobalists, therefore argue that globalisation represents 'a fundamental reconfiguration of human action'.

Sharply opposed to Hyperglobalists is the viewpoint of scholars who can be best described as the Sceptics. The Sceptics argue that globalisation as described by the Hyperglobalists is a 'myth'. They maintain that contemporary globalisation is neither new nor revolutionary. Interdependence, they insist, is not higher today than in the late 19th century which witnessed a greater increase of trade, labour flows and economic interdependence with much higher levels of integration of states into the international system. They argue that what is being described as globalisation is actually high levels of interstate trade and the expansion of regional common markets such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and European Union (EU). Further, in contrast to the Hyperglobalists, privileging political rather than economic power, they feel that the latter are being naïve in underestimating the political power of states; it is not the market that rules, but the state that regulates all economic activity. The forces of globalisation are themselves dependent upon the regulatory power of national governments to make states globalise, liberalise and privatise. Thus, politics and not economics alone are important in determining the relations among states in an increasingly interdependent world. The power of states, in other words, has not ebbed; state sovereignty has not eroded; and multinational corporations remain under national control. In fact, some feel that globalisation is a by-product of the multi-lateral economic order created by the United States in the post-Second World War period; others feel that it is a new phase of Western imperialism in which there has been intensification of world trade and investment by the Western states that have emerged as the agents of monopoly capital. Finally, the Sceptics point out that there has been no restructuring of the world economy, most trade and investment still favours the North and marginalises the South, as a result of which inequalities between the two areas are increasing, and the old international division is becoming stronger. In fact, they feel that it is these rising inequalities, which are leading to fundamentalism, ethnic resurgence and aggressive nationalism rather than a world civilisation and internationalism. Instead of cultural homogenisation, what we are witnessing is re-emergence of local identities. There is no global governance, only Western dominance, which hides behind a convenient slogan of globalisation.

A third, and more balanced view comes from the Transformationists, who believe that globalisation is transforming the world and see it as a driving force behind the rapid social, political and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and a world order. In such a system there is no longer a clear distinction between international and domestic, external and internal affairs. In this account, globalisation is conceived as a powerful transformative force, which is responsible for a 'massive shake-out' of societies, economies, institutions of governance and world order. However, the direction of this shakeout remains

uncertain since globalisation is an essentially contingent historical process replete with contradictions. Rather than putting forward a fixed ideal type, Transformationalists emphasise globalisation as a long-term historical process that is inscribed with contradictions, and significantly shaped by conjectural factors. Yet, they do believe that contemporary patterns of global economic, political, military, technological and cultural flows are historically unprecedented. They argue that virtually all countries in the world, if not parts of their territory and all segments of their society are now functionally part of that larger (global) system in one or more respects. This does not mean the arrival of a global society; rather globalisation is associated with new patterns of stratification in which some states, societies and communities are becoming increasingly enmeshed in the world order, while others are becoming increasingly marginalised.

Thus, at the core of the globalisation debate is a belief that it is reconstituting or re-engineering the power, functions and authority of national governments. While not disputing that states still retain the ultimate legal claim to effective supremacy over what occurs within their territories, this is juxtaposed to varying degrees with the expanding jurisdiction of institutions of international governance. Important examples include the European Union and the World Trade Organisation, where sovereign power is now divided between international, national and local authorities. Globalisation, therefore, is associated with a transformation or an unbundling of the relationship between sovereignty, territoriality and state power. Thus, a new sovereignty regime is displacing traditional conceptions of statehood as an absolute indivisible, territorially exclusive and zero-sum form of public power. Consequently, sovereignty, state power and territoriality stand in a more complex relationship to each other today, than they did in the epoch in which the modern nation-state was being formed.

A different and critical viewpoint is put forward by the neo-Marxists about the origins and nature of globalisation, and its impact particularly on the developing world. Describing it as a new form of Imperialism, they see it as an extension of the neo-liberal conservative policies practiced by the advanced Western countries to put their own economies in order as well as overcome global depression following the oil crisis of the 1970s and 80s. While these policies helped the advanced countries, it did not help the developing states on whom there is tremendous pressure today to liberalise and privatise internally, and externally to open their economies to the forces of globalisation. For the developing world, globalisation is part of the Debt Crisis of the 1980s, which led to Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Many of them, with the drying up of official aid in this period, borrowed heavily from commercial multinational banks, which were flush with petro-dollars at that time. Inability to repay debts by some countries such as for example, Mexico in 1982, led to 'conditionalities' by the IMF and multilateral banks. Borrowing countries were pushed to adopt SAPs which involved many changes such as rolling back of the state, removal of trade barriers and emphasis on export-led growth, regional price controls etc. In the political field, the conditionalities on the developing states have taken the shape of insistence on maintenance of democracy, good governance and human rights.



These developments have led to introduction of competitive market forces and dismantling of welfarism within the developing states. This has in turn led to greater class and regional inequalities within them, leaving large sections of the population such as the smaller farmers, agricultural labour and smaller industrialists vulnerable to the impact of globalisation. In India, this is visible in the suicides by cotton farmers in regions such as Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab. Thus, globalisation in the form of SAPs has led to a decline of developing states and their inability to thrive in a world of open economies. These states are not in a position to compete and take advantage of the new opportunities that globalisation has introduced, which have gone largely to the advanced Western states, and even within them, to already better-off sections of the population. While there was growth initially in some Latin America states as a result of the SAPs, they have also contributed to widening of social inequalities and poverty, a suitable example being the impact on Argentina. The impact on Africa was clearly indicated by the World Bank itself in its 1989 report on the continent. In fact, during the 1990s the World Bank and the IMF have themselves called for 'safety nets' or policies to help the poor in these countries and for adjustment with a 'human face'. This has led to increasing unrest and violence against the government in many developing countries, and even in some developed countries, against increasing inequalities and decreasing levels of employment. Andre Gunder Frank has recently pointed out that the impact of globalisation and the SAP has proved Dependency theory correct. Paradoxically, however, the theory is hardly used today in studies on globalisation. Thus, globalisation is a force that does not affect all states in the same manner; even within states it can affect different sections of the population differentially depending on their ability to face competitive markets.

## Check Your Progress 1

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

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit

- 1) What are the main disagreements between the Sceptics and the Transformationists?

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- 2) What are the conditionalities imposed by the IMF on developing countries seeking relief from the debt crisis?

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## 12.4 IMPACT ON STATE SOVEREIGNTY

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Most scholars agree that the age of the nation-state is not over, rather it has suffered a decline by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after the glorious highs it reached in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The state still remains the most significant actor in the international arena and retains a degree of autonomy. But this position is uneven; some states have declined while others have risen, and in some cases classic empires have declined and given way to new empires. What this implies is not the end of the state but a transformation in its power and authority. This is best understood by examining certain 'international' or 'external' disjuncture or challenges upon the sovereignty of the nation-state pointed out by the British political scientist, David Held.

### 12.4.1 Challenge from the New World Economy

Two major changes in economic international processes, which have impacted on state sovereignty, have been internationalisation of production and financial transactions organised by MNCs. MNCs in their production and financial transactions plan their activities with the world and not just the national economies in mind. Even when they have a national base, their interests are global, their activities in their home country being less important. Financial organisations such as multinational banks, which are global in scale, and new information technology have made this possible, and stocks and shares are now 'mobile' and move across frontiers easily. As a result, the financial world economy is not under the control of the state any longer. Technological advances in communication and transport are eroding the boundaries between national markets, which in the past were the bastion of independent national policies. Markets and societies are becoming sensitive to each other even though national identities are separate and monetary and fiscal policies are dominated by movements in international markets. The major market crash of South East Asian economies in 1997, for example, affected a very large number of countries.

As a result, internal policymaking, investment, employment and revenue within a state is often affected by the activities of MNCs and changes in the world economy. Keynesian-based welfare policies, and import or tariff barriers by governments (state interventionism) practiced by governments to protect home industry in an era of 'embedded liberalism' are now much harder to implement. This is because state economies are no longer 'managed' by state governments but are subject to external forces, such as recession, inflation and trade agreements, due to the interconnectedness of the world economy. However, it must be underlined that some states can manage better in this situation, and are able to 'restore boundaries' and take advantage also of the regionalisation of the world economy, as in the case of the USA or the European Union, respectively. Thus, the trends within the world system are not uniform in their impact upon individual states, but there is a definite disjuncture between the idea of a

sovereign state determining its own future and modern economies, which are intersected by international economic forces.

### **12.4.2 Challenge from new International Organisations**

Between the state and the international system there have arisen a large number of international organisations and regimes – new forms of political associations – which now manage whole areas of transnational activity (trade, oceans, outer space) and collective policy problems. At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were 37 inter-governmental organisations and 176 international NGOs. Over the past century, their numbers have risen to approximately 300 and 4,000, respectively. Consequently, we are witnessing new forms of decision making involving a number of states, and whole array of international pressure groups. A number of international agencies such as the International Postal Union or Telecom Unions, etc. are largely non-political organisations. Moreover, there are a large number of international organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, UNESCO, UN, which are highly politicised and over the years, their power to intervene in the internal affairs of states has increased. A tension therefore definitely exists between the notion of a sovereign nation-state in control of its internal affairs and the existence of international bodies capable of interfering in the management of its polity and economy. The European Union is an example of a supra-state body that can make law, punish, regulate, direct and implement policy and common currency. European states have willingly surrendered their sovereignty to this body in order to further their economic progress and face competition from the United States and Japan. This means that sovereignty is no longer indivisible, illimitable, exclusive, perpetual, and embodied in a single state.

### **12.4.3 Challenge from International law**

Changes in international law have introduced new forms of regulations, rights and duties which act as constraints on states. These are not backed by any coercive power but despite that are important enough for states to obey them. Traditionally, a rule that upheld state sovereignty was the immunity of individuals and state agencies from being tried in a court in any other country. However, in recent years these rules are being questioned in international courts. A tension now exists between states and international law which is yet to be resolved, particularly within the European Union. Moreover, the establishment of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1950 was an important step. Unlike many other Charters on Human Rights, it takes a step towards ‘collective enforcement’ of certain rights. An important innovation is that individuals can initiate proceedings against their own governments. European countries in the European Union have accepted that their citizens can directly petition the European Commission on Human Rights that can take cases to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and then the European Court of Human Rights. Thus, no state can any longer treat its citizen, as it thinks fit. In this regard, an important initiative has been taken by United Nations (UN) in 2005 by constituting what is called Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which says that the UN has a right to intervene in the domestic

affairs of a particular state if that state has failed to protect its citizens from human rights violation. A gap has also emerged between membership of a state, which traditionally gives individuals certain rights, and duties and the creation in international law of new forms of rights and liberties as laid down by the International Tribunal at Nuremberg. The Tribunal has laid down that when international law, which protects basic humanitarian values, is in conflict with state laws, it is the duty of every individual to follow the former. Moreover, the scope and direction of international law has changed. Traditionally, it was meant to uphold the idea of a society of sovereign states as the supreme political organisation of mankind. In recent years, international law is no longer defined as the law between states but as a cosmopolitan agency above states, but accepted by all. At the same time, it is important to remember despite globalisation it is not accepted by all states and individuals such as Islamic fundamentalist movements, who do not accept it.

Finally, there is a disjuncture between the idea of the state as an autonomous strategic military actor, and the development of the global system of states characterised by the existence of the great powers and power blocs which sometimes operates to undercut a state's authority and integrity. The existence of NATO can constrain the decision-making powers of many states specially their military and foreign policy. There has also emerged the 'internationalisation of security' due to joint use of armed forces by states, which has created a command structure above the states over which they individually have little control.

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## **12.5 IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON INTERNAL FUNCTIONING OF STATES**

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### **12.5.1 Democratic Decision-Making**

Questions are also being raised about the impact of globalisation on the internal functioning of nation-states. A central question raised by liberal political theory, closely related to popular sovereignty, is about the impact of globalisation on democratic decision-making. Traditionally liberal theory assumed that there is a symmetrical and corresponding relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The former made decisions for the latter based upon notions of majority rule and accountability, and the latter accorded them legitimacy. Nation-states were seen as self-contained units and changes in other states or the international system, except in case of war or an invasion, were not taken into consideration. The emergence of neo-liberalism has led to the retreat of the state creating more space for civil society and competitive markets, which are not limited to or enclosed within nation states. Moreover, active intervention by agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF led to the Structural Adjustment Programmes and development projects, trade sanctions, aid, military imports etc. had grave implications for democratic decision-making. Consequently, states no longer control their own decisions and actions as in the past. What this implies is a change in the traditional notion of 'consent', which is an important core of democratic theory. The earlier notions of a social contract and electoral democracy based on the use of the ballot box which leads to participatory democracy based upon a community of free and equal persons is no longer valid.

The question, that arises is, which is the relevant community - local, regional, national or international? Who makes the law is a valid question as territorial boundaries are no longer sacrosanct? So, globalisation has the possibility of re-opening the assumptions underlying liberal democracy. With the advent of globalisation, the theoretical underpinnings of a liberal democratic state requires a review.

### 12.5.2 Ethnic Resurgence

A second issue is the coexistence of globalisation and assertions based on ethnic identities, of language, tribe or religion, which is today questioning the concept of a homogenous nation-state based upon a common national sentiment, whether constructed out of long struggles against feudalism and the Church in the West, or colonial rule in the developing world. Earlier scholars examining ethnic identities and their relationship with the nation-state believed that ethnic ties were primordial, that is, given from the beginning and fixed, and with modernisation and increasing allocation of roles on the basis of universalistic criteria, they were expected to disappear. Nation-states would be able to solve the problem of ethnic minorities over a period of time; and assimilation was not merely social theory, but also a policy goal to be assiduously followed by states. However, since the early 1980s, there have been ethnic movements not only in the developing world, but also even in the economically advanced countries, such as Canada. Scholars like Benedict Anderson have pointed out that identities could be 'invented' or 'imagined'. This meant they were no longer rooted in blood relationship, language or culture, but could be constructed by social or political action. This meant that the relationship between the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism, between ethnic groups and the nation, have undergone a change. Three kinds of assertions seem to be taking place within states. First, those based on the belief that cultural identity and economic prosperity can be maintained and / or achieved by breaking away from the existing state, a good example being the former USSR. Second, those asserting that nationalist aspiration cannot be achieved without full independent statehood, for example, Yugoslavia. Third, a more widespread phenomenon, in which the state does not adequately look after the interests of a distinct ethnic group which has remained backward and marginalised, for example, the dalits in India. Today, therefore, while globalisation is the first major force posing a fundamental challenge to the state, the resurgence of ethnic identities is the second, and they often exert contrary pulls. As the term suggests, globalisation promotes a global culture, while ethnic identities promote the local, the parochial and stress upon the 'other'. The nation-state thus experiences a twofold pressure from without and within. The principle of nationalism, which created the state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is no longer able to hold states together. External influences can also impinge upon the redefinition of identities.

Most scholars would agree with David Held who attempts to provide a balanced view about the impact of globalisation on state sovereignty. He argues that the nation-state has not become totally irrelevant. "Global processes should not be exaggerated", he insists, "to represent either a total eclipse of the state's system or the simple emergence of an integrated world society" (1995, p. 136). He demands a re-evaluation of the theory of democracy, taking into account of the

changing nature of the polity both within pre-established borders and within the wider system of nation-state and global forces. What we are moving towards is a system of overlapping authority and multiple loyalties, with conflicting interpretations of rights and duties and authority structures, in which no state is supreme. In this respect, sovereignty is no longer one and indivisible. This is similar to Christendom's principle that existed in the medieval period with no ruler being supreme or above the others. This would require new international organisations to secure law and order. Such a new 'secular medievalism' could be fraught with problems on which democratic states have functioned traditionally such as notions of representation and accountability. The institutions of democracy may undergo change due to these pressures. Citizens would no longer have control over their states as in the past. A good example is the new states of Eastern Europe which have tried to keep control over their own affairs but international events beyond their control have had an influence. Thus, an ideal system for the future would be the continuation of sovereign states, but co-existing with new plural authority systems. The need of the hour is a democracy within and between states along with democracy within a network of intersecting international forces and relations. This is the meaning of democratisation of the state system - a structure of interlocking political decisions and outcomes so that each affects the other and impinges and imposes upon the other. All this is visualised as existing within an international civil order and civil society.

## Check Your Progress 2

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

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit

1) In what ways do international organisations affect state sovereignty?

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2) What effect does globalisation have on democratic politics?

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## 12.6 LET US SUM UP

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Globalisation is a highly contested concept. It stands for a tremendous diversity of issues and has been interpreted from a variety of theoretical and political positions. We have seen the dominant perspectives on globalisation theory and what is happening to the state in the globalised world- Hyperglobalist, the Sceptics, the Transformationalists and the neo-Marxists. The transformationalist school is persuasive: globalisation, is 'transforming' the world. It is a driving force behind the rapid social, political and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and a world order. New patterns of stratification are emerging in the world order in which some states, societies and communities are becoming

increasingly enmeshed in the world order, while others are becoming increasingly marginalised.

As we saw, the nation-state is no longer a unified command centre that it was in the 19th century or even until the Second World War. Although it still remains the most significant actor in the international arena and retains a degree of autonomy, its sovereignty authority is increasingly challenged by the global economic forces, the international organisations (intergovernmental as well as international non-governmental organisations), and the widening scope of international law.

Globalisation is also impacting the internal functioning of nation-states. Civil society and competitive markets, both of which are not limited to or enclosed within nation-states, have found more space. This has implications for democratic representation and decision-making. Challenges to nation-state are also emerging from assertions based on ethnic identities. While globalisation promotes a global culture, it is also strengthening the local or other identities which stress upon the 'other'. The principle of nationalism, which created the state in the 19th century, is no longer able to hold states together. These developments point to the movement towards a system of overlapping authority and multiple loyalties, with conflicting interpretations of rights and duties and authority structures. In this respect, sovereignty is no longer one and indivisible.

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## 12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Sceptics say globalisation is a myth and that economic interdependence and integration is limited to a few regions. They also believe that the states have effective control over the market forces. Transformationists say that globalisation is real and is transforming all institutions, including the state.
- 2) These conditionalities included introduction of economic reforms that would minimise the state intervention, remove barriers to trade, and give a export orientation to the economy. Borrowing countries were also asked to maintain democracy, good governance and human rights.

### Check Your Progress2

- 1) Mention how some intergovernmental organisations are able to intervene or shape state policies. Also, the emergence of EU as a supra-state. You can also mention the growing influence of international non-governmental organisations.
- 2) With the expanding role of civil society and markets as well as external influences on nation states, participatory democracy based upon a community of free and equal persons is in question.



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## UNIT 13 CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON THE NATURE OF STATE\*

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### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Traditional Debates
  - 13.2.1 Classical Liberalism
  - 13.2.2 Modern Liberalism
  - 13.2.3 Classical Pluralism
  - 13.2.4 Classical Marxism
- 13.3 Contemporary Debates
  - 13.3.1 Neoliberalism
  - 13.3.2 Neo-Marxism
  - 13.3.3 Neo-Pluralism
  - 13.3.4 Feminism
  - 13.3.5 Communitarianism and Multiculturalism
- 13.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.5 References
- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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The question relating to the nature of state is at the core of political analysis and political discourse. Diverse schools of thought have addressed this question. This unit introduces you to the contemporary debates on the nature of state after introducing you to position of the traditional approaches on the state debate. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the different theoretical positions on the nature of state;
- Compare the positions of diverse perspectives on the nature of state;
- Examine the role and jurisdiction of state from different theoretical perspectives;

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- Identify the relationship between state and civil society; and
- Analyse the question of state neutrality.

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## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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The state is of central importance in political science. Despite the fact that we come into contact with different aspects of state in our everyday lives, the state is a deeply contested and ambiguous concept. As David Held (2000) the British political scientists pointed out “the state . . . appears to be everywhere, regulating the conditions of our lives from birth registration to death certification. Yet the nature of the state is hard to grasp”. Although the Max Weber’s definition of state as “the human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” is widely recognised, there exists an unending debate among scholars about the essence of state and its role and jurisdiction. This is no doubt because there are different perspectives from which the state has been analysed. Focusing on the diverse debates on the nature of state, this unit seeks to address the questions of role and jurisdiction of state, state neutrality and autonomy, individual freedom, and the issue of relationship between state and civil society.

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## 13.2 TRADITIONAL DEBATES

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For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, what is popularly called the ‘state debate’ has been dominated by four competing theoretical perspectives- classical liberalism, modern liberalism, classical pluralism and classical Marxism. Though all these perspectives have since run into problems, they continue to set the basic terms of reference for all approaches and perspectives of the state. It is therefore important that we familiarise ourselves with these traditional perspectives before venturing into the contemporary debates on the nature of state.

### 13.2.1 Classical Liberalism

Although liberalism as a political philosophy has a longer history than most political ideologies, as a political programme, it came into existence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both as a philosophy and as a political programme, the core values of liberalism are individualism, rationality, freedom, choice, constitutionalism, consent and toleration. All the versions of liberalism - classical, modern and neo-liberal, share these values. However, there exists a disagreement, particularly between the classical and modern liberals, about the meaning of freedom, role of state and the ways for realising the freedom. Initially, liberalism as a political philosophy and political programme emerged in the form of what is called the classical liberalism. The classical liberalism found expression in contractual tradition of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, economic theory of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, social theory of Herbert Spencer, utilitarian tradition of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, individualist theory of J. S. Mill, and teleological theory of Thomas Paine. Its central assumption is that the individual, as a rational and egoistic being, is the best judge of his interests and so his freedom lies in leaving his private realm free from the interference of state. Any

form of state intervention in his private realm is violation of his freedom. In their pursuit of individual liberties, classical liberals argue for a minimal state or what John Locke calls a *night-watchman* state. This negative conception of state became the ideological foundation for the emerging laissez-faire capitalism. Classical liberals argue for a minimal but not for a stateless society. They maintain that state is what Thomas Paine calls a *necessary evil* or what Herbert Spencer describes an “unfortunate but necessary committee of management”. For them, state is necessary in the sense that it has the capacity of establishing and maintaining the environment necessary for the enjoyment of freedom, and it is evil in the sense that it tends to sacrifice the individual freedom at the altar of collectivism and welfarism.

In other words, in the classical liberals’ conception, state’s role is limited to the maintenance of internal law and order, and the protection of society against external aggression. This is justified on the ground that minimal state action maximises individual freedom and vice-versa. Beyond these two functions, the state has no reason to intervene in the lives of individuals and in the market which they believe brings progress and prosperity when left alone by state and its institutions. By celebrating the separation between public and private realms and restricting the state’s role to maintenance of order and security, classical liberals insist that state has neither an independent existence nor is an independent source of political power. It is the promotion of individual freedom and rights in a neutral manner that gives meaning and purpose to the state.

### 13.2.2 Modern Liberalism

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, classical liberal conception of minimal state began to be questioned by modern liberals, such as T. H. Green, L. T. Hobhouse, J. A. Hobson and Maynard Keynes, on the ground that social disadvantages and inequalities associated, particularly, with the process of industrialisation and free market have threatened the sphere of individual freedom. Unlike classical liberals, these modern liberals conceptualise freedom not merely as absence of external constraints (legal and physical constraints) on the individual but as the presence of certain socio-economic and other enabling conditions, which make enjoyment of liberty meaningful. On the basis of this conception of freedom, the modern liberals advocate a more positive and activist role for the state, and justify the necessity of what is called the *welfare state*, a state that is responsible for social amelioration of its citizens. State was expected to discharge a wide-range of services related to education, health, social security, housing and so on. In other words, modern liberals see the state as having a more extensive role in removing socio-economic evils, such as unemployment, poverty, homelessness, sickness, ignorance and so forth, which they believe prevent individuals from realising their freedoms. The state intervention is, thus, seen not as reducing liberty but rather as expanding it and promoting justice. Like classical liberals, the modern liberals view the state in an epiphenomenal way in that the state intervention is allowed on the condition that it should expand liberty.

### 13.2.3 Classical Pluralism

Pluralism is an extension of liberal tradition. It emerged as a distinctive philosophy in late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to monism and notion of an absolutist state. Methodologically, the spread of behaviouralism in the 1950s and early 1960s gave a concrete shape to pluralist position. It believes that: (a) groups rather than individuals are the building block of politics and state, (b) political power is dispersed amongst a wide variety of social groups, and (c) state is like one of the associations present in society which are independent of it in terms of their origin, existence and loyalty of members. However, state is an association of associations in that its jurisdiction is compulsory over all individuals and groups within its fold. This does not, however, mean that state has an overwhelming or absolute sovereignty. State has to justify the exercise of its special powers. The role of state is, thus, to resolve the conflicting and competing interests of different groups not by imposing its own will on them but by simply acting as mediator. By and large, both the classical and neo-pluralists share these three assumptions but there exists a disagreement between them over the nature of accessibility of groups to state.

Some of the important proponents of classical pluralism are Arthur Fisher Bentley, Charles Merriam, David Truman, Mary Follet, and Robert Dahl. The key elements of their approach to state can be given as following. First, political power is fragmented throughout society in such a way that it is impossible for any single group, including the state to gain dominance over political process and control all power centres. This means that all groups are equally capable of organising and gaining access to government. As Robert Dahl (1956), for instance, has maintained that “all the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stage in the process of decision” (p. 145). Secondly, state is a neutral institution in the sense that, as neutral arbiter, state processes the demands laid upon it by the equally influential groups in impartial way. The state does not have an interest of its own, and so does not dispense favours to any particular interest or group. Lastly, by recognising the existence of multiple power centres and celebrating the influence of groups on political process, the classical pluralists advocate a limited state whose role is to simply process demands laid upon it by different groups. It means that state is not an independent source of political power and does not have that form of autonomy as proposed by the modern state concept.

### 13.2.4 Classical Marxism

Marxism, as a dominant political philosophy and ideology, has emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a thought-provoking critique of liberal-capitalist tradition. Marxism is associated in its earliest form (classical Marxism) with the work of Karl Marx and his lifelong associate Frederick Engels. The primary assumption of classical Marxism is that the *base* consisting of economy (economic mode of production) determines the *superstructure* consisting of social, political, intellectual, religious and legal systems. The class which dominates the base has a control over superstructure. On the basis of this assumption, Marx and Engels in their works *German Ideology* and *Communist Manifesto* advocated an

instrumental theory of state. Challenging the liberal notion of state as a neutral institution, the instrumental theory proposed by Marx and Engels argues that the state in capitalist society is a class institution which as an instrument in the hands of the economically dominant class serves the interests of this class. As they (1848/2008) put it, “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”. Sharing this position, Vladimir Lenin in his *The State and Revolution* has insisted that state in capitalist society is an instrument for the oppression of the exploited class. In his words, (1917/1965) “the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another”. Ralph Miliband in his *State in Capitalist Society* (1969) too advocated an instrumental theory as a critique of classical pluralists’ assumption that there are no predominant groups or interests within society and no class dominates the political process. He argued that most of the decision-making positions in major state structures- government, military, administration, police and so forth, are controlled by dominant economic class and, therefore, the state in the Western capitalist societies is not a neutral mediator amongst different social interests.

Believing that state, as a part of superstructure, emerges from the material base and is directly dependent on the economic, social and political power of the dominant class, the classical Marxists argue that state is not autonomous and has no existence, purpose or interest independent of those of the economically dominant class. Like other approaches to state, the classical Marxism sees the state in an epiphenomenal way. For classical Marxists, the state in capitalist society, in nutshell, is non-autonomous and oppressive agent of the dominant capitalist class and therefore is to be smashed by revolution.

## Check Your Progress 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 is meant by minimal state?

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2) Define the term welfare state.

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3) What is the core assumption of classical pluralism?

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- 4) Define the instrumental theory of state from the perspective of classical Marxism.

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## 13.3 CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

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The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed unprecedented social, economic and political developments characterised by rise of big governments, global spread of capitalism and democracy, increasing power of business in a market economy, and rise of identity politics, among others. In the context of these developments, the liberals, Marxists and Pluralists, while pursuing the core values of their respective traditional philosophies, revised and updated the classical liberal, Marxist and pluralist approaches to the state respectively. In addition, new theoretical positions have emerged in the form of feminism, communitarianism and multiculturalism which usually theorise the state beyond the liberal and Marxist perspectives to the state. The question of as what is the nature of state is constantly under debate and discussion in contemporary political theory. The neoliberalism, neo-Marxism, neo-pluralism, feminism, communitarianism and multiculturalism are the central perspectives, among others, which are engaged competitively in a debate on the nature of state in contemporary times.

### 13.3.1 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is associated with the work of free-market economists, such as Friedrich Von Hayek and Milton Friedman, and libertarian political philosophers such as Robert Nozick and Isaiah Berlin. As a revised version of classical liberalism, the neoliberalism emerged in 1970s as a critique of modern liberals' notion of interventionist welfare state that dominated the political landscape for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the core of its philosophy and political programme are the ardent faith in atomistic individualism, free market economics, competitive capitalism and absolute right to ownership of property. Neoliberalism treats liberty as a primary value and economic freedom as prerequisite for other freedoms. In the light of these beliefs, the neoliberals advocate a minimal state and argue that, in contrast to classical pluralist position, state is not neutral but serves its own interests. Criticising the welfare state as a principal threat to individual liberty and cause of economic and other crisis, Hayek and Friedman argue that market is efficient and productive, guarantor of individual liberty and widespread growth and prosperity, and solver of all problems. Market delivers these virtues and benefits only when state interventions are limited and its role is limited to maintenance of such conditions, as the encouragement and promotion of privatisation, public expenditure reductions, tax cuts, deregulation and reduced welfare provisions, in which competitive capitalism can operate successfully. They, therefore, call for *rolling back* the frontiers of state and giving greater autonomy to market forces. Influenced by their ideas, the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the

American President Ronald Reagan gave a practical shape to neoliberal programme. By the early 1980s, international economic institutions began design policies on the lines of this programme.

Pursuing the Lockean tradition, Nozick in his *Anarchy, state and Utopia* has criticised the John Rawls's egalitarian-liberal philosophy by arguing that state directed welfare provisions and redistributive scheme aiming at enlarging equality violate individual's liberty and therefore are unjust. As he has insisted that "taxation of earnings from labour is on a par with forced labour" (1974, p. 169). He sees minimal state limited by the side-constraints of natural rights (each person is the morally rightful owner of his own person and powers) as morally justifiable solution for protecting individual's right to ownership of property, which for him is absolute and inviolable. He has conceptualised the jurisdiction and necessity of minimal state in the following words:

Our main conclusions about the state are that a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protecting against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified; that any more extensive state will violate person's rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified; and that the minimal state is inspiring as well as right. (pp. 160- 161)

### 13.3.2 Neo-Marxism

Neo-Marxism is a revised and updated version of Marxism which rejects the classical Marxism's assumption of economic determinism and reductionism in favour of 'relative autonomy' of the superstructure. In the context of social, economic and political developments that occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Georg Lukacs and Nicos Poulantzas have refined the base/superstructure formulation, representing that the political, cultural and ideological structures, as parts of superstructure, possess a relative autonomy within a loosely defined determination in the last instance by the economic mode of production, i.e. base. This position of neo-Marxists in relation to base/superstructure relationship has led them to argue that, in contrast to classical Marxist position, state as the part of superstructure is not merely an instrumental category in the hands of economically dominant class but rather is relatively autonomous and can bring changes in the base.

Let us try to understand the neo-Marxist approach to state through Poulantzas's conception of state and class in capitalist society. Influenced by French structuralist Althusser, Poulantzas in his book *Political Power and Social Classes* and in an article *The Problem of the Capitalist State* has advocated a structural Marxist theory of state as a critique of Miliband's instrumental theory. His structural theory suggests that capitalist mode of production is not associated merely with economic structure but rather is composed of four distinct levels- economic, political, ideological and theoretical- which exist together in the form of what he calls a *complex whole*. Each level is relatively autonomous. The political (state) and ideological levels influence the economic level, although in the last instance it is the economic level which plays the determinant role. Against the Miliband's claim that separate economic elites in capitalist society are homogenous with high degree of cohesion and solidarity, Poulantzas argued that there are internal divisions based on economic interests within a capitalist

class as a whole. Thus, to ensure the continuance of the capitalist system and save the long-term interests of the capitalist class as a whole, the state, he argues, plays the role of maintaining *cohesiveness* between the levels of social formation. It is in this sense that Poulantzas and other neo-Marxists hold that the state has a relative autonomy in capitalist society. This position was accepted by Miliband in his subsequent writings, such as *Marxism and Politics*. However, neo-Marxists insist that the state in capitalist society is not neutral as its existence lies in maintaining that exploitative capitalist system in which wealth produced by one class is expropriated by another class.

Neo-Marxists also maintain that capitalist system and state are maintained not simply through coercion but also and principally through consent which is generated through what Gramsci calls *bourgeois hegemony* or what Althusser describes *ideological state apparatus* (ISA), both of which consist of such spheres of civil society as the media, educational institutions, religion, art and literature, family, advertising and so on. These spheres of civil society generate and spread such capitalist values and beliefs which serve to perpetuate the injustices that lie at the core of capitalist societies. Thus, neo-Marxists argue that, in contrast to liberal tradition, civil society is not neutral and non-political domain.

### 13.3.3 Neo-Pluralism

Neo-pluralism is a revised version of pluralism that has emerged in 1970s in the wake of criticism launched against the tradition of classical pluralism by neoliberals, elite theorists and Marxists. It shares the classical pluralist assumptions that groups are the building block of political process and state is fragmented but recognises that particular groups, especially business corporations, dominate politics. The neo-pluralists like Charles Lindblom and J. K. Galbraith maintain that, in contrast to classical pluralism, all groups are not equally powerful or able to exert equal influence over public policy making and all interests do not have equal importance before public policy makers in a capitalist economy where business corporations enjoy a clear advantage compared to other groups. Lindblom in his *Politics and Markets* celebrates the classical pluralist notion of the state as fragmented but then insists that business enjoys a *privileged position* in that fragmented state. In capitalist economy, the government in order to realise its goal of economic growth and gain electoral popularity becomes dependent on business resources. This, he argues, provides considerable space to the business corporations to advance their interests and shape state policies. In this sense, the business corporations compared to other groups enjoy dominance over public policy making, particularly over the economic agenda of the government. Galbraith in his *The Affluent Society* has pointed out that large corporations in relation to small firms have the ability to control their markets through the power of advertising. Thus, the large corporations by virtue of their dominance over economic markets exert pre-eminent influence over public policy making. Robert Dahl in his later work, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, accepted the position held by Lindblom and Galbraith that pluralism cannot be regarded as an open competition between truly equal political forces.



Although neo-pluralists recognise the dominant position of business in public policy making, unlike the elite theorists and Marxists, they do not see the state as dominated by elite group or economically dominant class. They still treat the state as neutral institution. They believe that the inequalities of political forces in liberal democracy can be reduced through more and more redistribution of power in society and through other liberal institutional mechanisms.

### 13.3.4 Feminism

Feminism as a body of thought puts emphasis on eliminating the oppression of women and on improving the condition of women. However, there are different schools of feminist thought, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and radical feminism, which widely differ in analysing the sources of women oppression and in suggesting the ways for eliminating this oppression.

Liberal feminism has been deeply influenced by values of liberalism such as the individualism, rationalism, choice, freedom and procedural equality. The liberal feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, J. S. Mill and Betty Friedan, while pursuing these values, insist that women should have the same rights and liberties as men on the ground that both are human and rational beings. For them, the roots of women's oppression lay in denial of legal and political equality. Like classical pluralists, they maintain that all groups including women have equal access to state and so they see the state as a neutral mediator between different interest groups. Although they accept that because of denial of legal and political equality to women the state has tended to remain biased in favour of men, they believe that the state as a neutral mediator can rectify this bias by impartially enforcing the principle of equality before law. In this sense, the liberal feminists see the state in positive terms, regarding state intervention in public affairs, if not in private affairs, as a means of redressing gender inequality and promoting the role and emancipation of women.

Marxist feminism treats the state as a capitalist state. Against the liberal feminism, the Marxists feminists locate the oppression of women in class and economic relations within capitalism rather than in denial of formal equality and procedural justice. Oppression of women, for them, is rooted in the impersonal logic of capitalist expropriation. Mary McIntosh, the British sociologist in her essay *The State and the Oppression of Women* (1978) has pointed out that:

Capitalist society is one in which men as men dominate women; yet it is not this but class domination that is fundamental to the society. It is a society in which the dominant class is composed mainly of men; yet it is not as men but as capitalists that they are dominant. (p. 255)

Other contemporary Marxist feminists such as Margaret Benston, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Juliet Mitchell and Mary McIntosh argue that women's domestic role plays a role in sustaining capitalist economy through making men free to work and through the production and reproduction of labour power within a family, where they are subordinate to men. Thus, the capitalist state is interested in maintaining women's subordination and the structures of the patriarchal family which ensure the continuance reproduction of labour power, and encourage the maintenance of women as a reserve army of labour. In this sense, the Marxist

feminists hold that the state is not autonomous and neutral but rather is biased, and they see the state in negative terms believing that it cannot improve the condition of women.

Radical feminism has emerged in 1960s as a critique of liberal feminist conceptions of public/private separation and neutral state, among others. The radical feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Daly, Kate Millett, Eva Figs, Germaine Greer and Catharine MacKinnon locate the oppression of women in what they call *patriarchy* as opposed to legal and political equality or class conflict. By patriarchy they mean a structural domination of men over all aspects of society- personal, political, social, economic, cultural, educational and sexual existence, resulting in subordination of women. This conceptualization of patriarchy has led them, while denying public/private divide, to claim that *personal is political*- personal sphere as the sphere of power is the source men's domination and power- and so male domination and women's oppression occur everywhere. Thus, radical feminists see the state as a patriarchal state where the values and structures of the state are created and dominated by men. They have challenged the traditional definition of state, as advocated by Max Weber, as an institution that exercises a monopoly of legitimate force by arguing what MacKinnon (1989) has said that this monopoly "actually describes the power of men over women in the home, in the bedroom, on the job, in the street, throughout social life". Men use the state, they argue, as an instrument for defending their domination and facilitating the maintenance of patriarchal structure of society. MacKinnon in her *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989), while criticising the liberal state as a defender of patriarchal power, has maintained that:

The state is male in the feminist sense: the law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women. The liberal state coercively and authoritatively constitutes the social order in the interests of men as a gender- through its legitimating norms, forms, relations to society, and substantive policies. (pp. 161-162)

By focusing on the patriarchal nature of the state, the radical feminists, unlike the liberal feminists, insist that the state is not autonomous and neutral. MacKinnon, for instance, argues that "however autonomous of class the liberal state may appear, it is not autonomous of sex. Male power is systemic. Coercive, legitimized, and epistemic, it is the regime" (p. 170). Radical feminists therefore view the state in negative terms, believing that it being patriarchal cannot contribute in improving the condition of women. It is "impossible to separate state power from male power" (Johanna Kantola, 2006, p. 120). To realise women's liberation, the whole structure of patriarchy has to be dismantled and only then can the state be feminised.

### 13.3.5 Communitarianism and Multiculturalism

Communitarianism and multiculturalism as political philosophies have emerged in 1980s as a critique of contemporary liberal philosophy, particularly of John Rawls's theory of justice. Both communitarians, such as Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer and Alasdair MacIntyre, and multiculturalists, such as Will Kymlicka, Charles Taylor and Bhikhu Parekh, share a belief that human beings

are essentially social beings and that humans are constituted by communities in which they live and develop. On the basis of this belief, they reject the contemporary liberal conceptions of what Sandel calls *unencumbered self* (self as asocial and ahistorical) or isolated self, justice as a universal value applicable uniformly to all cultures, and single citizenship in favour of encumbered self (self as social) or situated self, justice as a particularistic value depending upon particular community's beliefs, customs, perceptions and practices (way of life), and celebration and recognition of cultural differences and distinct identities.

As far as the nature of state is concerned the communitarians criticise the contemporary liberal theorists like Rawls, Nozick and Dworkin for claiming that state has no reason to apply a particular notion of the good life on people and therefore the state should remain neutral between different and competing conceptions of the good life. Communitarians argue that this commitment of liberals to state neutrality is based on their belief that individual rights and personal freedom are prior to common good. As Sandel (1982) has insisted that the central idea of liberals like Rawls is that:

A just society seeks not to promote any particular ends, but enables its citizens to pursue their own ends . . . ; it therefore must govern by principles that do not presuppose any particular conception of the good. What justifies these regulative principles above all is not that they maximize the general welfare, or cultivate virtue, or otherwise promote the good, but rather that they conform to the concept of right, a moral category given prior to the good, and independent of it. (p. 13)

In contrast to liberals' notion of autonomous individual, Sandel and other communitarians argue that good based on community's way of life is prior to right and so the state should define and enforce the conceptions of the good life but in accordance with community's way of life. As Kymlicka (2002) has pointed out, a state for communitarians "can and should encourage people to adopt conceptions of the good that conform to the community's way of life, while discouraging conceptions of the good that conflict with it". The state neutrality, communitarians maintain, has far-reaching repercussions. It contributes in eroding the very moral fabric of society, disappearing the shared values and civic virtues that shape and govern our lives, and causing instability in society. To prevent these evils, they insist that state should promote a shared vision of the good, encourage the civic virtues, cultivate a sense of belonging, and nurture the community's central values. The communitarians, thus, argue for a perfectionist state.

Multiculturalism focuses on the celebration and recognition of two interrelated values- cultural differences, and group-differentiated rights. Multiculturalists maintain that the justice theories of contemporary liberals, like Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin and Gauthier, are based on the conception of single citizenship, that is, justice for them is about providing equal rights to all citizens regardless of their ethnicity, religion, race, or culture. This conception of citizenship, multiculturalists argue, encourages creation of culturally homogeneous society to be realised by assimilating minority cultures into the dominant culture, and by ignoring the cultural aspirations of such minority cultural groups as the national minorities, indigenous peoples, immigrants and the subnational groups. Thus, they see this politics of single citizenship as essentially problematic in today's

multicultural and polyethnic societies. Against the politics of single citizenship, they argue for what Taylor calls the *politics of recognition* and group-differentiated citizenship. Politics of recognition represents a celebration of cultural differences and demands that “everyone should be recognised for his or her unique identity” (Taylor, 1994, p. 38). It refers to a multicultural approach that signifies that state should take into account and recognise the cultural aspirations and identities of different disadvantaged cultural groups while distributing the political and economic resources. Multiculturalists maintain that denial of cultural recognition by the state makes the minority cultural groups direct victims of exclusion, assimilation and marginalisation which in turn tend to cause political instability and encourage the forces of extremism and the politics of hate. As Taylor has pointed out “non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being”.

To protect the minority cultural groups from the processes of exclusion, homogenisation and assimilation, and ensure the maintenance of unity in diversity, multiculturalists like Kymlicka argue for right to cultural membership associated with their conception of politics of recognition with the claim that culture enables individuals to make meaning within their lives. Kymlicka has advocated three types of minority cultural rights- self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and representation rights. Self-government rights deal with devolution of power, usually through federalism, to political units substantially controlled by their members. These rights are meant for national minorities (indigenous peoples), “the groups that formed complete and functioning societies in their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 349). Polyethnic rights are meant for enabling the religious minorities and ethnic groups emerged by immigration to express their cultural particularity and maintain their cultural distinctiveness. The rights which fall within this category would be state funding of cultural institutions and legal exemptions from certain policies and laws, such as exemption of Sikhs from wearing crash helmets while riding motorcycles, and the exemption of Muslim girls from school dress codes. Representation rights aim at ensuring fair representation of disadvantaged cultural groups in public and political spheres like education, state services, or legislative bodies through the mechanism of positive discrimination.

For multiculturalists, the state, in nutshell, in contemporary multicultural societies cannot and should not remain indifferent or insensitive to cultural aspirations of different cultural minority groups. The state should play a positive role in developing and protecting the rights of these minority groups.

## Check Your Progress 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 is meant by structural Marxist theory of state?

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2) Define the concept of patriarchy from the perspective of radical feminism.

3) What is the role of state from the perspective of communitarianism?

## 13.4 LET US SUM UP

The question pertaining to the nature of state is constantly under debate and discussion in contemporary political theory. The neoliberalism, neo-Marxism, neo-pluralism, feminism, communitarianism and multiculturalism, as the central perspectives to the state in contemporary times, provide a different and competing vision of the state. Neoliberals argue for a minimal state and free-market. Neo-Marxists believe that state has relative autonomy but is not neutral. Neo-pluralists recognise that business has dominance in politics but believe that state is still neutral. Feminists, particularly Marxist and radical feminists, see the state as a patriarchal body and therefore not neutral. Communitarians and multiculturalists maintain that state cannot and should not remain indifferent to the community's shared values and the cultural aspirations of different cultural minority groups. All these contemporary perspectives to the state see the state in an epiphenomenal way. It means that these theoretical perspectives share a belief that the state has not an independent existence, is not an independent source of political power and does not have that form of autonomy as proposed by the modern state concept.

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## 13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A state whose role is limited to the maintenance of internal law and order, and the protection of society against external aggression.
- 2) A state that is responsible for social amelioration of its citizens and so discharges a wide-range of services related to education, health, social security and so on.
- 3) Political power is dispersed throughout society in such a way that it is impossible for any single group, including the state to gain dominance over political process.
- 4) The state in capitalist society is a class institution which as an instrument in the hands of the economically dominant class serves the interests of this class.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The state, as a part of superstructure, has a relative autonomy within a loosely defined determination in the last instance by the economic mode of production (base).
- 2) A structural domination of men over all aspects of society- personal, political, social, economic, cultural, educational and sexual existence, resulting in subordination of women.
- 3) To promote a shared vision of the good, encourage the civic virtues, cultivate a sense of belonging, and nurture the community's central values.

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## SUGGESTED READINGS

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