

1.1. Theories on the Origin of the State

There are **three** theoretical explanations of how the state originated. These are:

1) The Divine Origin Theory of the State.

This theory argues that the state like every other aspect of creation was created by a divine being who is God.

2) The Evolutionary Theory of the State.

This theory argues that the state was a product of an evolutionary process from the basic social unit which is the family. From the family it evolved to the sub-clan/clan then to the ethnic group, then to the nation and finally to the state. All this took place in a series of concentric circles from the smallest unit to the largest (the state).

3) The Social Contract Theory of the State.

This theory asserts that the state was a product of individuals in the society entering into a social contract with each other to create an institution called the state that would act on everybody's behalf. Prior to the state, people existed in what is called ***a state of nature*** (*a law of the jungle experience where everybody did as they chose*).

The philosopher Thomas Hobbes argued that in the state of nature ***life was solitary, nasty, brutish and short***. To deal with the undesired state of nature people decided to create the state (a monster or the Leviathan according to Hobbes) and enter into a social contract with it (the state) to provide public goods and they in turn to play their part in their obligations to support it through taxation, observance of law and order etc.

1.2. Theory of Government

Government is traditionally divided into three branches/arms:

- a. The Executive
- b. The Legislature
- c. The Judiciary

The government is viewed by many as a necessary evil. *To what extent do you agree with this view?*

Can society exist without the government? Drawing from the Social Contract theory, is government necessary?

1.2.1. Roles/Functions of Government

The government plays several functions including the following:

- a) It serves as an agency of the state.
- b) Provision of public goods and services.
- c) Maintenance of law and order.
- d) Formulation of government policies.
- e) Implementation of government policies.
- f) National defense/security.
- g) Management of the affairs of the state.
- h) Public administration.
- i) Political stabilization of the state.
- j) Regulation of public life.

1.3. The Political System

Governments operate within the context of a political system. This is a series of interrelated units/parts that form part of a bigger system. Governments are put in place through a political process. Harold Lasswell defined politics as ***who gets what, how and when***. The process of putting in place a government is a political process as shall be demonstrated in subsequent topics.

1.4. Importance of Studying Basic Concepts of Government

There is great significance in studying Basic Concepts in Government as a unit. This includes:

- a) One gets to understand the basic concepts applied in government and its operations.
- b) One can get to understand the reasoning behind why governments are put in place.
- c) One can understand the process of how governments are structured.

- d) To gain insights into various governance solutions and their possible solutions.
- e) To gain an in-depth appreciation of the roles that governments play in a society.
- f) To expand one's intellectual depth and awareness of governance issues.
- g) To be able to propose and recommend key government changes e.g. in terms of structure to better respond to the needs of the public.