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**State System in International Relations:**

**State**:

State is a legal entity that enjoys a permanent population, a well-defined territory, and a government capable of exercising sovereignty.

**Nation**:

Collection of people who, on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, or cultural affinity, perceive themselves to be members of the same group.

**State** **System**

It is a pattern of political life in which people are separately organized into sovereign states that interact with one another.

**Nation**-**state** **System**

* Single or multiple nationalities joined together in a formal political union.
* The nation-state determines an official language(s), a system of law, manages a currency system, uses a bureaucracy to order elements of society, and fosters loyalties to abstract entities like "Pakistan," "the United States," and so on.

**Introduction:**

* The entire population of the world is divided into separate ’territorial political communities’, or ‘independent states’.
* Together these states form an international system that is global in extent.
* At present there are 190 independent states.
* Nearly everybody on earth lives in one of these states and is also a citizen of one of them. Therefore, virtually, every man, woman, and child on earth is connected to a particular state, and via that state to the state-system.
* States are independent of each other, at least legally on the basis of their sovereignty.
* Usually, states are embedded in international market, therefore, they are not ‘isolated’ or ‘insulated’.
* The isolation of a state from the ‘state system’ usually results in the suffrage of the people e.g Burma, Libya, Iraq and Iran.
* The world of states is basically a territorial world; it is a way of politically organizing the world’s populated territory based on numerous different governments that are legally independent of each other.
* The subject of International Relations generally dates back to the early modern era (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) in Europe, when sovereign states were initially established.
* In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the state system expanded to encompass the entire territory of the earth (except Antarctica).

**Basic Social Values:**

There are at least five basic social values that states are usually expected to fulfill: i) Security ii) freedom, iii) order, iv) justice and v) Welfare.

These are fundamental social values that must be protected or ensured.

**Security**

* National security involves the protection of citizens from external and internal threats.
* The very existent of a state is dependent on the value of its security.
* A state can both defend and threaten peoples’ security (security dilemma); as almost all of the states are armed at least to some degree so these states can threaten other’s states existence.
* A few states may be hostile and aggressive and may pose a basic and age-old problem of state systems; ‘national security’.
* Military power is usually considered a necessity so that states can coexist and deal with each other without being threatened or subjugated.
* Many states also enter into ‘alliances’ with other states to increase their national security.
* Realist Theories of International Relations underlined security as one of the most fundamental values of international relations
* Realists’ theories operate on the assumption that relations of states can be best characterized as a world in which armed states are competing rivals and periodically go to war with each other.

**Freedom**

* It encompasses both personal freedom and national freedom or independence.
* Freedom is the fundamental reason behind the creation and survival of the states.
* Free country ensures the freedom of its people.
* War threatens and sometimes destroys freedom while peace fosters it.
* Therefore peace and progressive change are among the most fundamental values of International Relations.
* Liberal theories of International Relations operates on the assumption that international relations can be best characterized as a world in which states cooperate with each other to maintain peace and freedom and to pursue progressive change.

**Order and Justice:**

* Establishing and maintaining ‘international order’ is in the common interest of all the states.
* Strong basis of stability, certainty, and predictability ensures peaceful coexistence and interaction among states.
* International Law is formulated to keep states follow their treaty commitments and to observe the rules, conventions, and customs of the international legal order.
* States are expected to follow accepted practices of diplomacy and to support international organizations.
* States are also responsible to uphold human rights.
* International Society theories of International Relations assert ‘order and justice’ among the most fundamental values of International relations.
* International Society theories of IR operates on assumption that International Relations can be best characterized as a world in which states are socially responsible actors and have a common interest in preserving international order and promoting international justice.

**Welfare:**

* States are expected to ensure high employment, low inflation, steady investment, the uninterrupted flow of trade and commerce and so on.
* As national economies are interrelated and interconnected, therefore a state possesses the responsibility to respond to the international economic environment.
* The emphasis of a state should be to enhance or at least defend and maintain the national standard of living in international economic environment.
* All states, in the contemporary world, are increasingly dependent on international economy.
* Economic interdependence among countries is a striking feature of the modern state-system.
* Economic interdependence is viewed, among some people, as a good thing as it may increase overall freedom and wealth by expanding the global marketplace.
* Other considers it to a bad thing because it may promote overall inequality by allowing rich and powerful countries to dominate poor and weak countries.
* International Political Economic (IPE) theories of International Relations rank wealth and welfare among the most fundamental values of International relations.
* IPE theories operate on the assumption that international relations can be best characterized as fundamentally a socio-economic world and not merely a political and military world.

**Awareness to Basic Values:**

* Most people usually take these basic values for granted.
* Generally, people only become aware of them when these values are threatened, for example, during a war or depression (famine, scarcity etc.)

**Examples:**

* People become aware of ‘national security’ when a foreign power engages I hostile actions against their country.
* People become aware of ‘national independence’ or personal freedom when peace is no longer guaranteed.
* The outbreak of 1st World War made the importance of peace and order dreadfully clear to most people.
* The recognition led to the 1st major developments of IR thought- the Covenant of the League of Nations which aimed at to prevent great –power war.
* Heightened awareness of the fundamental importance of the basic values reemerged since the end of the Second World War.
* **On the basis of the basic values states and the system of states can be described as;**

*“Territory based social organization which exists primarily to establish, maintain, and defend basic social conditions and values, including particularly security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare.”*

**State System and Modernity:**

State System and Modernity are closely related.

* They are completely coexistent; the start of modern era coincided with the emergence of territorial states in Europe.
* As modernity spread around the world, the state system spread with it (to North America in the late 18th century and to South America in the early 19th century)

**Evolution of Nation-State System:**

* The state system has deep historical roots. It has been fashioned by people and is therefore a social organization.
* Historically, the most common way in which people have organized their political lives is that of ‘political empire’ such as the Roman empire.
* Other ways have been city-states, feudalism, colonialism etc.

**City-States:**

* The first relatively clear historical manifestation of a state system is that of ancient Greece(500 BC- 100BC).
* It comprised of a large number of a mostly small city-states.
* Athens was the largest and most famous.
* There were extensive and elaborate relations between the city states.
* However, they were smaller in population and territory than most modern states.
* Their relations also lacked the institution of diplomacy, international law and international organization.
* The system was destroyed by powerful neighboring empires.

**Empire:**

**Roman Empire**

* The Romans developed a huge empire (200BC-500BC) in most of Europe and a large part of the Middle East and North Africa.
* Numerous smaller political communities inhabited these areas.
* No international or quasi-international relations, only option for political communities was either submission to Rome or revolt.
* Failing to hold vast territories and numerous political communities, the Roman empire ultimately came to an end.

**Middle Ages:**

* Middle Ages were an era of empire and hence, the relations and conflicts of different empires.
* Rome’s main successors in Europe were also empires; in Western Europe the medieval empire based at Rome (Italy) and in eastern Europe and the near east the Byzantine empire.
* North Africa and the Middle East was a world of Islamic civilizations.
* At that time, separate empires also existed in India and Iran.
* The oldest empire was the Chinese which survived, under different dynasties, for about 4000 years until the e1arly twentieth century.
* Contact between empires was less frequent; communications were slow and transportation was difficult.
* Most empires at that time, therefore, were a world unto themselves.
* Due to lack of clear lines of territorial political organization and control, disarrays, disorders, conflicts and violence were rampant.

**Status of Basic Values during Medieval Ages:**

* The values connected with sovereign statehood were arranged differently in medieval times.
* The basic difference between medieval times and modern times is that no single political organization (such as sovereign state) was entitled to cater for these basic values in medieval times.
* Security was provided by local rulers and their knights.
* Order was the responsibility of the emperor.
* The provision of Justice was the responsibility of both political and religious (Church) rulers.
* Welfare was connected to security and was based on feudal ties between local rulers and common people.
* Freedom was tied to feudal landlords who could be members of the nobility or the clergy or both.

**State System:**

* During the sixteenth century, sovereign states first began to be instituted in Western Europe.
* The emergence coincides with the modern age of expanding power, prosperity, knowledge, science, technology, literacy etc.
* The historical end point of the medieval era and the starting-point of the modern international system is usually identified with the Thirty Years War (1618-48) and the Peace of Westphalia.
* The political power was consolidated within the single framework of one unified and independent social organization; the sovereign state.
* The political change from medieval to modern basically involved the construction of the independent territorial state.
* In modern international system, territory is consolidated, unified, and centralized under a sovereign government.
* All institutions are subordinate to state authority and public law.

**Expansion (Globalization) of the State System:**

* Today the state system is a global institution that affects the lives of virtually everybody on earth.
* There are Three Stages of its Expansion;

**1st Stage:**

* In its first stage, the state system expanded via the incorporation of non-Western states that could be not colonized (e.g Turkey, Japan, China) by the West.
* The countries that fell under the political control of a Western imperial state were, however, forced to accept the rules of the Western state system.
* The Ottoman empire (Turkey) was forced to embrace these rules by the Treaty of Paris in 1854.
* Japan accepted them later in the nineteenth century. Japan rapidly acquired th organizational substance and constitutional shape of a modern state and by the early 20th century had become a great power.
* China was obliged to accept the rules of the Western state system during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

**2nd Stage:**

* The second stage of the globalization of the state system was brought about via anti-colonialism by the colonial subjects.
* After the Second World War, decolonization was the main vehicle by which state system expanded dramatically.
* Indigenous political leaders made political claims for decolonization and independence based on European and American ideas of ‘self-determination’.
* In a short period of some 20 year after World War II, beginning with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, most colonies in Asia and Africa became ‘independent states’ and members of the United Nations.
* European decolonization in the Third World more than tripled the membership of the UN from about 50 states in 1945 to over 160 states by 1970.

**3rd Stage:**

* The final stage of the globalization of the state system was the ‘disintegration of Soviet Union’ together with the breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia at the end of the Cold War.
* It expanded UN membership to about 190 states at the end of the twentieth century.

**Contemporary Challenges to the Nation State-System**

Several Challenges;

* Globalization
* Separatism
* Fundamentalism
* Irredentism
* Balkanization
* Not-State Actors

**Gobalization:**

* Today, globalization is regarded as one of the most important determinant of the human condition
* At the beginning of the 21st century, the perception of the nation-state is increasingly challenged by the neo-liberalist movements of economic globalisation and supra-national entities.
* The permeability of national borders has tremendously increased in the face of electronic commerce and other technology-driven innovations which have rendered the territorial state more susceptible to external influences
* The era is of the ascendance of the 'stateless corporation', the emergence of the international currency, integrated global financial market-place', the sharpening of competition under capital mobility and the 'law of one price', the proliferation of foreign direct investment, the increase in intercontinental migration, and the emergence of a 'global information society'.
* With the dynamic process of globalization come instability and people feeling more anxious about their well-being and security.
* The growing challenge to state sovereignty around the world seems to originate from the inability of the modern-state to navigate between the power of global networks.
* As for the ethical function of the state, globalization threatens the very essence of the Westphalian system; state sovereignty.
* Transnational non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace etc. challenge state activities and its legitimate role to uphold the 'rule of law' within its territory; they criticize and often attempt to interfere in situations of torture, nuclear testing etc
* A new form of political community based on a wider framework that of a 'global civil society' is emerging.

**Fundamentalism:**

* In recent decades, the increasing rise of religious fundamentalist organisations, combined with quasi-political movements and non-state actors, have also sought the redefining of nationalist beliefs
* The major beneficiaries of globalization, the Global North, continue to pressure nation-state members of the Global South for enacting good governance, raising of human rights standards, increasing immigration and freeing of market obstacles at the exclusion of cultural or national practices.
* In turn this can create a cultural backlash against the North, resisting and often refuting western cultural beliefs and practices and entrenching the already established culture within the nation-state to the point of inflexibility, potentially fostering and engendering fundamentalist ideologues as witnessed by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan.
* Contacts between distinct and differing cultures have at some place bred mistrust and contempt giving rise to ethnocentrism.
* Religious fundamentalism destroys mutual trust and respect from society and divide communities on religious line.
* Religious fundamentalism in the era of information and communication technology and social media has facilitated the online indoctrination of youth and motivation to join terror outfit.

**Separatism:**

* While it often refers to full political secession, separatist groups may seek nothing more than greater autonomy.
* It was expected that the end of the Cold War will bring peace to the World
* However, the movements of ‘Separatism’ shattered that hope and posed the most serious threat to national and international stabilities.
* It is feared that success of a separatist movement will ‘destabilize’ the nation and entire region as it will encourage others with same motives.

**Major Causes of Separatism Movements**

* Economic motivations: seeking to end economic exploitation by more powerful group or, conversely, to escape economic redistribution from a richer to a poorer group
* Preservation of threatened religious, language or other cultural tradition
* Feeling that the perceived nation was added to the larger state by illegitimate means
* Resistance by victims of oppression, including denigration of their language, culture or religion

**Examples:**

Maoist in India, Uyghur in China, Scottish from UK, Kabyle in Algeria, Sahrawi in Morocco, Igbo in Nigeria etc

**Irredentism:**

* **Irredentism** (from Italian irredento for "unredeemed") is any political or popular movement intended to reclaim and reoccupy a lost homeland.
* **Irredentist:** One who advocates the recovery of territory culturally or historically related to one’s nation but now subject to a foreign government.
* As such **irredentism** tries to justify its territorial claims on the basis of (real or imagined) historic and/or ethnic affiliations.
* Some states formalize their irredentist claims by including them in their constitutional documents, or through other means of legal enshrinement.

**Examples:**

* Afghanistan claim over Pakistan’s territory including Pashtun belt,
* Argentina claim over Falkland Island
* Cyprus issue between Turkey and Greece.

**Balkanisation:**

* **Balkanisation**, is a pejorative geopolitical term, originally used to describe the process of fragmentation or division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are often hostile or non-cooperative with one another.
* Simply; to break up (as a region or group) into smaller and often hostile units
* The larger countries within Europe, often being the result of the union of several historical regions or nations, have faced the perceived issue of Balkanization.
* The Iberian Peninsula and Spain especially has from the time of Al-Andalus had to come to terms with Balkanization, with several separatist movements existing today including the Basque Country and Catalan independentism.

**Non-State Actors:**

* **Non**-**state actors** (NSA) are entities or organizations with sufficient power to influence and cause a change even though they do not belong to any established institution of a state.
* The proliferation of non-state actors in the post–Cold War era has caused an erosion of power and sovereignty in the traditional Westphalian nation-state system.
* Armed non-state actors operate without state control and are involved in internal and trans-border conflicts.
* The activity of such groups in armed conflicts adds layers of complexity to traditional conflict management and resolution.

**Conclusion:**

* The state system is a historical institution.
* In medieval times, political authority was chaotic and dispersed.
* In the modern state, authority is centralised in one legally supreme government.
* Initially, state system was a European state system.
* After the Asian and African decolonization, the state system has become a global institution.
* States are expected to uphold certain key values; security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare.
* International Relations theories concern the ways in which states do or do not ensure these values.
* Modern state is facing several key challenges, the most important of which are globalization, fundamentalism, separatism, irredentism and Balkanisation.

**Note:** For details, Study;

**Introduction to International Relations; Theories and Approaches**

Part 1: Why Study IR

By Robert Jackson and George Sorensen