European State System

- Prior to the 1500s, in Europe, the nation-state as we know it did not exist.

  - Back then, most people did not consider themselves part of a nation; they rarely left their village and knew little of the larger world.
  - If anything, people were more likely to identify themselves with their region or local lord.
  - Most people lived in small villages; they paid tithes to feudal landlords, didn't travel, and cared little for anything beyond the village.

- At the same time, the rulers of states frequently had little control over their countries.

  - Instead, local feudal lords had a great deal of power, and kings often had to depend on the goodwill of their subordinates to rule.
  - Laws and practices varied a great deal from one part of the country to another.

- In the early modern era, a number of monarchs began to consolidate power by weakening the feudal nobles and allying themselves with the emerging commercial classes.

  - This difficult process sometimes required violence.
  - The consolidation of power also took a long time. Kings and queens worked to bring all the people of their territories under unified rule.
  - Hence, then, the birth of the nation-state also saw the first rumblings of nationalism, as monarchs encouraged their subjects to feel **loyalty toward the newly established nations**.

- The modern, integrated nation-state became clearly established in most of Europe during the nineteenth century.

Elements of the early modern European state system

- **War:**

  - War was an acceptable means of preserving royal or national honor. As the early modern period progressed, chivalry and war contributed to the growth of early ideas of state formation. The chivalric urge to defend Europe against non-Christians became refocused into the urge to defend and glorify one's country.

- **Economic warfare:**

  - While war continued to dominate the early modern European political scene, commerce was gaining new importance in the area of international relations. Commerce and finance often determined the outcome of war, but were becoming important tools of international relations in their own right.

- Since domestic discontent was easily sparked by a rise in bread prices, economic pressure was a good way to influence other countries' behavior.
  - While economic warfare was often an effective means of international pressure, it was difficult to enforce and control.
  - Economic warfare was an alien concept to most early modern Europeans, and few countries had the bureaucratic force to undertake such measures or could withstand the shock of financial warfare on their own economies. At the end of the sixteenth century, financial warfare began to be more effective.

- **Balance of power:**

  - The growth of the modern European state system was provoked and supported by the beginnings of the idea of the **balance of power**.
  - The balance of power gained popularity for several reasons. It was, to some extent, an outgrowth of the medieval concept of alliances.
  - Italy provided the first example of an early modern balance of power, when the various states of the Italian peninsula all established diplomatic contacts (and spies) at each other's courts.
  - The system slowly spread north from Italy as other powers saw its utility in keeping tabs on their rivals.
  - By the first decades of the seventeenth century, almost all western European countries saw the balance of power as the natural state of Europe.

Examples of formation of European State System:

- **England:**

  - The early attempts at nation-state building were made by English monarchs, especially of the Tudor dynasty (1485-1603) through a centralized system or government.

    - In 1485, Henry VII wins the War of the Roses in England, begins the Tudor dynasty, and starts the development of the English nation-state.

  - Parliament became the major institution (having a history of continuous existence since 1275 A.D.) through which collaboration was secured with the upper classes for the purpose of centralization.
  - England became a political society in which centralized monarchy had to exist along with agglomerated local interests represented through Parliament.
  - The sixteenth century saw the integration of English towns into a single unit.

    - Most internal barriers were eliminated through economic regulations of the State.
    - It was made possible not only by the concentration of power in the crown hut also by England's comparatively smaller surface area.
    - The expansion of the urban market made the whole kingdom a unified market.
    - London was becoming the unifying force creating food demand thus putting pressure on agricultural production encouraging commercialization and capital investments in the countryside.

-

  Another significant development in the creation of the nation-state was the **progress of religious reformation.**

  - The Reformation not only subordinated the national church to the king but it also subordinated villages to the towns.
  - It reflects the rising spirit against the foreign domination of Papal authority.
  - In the reign of Elizabeth, the upsurge of literature, the religious sentiments, the rise of new social classes and the changing political ideas – all contributed to the rise of the English nation-state.
  - The Anglican Church provided a strong foundation to the state.
  - Later, the Anglican clergy helped in fulfilling vision of leading missionaries by training the people to he obedient and respectful subjects, and patriots, living for the benefit of the state.
  - Clergymen marked the commemorative calendar of the state holding special services on the days of important events.

    - In their regular sermons the bishops reminded the children and their parents of their paramount duty of 'obedience to the King and quiescence in the State'.

- **France:**

  - The transition from medieval to absolute monarchy was speeded up by the different crises like the Hundred Years War, the religious wars and the Fronde uprisings.
  - **Louis XIV** (1638–1715) of France creates an absolute monarchy; France emerges as the dominant power in Europe.

    - Louis believed in the theory of absolute monarchy and consciously fostered the myth of himself as the **Sun King**, the source of light for all of his people.
    - He believed in the motto, "one king, one law, one faith".
    - Louis XIV's absolutism fostered in four major parts:

      - the building of Versailles to control the nobility,
      - the breeding of a strong military,
      - the improvement of France's economy, and
      - the brutal extinction of religious toleration.

  - The essential institutional features of French absolutism could be seen in its standing army, a developed fiscal apparatus, a bureaucracy, specialized departments of state, and a body of salaried intendants (appointed royal officials) having sweeping administrative, financial and judicial powers.
  - State intervention in the economy went well beyond the needs of protective legislation as seen in Britain, while government's direction and participation in commercial and manufacturing activities remained very active.

    - There was a total absence of alternative institutions through which opposition to the crown could be

organized.

- ■
  Although centralization of political authority had been achieved to a reasonable degree, France remained a political unit, and it was still not a fully developed nation at the beginning of the Revolution in 1789.
- ■ In culture, family structure, social beliefs and economic activity, France was unusually diverse.

- ○ France remained a continental power of great diversity with poor communications and transport.

  - ■ The wide gulf between urban and rural life and the regional economic diversity between the north-east region and the rest of the country prevented France from becoming an economic unit till late nineteenth century.
  - ■ Till then it remained a patchwork of local and regional economies.

- ○ As late as the 1870s, standard French remained a foreign language for almost half the population who spoke their own local languages.

  - ■ The French language gained ascendancy and became the national language only towards the end of the 19th century.
  - ■ Moreover, many of the culturally distinct regions had close links with neighbouring states across the frontier.
  - ■ Language was far from being the only form of diversity.
  - ■ Not until 1891 was there an official standard time for the whole country.

- ○ The aspiration to form a nation-state out of the political state was the product of French Revolution (1789). It creates the modern French nation-state and sparks nationalism around Europe.

- **Other events leading to formation of European State System:**

  - **In 1492,**

    - ■ Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella finish taking back all of Spain from the Muslims; the era of Spain as a global power begins.

  - **1547–1584:**

    - ■ Ivan the Terrible rules Russia; he unifies the government and creates the first Russian nation-state.

      - ■ Throughout most of the medieval era, what became Russia was a minor principality centered on the city of Moscow.
      - ■ When Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) assumed the throne in 1547, he was crowned the first czar. He proceeded to devastate the nobility by means of a secret police and gained the loyalty of commercial classes by giving them positions in a new state bureaucracy.

  - **1648:**

- Peace of Westphalia cements the legal status of the nation-state as sovereign.

  - **1871:**

    - Unification of Italy and Germany is complete.

  - **1919:**

    - Treaty of Versailles ends World War I; it breaks up several multinational empires and creates many new nation-states.

The Catholic Church And The Rise Of The Nation-State

- Newly emerging nation-states in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had a complex relationship with the predominant transnational power of the time, the Catholic Church.
- At times, partial nation-states were useful tools for the Catholic Church.

  - On several occasions, for example, France and Spain intervened in Italy at the invitation of the Pope.

- But some monarchs wanted control over their national churches in order to get absolute power.

  - In England, the dispute over who controlled the English church led **Henry VIII** to break from the Pope and establish an **independent Protestant church** in the 1530s.
  - This break with the Catholic Church gave the English something to rally around, thus encouraging them to develop loyalty toward the English nation-state.
  - At the same time, some devout Catholics in England refused to convert; their displeasure ultimately led to repression and civil war.

The Thirty Years' War and the Peace of Westphalia

- The Thirty Years' War, fought throughout central Europe from 1618–1648 between Protestants and Catholics, laid the legal foundation for the nation-state.
- The war involved many nations of Europe, including many small German states, the Austrian Empire, Sweden, France, and Spain.
- Despite a brutal war, the Catholics were unable to overturn Protestantism.
- The treaty that ended the war, called the Peace of Westphalia, decreed that the **sovereign ruler of a state had power over all elements** of both the nation and the state, including religion. Thus, the modern idea of a sovereign state was born.

Centralization

- Centralization of power helped spur the development of nation-states.
- Final power rested with the central government, which made the laws and practices more uniform across the country.
- A single centralized authority, rather than many diverse local authorities, allowed nation-states to quickly develop their economies.
- Merchants could trade throughout the nation without worrying about local taxes and regulations.
- Rulers were able to create national armies, which were not dependent on the nobility. The armies could receive consistent training so that all units could work well together.
- In the eighteenth century, nobles held most of the power in Poland. The monarch was very weak.

  - As a result, Poland could not defeat its powerful neighbors Austria, Prussia, and Russia.
  - These three centralized nation-states partitioned Poland on three different occasions—1772, 1793, and 1795—eventually eliminating Poland until 1918, when a new Republic of Poland formed.

The Importance Of Napoleon

- Napoleon Bonaparte was a key figure in the development of the nation-state.
- Amid the chaos of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, most remaining medieval and feudal laws were overturned and a truly national law code was established.
- Similarly, a national military was created.
- Although not the only reason, France's status as a nation-state was a key factor in its ability to dominate feudal neighbors in Italy and Germany.
- Napoleon's military victories also paved the way for the emergence of nation-states in the rest of Europe: In many places, the people rallied together as a nation in order to defeat Napoleon.

Rise of the Nation-State System:

- The nation-state system in international relations began taking shape around the year 1648 when the Thirty-year War in Europe was brought to an end by the Treaty of Westphalia.

  - This Treaty paved the way for this development because it recognized that the Rome could no longer command the allegiance of the states and that Pope had no right to interfere in the affairs of the states in the name of his highest spiritual authority.

- The state as such, emerged supreme in its territory with a power to command its people in both secular and temporal spheres.

  - The concept of sovereignty of the state got full recognition.
  - Relations among nations came to be conducted by sovereign states for securing their respective interests in relation with other states.
  - In the era of imperialism even the use of power of the state for dominating other states came to be recognized as a right of the state.

- In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the rise of nationalism as the basic principle of nation-state got a world-wide acceptance.

    - The rise of the modern nation-state in England in which nationalism became coequal with the idea of individual liberties and popular participation in public affairs, the American Revolution 1776 and the French Revolution 1789, gave strength to the concept of nation-state fortified with the spirit and philosophy of nationalism.

- Napoleon Bonaparte, however, transformed nationalist sentiments into an expansionist ideology and used his citizens army to score victory after victory in Europe and Middle East. Ultimately, however, he was defeated in 1815 by the forces of nationalism he had helped to awaken.'
- The unification of Germany (1871) gave further strength to the concept of nationalism as the hall mark of the state. The philosophical foundations of the nation-state received tremendous strength from the ideas of Hegel (1770-1831), the German philosopher.
- The march of events of the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly the coming of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, invigorated the consolidation of the nation-state as the fundamental unit of protection.
- Once this development had taken place, the resulting case of economic and social interactions within them and the relative isolation of their populations from neighboring states helped the solidification of different cultures, institutions and linguistic and religious patterns of behaviour which came to be identified with the nation-state.
- The state came to be sovereign, territorial nation-state. International relations got transformed into relations and interactions among the nation-states.

Features of the Sovereign Nation-state System:

- The nation-state came to get firmly entrenched when humankind entered the 20th century. It got identified with its four essential elements:

    - Population,
    - Territory,
    - Government and
    - Sovereignty.

- In the sphere of international relations its four basic credentials of Nation-state got fully recognized:

    - Nationalism,
    - Territorial Integrity or Territorial Impermeability
    - Sovereignty
    - Legal Equality/Sovereign Equality of all Nation-States.