CHAPTER 3

Politics and the State

'The purpose of the State is always the same: to limit the individual, to tame him, to subordinate him, to subjugate him.'

MAX STIRNER, *The Ego and His Own* (1845)

PREVIEW

The shadow of the state falls on almost every human activity. From education to economic management, from social welfare to sanitation, and from domestic order to external defence, the state shapes and controls; where it does not shape or control it regulates, supervises, authorizes or proscribes. Even those aspects of life usually thought of as personal or private (marriage, divorce, abortion, religious worship and so on) are ultimately subject to the authority of the state. It is not surprising, therefore, that politics is often understood as the study of the state, the analysis of its institutional organizations, the evaluation of its impact on society and so on. Ideological debate and party politics, certainly, tend to revolve around the issue of the proper function or role of the state: what should be done by the state and what should be left to private individuals and associations? The nature of state power has thus become one of the central concerns of political analysis. This chapter examines the feature that are usually associated with the state, from both a domestic and an international perspective. It considers the issue of the nature of state power, and, in the process, touches on some of the deepest and most abiding divisions in political theory. This leads to a discussion of the contrasting roles and responsibilities of the state and the different forms that states have assumed. Finally, it looks whether, in the light of globalization and other developments, the state is losing its central importance in politics.

KEY ISSUES

- What is the state, and why does it play such a crucial role in politics?
- How has state power been analysed and explained?
- Is the state a force for good or a force for evil?
- What roles have been assigned to the state? How have responsibilities been apportioned between the state and civil society?
- To what extent does politics now operate outside or beyond the state?

CONCEPT

The state

The state is a political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders, and exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions. These institutions are those that are recognizably 'public', in that they are responsible for the collective organization of communal life, and are funded at the public's expense. The state thus embraces the various institutions of government, but it also extends to the courts, nationalized industries, social security system, and so forth; it can be identified with the entire 'body politic'.

DEFINING THE STATE

The term 'state' has been used to refer to a bewildering range of things: a collection of institutions, a territorial unit, a philosophical idea, an instrument of coercion or oppression, and so on. This confusion stems, in part, from the fact that the state has been understood in four quite different ways; from an **idealist** perspective, a functionalist perspective, an organizational perspective and an international perspective. The *idealist* approach to the state is most clearly reflected in the writings of G. W. F. Hegel (see p. 59). Hegel identified three 'moments' of social existence: the family, civil society and the state. Within the family, he argued, a 'particular altruism' operates that encourages people to set aside their own interests for the good of their children or elderly relatives. In contrast, civil society was seen as a sphere of 'universal egoism' in which individuals place their own interests before those of others. Hegel conceived of the state as an ethical community underpinned by mutual sympathy – 'universal altruism'. The drawback of idealism, however, is that it fosters an uncritical reverence for the state and, by defining the state in ethical terms, fails to distinguish clearly between institutions that are part of the state and those that are outside the state.

Functionalist approaches to the state focus on the role or purpose of state institutions. The central function of the state is invariably seen as the maintenance of social order (see p. 400), the state being defined as that set of institutions that uphold order and deliver social stability. Such an approach has, for example, been adopted by neo-Marxists (see p. 64), who have been inclined to see the state as a mechanism through which class conflict is ameliorated to ensure the long-term survival of the capitalist system. The weakness of the functionalist view of the state, however, is that it tends to associate *any* institution that maintains order (such as the family, mass media, trade unions and the church) with the state itself. This is why, unless there is a statement to the contrary, an organizational approach to the definition of the state is adopted throughout this book

The *organizational* view defines the state as the apparatus of government in its broadest sense; that is, as that set of institutions that are recognizably 'public', in that they are responsible for the collective organization of social existence and are funded at the public's expense. The virtue of this definition is that it distinguishes clearly between the state and **civil society** (see p. 6). The state comprises the various institutions of government: the bureaucracy (see p. 361), the military, the police, the courts, the social security system and so on; it can be identified with the entire 'body politic'. The organizational approach allows us to talk about 'rolling forward' or 'rolling back' the state, in the sense of expanding or contracting the responsibilities of the state, and enlarging or diminishing its institutional machinery.

In this light, it is possible to identify five key features of the state:

- The state is *sovereign*. It exercises absolute and unrestricted power, in that it stands above all other associations and groups in society. Thomas Hobbes (see p. 61) conveyed the idea of sovereignty (see p. 58) by portraying the state as a 'leviathan', a gigantic monster, usually represented as a sea creature.
- State institutions are recognizably '*public*', in contrast to the 'private' institutions of civil society. Public bodies are responsible for making and

● **Idealism**: A view of politics that emphasizes the importance of morality and ideals; philosophical idealism implies that ideas are more 'real' than the material world.

● **Civil society**: A private sphere of autonomous groups and associations, independent from state or public authority (see p. 6).

CONCEPT

Sovereignty

Sovereignty, in its simplest sense, is the principle of absolute and unlimited power. However, sovereignty can be understood in different ways. *Legal* sovereignty refers to supreme legal authority, defined in terms of the 'right' to command compliance, while *political* sovereignty refers to absolute political power, defined in terms of the 'ability' to command compliance. *Internal* sovereignty is the notion of supreme power/authority within the state (e.g. parliamentary sovereignty: see p. 336). *External* sovereignty relates to a state's place in the international order and its capacity to act as an independent and autonomous entity.

enforcing collective decisions, while private bodies, such as families, private businesses and trade unions, exist to satisfy individual interests.

- The state is an exercise in *legitimation*. The decisions of the state are usually (although not necessarily) accepted as binding on the members of society because, it is claimed, they are made in the public interest, or for common good; the state supposedly reflects the permanent interests of society.
- The state is an instrument of *domination*. State authority is backed up by coercion; the state must have the capacity to ensure that its laws are obeyed and that transgressors are punished. For Max Weber (see p. 82), the state was defined by its monopoly of the means of 'legitimate violence'.
- The state is a *territorial* association. The jurisdiction of the state is geographically defined, and it encompasses all those who live within the state's borders, whether they are citizens or non-citizens. On the international stage, the state is therefore regarded (at least, in theory) as an autonomous entity.

The *international* approach to the state views it primarily as an actor on the world stage; indeed, as the basic 'unit' of international politics. This highlights the dualistic structure of the state; the fact that it has two faces, one looking outwards and the other looking inwards. Whereas the previous definitions are concerned with the state's inward-looking face, its relations with the individuals and groups that live within its borders, and its ability to maintain domestic order, the international view deals with the state's outward-looking face, its relations with other states and, therefore, its ability to provide protection against external attack. The classic definition of the state in international law is found in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of the State (1933). According to Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention, the state has four features:

- a defined territory
- a permanent population
- an effective government
- the capacity to enter into relations with other states.

This approach to the state brings it very close to the notion of a 'country'. The main difference between how the state is understood by political philosophers and sociologists, and how it is understood by IR scholars is that while the former treat civil society as *separate from* the state, the latter treat civil society as *part of* the state, in that it encompasses not only an effective government, but also a permanent population. For some, the international approach views the state essentially as a legal person, in which case statehood depends on formal recognition by other states or international bodies. In this view, the United Nations (UN) is widely accepted as the body that, by granting full membership, determines when a new state has come into existence. Nevertheless, while, from this perspective, states may be legally equal, they are in political terms very different. Although their rights and responsibilities as laid out in international law may be identical, their political weight in world affairs varies dramatically. Some states are classified as '**great powers**', or even 'superpowers' (see p. 422), whereas others are 'middle' or 'small' powers and, in cases such as the small highland countries of the Caribbean and the Pacific, they may be regarded as 'micro-states'.

● **Great power**: A state deemed to rank amongst the most powerful in a hierarchical state system, reflecting its influence over minor states.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831)

German philosopher. Hegel was the founder of modern idealism and developed the notion that consciousness and material objects are, in fact, unified. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), he sought to develop a rational system that would substitute for traditional Christianity by interpreting the entire process of human history, and indeed the universe itself, in terms of the progress of absolute Mind towards self-realization. In his view, history is, in essence, a march of the human spirit towards a determinate endpoint. His major political work, *Philosophy of Right* (1821), portrays the state as an ethical ideal and the highest expression of human freedom. Hegel's work had a considerable impact on Marx and other so-called 'young Hegelians'. It also shaped the ideas of liberals such as T. H. Green (1836–82), and influenced fascist thought.

Regardless of the different ways in which the state has been understood, there is general agreement about when and where it emerged. The state is a historical institution: it emerged in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe as a system of centralized rule that succeeded in subordinating all other institutions and groups, including (and especially) the Church, bringing an end to the competing and overlapping authority systems that had characterized Medieval Europe. By establishing the principle of territorial sovereignty, the Peace of Westphalia (1648), concluded at the end of the Thirty Years' War, is often taken to have formalized the modern notion of statehood, by establishing the state as the principal actor in domestic and international affairs. There is less agreement, however, about why the state came into existence. According to Charles Tilly (1990), for instance, the central factor that explains the development of the modern state was its ability to fight wars. In this view, the transformation in the scale and nature of military encounters that was brought about from the sixteenth century onwards (through, for instance, the introduction of gun powder, the use of organized infantry and artillery, and the advent of standing armies) not only greatly increased the coercive power that rulers could wield, but also forced states to extend their control over their populations by developing more extensive systems of taxation and administration. As Tilly (1975) thus put it, 'War made the state, and the state made war'. Marxists, in contrast, have explained the emergence of the state largely in economic terms, the state's origins being traced back to the transition from feudalism to capitalism, with the state essentially being a tool used by the emerging bourgeois class (Engels, [1884] 1972). Michael Mann (1993), for his part, offered an account of the emergence of the state that stresses the state's capacity to combine ideological, economic, military and political forms of power (sometimes called the 'IEMP model').

The state nevertheless continued to evolve in the light of changing circumstances. Having developed into the **nation-state** during the nineteenth century, and then going through a process of gradual democratization, the state acquired wider economic and social responsibilities during the twentieth century, and especially in the post-1945 period, only for these, in many cases, to be 'rolled back' from the 1980s and 1990s. The European state model, furthermore, spread

● **Nation-state**: A sovereign political association within which citizenship and nationality overlap; one nation within a single state (see p. 124).

to other lands and other continents. This occurred as the process of decolonization accelerated in the decades following World War II, independence implying the achievement of sovereign statehood. One result of this process was a rapid growth in UN membership. From its original 51 member states in 1945, the UN grew to 127 members by 1970, and reached 193 members by 2011 (with the recognition of South Sudan). The state has therefore become the universal form of political organization around the world. However, in order to assess the significance of the state, and explore its vital relationship to politics, two key issues have to be addressed. These deal with the nature of state power and with the roles and responsibilities the state has assumed and should assume.

DEBATING THE STATE

Rival theories of the state

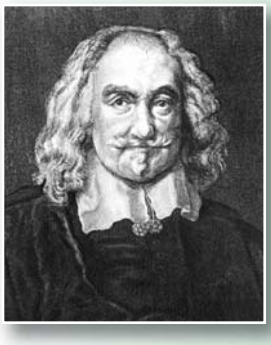
What is the nature of state power, and whose interests does the state represent? From this perspective, the state is an 'essentially contested' concept. There are various rival theories of the state, each of which offers a different account of its origins, development and impact on society. Indeed, controversy about the nature of state power has increasingly dominated modern political analysis and goes to the heart of ideological and theoretical disagreements in the discipline. These relate to questions about whether, for example, the state is autonomous and independent of society, or whether it is essentially a product of society, a reflection of the broader distribution of power or resources. Moreover, does the state serve the common or collective good, or is it biased in favour of privileged groups or a dominant class? Similarly, is the state a positive or constructive force, with responsibilities that should be enlarged, or is it a negative or destructive entity that must be constrained or, perhaps, smashed altogether? Four contrasting theories of the state can be identified as follows:

- the pluralist state
- the capitalist state
- the leviathan state
- the patriarchal state.

The pluralist state

The **pluralist** theory of the state has a very clear liberal lineage. It stems from the belief that the state acts as an 'umpire' or 'referee' in society. This view has also dominated mainstream political analysis, accounting for a tendency, at least within Anglo-American thought, to discount the state and state organizations and focus instead on 'government'. Indeed, it is not uncommon in this tradition for 'the state' to be dismissed as an abstraction, with institutions such as the courts, the civil service and the military being seen as independent actors in their own right, rather than as elements of a broader state machine. Nevertheless, this approach is possible only because it is based on underlying, and often unacknowledged, assumptions about state neutrality. The state can be ignored only because it is seen as an impartial arbiter or referee that can be bent to the will of the government of the day.

● **Pluralism**: A belief in, or commitment to diversity or multiplicity; or the belief that power in modern societies is widely and evenly distributed (see p. 100).



Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

English political philosopher. Hobbes was the son of a minor clergyman who subsequently abandoned his family. He became tutor to the exiled Prince of Wales Charles Stewart, and lived under the patronage of the Cavendish family. Writing at a time of uncertainty and civil strife, precipitated by the English Revolution, Hobbes developed the first comprehensive theory of nature and human behaviour since Aristotle (see p. 6). His classic work, *Leviathan* (1651), discussed the grounds of political obligation and undoubtedly reflected the impact of the Civil War. It provided a defence for absolutist government but, by appealing to reasoned argument in the form of the social contract, also disappointed advocates of **divine right.**

The origins of this view of the state can be traced back to the social-contract theories (see p. 62) of thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke (see p. 31). The principal concern of such thinkers was to examine the grounds of **political obligation**, the grounds on which the individual is obliged to obey and respect the state. They argued that the state had arisen out of a voluntary agreement, or social contract, made by individuals who recognized that only the establishment of a sovereign power could safeguard them from the insecurity, disorder and brutality of the **state of nature**. Without a state, individuals abuse, exploit and enslave one another; with a state, order and civilized existence are guaranteed and liberty is protected. As Locke put it, 'where there is no law there is no freedom'.

In liberal theory, the state is thus seen as a neutral arbiter amongst the competing groups and individuals in society; it is an 'umpire' or 'referee' that is capable of protecting each citizen from the encroachments of fellow citizens. The neutrality of the state reflects the fact that the state acts in the interests of *all* citizens, and therefore represents the common good or public interest. In Hobbes' view, stability and order could be secured only through the establishment of an absolute and unlimited state, with power that could be neither challenged, nor questioned. In other words, he held that citizens are confronted by a stark choice between absolutism (see p. 268) and **anarchy**. Locke, on the other hand, developed a more typically liberal defence of the limited state. In his view, the purpose of the state is very specific: it is restricted to the defence of a set of 'natural' or God-given individual rights; namely, 'life, liberty and property'. This establishes a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the state (essentially, the maintenance of domestic order and the protection of property) and the responsibilities of individual citizens (usually seen as the realm of civil society). Moreover, since the state may threaten natural rights as easily as it may uphold them, citizens must enjoy some form of protection against the state, which Locke believed could be delivered only through the mechanisms of constitutional and representative government.

These ideas were developed in the twentieth century into the pluralist theory of the state. As a theory of society, pluralism asserts that, within liberal democracies, power is widely and evenly dispersed. As a theory of the state, pluralism holds that the state is neutral, insofar as it is susceptible to the influence of

● **Divine right**: The doctrine that earthly rulers are chosen by God and thus wield unchallengeable authority; a defence for monarchical absolutism.

● **Political obligation**: The duty of the citizen towards the state; the basis of the state's right to rule.

● **State of nature**: A society devoid of political authority and of formal (legal) checks on the individual; usually employed as a theoretical device.

● **Anarchy**: Literally, 'without rule'; anarchy is often used pejoratively to suggest instability, or even chaos.

Focus on . . .
Social-contract theory

A social contract is a voluntary agreement made amongst individuals through which an organized society, or state, is brought into existence. Used as a theoretical device by thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (see p. 97), the social contract has been revived by modern theorists such as John Rawls (see p. 45). The social contract is seldom regarded as a historical act. Rather, it is used as a means of demonstrating the value of government and the grounds of political obligation; social-contract theorists wish individuals to act as if they had concluded the contract themselves. In its classic form, social-contract theory has three elements:

- The image of a hypothetical stateless society (a 'state of nature') is established. Unconstrained freedom means that life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes).
- Individuals therefore seek to escape from the state of nature by entering into a social contract, recognizing that only a sovereign power can secure order and stability.
- The social contract obliges citizens to respect and obey the state, ultimately in gratitude for the stability and security that only a system of political rule can deliver.

various groups and interests, and all social classes. The state is not biased in favour of any particular interest or group, and it does not have an interest of its own that is separate from those of society. As Schwarzmantel (1994) put it, the state is 'the servant of society and not its master'. The state can thus be portrayed as a 'pincushion' that passively absorbs pressures and forces exerted upon it. Two key assumptions underlie this view. The first is that the state is effectively subordinate to government. Non-elected state bodies (the civil service, the judiciary, the police, the military and so on) are strictly impartial and are subject to the authority of their political masters. The state apparatus is therefore thought to conform to the principles of public service and political accountability. The second assumption is that the democratic process is meaningful and effective. In other words, party competition and interest-group activity ensure that the government of the day remains sensitive and responsive to public opinion. Ultimately, therefore, the state is only a weather vane that is blown in whichever direction the public-at-large dictates.

Modern pluralists, however, have often adopted a more critical view of the state, termed the neopluralist (see p. 63) theory of the state. Theorists such as Robert Dahl (see p. 250), Charles Lindblom and J. K. Galbraith (see p. 155) have come to accept that modern industrialized states are both more complex and less responsive to popular pressures than classical pluralism suggested. Neopluralists, for instance, have acknowledged that business enjoys a 'privileged position' in relation to government that other groups clearly cannot rival. In *Politics and Markets* (1980), Lindblom pointed out that, as the major investor and largest employer in society, business is bound to exercise considerable sway over any government, whatever its ideological leanings or manifesto commitments. Moreover, neopluralists have accepted that the state can, and does, forge its own sectional interests. In this way, a state elite, composed of senior civil servants,

CONCEPT

Neopluralism

Neopluralism is a style of social theorizing that remains faithful to pluralist values while recognizing the need to revise or update classical pluralism in the light of, for example, elite, Marxist and New Right theories. Although neopluralism embraces a broad range of perspectives and positions, certain central themes can be identified. First, it takes account of modernizing trends, such as the emergence of postindustrial society. Second, while capitalism is preferred to socialism, free-market economic doctrines are usually regarded as obsolete. Third, western democracies are seen as 'deformed polyarchies', in which major corporations exert disproportionate influence.

judges, police chiefs, military leaders and so on, may be seen to pursue either the bureaucratic interests of their sector of the state, or the interests of client groups. Indeed, if the state is regarded as a political actor in its own right, it can be viewed as a powerful (perhaps the most powerful) interest group in society. This line of argument encouraged Eric Nordlinger (1981) to develop a state-centred model of liberal democracy, based on 'the autonomy of the democratic state'.

The capitalist state

The Marxist notion of a capitalist state offers a clear alternative to the pluralist image of the state as a neutral arbiter or umpire. Marxists have typically argued that the state cannot be understood separately from the economic structure of society. This view has usually been understood in terms of the classic formulation that the state is nothing but an instrument of class oppression: the state emerges out of, and in a sense reflects, the class system. Nevertheless, a rich debate has taken place within Marxist theory in recent years that has moved the Marxist theory of the state a long way from this classic formulation. In many ways, the scope to revise Marxist attitudes towards the state stems from ambiguities that can be found in Marx's (see p. 41) own writings.

Marx did not develop a systematic or coherent theory of the state. In a general sense, he believed that the state is part of a 'superstructure' that is determined or conditioned by the economic 'base', which can be seen as the real foundation of social life. However, the precise relationship between the base and the superstructure, and in this case that between the state and the capitalist mode of production, is unclear. Two theories of the state can be identified in Marx's writings. The first is expressed in his often-quoted dictum from *The Communist Manifesto* ([1848] 1967): 'The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. From this perspective, the state is clearly dependent on society and entirely dependent on its economically dominant class, which in capitalism is the **bourgeoisie**. Lenin (see p. 99) thus described the state starkly as 'an instrument for the oppression of the exploited class'.

A second, more complex and subtle, theory of the state can nevertheless be found in Marx's analysis of the revolutionary events in France between 1848 and 1851, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* ([1852] 1963). Marx suggested that the state could enjoy what has come to be seen as 'relative autonomy' from the class system, the Napoleonic state being capable of imposing its will upon society, acting as an 'appalling parasitic body'. If the state did articulate the interests of any class, it was not those of the bourgeoisie, but those of the most populous class in French society, the smallholding peasantry. Although Marx did not develop this view in detail, it is clear that, from this perspective, the autonomy of the state is only *relative*, in that the state appears to mediate between conflicting classes, and so maintains the class system itself in existence.

Both these theories differ markedly from the liberal and, later, pluralist models of state power. In particular, they emphasize that the state cannot be understood except in a context of unequal class power, and that the state arises out of, and reflects, capitalist society, by acting either as an instrument of oppression wielded by the dominant class, or, more subtly, as a mechanism through which class antagonisms are ameliorated. Nevertheless, Marx's attitude towards

● **Bourgeoisie**: A Marxist term, denoting the ruling class of a capitalist society, the owners of productive wealth.

CONCEPT

Neo-Marxism

Neo-Marxism (sometimes termed 'modern' or 'western' Marxism) refers to attempts to revise or recast the classical ideas of Marx while remaining faithful to certain Marxist principles or aspects of Marxist methodology. Neo-Marxists typically refuse to accept that Marxism enjoys a monopoly of the truth, and have thus looked to Hegelian philosophy, anarchism, liberalism, feminism, and even rational-choice theory. Although still concerned about social injustice, neo-Marxists reject the primacy of economics over other factors and, with it, the notion that history has a predictable character.

the state was not entirely negative. He argued that the state could be used constructively during the transition from capitalism to communism in the form of the 'revolutionary dictatorship of the **proletariat**'. The overthrow of capitalism would see the destruction of the bourgeois state and the creation of an alternative, proletarian one.

In describing the state as a proletarian 'dictatorship', Marx utilized the first theory of the state, seeing the state as an instrument through which the economically dominant class (by then, the proletariat) could repress and subdue other classes. All states, from this perspective, are class dictatorships. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was seen as a means of safeguarding the gains of the revolution by preventing counter-revolution mounted by the dispossessed bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, Marx did not see the state as a necessary or enduring social formation. He predicted that, as class antagonisms faded, the state would 'wither away', meaning that a fully communist society would also be stateless. Since the state emerged out of the class system, once the class system had been abolished, the state, quite simply, loses its reason for existence.

Marx's ambivalent heritage has provided modern Marxists, or neo-Marxists, with considerable scope to further the analysis of state power. This was also encouraged by the writings of Antonio Gramsci (see p. 175), who emphasized the degree to which the domination of the ruling class is achieved by ideological manipulation, rather than just open coercion. In this view, bourgeois domination is maintained largely through 'hegemony' (see p. 174): that is, intellectual leadership or cultural control, with the state playing an important role in the process.

Since the 1960s, Marxist theorizing about the state has been dominated by rival instrumentalist and structuralist views of the state. In *The State in Capitalist Society* ([1969] 2009), Miliband portrayed the state as an agent or *instrument* of the ruling class, stressing the extent to which the state elite is disproportionately drawn from the ranks of the privileged and propertied. The bias of the state in favour of capitalism is therefore derived from the overlap of social backgrounds between, on the one hand, civil servants and other public officials, and, on the other, bankers, business leaders and captains of industry. Nicos Poulantzas, in *Political Power and Social Classes* (1968), dismissed this sociological approach, and emphasized instead the degree to which the *structure* of economic and social power exerts a constraint on state autonomy. This view suggests that the state cannot but act to perpetuate the social system in which it operates. In the case of the capitalist state, its role is to serve the long-term interests of capitalism, even though these actions may be resisted by sections of the capitalist class itself. Neo-Marxists have increasingly seen the state as the terrain on which the struggle amongst interests, groups and classes is conducted. Rather than being an 'instrument' wielded by a dominant group or ruling class, the state is thus a dynamic entity that reflects the balance of power within society at any given time, and the ongoing struggle for hegemony.

● **Proletariat**: A Marxist term, denoting a class that subsists through the sale of its labour power; strictly speaking, the proletariat is not equivalent to the working class.

The leviathan state

The image of the state as a 'leviathan' (in effect, a self-serving monster intent on expansion and aggrandizement) is one associated in modern politics with the New Right. Such a view is rooted in early or classical liberalism and, in particular,

CONCEPT

Patriarchy

Patriarchy literally means 'rule by the father', the domination of the husband–father within the family, and the subordination of his wife and his children. However, the term is usually used in the more general sense of 'rule by men', drawing attention to the totality of oppression and exploitation to which women are subject. Patriarchy thus implies that the system of male power in society at large both reflects and stems from the dominance of the father in the family. Patriarchy is a key concept in radical feminist analysis, in that it emphasizes that gender inequality is systematic, institutionalized and pervasive.

a commitment to a radical form of individualism (see p. 158). The New Right, or at least its neoliberal wing, is distinguished by a strong antipathy towards state intervention in economic and social life, born out of the belief that the state is a parasitic growth that threatens both individual liberty and economic security. In this view, the state, instead of being, as pluralists suggest, an impartial umpire or arbiter, is an overbearing 'nanny', desperate to interfere or meddle in every aspect of human existence. The central feature of this view is that the state pursues interests that are separate from those of society (setting it apart from Marxism), and that those interests demand an unrelenting growth in the role or responsibilities of the state itself. New Right thinkers therefore argue that the twentieth-century tendency towards state intervention reflected not popular pressure for economic and social security, or the need to stabilize capitalism by ameliorating class tensions but, rather, the internal dynamics of the state.

New Right theorists explain the expansionist dynamics of state power by reference to both demand-side and supply-side pressures. Demand-side pressures are those that emanate from society itself, usually through the mechanism of electoral democracy. As discussed in Chapter 4 in connection with democracy, the New Right argue that electoral competition encourages politicians to 'outbid' one another by making promises of increased spending and more generous government programmes, regardless of the long-term damage that such policies inflict on the economy in the form of increased taxes, higher inflation and the 'crowding out' of investment. Supply-side pressures, on the other hand, are those that are internal to the state. These can therefore be explained in terms of the institutions and personnel of the state apparatus. In its most influential form, this argument is known as the 'government oversupply thesis'.

The oversupply thesis has usually been associated with public-choice theorists (see p. 252), who examine how public decisions are made on the assumption that the individuals involved act in a rationally self-interested fashion. Niskanen (1971), for example, argued that, as budgetary control in legislatures such as the US Congress is typically weak, the task of budget-making is shaped largely by the interests of government agencies and senior bureaucrats. Insofar as this implies that government is dominated by the state (the state elite being able to shape the thinking of elected politicians), there are parallels between the public-choice model and the Marxist view discussed above. Where these two views diverge, however, is in relation to the interests that the state apparatus serves. While Marxists argue that the state reflects broader class and other social interests, the New Right portrays the state as an independent or autonomous entity that pursues its own interests. In this view, bureaucratic self-interest invariably supports 'big' government and state intervention, because this leads to an enlargement of the bureaucracy itself, which helps to ensure job security, improve pay, open up promotion prospects and enhance the status of public officials. This image of self-seeking bureaucrats is plainly at odds with the pluralist notion of a state machine imbued with an ethic of public service and firmly subject to political control.

The patriarchal state

Modern thinking about the state must, finally, take account of the implications of feminist theory. However, this is not to say that there is a systematic feminist

theory of the state. As emphasized in Chapter 2, feminist theory encompasses a range of traditions and perspectives, and has thus generated a range of very different attitudes towards state power. Moreover, feminists have usually not regarded the nature of state power as a central political issue, preferring instead to concentrate on the deeper structure of male power centred on institutions such as the family and the economic system. Some feminists, indeed, may question conventional definitions of the state, arguing, for instance, that the idea that the state exercises a monopoly of legitimate violence is compromised by the routine use of violence and intimidation in family and domestic life. Nevertheless, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, feminists have helped to enrich the state debate by developing novel and challenging perspectives on state power.

Liberal feminists, who believe that sexual or gender (see p. 163) equality can be brought about through incremental reform, have tended to accept an essentially pluralist view of the state. They recognize that, if women are denied legal and political equality, and especially the right to vote, the state is biased in favour of men. However, their faith in the state's basic neutrality is reflected in the belief that any such bias can, and will, be overcome by a process of reform. In this sense, liberal feminists believe that all groups (including women) have potentially equal access to state power, and that this can be used impartially to promote justice and the common good. Liberal feminists have therefore usually viewed the state in positive terms, seeing state intervention as a means of redressing gender inequality and enhancing the role of women. This can be seen in campaigns for equal-pay legislation, the legalization of abortion, the provision of child-care facilities, the extension of welfare benefits, and so on.

Nevertheless, a more critical and negative view of the state has been developed by radical feminists, who argue that state power reflects a deeper structure of oppression in the form of patriarchy. There are a number of similarities between Marxist and radical feminist views of state power. Both groups, for example, deny that the state is an autonomous entity bent on the pursuit of its own interests. Instead, the state is understood, and its biases are explained, by reference to a 'deep structure' of power in society at large. Whereas Marxists place the state in an economic context, radical feminists place it in a context of gender inequality, and insist that it is essentially an institution of male power. In common with Marxism, distinctive instrumentalist and structuralistversions of this feminist position have been developed. The *instrumentalist* argument views the state as little more than an agent or 'tool' used by men to defend their own interests and uphold the structures of patriarchy. This line of argument draws on the core feminist belief that patriarchy is rooted in the division of society into distinct 'public' and 'private' spheres of life, men dominating the former while women are confined to the later. Quite simply, in this view, the state is run *by* men, and *for* men.

Whereas instrumentalist arguments focus on the personnel of the state, and particularly the state elite, *structuralist* arguments tend to emphasize the degree to which state institutions are embedded in a wider patriarchal system. Modern radical feminists have paid particular attention to the emergence of the welfare state, seeing it as the expression of a new kind of patriarchal power. Welfare may uphold patriarchy by bringing about a transition from private dependence (in which women as 'home makers' are dependent on men as 'breadwinners') to a

system of public dependence in which women are increasingly controlled by the institutions of the extended state. For instance, women have become increasingly dependent on the state as clients or customers of state services (such as child-care institutions, nursery education and social work) and as employees, particularly in the so-called 'caring' professions (such as nursing, social work and education).

The role of the state

Contrasting interpretations of state power have clear implications for the desirable role or responsibilities of the state. What should states do? What functions or responsibilities should the state fulfil, and which ones should be left in the hands of private individuals? In many respects, these are the questions around which electoral politics and party competition revolve. With the exception of anarchists, who dismiss the state as fundamentally evil and unnecessary, all political thinkers have regarded the state as, in some sense, worthwhile. Even revolutionary socialists, inspired by the Leninist slogan 'smash the state', have accepted the need for a temporary proletarian state to preside over the transition from capitalism to communism, in the form of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Nevertheless, there is profound disagreement about the exact role the state should play, and therefore about the proper balance between the state and civil society. Among the different state forms that have developed are the following:

- minimal states
- developmental states
- social-democratic states
- collectivized states
- totalitarian states
- religious states

Minimal states

The minimal state is the ideal of classical liberals, whose aim is to ensure that individuals enjoy the widest possible realm of freedom. This view is rooted in social-contract theory, but it nevertheless advances an essentially 'negative' view of the state. From this perspective, the value of the state is that it has the capacity to constrain human behaviour and thus to prevent individuals encroaching on the **rights** and liberties of others. The state is merely a protective body, its core function being to provide a framework of peace and social order within which citizens can conduct their lives as they think best. In Locke's famous simile, the state acts as a nightwatchman, whose services are called upon only when orderly existence is threatened. This nevertheless leaves the 'minimal' or 'nightwatchman' state with three core functions. First and foremost, the state exists to maintain domestic order. Second, it ensures that contracts or voluntary agreements made between private citizens are enforced, and third it provides protection against external attack. The institutional apparatus of a minimal state is thus limited to a police force, a court system and a military of some kind. Economic, social, cultural, moral and other responsibilities belong to the individual, and are therefore firmly part of civil society.

● **Rights**: Legal or moral entitlements to act or be treated in a particular way; civil rights differ from human rights.

Robert Nozick (1938–2002)

US academic and political philosopher. Nozick's major work, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974), had a profound influence on New Right theories and beliefs. He developed a form of libertarianism that was close to Locke's and clearly influenced by nineteenth-century US individualists such as Spooner (1808–87) and Tucker (1854–1939). He argued that property rights should be strictly upheld, provided that wealth has been justly acquired in the first place, or has been justly transferred from one person to another. This position means support for minimal government and minimal taxation, and undermines the case for welfare and redistribution. Nozick's rights-based theory of justice was developed in response to the ideas of John Rawls (see p. 45). In later life, Nozick modified his extreme libertarianism.

The cause of the minimal state has been taken up in modern political debate by the New Right. Drawing on early liberal ideas, and particularly on free-market or classical economic theories, the New Right has proclaimed the need to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'. In the writings of Robert Nozick, this amounts to a restatement of Lockean liberalism based on a defence of individual rights, especially property rights. In the case of free-market economists such as Friedrich von Hayek (see p. 37) and Milton Friedman (see p. 138), state intervention is seen as a 'dead hand' that reduces competition, efficiency and productivity. From the New Right perspective, the state's economic role should be confined to two functions: the maintenance of a stable means of exchange or 'sound money' (low or zero inflation), and the promotion of competition through controls on monopoly power, price fixing and so on.

Developmental states

The best historical examples of minimal states were those in countries such as the UK and the USA during the period of early industrialization in the nineteenth century. As a general rule, however, the later a country industrializes, the more extensive will be its state's economic role. In Japan and Germany, for instance, the state assumed a more active 'developmental' role from the outset. A developmental state is one that intervenes in economic life with the specific purpose of promoting industrial growth and economic development. This does not amount to an attempt to replace the market with a 'socialist' system of planning and control but, rather, to an attempt to construct a partnership between the state and major economic interests, often underpinned by conservative and nationalist priorities.

The classic example of a developmental state is Japan. During the Meiji Period (1868–1912), the Japanese state forged a close relationship with the *zaibutsu*, the great family-run business empires that dominated the Japanese economy up until World War II. Since 1945, the developmental role of the Japanese state has been assumed by the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), which, together with the Bank of Japan, helps to shape private investment decisions and steer the Japanese economy towards international competitiveness (see

p. 372). A similar model of developmental intervention has existed in France, where governments of both left and right have tended to recognize the need for economic planning, and the state bureaucracy has seen itself as the custodian of the national interest. In countries such as Austria and, to some extent, Germany, economic development has been achieved through the construction of a 'partnership state', in which an emphasis is placed on the maintenance of a close relationship between the state and major economic interests, notably big business and organized labour. More recently, economic globalization (see p. 142) has fostered the emergence of '**competition states**', examples of which are found amongst the **tiger economies** of East Asia. Competition states are distinguished by their recognition of the need to strengthen education and training as the principal guaranteeing economic success in a context of intensifying transnational competition.

Social-democratic states

Whereas developmental states practise interventionism in order to stimulate economic progress, social-democratic states intervene with a view to bringing about broader social restructuring, usually in accordance with principles such as fairness, equality (see p. 454) and **social justice**. In countries such as Austria and Sweden, state intervention has been guided by both developmental and social-democratic priorities. Nevertheless, developmentalism and social democracy do not always go hand-in-hand. As Marquand (1988) pointed out, although the UK state was significantly extended in the period immediately after World War II along social-democratic lines, it failed to evolve into a developmental state. The key to understanding the social-democratic state is that there is a shift from a 'negative' view of the state, which sees it as little more than a necessary evil, to a 'positive' view of the state, in which it is seen as a means of enlarging liberty and promoting justice. The social-democratic state is thus the ideal of both modern liberals and democratic socialists.

Rather than merely laying down the conditions of orderly existence, the social-democratic state is an active participant; in particular, helping to rectify the imbalances and injustices of a market economy. It therefore tends to focus less upon the generation of wealth and more upon what is seen as the equitable or just distribution of wealth. In practice, this boils down to an attempt to eradicate poverty and reduce social inequality. The twin features of a social-democratic state are therefore Keynesianism and social welfare. The aim of Keynesian economic policies is to 'manage' or 'regulate' capitalism with a view to promoting growth and maintaining full employment. Although this may entail an element of planning, the classic Keynesian strategy involves 'demand management' through adjustments in fiscal policy; that is, in the levels of public spending and taxation. The adoption of welfare policies has led to the emergence of so-called '**welfare states**', whose responsibilities have extended to the promotion of social well-being amongst their citizens. In this sense, the social-democratic state is an 'enabling state', dedicated to the principle of individual empowerment.

Collectivized states

While developmental and social-democratic states intervene in economic life with a view to guiding or supporting a largely private economy, collectivized

● **Competition state**: A state which pursues strategies to ensure long-term competitiveness in a globalized economy.

● **Tiger economies**: Fast-growing and export-orientated economies modelled on Japan: for example, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.

● **Social justice**: A morally justifiable distribution of material rewards; social justice is often seen to imply a bias in favour of equality.

● **Welfare state**: A state that takes primary responsibility for the social welfare of its citizens, discharged through a range of social security, health, education and other services (albeit different in different societies).

Debating . . .
Is the state a force for good?

Political and ideological debate so often revolves around the issue of the state and, in particular, the proper balance between the state and civil society. At one extreme, anarchists claim that states and, for that matter, all systems of rule are illegitimate. Other views range from a grudging acceptance of the state as a necessary evil to a positive endorsement of the state as a force for good. Does the state have a positive or negative impact on our lives? Should it be celebrated or feared?

YES

Key to civilized existence. The most basic argument in favour of the state is that it is a vital guarantee of order and social stability. A state is absolutely necessary because only a sovereign body that enjoys a monopoly of the means of coercion is able to prevent (regrettable, but inevitable) conflict and competition from spilling over into barbarism and chaos. Life in the absence of a state would be, as Hobbes famously put it, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. This is a lesson that is underlined by the sad misfortunes suffered by so-called 'failed' states (see p. 76), where civil war and warlordism take hold in the absence of a credible system of law and order.

Foundation of public life. The state differs from other bodies and institutions in that it is the only one that represents the common or collective interests, rather than the selfish or particular ones. The state speaks for the whole of society, not just its parts. As such, the state makes possible a 'public' realm of existence, which allows people to be involved in something larger than themselves, discharging responsibilities towards fellow citizens and, where appropriate, participating in making collective decisions. In a tradition that dates back to Aristotle and Hegel, the state can therefore be seen to be morally superior to civil society.

Agent of social justice. The state is a key agent of modernization and delivers a range of economic and social benefits. Even supporters of free-market economics acknowledge this in accepting that the economy can only function in a context of civic order that can only be established by the state. Beyond this, the state can counter the inherent instability of a market economy by intervening to ensure sustainable growth and full employment, and it can protect people from poverty and other forms of social disadvantage by delivering publicly-funded welfare services that no amount of private philanthropy can rival in terms of reach and quality.

NO

Cause of disorder. As anarchists argue, the state is the cause of the problem of order, not its solution. The state breeds conflict and unrest because, by robbing people of their moral autonomy and forcing them to obey rules they have not made themselves, it 'infantalizes' them and blocks their moral development. This leaves them under the sway of base instincts and allows selfishness, greed and aggression to spread. As moral development flourishes in conditions of freedom and equality, reducing the authority of the state or, preferably, removing it altogether, will allow order to arise 'from below', naturally and spontaneously.

Enemy of freedom. The state is, at best, a necessary evil. Even when its benefits in terms of upholding order are accepted, the state should be confined to a strictly minimal role. This is because, as state authority is sovereign, compulsory and coercive, the 'public' sphere is, by its nature, a realm of oppression. While anarchists therefore argue that all states are illegitimate, others suggest that this only applies when the state goes beyond its essential role of laying down the conditions for orderly existence. Freedom is enlarged to the extent that the 'public' sphere contracts, civil society being morally superior to the state.

Recipe for poverty. The economy works best when it is left alone by the state. Market economies are self-regulating mechanisms; they tend towards long-term equilibrium, as the forces of demand and supply come into line with one another. The state, in contrast, is a brute machine: however well-meaning state intervention in economic and social life may be, it inevitably upsets the natural balance of the market and so imperils growth and prosperity. This was a lesson most graphically illustrated by the fate of orthodox communist systems, but it has also been underlined by the poor economic performance of over-regulated capitalist systems.

CONCEPT

Statism

Statism (or, in French, *étatisme*) is the belief that state intervention is the most appropriate means of resolving political problems, or bringing about economic and social development. This view is underpinned by a deep, and perhaps unquestioning, faith in the state as a mechanism through which collective action can be organized and common goals can be achieved. The state is thus seen as an ethical ideal (Hegel), or as serving the 'general will' or public interest. Statism is most clearly reflected in government policies that regulate and control economic life, possibly extending to Soviet-style state collectivization.

states bring the entirety of economic life under state control. The best examples of such states were in orthodox communist countries such as the USSR and throughout Eastern Europe. These sought to abolish private enterprise altogether, and set up centrally planned economies administered by a network of economic ministries and planning committees. So-called 'command economies' were therefore established that were organized through a system of 'directive' planning that was ultimately controlled by the highest organs of the communist party. The justification for state **collectivization** stems from a fundamental socialist preference for common ownership over private property. However, the use of the state to attain this goal suggests a more positive attitude to state power than that outlined in the classical writings of Marx and Engels (1820–95).

Marx and Engels by no means ruled out nationalization; Engels, in particular, recognized that, during the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', state control would be extended to include factories, the banks, transportation and so on. Nevertheless, they envisaged that the proletarian state would be strictly temporary, and that it would 'wither away' as class antagonisms abated. In contrast, the collectivized state in the USSR became permanent, and increasingly powerful and bureaucratic. Under Stalin, socialism was effectively equated with statism, the advance of socialism being reflected in the widening responsibilities and powers of the state apparatus. Indeed, after Khrushchev announced in 1962 that the dictatorship of the proletariat had ended, the state was formally identified with the interests of 'the whole Soviet peoples'.

Totalitarian states

The most extreme and extensive form of interventionism is found in totalitarian states. The essence of **totalitarianism** is the construction of an all-embracing state, the influence of which penetrates every aspect of human existence. The state brings not only the economy, but also education, culture, religion, family life and so on under direct state control. The best examples of totalitarian states are Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR, although modern regimes such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq arguably have similar characteristics. The central pillars of such regimes are a comprehensive process of surveillance and terroristic policing, and a pervasive system of ideological manipulation and control. In this sense, totalitarian states effectively extinguish civil society and abolish the 'private' sphere of life altogether. This is a goal that only fascists, who wish to dissolve individual identity within the social whole, are prepared openly to endorse. It is sometimes argued that Mussolini's notion of a totalitarian state was derived from Hegel's belief in the state as an 'ethical community' reflecting the altruism and mutual sympathy of its members. From this perspective, the advance of human civilization can clearly be linked to the aggrandisement of the state and the widening of its responsibilities.

Religious states

On the face of it, a religious state is a contradiction in terms. The modern state emerged largely through the triumph of civil authority over religious authority, religion increasingly being confined to the private sphere, through a separation between church and state. The advance of state sovereignty thus usually went

● **Collectivization**: The abolition of private property in favour of a system of common or public ownership.

● **Totalitarianism**: An all-encompassing system of political rule, involving pervasive ideological manipulation and open brutality (see p. 269).

hand in hand with the forward march of secularization. In the USA, the secular nature of the state was enshrined in the First Amendment of the constitution, which guarantees that freedom of worship shall not be abridged, while in France the separation of church and state has been maintained through a strict emphasis on the principle of ***laïcité***. In countries such as Norway, Denmark and the UK, 'established' or **state religions** have developed, although the privileges these religions enjoy stop well short of theocratic rule, and their political influence has generally been restricted by a high level of social secularization.

Nevertheless, the period since the 1980s has witnessed the rise of the religious state, driven by the tendency within religious fundamentalism (see p. 53) to reject the public/private divide and to view religion as the basis of politics. Far from regarding political realm as inherently corrupt, fundamentalist movements have typically looked to seize control of the state and to use it as an instrument of moral and spiritual regeneration. This was evident, for instance, in the process of 'Islamization' introduced in Pakistan under General Zia-ul-Haq after 1978, the establishment of an 'Islamic state' in Iran as a result of the 1979 revolution, and, despite its formal commitment to secularism, the close links between the Sri Lankan state and Sinhala Buddhism, particularly during the years of violent struggle against Tamil separatism. Although, strictly speaking, religious states are founded on the basis of religious principles, and, in the Iranian model, contain explicitly theocratic features, in other cases religiously-orientated governments operate in a context of constitutional secularism. This applies in the case of the AKP in Turkey (see p. 280) and, since 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

ECLIPSE OF THE STATE?

Since the late 1980s, debate about the state has been overshadowed by assertions about it 'retreat' or 'decline'. The once-mighty leviathan – widely seen to be co-extensive with politics itself – had seemingly been humbled, state authority having been undermined by the growing importance of, amongst other things, the global economy, the market, major corporations, non-state actors and international organisations. The clamour for 'state-centric' approaches to domestic and international politics to be rethought, or abandoned altogether, therefore grew. However, a simple choice between 'state-centrism' and 'retreat-ism' is, at best, misleading. For instance, although states and markets are commonly portrayed as rival forces, they also interlock and complement one another. Apart from anything else, markets cannot function without a system of property rights that only the state can establish and protect. Moreover, although states may have lost authority in certain respects; in others, they may have become stronger.

● ***Laïcité***: (French) The principle of the absence of religious involvement in government affairs, and of government involvement in religious affairs.

● **State religion**: A religious body that is officially endorsed by the state, giving it special privileges, but (usually) not formal political authority.

Decline and fall of the state

Globalization and state transformation

The rise of globalization has stimulated a major debate about the power and significance of the state in a globalized world. Three contrasting positions can be identified. In the first place, some theorists have boldly proclaimed the emergence of 'post-sovereign governance' (Scholte, 2005), suggesting that the rise of