

What is a state?

State is a necessary and a universal institution, and is the fundamental subject of Political Science. The term 'state' is not to be confused with **nation, society, government** etc. In effect, there are so many definitions of state that a political scientist sometimes finds himself/herself in the maze of numerous conflicting ideas and viewpoints with respect to the meaning of state. In most ordinary sense, a state is a central government, ruling over a population and a territory that represents and protects that population in international politics. This viewpoint can be substantiated by the definition of state given by Professor Garner. According to him, **"The state as a concept of political science and public law is a community of persons, more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independently or so, of external control and possessing an organized government to which the great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience"**

The above definition can be regarded as one of the best. Thus, in brief, it can be summed up, **"state can be defined as an organized people living in a definite territory which has its own sovereign government"**.

Elements or attributes of a state

There are four essential elements of a state. They are : population, territory, government and sovereignty. They are discussed below:

- (1) **Population** : Population assumes importance for two reasons. First, the state is a human institution and a product of man's gregarious nature and the result of necessities of human life. Second, population and land are the starting point of any study of man in his organized groups. It is the people who make the state, without them there can be no state. But population must be large enough to make a state and sustain it. The members of one single family do not make a state, there should be a series of families. No limit, however, can be placed on the number of people constituting the state. Difference in population, other things remaining the same, do not make any difference in the nature of the state, although opinions as to its size have varied from time to time.
- (2) **Territory** : Territoriality that originated as a Westphalian concept is an essential element of a state. All authorities on International Law now agree that a fixed territory must be a condition of statehood. Living together on a common land welds the people in a community of interests and it is a powerful incentive to fellow-feeling. Love for the territory inculcates the spirit of patriotism, which has been described in all ages and stages as a supreme virtue of man. Some reverentially call their country 'motherland' while others call it 'fatherland' and they invoke his/her blessings and vow to safeguard its territorial integrity. Territorial integrity of the state is the most cherished sentiment of oneness and the object of patriotism and both together for its permanent existence.

- (3) **Government** : The purpose for which the people live together cannot be realized unless they are properly organized and accept certain rules of conduct. The agency created to enforce such rules of conduct and to ensure obedience is called government. Government is the focus of the common purpose of the people occupying a definite territory and it is through this medium that common policies are determined, common affairs are regulated and common interests promoted. Without government, the condition of a state will be like a ship without a radar with no direction for social cohesion and collective action.
- (4) **Sovereignty** : Sovereignty of a state is its most essential and distinguishable feature. A people inhabiting a definite portion of territory and having a government do not constitute a state. They must be internally supreme and free from external control. Sovereignty of the state has two aspects, internal sovereignty and external sovereignty. Internal sovereignty is the state's monopoly of authority inside its boundaries. External sovereignty indicates that each state is independent of other states and that no outside state has any authority over any other state.

Functions of a state

The functions of a state are both compulsory and voluntary. They are discussed below.

A : Compulsory functions of a state

- (1) **Defense against foreign attack** : The most urgent function of a state is defense of the country against foreign attack. It has to make adequate preparations in the form of weapons as land, sea and air forces. It has to take special notice of things which can create danger of attack from other countries.
- (2) **Internal Peace and Security** : The policy of a state at home is quite important as its foreign policy. It is the prime duty of the state to maintain internal peace and security. An increase in communal riots, thefts, cases of robbery and dacoity and rebellion can endanger the existence of the state itself. The state maintains peace and order through police and army.
- (3) **Protection of the Rights of Citizens** : In every state, the citizens possess certain rights like rights to life, property, freedom of thought etc. It is incumbent upon the state to protect these rights, drawn mostly from the UNDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). For attaining this goal, the state has to formulate essential laws, arrange for proper administration and organize justice.
- (4) **Justice** : Justice is a compulsory function of a state. This provides for obedience of laws in the state, maintains order and protects the rights of everyone.

B. Voluntary functions of a state

- (1) **Education:** In the modern age, all states consider it their duty to make adequate arrangement for the education of their citizens. A state of uneducated citizens can never progress. Thus the state makes arrangement for primary schools, colleges and universities so that higher education in science, agriculture and the humanities may become possible. Arrangements are made for adjoining research, research centers, libraries, zoos, store houses and art classes etc. Efforts are made to provide free primary education. Capable students are awarded scholarship by the state. But the state should avoid unnecessary interference in educational centers.
- (2) **Health:** Along with education, modern states try to provide for the protection of health. Provision is made for sanitation, hospitals, free medicine, vaccination and essential energizing foods for the poor. Medical colleges are opened to end the dearth of capable doctors. Government research centers and training schools for nurses are opened.
- (3) **Protection of the old, poor and invalid:** Modern states have also begun making arrangements for the old, unemployed people who are given pension. The facility of insurance insures the security of everyone. Orphanages and homes for the destitute are created.
- (4) **Arrangement of public welfare services:** The state organizes for the railways, postal and telegraphic facilities. It is the duty of the state to make arrangements for means of transportation such as buses, railways, air service and ships etc.
- (5) **Social and economic development:** Another of state's duties is to guarantee social and economic improvement. The state lays down laws against harmful customs and makes necessary arrangements for their enforcement.
- (6) **Encouraging trade and industry:** It is also the duty of the state to encourage trade and industry and to develop it as well. Almost everywhere in the world, it is the state which controls economic system and the mint. It is the state which standardizes the scales of measurement and weighing. The country cannot benefit by international trade if it does not make the proper laws for import and export. The state should establish factories of the key industries in order to implement and initiate other industries in the country.
- (7) **Organization of labour:** The state should direct its efforts to the implementation of conditions of labourers and lay down rules to obviate the probability of their exploitation. It is the responsibility of the state to make efforts towards labour welfare.
- (8) **Proper use of natural resources of the country :** A country can become powerful by land, forests , rivers, minerals and agricultural products. Maximum benefit should be extracted from them. On this subject, the state should direct the necessary precautionary measures, research and search for new material products and lay down laws for the utilization of forests, mines, land etc. in a sustainable manner.
- (9) **Arrangement of recreation:** In order to maintain the novelty and excitement in life of the public, the state should provide means for recreation. For this, film societies, dramatic societies etc. should be encouraged.
- (10) **Environmental protection:** The state should undertake developmental activities not at the cost of environment. Care should be taken that development in whatever sector takes

place in a sustainable manner so as not to damage the environment and as well the rights of the future generation.

References :

1. Introduction to International Relations by Robert Jackson and George Sorensen.
2. Principles of Political Science by A C Kapur
3. Principles and Theory of Political Science by Urmila Sharma and S K Sharma
4. International Relations : Conflict and Cooperation at the Turn of the 21st Century by Conway W Henderson.

General Reading

Political Science : An Introduction by Michael G Roskin, Robert L Cord, James a Medeiros and Walter S Jones.

The Origin of State: The Evolutionary Theory

The origin of modern state is marked by a long evolutionary process. The state is neither the result of an artificial creation nor can it said to have originated at a particular period of time. It is, on the other hand, the product of growth - a slow and steady evolution extending over a long period of time and embracing many elements in its development, prominent among which are kinship, religion, property and the need for self-defense from within and outside. In Political Science, there are many theories to explain the origin of state like: the Theory of Divine Origin, the Theory of Force, the Theory of Social Contract, the Patriarchal or Matriarchal Theories, the Historical or Evolutionary Theory. Among these theories, the Historical or Evolutionary Theory is now accepted as the correct theory of the origin of state. While explaining this theory, light can be thrown on the other theories that influenced the development of state in one way of the other.

The first relatively clear manifestation of a state system is that of ancient Greece (500 BC – 100 BC) then known as Hellas. Ancient Greece was not a nation-state the way it is today. Rather it was a system of mostly small **city – states**. Athens was the largest and most famous, but there were also many other city states such as Sparta and Corinth. Together, they formed the first state system in Western history. The ancient Greek state system was eventually destroyed by more powerful neighbouring empires and in due course of time, the Greeks became the subjects of the **Roman Empire** (200 BC – 500 AD). The Romans developed a huge empire in the course of conquering, occupying and ruling most of Europe and a large part of the Middle East and North Africa. The Romans had to deal with the numerous political communities that occupied these

areas, but they did it by subordinating them rather than recognizing them. So one finds the application of force during the Roman period. It should be mentioned that there were other political systems and empires further afield. North Africa and the Middle East formed a world of Islamic civilization which originated in the Arabian peninsula in the early years of the 7th century. There were also empires in what are today Iran and India.

Under the Roman empire, the only option for political communities was either subordination to Rome or revolt. Eventually, those communities on the periphery of the empire began to revolt. The Roman army could not control the revolts and began to retreat. On several occasions, the city of Rome itself was invaded and shattered by the barbarian tribes. In this way, the Roman empire was finally brought to an end after many centuries of political success and survival. The collapse of the Roman empire left Western Europe in the **Dark Ages** (476 AD – 800 AD), a period marked by a decline in law and order, and learning and a decrease in population. Power and authority, once concentrated in the hands of the Romans, became fragmented among many petty kings and warlords who provided a modicum of security from local lawlessness and barbarian raids. Protection improved as feudalism evolved, reaching its full form between the 11th and 13th centuries in the Middle age (801 AD – 1400 AD). Feudalism called for lords to distribute land to vassals and to offer them protection. In return, the vassals contributed money and soldiers to their lords. Over the centuries, a pattern of consolidation of the fragmented feudal units gradually developed to provide a territorial base for larger states. Before large independent states began to emerge, there was the rise of the Holy Roman Empire that Christianized almost the whole of Europe and parts of the Middle East. The Holy Roman Empire (962 AD - 1806 AD) took shape, usually under the role of a German emperor approved by the Roman Catholic Pope. The Holy Roman Empire existed on territory presently shared by Austria, Belgium, the Republics of Czech and Slovakia, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. This empire was a weak governmental system with territorial boundaries that tended to recede rather than expand. During this period of time, an important step in the formation of the state was the emergence of strong kings.

A king usually began as a lord, but overtime, came to rule over other lords and large territories. Not only did the kings have to gain control over the feudal lords within their domains; these rulers also had to wrest themselves free of the control of Roman Catholic Pope at the same time. The Roman Catholic Church was a cultural unifier for centuries in Europe, and the Pope had considerable powers. The Divine Theory allowed some of the kings of Europe to view their sovereignty as completely unbridled authority. They took seriously the views of French philosopher Jean Bodin (1530-1596) who claimed that the monarch had supreme power over the citizens. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the English philosopher, maintained that without a monarch's firm control, life would be 'poor, nasty, brutish and short'.

Fortunately for king and the evolution of modern state in Europe, the Pope's power declined. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century severely shook the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, several different Protestant Churches appeared during the **Renaissance** (1400-1600). This period was an era of enlightenment and reforms that marked the end of the Middle Ages, an era that helped to create the cultural atmosphere that made the Protestant Reformation possible. During this period, various philosophers and thinkers talked about the Social Contract Theory as

per which the people would enter into a contract with the sovereign for running the affairs of the state. This has profoundly influenced the rise of modern state.

Between 1400 and 1600, territorial units began to appear that would foreshadow some of the modern states of today. Primarily these territorial states were England, France, Holland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the small principalities known collectively as Germanies. Divided along Catholic or the Protestant lines, some of these states fought intense, bloody wars over whether Catholic or the Protestant faith would prevail in Europe. Religious wars finally culminated in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The treaty ending this war is known as the **Treaty of Westphalia** (1648). It recognized the sovereignty of each king. This legal status meant that no authority operated above the king, and states were not to interfere with one another because they were legal equals. Sovereignty is the cornerstone of the modern state, and many scholars use the date 1648 to mark the beginning of the modern state system.

Later on, the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789 jolted the monarch's powerful position since these revolutions rejected the entire concept of monarchical rule. In time, sovereignty passed from the state to the people, meaning that the people were the ultimate source of all legitimate political authority. This locus of authority in the people became known as popular sovereignty, and the people exercised this authority mainly through elections to choose those who were to govern. Popular sovereignty spread as an ideal, with some European states turning to democracy in the 19th century.
