



POLITICS AS SOCIAL ACTIVITY

ONLY STUDY GUIDE FOR PLC101-R

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA, PRETORIA

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GETTING STARTED

Welcome as a student in Politics (often called Political Science) at Unisa and to the Department of Political Sciences in particular. We trust that you will find the course interesting and enriching. Since we come into contact with politics almost every day of our lives, we hope that the course will equip you with the necessary knowledge and skills to make a contribution to politics. In this way you can put the theory into practice.

Since a student's first introduction to a new course is sometimes difficult, at this point we shall provide a few hints on the approach that we shall be adopting in this course.

POLITICS AS A SUBJECT

Politics is the topic that we shall be studying in this course. Since the origin of the subject, the focus of the field of study of politics has often changed. Some of the fields of study that have been emphasised in the past are institutions, philosophy, laws and political behaviour. As you progress in the course (especially if you are taking it as a major subject), you will be introduced to all the elements. You will also see that the study of politics has points of contact with most other fields of study, even the natural sciences — look, for example, at green politics in terms of which people are concerned about the effects of pollution.

CONTENTS OF THE COURSE

The content of this module is as follows:

- One study guide which forms the nucleus of the course.
- A prescribed book which supplements the study guide. The aim of the prescribed book is to teach students to handle

academic books and to assess them critically. Tasks on the prescribed books will thus be given in the study guide.

- Tutorial letters containing general information on the University, the course, prescribed books and assignments. It is vitally important for you to read all the tutorial letters, especially PLC101–R/101.
- Activities which are part of the study units. Set enough time aside for the activities because they afford you the opportunity of developing and/or refining your academic skills. They also test your understanding of the course contents, which, in turn, will prepare you for the assignments and examination.
- Assignments contained in PLC101–R/101, which you will be required to submit in order to gain admission to the examination.
- Brochures such as *Unisa: services and procedures* which you should study carefully in order to acquaint you with library procedures, for example.

We also recommend the following:

- Do yourself a favour and buy the study aid, *Effective study*. Tutorial Letter PLC101–R/101 contains details of this publication, which provides information on study methods, time management, memorisation techniques, the writing of assignments, answering multiple-choice questions and how to study for the examination.
- Make sure that you have access to a few good dictionaries.

POLITICAL MAPS

The study guide repeatedly mentions geographical areas and states in particular. However, the number of states has drastically increased in the last few years, and not all atlases contain all the new states. Thus for your convenience, the study guide contains political maps of the world indicating regions and states. Use them to orientate yourself towards the world of politics.

political map indicates
the different political
boundaries

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

concept

term

definition

A **concept** is the idea of the existence of something such as a particular phenomenon and what it entails — think, for example, of the concepts of husband, wife, love and hate. A **term** is a word or phrase (set of words) used to identify a particular concept. A **definition** again is a sentence explaining what a certain concept entails, or how a specific term is used. You will be introduced to specific concepts, terms and their definitions in any subject or course — hence the importance of your understanding what specific concepts entail and how specific terms are used. If you do not master these concepts and understand how specific terms are used, meaningful communication in a particular subject becomes problematic.

In this course you will also be introduced to certain concepts and terms. Make sure that you master them. To make this easier for you, a list is provided at the beginning of each theme. To enable you to easily look up these concepts and terms in the study guide, you are advised to write down the page number next to these terms whenever you encounter them in the text. At the same time this will give you practice in using indices in academic books.

STUDY GROUPS

In this course you are encouraged to develop your own views on politics, but at the same time to be aware of others' views. We therefore recommend that you try to start a study group in your area. Details of how to go about this are provided in Tutorial Letter PCS100–E/101. If it is not possible to start such a study group, we recommend that you discuss what you learn in this course with other people. It is also important to read different newspapers — these you can also swap with others.

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLES

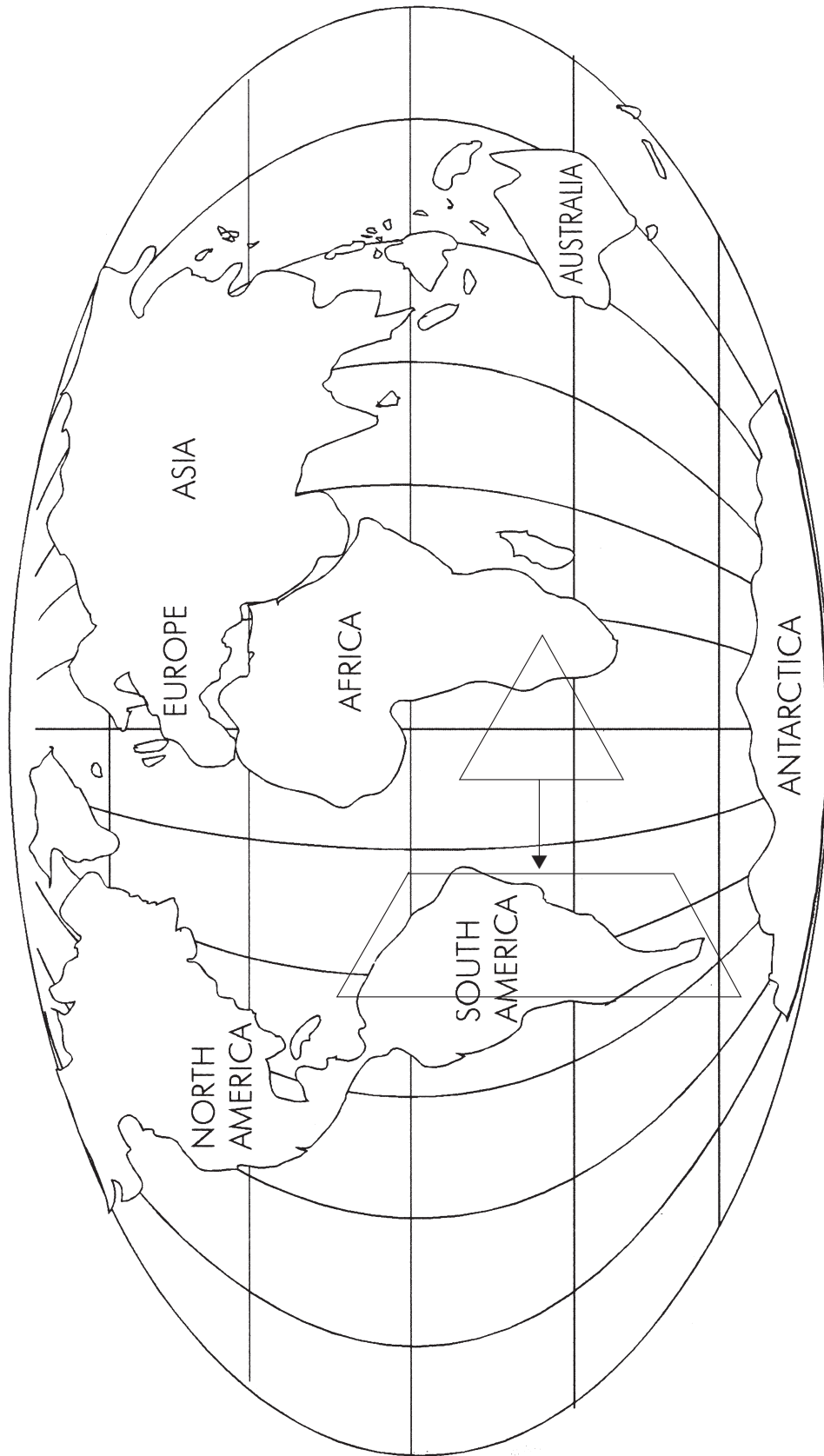
To explain certain facts to you, we often used hypothetical examples (ie imaginary examples). Although these examples are often linked to certain offices, such as that of a particular minister, bear in mind that the example is only imaginary and that we are not stating that a certain person acted in this way.

We trust that you will find the course interesting and that you will consider continuing with it. If you have any problems do not hesitate to contact us.

Wishing you every success!

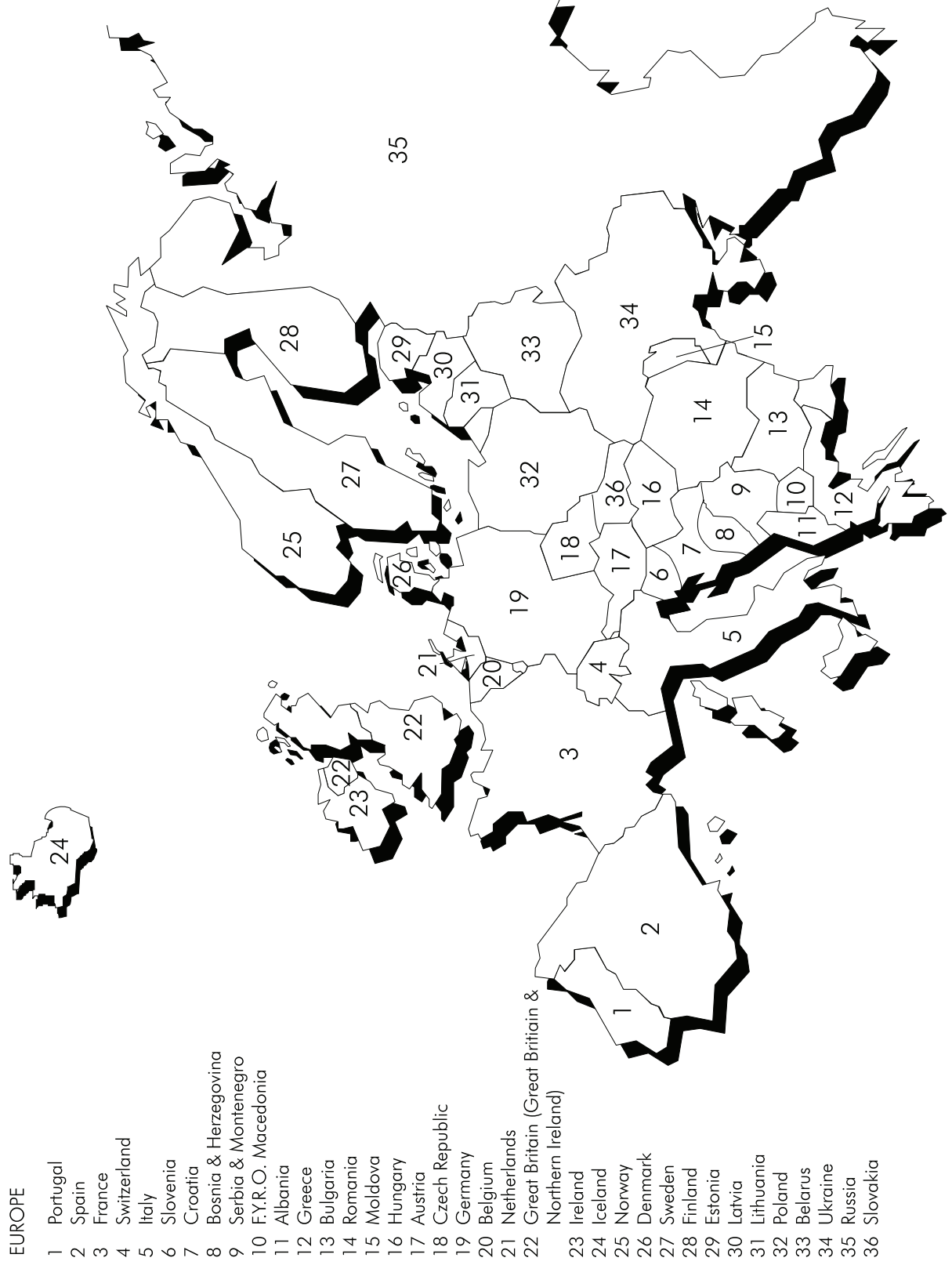
The presenters of the course

CONTINENTS OF THE WORLD



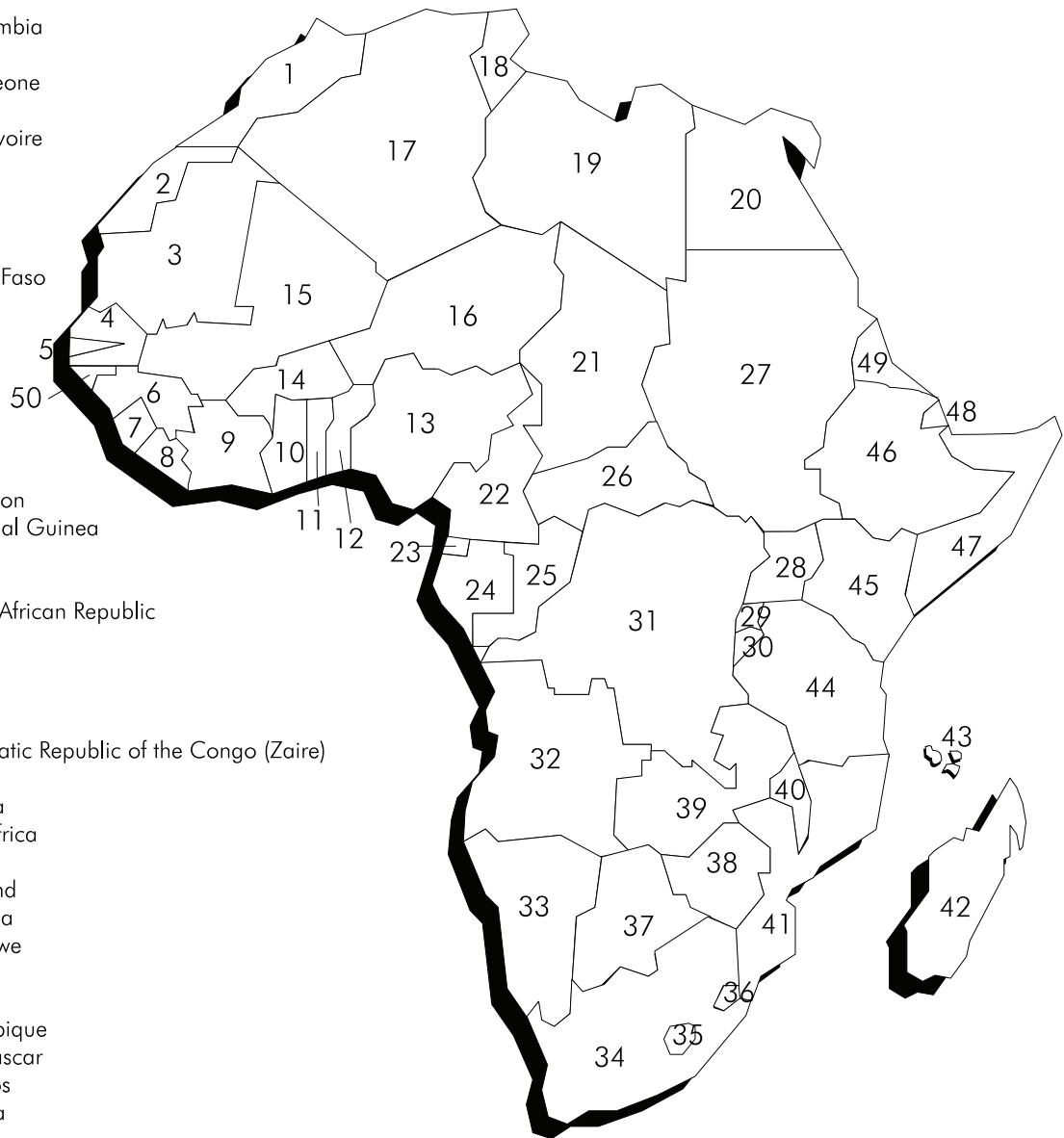


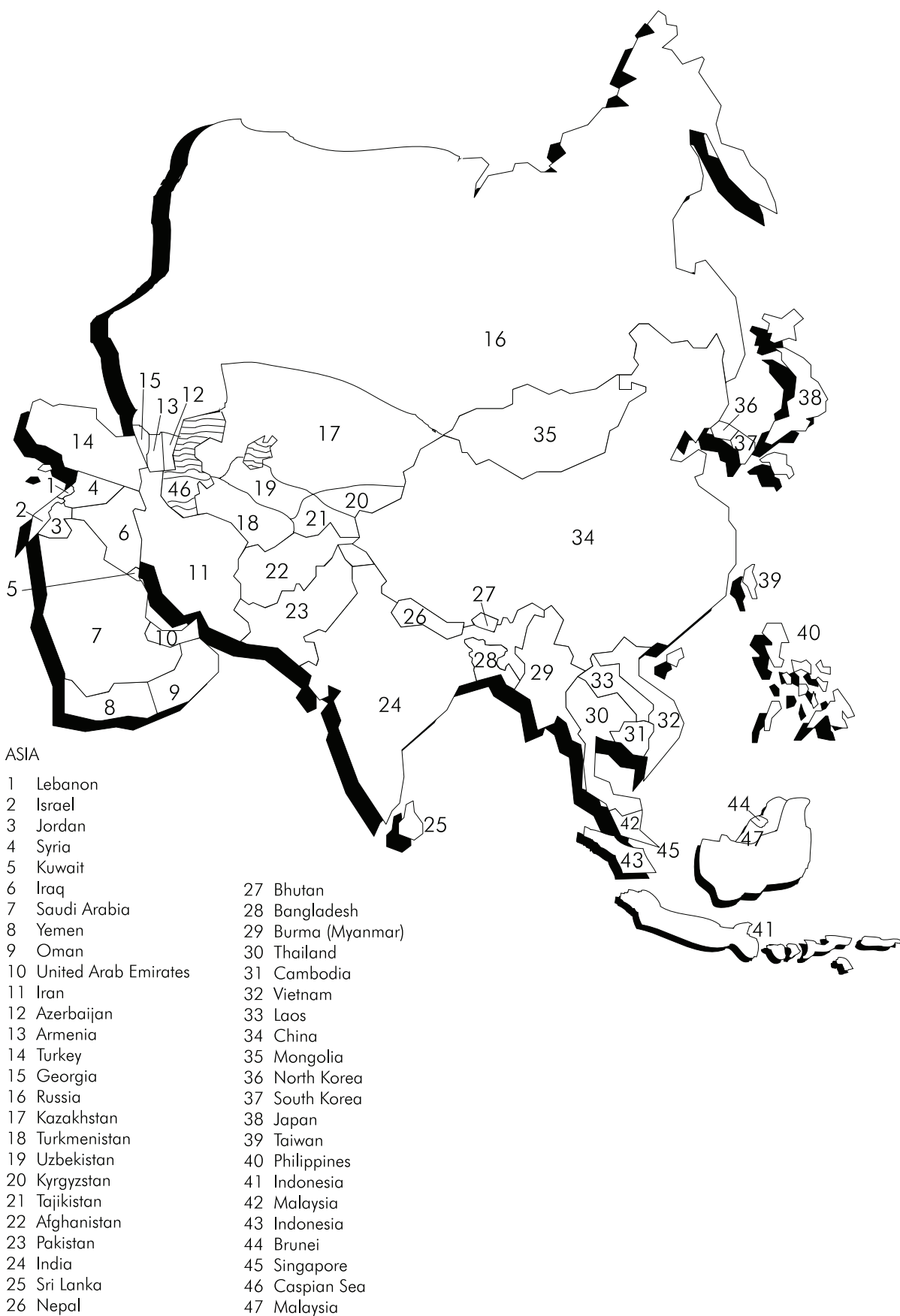




AFRICA

- 1 Morocco
- 2 Western Sahara
- 3 Mauritania
- 4 Senegal
- 5 The Gambia
- 6 Guinea
- 7 Sierra Leone
- 8 Liberia
- 9 Côte d'Ivoire
- 10 Ghana
- 11 Togo
- 12 Benin
- 13 Nigeria
- 14 Burkina Faso
- 15 Mali
- 16 Niger
- 17 Algeria
- 18 Tunisia
- 19 Libya
- 20 Egypt
- 21 Chad
- 22 Cameroon
- 23 Equatorial Guinea
- 24 Gabon
- 25 Congo
- 26 Central African Republic
- 27 Sudan
- 28 Uganda
- 29 Rwanda
- 30 Burundi
- 31 Democratic Republic of the Congo (Zaire)
- 32 Angola
- 33 Namibia
- 34 South Africa
- 35 Lesotho
- 36 Swaziland
- 37 Botswana
- 38 Zimbabwe
- 39 Zambia
- 40 Malawi
- 41 Mozambique
- 42 Madagascar
- 43 Comoros
- 44 Tanzania
- 45 Kenya
- 46 Ethiopia
- 47 Somalia
- 48 Djibouti
- 49 Eritrea
- 50 Guinea-Bissau





OVERVIEW

No matter where we are, political decisions are made which affect our way of life. Sometimes we feel positive about these political decisions, while at other times we may feel negative. In this study guide, we shall be looking for answers to the following questions: “What is politics? How and why does it affect our lives? In what ways are people politically organised?”

To familiarise you with politics and to provide answers to these questions, you should be able to

- **explain what the concept of politics entails**
- **explain why politics is a facet of human life**
- **distinguish between the different manifestations of political organisation**
- **discuss the nature of humankind’s political organisation today, and how it developed**



THEME 1

POLITICS AS A FACET OF HUMAN LIFE

OVERVIEW

This theme entails searching for an answer to the question: “Why is politics a facet of human life?” In order to answer this question, you should be able to explain

- what the concept of politics entails
- why people are political beings

We now provide a list of terms and concepts that are important in this study unit. Make sure that you are completely familiar with the meaning of these terms and concepts when studying this section. We suggest that you keep a record of the page numbers whenever you encounter these terms in the text.

authoritarian	authoritative decisions	authorities
authority	community	comparison
competency	concepts	consultative
decisions	definitions	executive authority
goods	government	legislative authority
legitimacy	liberal tradition	participative
policy matters	political decisions	political decision makers
politics	power	regulation
services	society	structural problems
subjects	terms	totalitarian tradition
values		



STUDY UNIT 1

THE CONCEPT OF POLITICS

Compiled by Susan Botha

OVERVIEW

In this study unit, we will look for an answer to the question, “What is politics?” To be able to answer this question, we will start with a brief description of what we regard as politics in this study. In short, politics has to do with decisions that authorities make for an entire society, according to specific procedures and on a variety of matters. In order to explain what this definition implies it is necessary to find answers to the focus questions set out below.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What decisions are political decisions?
For whom are political decisions made?
Who makes political decisions?
How are political decisions made?
About what things are political decisions made?
Who executes (carries out) political decisions?

It is also important for you to know the following:

- How the concept of politics is defined.
- How the term “politics” is used.

1.1 WHAT DECISIONS ARE POLITICAL DECISIONS?

Have you ever stopped to think about how important decisions are in your life? You make some decisions for yourself and some for other people, for example, for your family and at work. Now think about all the decisions you have not made, but which still affect your life. Political decisions are one example of decisions that affect your life, but which do not necessarily have your approval. Even if a political decision does not have your approval, you are still bound by it. The nature of political decisions makes it very important for you to know exactly what political decisions are.

ACTIVITY 1.1

Read the following two hypothetical examples and then answer the questions:

The Minister of Transport has announced that because of the shocking road death figures, the government has decided to take strong action against people who break the traffic rules.

Your neighbour has decided that because his children have performed poorly at school, they may now only watch television on Saturdays.

Answer the following questions:

- (1) Whose actions are influenced by the first decision? Is this decision going to affect both you and your neighbour? Who is not affected by this decision?
- (2) Whose actions are affected by the second decision? Is this decision going to affect you? Who is not affected by this decision?
- (3) What will or may happen if you and/or your neighbour violate the traffic rules?
- (4) What will or may happen if your neighbour's children watch television on a Monday?
- (5) What will or may happen if you and your children watch television on a Monday?
- (6) What do you think will happen if your neighbour hits his children

so hard, because they watched television on a day other than Saturday, that they have to be taken to hospital?



Comparison is when a person looks at similarities and differences between two or more things.

If you **compare** the decisions made in the two sentences, you will notice that there are important similarities and differences that tell us more about politics.

Authority is the legal and legitimate right to exercise control over others.

One similarity is that both sentences give examples of *decisions* that are going to affect someone's actions (behaviour). In the first sentence, everyone over whom the Minister of Transport can exercise **authority**, is affected. If the person concerned is the Minister of Transport of South Africa (RSA), everyone living within the borders of South Africa will be affected. In the second sentence, those over whom your neighbour has authority will be affected. Since the last-mentioned case is a family matter, you and other families will not be affected by the decision because your neighbour, as the head of his family, has authority over the members of his family, but not over you.

A second similarity is that both decisions can be *enforced*. The Department of Transport can act against those who violate traffic rules, and your neighbour can act against his children who disobey the rules laid down in his house. When a decision can be enforced, it is referred to as an **authoritative** decision.

authoritative

An important difference that becomes apparent from the discussion of the similarities is that these two authoritative decisions do not *apply* to exactly the same group of people.

If you and your neighbour are inhabitants of South Africa, then the first decision applies to all people living in South Africa, including you and your neighbour. Everyone in South Africa is *bound* by this decision (with the exception of people with diplomatic immunity).

The second decision is authoritative since it can be enforced, but it can only be enforced on your neighbour's family. In other words, you and other inhabitants of South Africa are not bound by this decision. Thus, we can regard the first decision as an authoritative decision for the whole of South African **society**. (A society is a social unit of people who, because of certain interests and activities, develop common institutions and live in an interdependent way in a common living environment.) You and your neighbour are members of the South African society. Your neighbour's decision is

society

not applicable to the whole of society, but the Minister of Transport's decision is.

The term "politics" comes from the Greek, *polis*, which refers to a city-state.

What do you think would happen if your neighbour were to punish his children by hitting them so hard that they land up in hospital? In South Africa he will probably be accused of child abuse, stand trial and be sentenced. Why will this happen? Surely your neighbour has the right to decide how his children should behave? The answer to this question is that your neighbour may only take authoritative decisions for his family which are not in conflict with the **values** enforced in that society. (A value is something that people regard as important and strive for, and it therefore determines, among other things, what can be regarded as right and as wrong.) In other words, there are decisions that have a higher status in South African society compared to the decisions your neighbour takes for his family. The Minister of Transport's decision is concerned with **politics**; **political decisions** have the highest status in a society, because they are not subordinate to other decisions such as the one taken by your neighbour, for example. Your neighbour's decision is, therefore, not a political decision, because it is subordinate to political decisions.

values

politics

political decision

ACTIVITY 1.2

Indicate which of the hypothetical statements below refers to a political decision. Explain your choice.

- (1) The President of South Africa has announced that from now on drastic steps are going to be taken against crime.
- (2) The XYZ Soccer League has announced that from now on strict action is going to be taken against clubs that use overseas players.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that the first decision relates to politics, while the second does not.

To sum up:

The first characteristic of politics discussed is the following:

- Politics has to do with *authoritative decisions* that *apply* to an entire *society*.

1.2 FOR WHOM ARE POLITICAL DECISIONS TAKEN?

In the preceding discussion, we mentioned that decisions taken in politics are applicable to the whole of society. What does this mean?

ACTIVITY 1.3

Read the next three statements and then answer the questions which follow.

The Minister of Finance has announced that all taxpayers must register with the South African Revenue Service.

The Premier of Gauteng has announced that owners of vehicles with old registration numbers must apply for new registration numbers.

The City Council of Pretoria approved a decision at their last monthly meeting, that strict action would be taken against people using fire-works without the necessary permission.

- (1) To whom does the Minister of Finance's decision apply? (Will the inhabitants of Gauteng, the Free State, Pretoria and Johannesburg be bound by the decision?)
- (2) To whom does the Premier of Gauteng's decision apply? (Will the inhabitants of Pretoria, Johannesburg, the Free State and the whole of South Africa be bound by it?)
- (3) To whom does the City Council of Pretoria's decision apply? (Will the inhabitants of Johannesburg, Gauteng, the Free State and the rest of South Africa be bound by it?)

The first decision applies to all the inhabitants of South Africa. The second decision applies only to the inhabitants of Gauteng; since Pretoria and Johannesburg are situated in Gauteng, the decision will also apply to the inhabitants of these two cities. The third decision, however, will apply to the inhabitants of Pretoria.

The question that arises here is whether the last two statements relate to political decisions because they can be enforced on far fewer people than the first decision. The answer to this question depends on what we understand by the concept of society.

We indicated earlier that the inhabitants of South Africa form a society. This suggests that it is a particular society, but not the only society. The inhabitants of Pretoria, Johannesburg, Gauteng and the Free State, like the inhabitants of any other town, city and province in South Africa, form a specifically defined (demarcated) society in which decisions, that are authoritative for that particular society, may be taken.

One can regard these societies as subsocieties of the overall South African society. Any decisions made in these subsocieties may be taken because the overall society allows them to be made. The political decisions made in these subsocieties have a higher status than any other decision made *therein*, such as, a decision by a sports association, business enterprise or church. For instance, a certain business enterprise in Pretoria cannot decide to hold a fireworks display without obtaining the necessary permission from the City Council of Pretoria.

There are many other societies similar to the one in South Africa, in which authoritative decisions, which apply to all members of that society, are taken. Think, for example, of Zimbabwe, Botswana, the USA, China and Japan, to mention but a few. These societies also have subsocieties in which political decisions are made.

To sum up:

The two characteristics of politics discussed thus far are as follows:

- Politics relates to *authoritative decisions* made for the *whole of society*.
- Political decisions are the *highest* level of decisions made in a particular society.

1.3 WHO MAKES POLITICAL DECISIONS?

In our discussion thus far we have mentioned authoritative decisions that are taken for an entire society. Who makes these decisions?

ACTIVITY 1.4



Read the preceding discussion again, and then do the following:

- (1) In the preceding discussion, indicate which people and organisations made authoritative decisions.
- (2) Name the decisions that have to do with politics.
- (3) Give reasons why the other decisions are not political decisions.



The following people or organisations were mentioned: the Minister of Transport, your neighbour, the President of South Africa, the XYZ Soccer League, the Minister of Finance, the Premier of Gauteng and the City Council of Pretoria.

This brings us to further questions, namely: Who are these people? Who are the Minister of Transport and the President of South Africa? Why can they make decisions which can be enforced on everyone in South Africa, while your neighbour and the XYZ Soccer League cannot. The answer is that the Minister of Transport is also part of the **authorities** in South Africa and is, therefore, in the position to make the highest authoritative decisions for the whole of South African society. Authorities consist of all the institutions and people responsible for taking, executing (carrying out) and adjudicating (applying) political decisions. That is why we refer to them as political decision makers. We say that they are sovereign in making authoritative decisions, because there is no-one who may make a higher decision in that society.

authorities

In the same way, the Premier of Gauteng and the City Council of Pretoria are in the position to make the highest authoritative decisions on certain issues for the entire subsociety. (These issues are usually assigned by the national authority.) You, your neighbour and XYZ Soccer League, however, are not in such a position, because you do not have the necessary authority.

On what grounds may someone make a decision for an entire society? A person must have the necessary power and authority in order to make decisions for an entire society.

power

Firstly, a person may have sufficient **power** to make and enforce decisions. A person has power when he or she is able to make someone else do something that he or she would otherwise not do.

Secondly, a person may be given the necessary authority to make authoritative decisions. **Authority** is often defined as legalised and legitimate power. When someone is given authority, he or she has the power, competencies and legitimacy to make authoritative decisions. However, he or she must also have the capability to

authority

competency

exercise authority. Military leaders, for example, may make it impossible for those with authority to actually exercise it.

A person must also have the necessary **competency** or powers to make authoritative decisions. Someone who has the necessary power and/or authority, can empower another person to make authoritative decisions. Competency implies empowering a person to carry out a specific action.

legitimacy

Political decision makers obtain authority by means of **legitimacy**. Legitimacy may be regarded as the opinion of the members of the society, that those people who make authoritative decisions have the right to do so and that they are entitled to obedience. Society may thus accept a government's exercise of power and competency as legitimate. It is in this way that the government is given authority.

However, having power and competency does not necessarily imply legitimacy and authority. Thus, on the grounds of the competency given to him or her, someone may acquire the necessary power to make decisions that can be enforced on an entire society, without this person having the necessary legitimacy and authority.

When someone does not have the necessary authority, he or she may indeed have the necessary power to make decisions for society as a whole and consequently force society to accept these decisions. In the long run, however, it is difficult for political decision makers who do not have legitimacy and authority to enforce decisions.

ACTIVITY 1.5



Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions:

During the apartheid era in South Africa, the government decided that all blacks should carry passbooks. However, blacks revolted against this and burnt their passbooks on a number of occasions. Despite this, however, the government enforced this decision and those who did not carry their passbooks were prosecuted.

- (1) Do you think the government had legitimacy among blacks during the apartheid era? Give a reason for your answer.
- (2) How did the government succeed in enforcing its decisions on blacks?
- (3) Among which section of the population did the government have legitimacy?

- (4) From whom did the officials, who were responsible for the prosecutions, obtain the necessary competency or powers?



One can deduce from history that the former government did not have legitimacy among the majority of blacks, but it did among the majority of whites. The government's decisions were largely forced on blacks through the exercise of power, and forced on whites through the exercise of authority. The officials responsible for prosecutions obtained the necessary competency or powers from the political decision makers.

Authorities seldom have 100 percent legitimacy in a particular society. If the authorities do not have adequate legitimacy, efforts will be made in that society to replace the authorities with legitimate authorities. That is why efforts were made in South Africa during the apartheid era to overthrow the authorities.

Political decision makers will only be able to enforce their decisions on an entire society if they have either the necessary power or the necessary authority. If they do not, they can still make decisions for the whole of society, but they will have trouble enforcing their decisions. So, a further characteristic of politics comes to the fore, namely the *interaction and relationship between the authorities and their subjects*. Robert A Dahl (1984:95) proposes the following political strata:

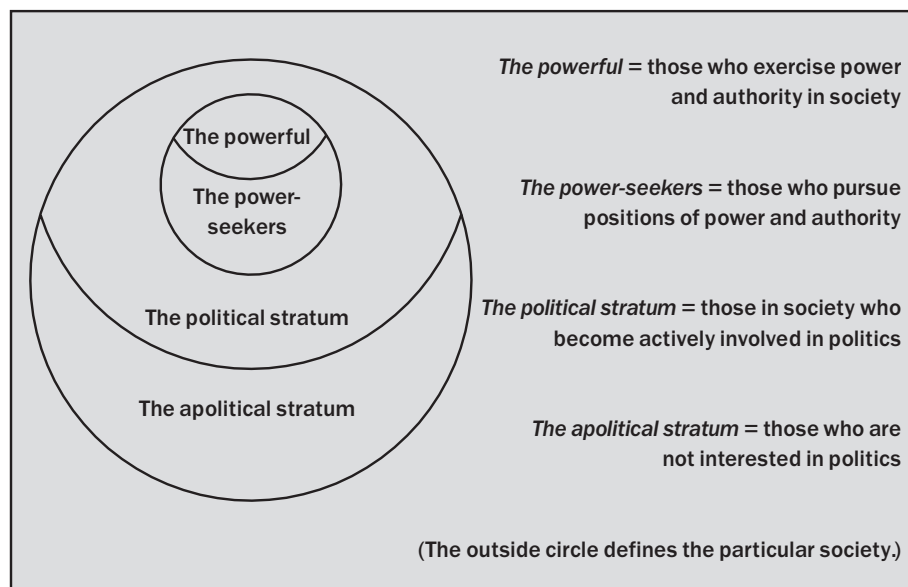


FIGURE 1.1

The authorities make authoritative decisions for the whole of society (subjects), but they (the authorities) should take into account the subjects' attitude towards them as well as the decisions they make and the way they enforce these decisions.

Obviously another important consideration is who the political decision makers are. This will depend largely on the society concerned. As a rule, political decision makers are specific individuals, institutions and groups. Examples of such individuals would be a king or a president. Parliaments and councils are examples of institutions and governing parties are examples of groups. However, it is especially those people who are involved in the legislative institutions, but also the executive and even the judicial institutions, who are important decision makers.

How does someone become a political decision maker? Once again, this depends on the particular society. As a rule, someone becomes a political decision maker as a result of heredity or by means of an election, appointment or self-appointment.

To sum up:

The characteristics of politics that we have discussed thus far are as follows:

- Politics has to do with the interaction and the relationship between the government and its subjects.
- This interaction and relationship relates to the highest authoritative decisions made for the whole of society.
- These authoritative decisions are made by those with the necessary power, authority, legitimacy and competency (political decision makers).

1.4 HOW ARE POLITICAL DECISIONS MADE?

We are now looking for an answer to the question: "Is any decision made by a political decision maker a political decision?"

ACTIVITY 1.6

Go back to activity 1.1 and then answer the following questions:

- (1) Suppose that your neighbour happens to be the Minister of

Transport. Who is now going to be affected by your neighbour's decision about his children's performance at school?

- (2) **What would happen if he were to hit his children so hard that they land up in hospital?**



*A hypothetical example
is an imaginary example.*

In this hypothetical example, the Minister of Transport makes a decision in his private capacity and not in his official capacity. Thus, only the members of his family are bound by his decision and not you or any other person. In his private capacity he is just as bound by the authoritative decisions made and applied in that society, and he, therefore, cannot punish his children as he likes.

The actual people who make decisions are important when a distinction is made between political and other decisions, and the circumstances in which decisions are made are also a significant consideration. Authoritative decisions have to meet specific procedural requirements.

If we look at the procedures for making political decisions, we can distinguish between the following three kinds of political decisions:

- authoritarian decisions
- consultative decisions
- participative decisions

authoritarian

consultative

participative

Authoritarian decisions are decisions made by political decision makers, without the society, for which the decisions are being made, being consulted about the decisions. In the case of **consultative** decisions, the society is consulted, but the political decision makers make the final decisions without having to include society's ideas in the decision. In the case of **participative** decisions, the society is consulted and their ideas are incorporated into the decision.

To sum up:

The characteristics of politics discussed thus far are as follows:

- Politics relates to the interaction and relationship between the government and its subjects.
- This interaction and relationship relate to the highest authoritative decisions made for the whole of society.
- These authoritative decisions are made by those with the

necessary power, legitimacy and competency (political decision makers).

- Political decisions are made according to specific procedures for an entire society.

1.5 ABOUT WHAT MATTERS ARE POLITICAL DECISIONS MADE?

In our discussion so far we have already given a few examples of political decisions. These are examples of decisions about

- action against traffic offenders
- vehicle registration
- registration of taxpayers
- a ban on fireworks

If we look at these examples, we might gain the wrong impression that authoritative decisions are concerned with the “do’s and don’ts” that individuals in society are required to observe.

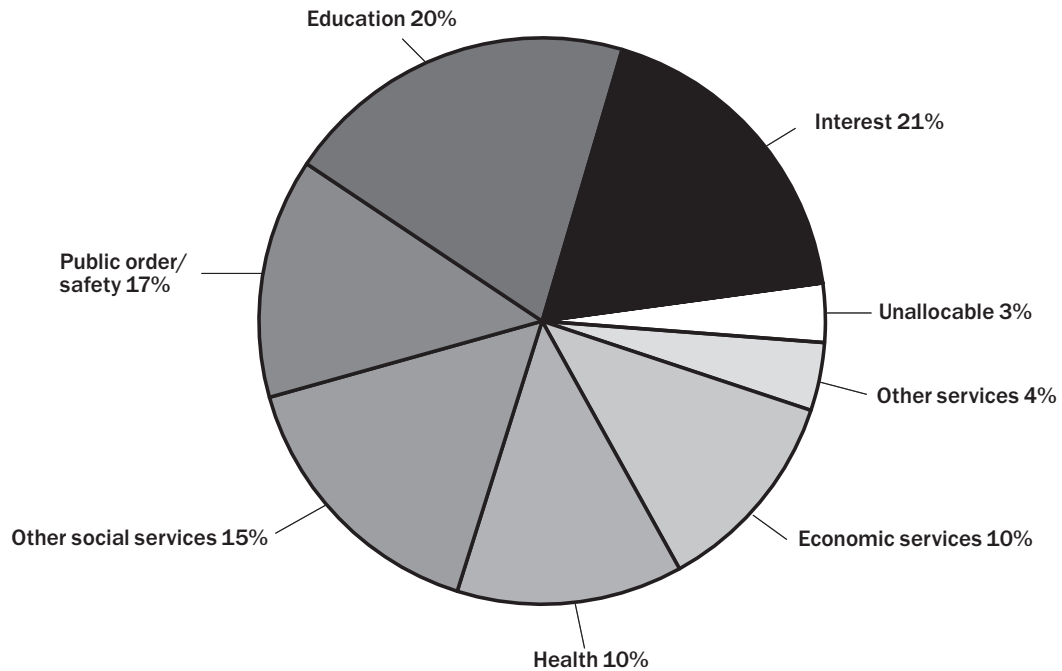
ACTIVITY 1.7

Table 1.1 contains extracts from a summary of the South African government’s expenditure. Study this table and write down the political decisions that are made in South Africa.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION		TOTAL AMOUNT
1.1	General administration:	
1.1.1	Legislation and execution	928 690 000
1.1.2	Financial and fiscal services	3 057 990 000
1.2	Foreign affairs	1 586 417 000
1.3	General research	657 742 000
1.4	Other	1 907 606 000
2	Public order and safety:	
2.1	Defence	11 351 662 000
2.2	Police:	
2.2.1	Traffic control	651 876 000
2.2.2	Fire	31 762 000
2.2.3	Other	13 423 776 000
2.3	Correctional services	4 179 907 000
2.4	Law courts	2 125 362 000

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION		TOTAL AMOUNT
3	Social security and welfare services:	
3.1	Education:	
3.1.1	Pre-primary, primary and secondary	31 275 462 000
3.1.2	Tertiary	7 157 363 000
3.2	Health:	
3.2.1	Primary health care	8 135 900 000
3.2.2	Other	11 180 815 000
3.3	Social security and welfare services	18 151 432 000
3.4	Housing	4 151 391 000
3.5	Sewerage and sanitation	9 897 000
3.6	Community development	3 860 107 000
3.7	Recreation	315 342 000
3.8	Culture	946 867 000
3.9	Other	23 673 000
4	Economic services:	
4.1	State water schemes and other water services	1 913 463 000
4.2	Fuel and energy	156 057 000
4.3	Agriculture, forestry and nature conservation:	
4.3.1	Subsidies on agriculture	
4.3.2	Agriculture	3 371 281 000
4.3.3	Forestry	310 988 000
4.3.4	Nature conservation	770 351 000
4.4	Mining	314 139 000
4.5	Manufacturing:	
4.5.1	Regional development	864 013 000
4.5.2	Other	1 090 242 000
4.6	Construction	
4.7	Transport and communication:	
4.7.1	Roads and road transport	5 242 909 000
4.7.2	Other	2 018 684 000
4.8	Other economic services:	
4.8.1	Tourism	169 193 000
4.8.2	Labour	680 781 000
4.8.3	Export trade promotion	1 437 744 000
4.8.4	Other	527 230 000
5	Unallocable	
5.1	Former provincial administrations	81 000
5.2	Ancillary services	4 322 513 000
5.3	Purchases of land	

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION		TOTAL AMOUNT
5.4	Erection of buildings	861 645 000
5.5	Loans to household	
5.6	Cost of raising loans	50 000 000
5.7	Interest	38 549 782 000
SUBTOTAL — GENERAL GOVERNMENT		187 762 153 000



Source: Central Statistical Service: Release P9121

A quick look at the above table shows that money was spent on the following, for example:

- education
- health
- pensions
- provision of water
- defence and police

Why would the government want to spend money on these things? The answer is that money is provided to carry out the authoritative decisions made, say, about education.

The things about which political decisions are made in a society, relate to the way of life and living conditions in that society. These things are usually divided into the following two categories:

- structural matters
- policy matters

Political decisions about *structural* matters involve things such as who, where and how decisions may be taken. They also involve decisions about, say, the number of houses of parliament, the powers of the president, the provinces and the constitutional court.

Policy matters again have to do with questions (usually problems) in society to which the government has decided to pay attention. These usually concern

- regulating society
- providing services and goods

Regulating society, therefore, entails all the “do’s and don’ts” of the individuals in a society, such as the requirement that births, marriages and deaths have to be registered. The provision of services, for example, concerns protection services such as those provided by military units, the police, courts and prisons, medical services, and pensions. The provision of *goods* again relates, among other things, to the building of roads, bridges and houses.

Sometimes another category of matters about which political decisions are made is identified, namely **systems** matters. Although different systems are evident in politics, such as the legal system and the legislative system, the political system, in particular, is of vital importance. A political system is a set of identifiable and interdependent units (including the government) which generates (brings forth) authoritative decisions by means of interaction. This is usually represented as follows:

A system is a set of identifiable and interdependent units interacting with each other.

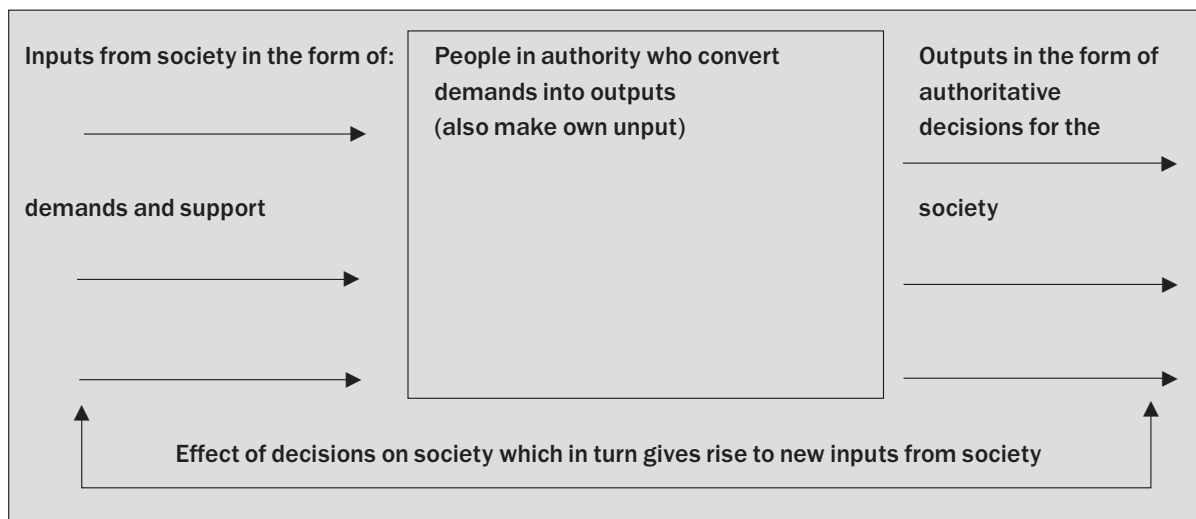


FIGURE 1.2

Systems matters therefore usually relate to these units and the interaction between them.

Matters about which decisions have to be made are important and indicate the government's functions in a society.

ACTIVITY 1.8

Read the following paragraph and answer the questions:

After abortion had been illegal for many years in South Africa, new legislation was introduced which provides for abortion on demand. This new legislation, however, received mixed reaction from South Africans. Pro-abortion groups welcomed it, for they regarded it as a breakthrough in the empowerment of women. Anti-abortion groups, however, regarded it as the legalisation of murder. The latter groups have already indicated that they are busy collecting signatures for a petition in which they will request the reinstatement of stricter abortion laws.

- How was the new legislation on abortion received?
- How do you feel about the new legislation on abortion?
- What do you think the President's reaction to the proposed petition is going to be?
- How do you think the President should act?

A decision is the product of a choice between different possibilities.

When making authoritative decisions, political decision makers normally have to make a *choice* between different possibilities. If there is support for different possibilities in a society, there will be people who are satisfied and others who are dissatisfied. That is why groups are formed in society which pass on their needs, interests and ideas to the political decision makers. In carrying out these activities, it sometimes happens that different groups *cooperate* with each other, but also that, as in the case of the abortion legislation, they *compete* with each other, and even come into *conflict* with each other.

Another important consideration in the discussion here is the question: "About what matters *should* authoritative decisions be made?" The answer will depend once again on the circumstances in

a particular society. If we look at the issues about which decisions are made, we are faced with two main traditions, namely:

- a totalitarian tradition
- a liberal tradition

totalitarian

liberal

In a totalitarian tradition, there are few aspects of a person's life that are not regulated by political decisions. The individuals in a society can make few decisions for themselves. In the liberal tradition, as few as possible decisions are made for people which means that individuals in such a society have a great deal of freedom to decide matters for themselves.

ACTIVITY 1.9



- Make a list of ten matters about which you can decide yourself. Indicate whether there are political decisions that impose restrictions on these decisions. (Eg, can you get married, regardless of how old you are?)
- Make a list of ten political decisions made for you. Indicate whether you think these decisions should be made for you.
- Do you feel that you should be consulted about political decisions which affect you?
- Do you think that, through political decisions, provision should be made for the care of the elderly?
- In the People's Republic of China (Communist China), political decisions have been made that stipulate that a married couple may have only one child. Do you think that a government should interfere in a couple's decision about the number of children they intend having? (Bear in mind that the population of the People's Republic of China is 1,2 billion.)
- Discuss this activity with your fellow-students or your friends and see what kinds of answers they come up with.



Your opinion reflects your own ideas.

A fact is something we know has happened or is true.

In this activity you must give your own opinion. Since an opinion is not a fact, there is no right or wrong answer. Different students will probably give different opinions.

To sum up:

The characteristics of politics that we have discussed so far are the following:

- Politics relates to the interaction and relationship between the government and its subjects.
- This interaction and relationship relates to the highest authoritative decisions made for a whole society.
- These authoritative decisions are made by those with the necessary power, authority legitimacy and competency (political decision makers).
- Political decisions are made in accordance with specific procedures for an entire society.
- Political decisions are made about a whole range of matters (ie, they depend on circumstances in the particular society).

1.6 WHO CARRIES OUT POLITICAL DECISIONS?

We indicated earlier that a decision, whether it is oral or made on paper, that is not carried out or enforced, is actually meaningless. It is not only the making of the decisions that is important, therefore, but also the provision for executing or carrying it out.

Provision should be made for people and funds to execute decisions. The executive authority is mainly responsible for executing authoritative decisions. The term *executive authority* is used both in a narrow and broad sense. In its narrower use, it refers mainly to the government, that is the cabinet. In its broader sense, it refers to the government and the bureaucracy (officialdom). For the purposes of this section, we are primarily concerned with the narrower meaning.

ACTIVITY 1.10



Study the outline of positions of authority which were/are responsible for carrying out decisions in South Africa. Write down a number of recent political decisions that the people who currently occupying these positions are responsible for.

EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY AND CABINET

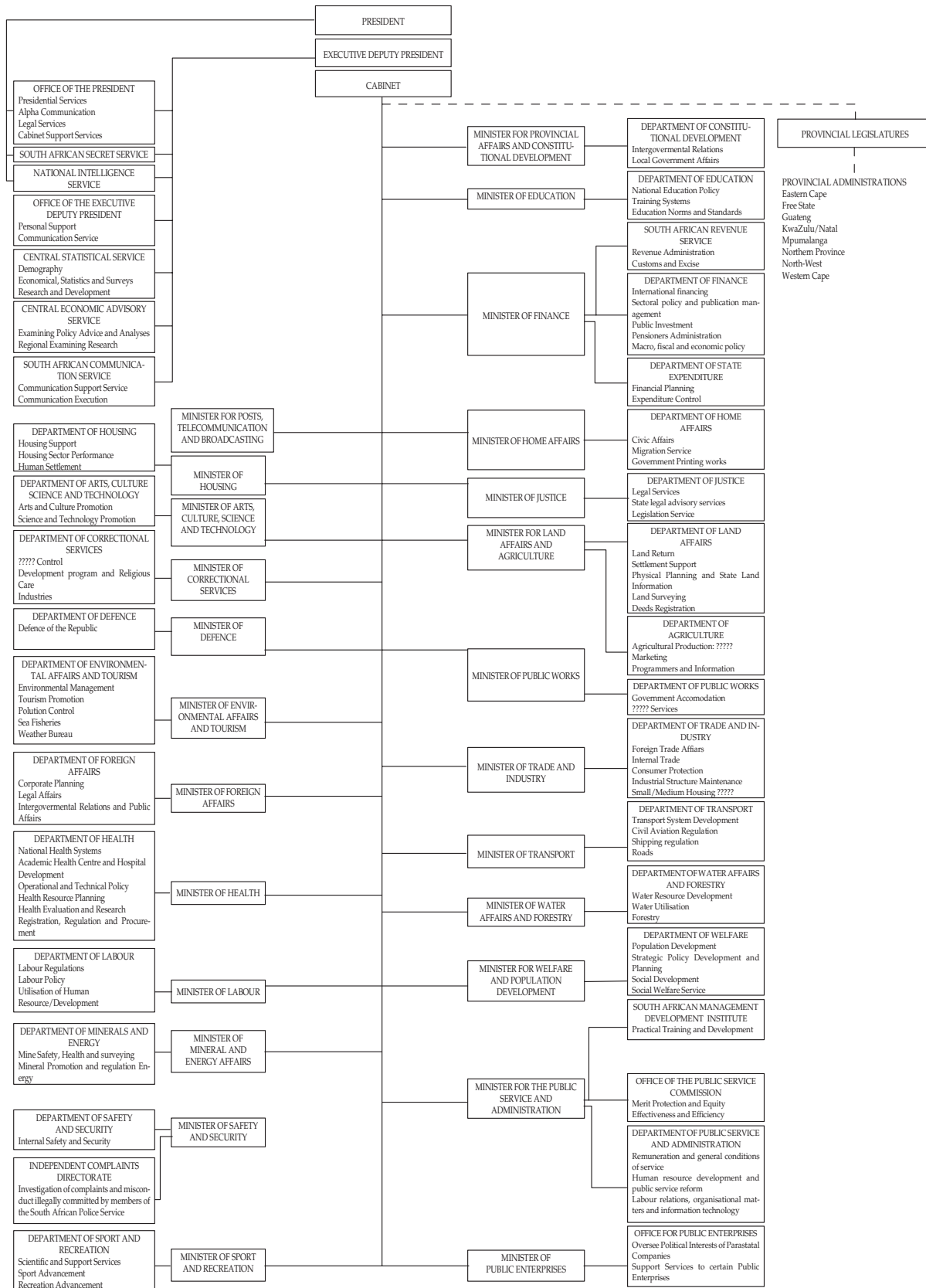


FIGURE 1.3 (Publico 1997)

To sum up:

The characteristics of politics discussed in this study unit are as follows:

- Politics relates to the interaction and relationship between the government and its subjects.
- This interaction and relationship relate to the highest authoritative decisions that can be made for an entire society.
- These authoritative decisions are made by those with the necessary power, authority, legitimacy and competency (political decision makers).
- Political decisions are made in accordance with specific procedures for an entire society.
- Political decisions are made about a whole range of matters, depending on the circumstances in a particular society.
- The executive authority and the bureaucracy carry out political decisions.

1.7 HOW IS THE CONCEPT OF POLITICS DEFINED?

Thus far we have looked at the characteristics of politics. We are now going to examine how the concept of politics is defined in Political Science. However, before we can do this, we need to know more about definitions because many different definitions of politics have already been formulated. Some definitions are better than others, but this does not mean that some are necessarily wrong.

To explain the problem of definition, we are going to use the simple everyday example of a bed. We mentioned earlier that a definition is a sentence that indicates what a specific concept entails and how a term is used. Before we can use the term “bed” for a specific object, we must know what the concept “bed” entails.

ACTIVITY 1.11

Try explaining to someone what a bed is.

A definition always has two parts, namely that which is defined, which we call the *definiendum*, and that which gives the explanation, which we call the *definiens*. The following is one possible definition of the concept “bed”: a bed is a structure (with a mattress) on which a person can sleep. Can you think of other possible explanations of the concept “bed”? Remember that you cannot use the same terms in your definition. You may not, for example, say that a bed is a bed; or that a political party is a party that participates in politics.

The characteristics of a concept are not all equally important. Some characteristics of a concept are defining characteristics. This means that if those characteristics are present, we know what concept we are dealing with. For example, in the natural sciences, a star (sun) is a heavenly body that radiates energy (other heavenly bodies are planets and moons). The radiation of energy is thus a defining characteristic of a star. Some characteristics are often merely chance or accompanying characteristics of a concept. The fact that stars are visible in the sky at night, is merely an accompanying characteristic because planets and moons are also visible at night. Thus we cannot regard the characteristic, night visibility, as a defining characteristic of a star.

The greater the number of characteristics specified for a concept, the fewer examples of that concept we will obtain. Thus if we stay with our definition of the concept “bed”, we will be concerned with a particular number of beds. If, for example, we define the concept “bed” as an object on which one can sleep, then we are going to be faced with more kinds of beds (eg, we can also sleep on a mat). If we define the concept of bed as a structure that is at least 30 cm high, on which a mattress is placed, and on which a person can sleep, then we are going to be concerned with fewer beds (we can also sleep on structures that are lower than 30 cm).

ACTIVITY 1.12

Go through our discussion again and make a list of all the characteristics of politics that we have discussed.

- (1) Indicate which characteristic you think is the most important — in other words, which characteristic is so important that if it is missing, we are not dealing with politics.
- (2) Indicate which characteristic you think is the least important — in other words, which characteristic is so unimportant that even if it is missing, we are still dealing with politics.

- (3) Does everyone necessarily agree about which characteristic is the most important and which is the least important?

If you had difficulty deciding which characteristic of politics is the most important and which is the least important, you are still in good company. The concept “politics” has been defined in many different ways. There are many definitions because it is not always easy to determine which characteristics are the defining characteristics of politics. Of course, the greater the number of characteristics we specify, the less politics we will encounter.

ACTIVITY 1.13

Use the list of characteristics of politics that you drew up in activity 1.12 and then do the following:

- Study the list of definitions and or characteristics below.
- Mark the definitions that regard power (and/or legitimacy and/or authority) as a characteristic of politics, by writing a “P” after the definition.
- Mark the definitions that regard the societal context of politics as a characteristic of politics, with an “S” (you may place more than one mark after a definition).
- Mark the definitions that regard conflict and disputes as a characteristic of politics, with a “C”.
- Mark the definitions that regard the allocation of values and/or resources as a characteristic of politics, with a “V”.
- Mark the definitions that indicate that politics relates to decisions, with a “D”.

List of definitions:

Politics is the power to levy taxes.

Politics is the peaceful settlement of disputes between different interested parties.

Politics is the authoritative allocation of values for a whole society (David Easton).

“We wish to understand by politics only the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a *political* association, hence today, of a *state*” (Weber).

Politics entails the legitimate use of physical force.

Politics is the struggle for power.

Politics is the relationship between the authorities and their subjects.

Politics is about seeking and using power to change the social relationships between people.

Politics is a sphere of social activity in which at least two social classes, whose objective interests are mutually antagonistic, engage in a struggle for control of the state.

Politics is a process that arises out of conflict between groups that try to realise their interests and in which the government only plays the role of referee.

Politics is the allocation of scarce resources.

If we look at these definitions we will find that they still relate to the characteristics of politics that we have discussed thus far. Yet some of these definitions have limitations. The scope of these definitions is not important at this stage. What is important, is that different authors define the concept of politics in different ways.

To sum up:

The way in which we define a concept, as indicated in the example of the concept “bed”, will determine what we regard as politics in the real world. That is why it is important when reading books on politics, to always study the author of a book’s definition of the concept of politics. Remember that if we do not take note of how a particular author defines the concept of politics, we will not be able to understand what he or she is writing.

1.8 OTHER USES OF THE TERM “POLITICS”

In the preceding discussion we emphasised the definitions of the concept “politics”. However, the term is also used to refer to other concepts. You have all probably heard of

- office politics
- politics in sports associations (think, eg, of rugby and soccer)

The question here is whether the concept of politics that we have discussed thus far is the same as the term “politics” in these examples. The answer is “no”. What has happened here is that the term “politics” is now being used to refer to other, although related, concepts. In such cases, we say that the term “politics” has undergone an extension of meaning.

There are certain similarities between office politics and politics in sport, on the one hand, and politics as we study it in Political Science, on the other. For example:

- In both cases, authoritative decisions are made.
- In both cases, there are people with power positions.

There is one important difference between politics in the office and in sport, on the one hand, and politics as we study it in Political Science, on the other. To pinpoint this difference, it is necessary to look at the origin of the term “politics”. As indicated earlier, the term “politics” comes from the Greek, *polis*. The *polis* was a particular society that was organised by means of authoritative decisions (that were not subordinate to other decisions). Thus in this course, the emphasis is on “the highest authoritative decisions” as a characteristic of politics, as we study *politics* in Political Science. In the case of office politics and politics in sport, authoritative decisions are made, but these decisions are still subordinate to the decisions made by the authorities for the whole of society.

To sum up:

The use of terms to identify certain concepts should always be handled carefully. It is when we start forming new concepts, in particular, that we should be careful with the terms we use to define them. Extending the meaning of terms can sometimes cause confusion. When we create or use new terms for concepts, we refer to the term as a neologism. In the social sciences there is a tendency to extend meaning at the cost of neologisms (new terms).



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This self-evaluation exercise is based on the contents of this study unit.

Answer the following questions:

- (1) A decision is an authoritative decision when it can be
- (2) A political decision is the authoritative decision made for a whole
- (3) The term “politics” is derived from the Greek
- (4) Decisions can on a whole, because the political decision makers possess either the necessary or the necessary
- (5) Politics relates, among other things, to the relationship between the and the
- (6) If we look at the procedures for making political decisions, we can distinguish three kinds of political decisions, namely, and
- (7) Political decisions are usually made about the following: and, but can also be made about
- (8) If we look at the things about which political decisions are made, two main traditions are evident, namely a and a tradition.
- (9) What other uses of the term “politics” are there?
- (10) In your own words, explain the characteristics of the concept “politics”.
- (11) How would you define the concept “politics”?

In order to answer the next five questions, you must consult the prescribed book. The aim of these questions is to teach you how to handle academic books and at the same time revise what we have discussed up to now.

- (12) Glance quickly through the contents of the prescribed book. Write down all the topics (eg specific terms and concepts) that you have already been introduced to in this study unit.
- (13) In Jackson and Jackson’s opinion, are there few or many definitions of the concept of politics?
- (14) Turn to the discussion “What is politics?” on page 5. A few examples are given of definitions of the concept “politics”. See which definitions differ from those given in the list above, and add to the list by writing down these definitions.
- (15) According to Jackson and Jackson, two characteristics come to the fore in most definitions of politics. Name these two characteristics. Indicate whether these are also regarded as characteristics of politics in this study unit.
- (16) Why are power, authority and legitimacy important concepts in the study of politics?

You may also consult one or more of the books listed below, but are under no obligation to do so. Note that some of the books have earlier and later editions. You may use any edition, but always try to obtain the latest edition of a book. Bear in mind that the books are listed in alphabetical order and not in order of preference.

- Ball, AR. 1993. *Modern politics and government*. 5th edition. London: Macmillan.
- Dahl, RA. 1984. *Modern political analysis*. 4th edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Danziger, JN. 1994. *Understanding the political world: a comparative introduction to political science*. 2nd edition. New York: Longman.
- Gamble, JK, Irwin, ZT, Redenius, CM & Weber, JW. 1992. *Introduction to political science*. 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Heywood, A. 1994. *Political ideas and concepts: an introduction*. New York: St Martins.
- Jackson, R & Jackson, D. 1997. *A comparative introduction to political science*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lawson, K. 1994. *The human polity: an introduction to political science*. 3rd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Ponton, G & Gill, P. 1993. *Introduction to politics*. 3rd edition. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Ranney, A. 1996. *Governing: an introduction to political science*. 7th edition. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall.
- Roskin, MG, Cord, RL, Madeiros, JA & Jones, DS. 1997. *Political science: an introduction*. 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Using the table of contents at the beginning of the book and the index at the back of the book, see whether and how these authors explain the concept of politics.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- (17) Does/do the author/authors indicate the origin of the term “politics”?
- (18) Does/do the author/authors mention whether the concept of politics is difficult to define, and that there are many definitions of the concept?
- (19) What different definitions of the concept of politics, does/do the author/authors mention?
- (20) Are these definitions included in our list of definitions in activity 1.13?
- (21) To which of these definitions does/do the author/authors give preference?
- (22) Do you agree with the author’s/authors’ choice? Why/why not?
- (23) Which of the following concepts are used in this author’s/these authors’ discussion of the concept of politics: power, authority,

legitimacy, competency, authoritative decisions, force, government, subordinates, society, conflict and scarce resources?



SOURCES

- Ball, AR. 1993. *Modern politics and government*. 5th edition. London: Macmillan.
- Dahl, RA. 1984. *Modern political analysis*. 4th edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Danziger, JN. 1994. *Understanding the political world: a comparative introduction to political science*. 2nd edition. New York: Longman.
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- Heywood, A. 1994. *Political ideas and concepts: an introduction*. New York: St Martins.
- Jackson, R Jackson, D. 1997. *A comparative introduction to political science*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lawson, K. 1994. *The human polity: an introduction to political science*. 3rd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
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- Ranney, A. 1996. *Governing: an introduction to political science*. 7th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Roskin, MG, Cord, RL, Madeiros, JA & Jones, DS. 1997. *Political science: an introduction*. 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.



STUDY UNIT 2

HUMANS AS POLITICAL BEINGS

Compiled by Susan Botha

OVERVIEW

In study unit 1 you were introduced to political decisions which affect your life, even if you do not approve of them. It is not always possible to get away from such a situation. If you are dissatisfied with the political decisions in South Africa, the best you can do is to move elsewhere, say, the United States of America (USA), only to be subject to the authoritative decisions made there. In this study unit we are, therefore, looking for

- reasons why politics is an unavoidable phenomenon in people's lives
- the implications of politics for people

To explain why politics is inevitable, and the implications for people, it is necessary to find answers to the following focus questions:

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What is the origin of human beings' political environment?
What is the purpose of political life?
Why is knowledge of politics so important?

2.1 WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN BEINGS' POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT?

Think of all the rules and regulations that control an individual's life from the moment of his or her birth until the administration of his estate after his or her death. How does it happen that people find themselves in a situation in which authoritative decisions are made for them?

ACTIVITY 2.1

Follow the instructions below and then answer the questions which follow:

Think of all the political decisions made for you.

Put yourself in a world where there are no authorities (those that rule and govern) to make authoritative decisions.

- (1) What do you think are the disadvantages of the existence of authorities?
- (2) What do you think the advantages are of authorities?
- (3) Is it possible for people to live in a world without authorities?

There are a number of definite disadvantages linked to the existence of authorities that makes decisions for a whole society. Think of the following:

- All the money you have to pay in taxes.
- The restrictions political decisions impose on your way of life, for example, not being allowed to marry before you reach a certain age.
- The obligations that political decisions impose on people, for example, compulsory military service that white males in South Africa had to undergo during the apartheid era.

The restrictions and obligations imposed on the individual's freedom, will depend on whether the authorities act in a totalitarian or authoritarian way, and whether they leave room for individual decision making or not, as in the case of liberalism. During the apartheid era in South Africa, for example, people were not allowed to live where they chose. This reminds one of the French

philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who said, “Man is born free but is everywhere in chains.”

There are, however, definite advantages to the existence of authorities. Just think of the following:

- Who will take action against criminals if there are no authority figures?
- Who will see to it that roads and bridges are built if there are no authority figures to make the necessary decisions?

The advantage of the existence of authorities who make authoritative decisions for the whole of society, therefore, relate to their functions. In other words, the authorities

- have a protective and regulatory function that ensures our safety and freedom
- have a function to provide goods and services that are essential to maintain society (eg fighting disease)
- even have, in some societies with the necessary financial means, the function of providing luxury goods and services that benefit society, for example, promoting the arts and research

Although political decisions do restrict our freedom, they can, in fact, protect our freedom and make possible our self-realisation.

Various **theories** have already been developed to explain the origin of politics or to try and explain why the individual finds himself in a political environment. These theories provide the following explanations for the political environment:

- supernaturalistic
- naturalistic
- rationalistic

Hence, there are divergent (different) explanations for the origin of politics. It is possible to identify common elements in these explanations which relate primarily to

- the fact that human beings always find themselves among other human beings
- the regulation of the relationships between people in a societal context occurs only through the exercise of power and authority

A theory is a set of ideas and concepts arranged in such a way that it explains something to us.

- the institution of authorities (those that rule and govern) to exercise power and authority

Since people are always found among other people, a variety of interactions and relationships develop. These interactions usually give rise to group formation (eg the development of cultural groups, interest groups and classes), sometimes resulting in the development of patterns of interactions (relationships) between the following:

- between individuals
- between individuals and groups
- between different groups
- between individuals, groups and the natural environment

If you now think about the nature of the interactions in which more than one person is involved, you will find the following:

- Different individuals have different experiences.
- Different individuals may even have different interpretations of the same experience and develop different ideas about it (you have probably encountered this in discussions with your fellow-students); nevertheless, there are always those who, to a greater or lesser extent, have similar interpretations and experiences.

Since uniformity and differences are both possible among different members of a particular society, cooperation and conflict occur between individuals. According to some of these theories, cooperation and handling conflict are possible only through the exercise of power and authority.

The main *difference* in these theories concerns the *way in which power and authority are instituted* and how they should be exercised.

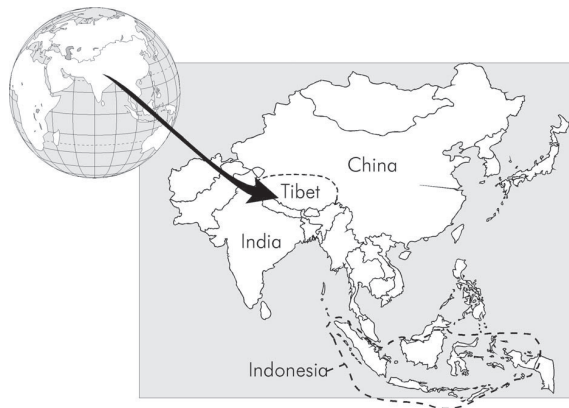
We shall now briefly examine the ideas in these theories.

2.1.1 Supernaturalistic explanations

Theories in this category provide a supernatural and divine explanation for the origin and existence of authorities. These explanations, therefore, relate to religious views, and will obviously differ to the extent that certain religions differ from each other.

According to these explanations, human beings are part of a Supreme Being's creation and the authorities' exercise of power and authority relates directly to human beings' divinely appointed place and task on earth. Hence, human beings' political organisation is an inseparable part of their religious views. There are a few basic variations of these explanations:

- A deity is the ruler of humankind and the earthly leaders must carry out the commands received directly from this deity — these leaders are the protectors of a deity's laws on earth. An example here is the Israelites under Moses. Priests who are the earthly rulers, such as the Incas in Ancient Peru and even the Brahman castes in India, are also examples of this. This explanation also underlies the political order in Iran which is based on the rules of Islam. In the West, these explanations led to the development of the idea of the divine right of kings.



The Dalai Lama who is both the spiritual (Buddhist) and the banned earthly leader of Tibet (situated in the south-western part of the People's Republic of China) is an interesting case in point. The Buddha is a spiritual leader, and not, as in the other religions (eg in the Christian religion) a deity. Another interesting example is Britain, where the monarch (queen) is both head of state and head of the Anglican Church. In other states such as Norway and Sweden, a particular religion (Lutheranism) is protected by the authorities.

In South Africa too, certain political parties have these views as their basic point of departure. Think, for example, of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and their opposition to abortion. Further examples are the African Muslim Party and the Islamic Party in the Western Cape.

- The earthly rulers are the direct descendants of a deity. This

is an age-old explanation. A contemporary (modern) example is the idea among some people that the Japanese emperor is a descendant of a deity.

- The earthly rulers are people who can think and act for themselves, but they are appointed by a deity (even by means of democratic elections). These explanations are important to Westerners, but also occur in other societies where there is little distinction between religion and other aspects of the society. Some societies even hold the view that politics is god's punishment for the sins of humankind.

These explanations of the divine origin of authorities play a role in the debate of the right of subjects to resist an unjust government. Resistance to an unjust government, therefore, actually implies resistance to a deity. This, among other things, played a role in the apartheid era in South Africa; it was the reason why many Afrikaners felt that they had to obey their earthly leaders.

ACTIVITY 2.2

Study the theories above which give a supernaturalistic explanation for the origin of authorities and then do the following:

- (1) How were these explanations used in South African politics?
- (2) Do you find these explanations acceptable? Give reasons for your answer.

As indicated in the discussion, some politicians and some believers in South Africa advocate these explanations of the origin of the state, while others reject them. It is important to note that these explanations are an extremely forceful reason for obeying (even blindly) authorities. It is difficult, therefore, to change the authorities' position and the relationship between the authorities and their subjects in a society organised on the basis of religious principles.

2.1.2 Naturalistic explanations

Theories in this category regard nature, and even human nature, as

the reason why people find themselves in a political environment. Some writers refer to these theories as the biological and psychological explanations for the origin of authorities.

Once again there are variations of this explanation.

- One explanation concentrates on the social nature of human nature. Biologically speaking, human beings, like some animals, are social beings. Social animals' social order is always characterised by a relationship between leaders and subjects. Thus, according to this explanation, human beings' lives in societal context are inevitable, and they cannot live without others. According to Aristotle (Greek philosopher, ca 384–322 BC), people are so dependent on society for their very existence, that society actually existed before the individual, in the same way as bread has to exist before one can have a slice. Certain aspects of this view are contained in the idea of *ubuntu*, according to which a person can only be a person through other people.
- Another explanation of politics is that it is the result of the strong dominating the weak. The selfish nature of human beings is emphasised here because the strong always act in their own interests. This explanation is encountered in Marxism in particular (Karl Marx, 1818–1883, the German socialist philosopher of Jewish origin). According to this theory, the relationship between a ruler and a subject is related to an ideology of class and economics. The rulers are the owners (capitalists) who exploit the workers. Although we should be hesitant to say that all authorities originate in the power relationship between the strong and the weak, it is important to realise that for a variety of reasons, it may happen that one group in a society dominates another. However, this domination does not necessarily have anything to do with economics, but may be the result of an unequal numerical and power relationship.

It is important to notice that in these theories the subjects' acceptance of the authorities forms part of their natural existence. Where economics and the power of the strong over the weak are emphasised, the subjects do not really have a choice. The fact that people necessarily live in groups, therefore gives rise to a communal way of life (culture) into which newcomers are initiated. The acceptance of authorities is thus partly acquired behavior by human beings.

ACTIVITY 2.3

Study the theories above which give a naturalistic explanation for the origin of government and then do the following:

- (1) How were these explanations used in South African politics?
- (2) Do you find these explanations acceptable? Give reasons for your answer.

These explanations of the origin of authorities are also used in South African politics. It is true that people in South Africa are unavoidably involved in a societal context. It has often happened in South African history that authorities used power to their own advantage.

2.1.3 Rationalistic explanations

According to these explanations, politics is the product of human reasoning. Human beings consciously institute the authorities, because it is in their interests to do so. The best-known theoretical examples in this regard are the **social contract theories**.

social contract

The oldest examples of social contract theories can be found in Hindu and Buddhist writings (ca 600–325 BC), but the most famous social contract theories are those of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. There are noticeable similarities between their theories and those prevalent in the Hindu and Buddhist writings.

There are different versions of the social contract. The main similarity is that human beings had a prepolitical existence. This prepolitical stage is often known as the **state of nature** or the natural condition. For a variety of reasons, people decide to get together or assemble and then enter into a social contract in which they agree on a leader(s) and his/her/their powers.

state of nature

One of the main differences in these theories of the social contract relates to the ideas of living conditions in the state of nature. For some, life in the state of nature was cruel and unhappy, while for others it was blissful.

- According to Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679; English philosopher) the situation in which there are no authorities is

characterised by lawlessness and continual war. Life without authorities is thus extremely unhappy. People therefore get together and draw up a contract in terms of which authorities then come into existence and determine the relationship between them and their subjects.

- John Locke (1632–1704; English philosopher), however, believed that life without authorities could be very peaceful, but that there may be uncertainties, such as the application of laws. Thus people come to realise that it was in their own interests to appoint authorities, and to get together to draw up a social contract.
- According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778; French philosopher), life without authorities was actually very happy, but it was also a simple life in which there were many dangers. Hence one comes to the realisation that it would be far better to unite with other individuals and appoint authorities.

Other differences in these theories relate to the question of who the authorities should be, and the relationship between the ruler/s and his/their subjects.

The constitution of the United States of America is generally regarded as the modern example of a social contract. One can also put forward good arguments as to why South Africa's new constitution can be regarded as an example of a social contract.

On the whole, the rationalistic explanations for the existence of the authorities are emphasised. However, this does not mean that the supernaturalistic and the naturalistic explanations should be regarded as invalid. What the rationalistic explanations do say is that people, using their reasoning, had a great deal to say about who the authorities should be and what the relationship should be between the authorities and their subjects.

ACTIVITY 2.4



Study the above explanations of the rationalistic theories on the origin of authorities and then do the following:

- (1) Why do you regard/do not regard the South Africa's new constitution as an example of a social contract?**

- (2) Do you find the rationalistic explanations acceptable? Give reasons for your answer.
- (3) Indicate to what extent you find the theories discussed thus far acceptable/unacceptable by using a scale from 1 to 5. If a theory is hardly acceptable or not at all acceptable, write a 1 after it; if it is only partially acceptable, a 2; if it is equally acceptable or unacceptable, a 3; if it is largely acceptable, a 4; and if you find it totally acceptable, a 5.
 - (a) supernaturalistic explanations
 - (b) naturalistic explanations
 - (c) rationalistic explanations



Each of the explanations discussed has followers. Nowadays the rationalistic explanations for the existence of authorities are generally preferred. This is probably because the more knowledge people have of political life, the more they have to say about it and the greater the input they wish to make.

2.2 WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL LIFE?

Here we are looking for an answer to the question: “What is the purpose of political life?” Why, for example, do people purposely appoint authorities? If you think about the reasons given for the origin of authorities, you will realise that those reasons indicate the aim or purpose of political life.

ACTIVITY 2.5



Read the different explanations for the origin of authorities again, and then do the following:

- (1) The following list contains two statements on each theory of the origin of political life and government as discussed above. After each statement write down the particular theory (in other words, indicate whether it relates to the supernaturalistic, naturalistic or rationalistic explanation).
- (2) Indicate which of these statements below has a positive view of political life (in other words, government is to the advantage of everyone).
 - (a) People came to the realisation that a better life is possi-

- ble if, together with other people, they are organised in a political context. (.....)
- (b) The authorities should make the divine life possible on earth. (.....)
 - (c) Authorities come into being because the strong dominate the weak. (.....)
 - (d) A person's political life is an inescapable part of his biological and psychological nature, because order in a societal context is necessary. (.....)
 - (e) The authorities are a deity's punishment for humankind's sins. (.....)
 - (f) Individuals deliberately institute power to ensure peace and security. (.....)



Both a positive and a negative view of political life can be inferred from the statements above.

One can infer from the supernaturalistic explanations that the aim of political life is to maintain a deity's creation. However, it is also possible to infer, especially in the case of societies based on religious principles (eg Iran), that a happy life on earth is possible only if societies are organised according to divine rules. One also has to bear in mind then, that there are people who believe that politics is a deity's punishment for the sins of humankind. In other words, we can infer from these explanations that there is both a positive and a negative view of political life.

The positive view in naturalistic explanations relates to the idea that people can only realise themselves in societal context, and that society inevitably involves a relationship between ruler/s and subject. Human beings can only achieve the good life through political life. The negative view is that political life is the way in which some individuals and groups promote their own interests at the cost of others' interests (the strong dominating the weak).

The rationalistic explanations emphasise a human being's striving for better living conditions which is why ordinary people are parties to the contract which determines who the authorities are and what the relationship between the authorities and subjects should be.

If we look at the functions of authorities (the things about which decisions are made) as discussed in study unit 1, we find that it is the task of the authorities to combat whatever has a negative impact

on our lives (eg crime), and to promote whatever can improve our lives (eg providing goods and services).

ACTIVITY 2.6

Read the following paragraph and then answer the question:

Conflict between the Hutus and the Tsutsis in Rwanda was politically inspired (in other words, it had to do with who should be responsible for exercising power). This conflict led to the death of about one million people, and this is but one of a number of conflicts on the African continent. However, political conflict also disrupts human lives in various other parts of the world, including Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

- (1) In your opinion, does political life benefit everyone in these areas?

Give reasons for your answer.

It is clear that political life did not improve the living conditions of these people. In these countries, political life developed into a struggle between different groups competing for power.

On the one hand, it is true that the history of humankind has been characterised by political strife and conflict. On the other hand, there have been developments in humankind's political life that have brought about improvements in living conditions. It is precisely because people are organised in a societal context that they can benefit from these developments. (Think again of the one definition that sees politics as the peaceful settlement of disputes.)

To sum up:

the good life

We can infer from the above discussion that political life has both advantages and disadvantages. There is a chance that political life will ensure safety and self-realisation (**the good life**), on the one hand, but there is also the chance that the people who are being ruled will be exploited and not be able to realise their full potential, on the other. Nevertheless, everyone would probably choose to have the authorities improve their living conditions. For this reason, people's reasoning is regarded as important in politics, and the rationalistic explanations of politics are often emphasised. By using

their reasoning, human beings can determine what has a negative effect on their lives and how this can be counteracted. Only if human beings have the necessary knowledge can they understand their political environment and make the necessary changes to it. Authorities are aware of the power of knowledge, which is why they often withhold important information from their subjects. Knowledge of politics therefore implies *empowerment of the individual*.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- (1) According to the supernaturalistic explanations, what is the origin of political life?
- (2) According to the naturalistic explanations, what is the origin of political life?
- (3) According to the rationalistic explanations, what is the origin of political life?
- (4) What are the different views of the purpose or aim of political life?
- (5) Describe whether political life always benefits people. Give reasons for your answer.

In the questions which follow, you must consult the relevant sections in the study guide before you do the tasks.

- (6) In their discussion in the study guide, the authors mention *divine rule* (supernaturalistic explanation), Aristotle (naturalistic explanation) and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (rationalistic explanation), which provide an indication of the origin of political life. For each of the five explanations mentioned above, give the essence of the discussion.
- (7) In their discussion, the authors mention only Western political theory. Do you agree with this method? Give reasons for your answer.

Study one or more of the following books and then complete the tasks set:

Dahl, RA. 1984. *Modern political analysis*. 4th edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. (Look at the chapter, "Political Man", and especially the part on "the power-seekers".)

Gamble, JK, Irwin, ZT, Redenius, CM & Weber, JW. 1992. *Introduction to political science*. 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. (Look up Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and the social contract in the index at the back of the book.)

Roskin, MG, Cord, RL, Madeiros, JA & Jones, DS. 1997. *Political science*:

an introduction. 6th edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
(Look up “political power” in the index at the back of the book.)

- (8) How comprehensively do the authors discuss the origin of authorities?
- (9) Do you think these authors discuss the origin of authorities in sufficient detail? Give reasons for your answer.
- (10) Which theory on the origin of authorities do these authors emphasise?
- (11) What, according to these authors, is the purpose of authorities?
- (12) If you have read more than one book, indicate which book, in your opinion, discusses these two subjects the best.



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T H E M E 2

MANIFESTATIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS' POLITICAL ORGANISATION

OVERVIEW

This theme seeks an answer to the question: “In what ways can people be politically organised?” The state, as we know it today (which is why it is usually referred to as the modern state), is omnipresent. All of us are attached to a particular state in some or other way.

Membership of the United Nations (UN) provides a good indication of the omnipresence of the modern state. At the time of the United Nations’ 50th anniversary in 1995, as many as 185 states were members of the UN. There are few territories that are not part of one or other state. (Of course, one such area is Antarctica.) It is important for you to ascertain how human beings can be politically organised, since, against this background, you may be under the wrong impression that the state is the only way in which people can be politically organised.

Thus, in order to give an opinion on human beings’ political organisation, it is necessary for you to explain

- the characteristics of the modern state
- the ways in which human beings can be politically organised



STUDY UNIT 3

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN STATE

Compiled by P Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

In this study unit we are looking for the answer to the question, “What are the characteristics of the modern state?”

Study unit 3 will give an overview of the different definitions and applications of the concept “state”. It is important that you know what is meant by this concept, since the word “state” is used very loosely by different people and even by the media, which can be very confusing. It often happens that the word “state” is used when the word “government” should be used and vice versa.

In order to explain the characteristics of the state, we have identified four characteristics which are essential for the survival of the state. This study unit will introduce you to these four characteristics and then discuss them briefly. A more detailed discussion of these characteristics can be found in study unit 4.

As you work through the study unit, you will notice that the state is sometimes an end product of a long evolutionary process, or the state can emerge in a more dynamic way. We will discuss these two aspects in this study guide to emphasise that the state can emerge in different ways.

In this study unit and also in later study units, you will be exposed to the different meanings of the word “state” and the different theories which exist about the state. It is important that you understand that there is more than one theory about the state and that the concept “state” has more than one meaning. In this study unit we will refer to a few of the theories and highlight the significance of these theories.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What criteria are applicable to the existence of the state?
What different meanings are there for the concept “state”?
What theories exist for the concept “state”?
Why are there diverse views about the state?
How does the state differ from other political entities?
In what ways is the term “state” used?

3.1 CRITERIA WHICH ARE APPLICABLE TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE STATE

What criteria are prerequisites for the existence of a state? Jackson and Jackson’s definition of the state summarises many of these important characteristics. They describe a state as “a form of political organisation, consisting of governmental institutions which are capable of maintaining order and implementing rules or laws over a given population and within a given territory”. A state can also be defined as a community of people who live in a given territory under a specific authority and according to communal laws. Phillips and Jackson refer to a state as an independent political community which occupies territory; they stress that the goal of the state is to resist political interference and to maintain internal order. It is possible to abridge this definition by stating that “a state is a political unit within a given territory”.

It is not necessary to memorise all the definitions. It is clear that there are certain key elements or characteristics which are present in all the definitions. Reread the definitions and you will notice that there are certain corresponding elements or characteristics of the state which are similar and which appear in virtually all the definitions. Read the definitions again and try to make a list of the common characteristics before you read any further.

Now that you have made your list, you can read further. What common characteristics did you identify?

Some of the elements or characteristics which appear in the

definitions are (1) demarcated territory (2) a permanent population (3) a form of government and (4) to exist without external interference.

ACTIVITY 3.1

- (1) Reread subsection 3.1 carefully. Could you formulate your own definition of a state, as Jackson and Jackson did in their textbook? Try to formulate your definition in one line.

- (2) Now test yourself by doing the following activities:

Try to replace the following phrases/words which appear below with a single word.

- (a) Form of political organisation
- (b) Maintain law and order, implement rules/laws, free from external interference
- (c) Given population (permanent population)
- (d) Within a given territory (demarcated territory)

It should not be difficult to do these questions. The answers are: (a) government (b) sovereignty (c) population (d) territory.

Number (b) is the one concept which might be problematic at this stage. The upholding of law and order and the right to make rules and laws *without interference from outside or from other countries* is the one aspect which can be broadly understood under the concept “sovereignty”. The concept is naturally far more complicated, but this simple explanation will suffice at this stage. The concept “sovereignty” and the other three characteristics of the state will be discussed in more detail in the next study unit.

3.2 DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE CONCEPT “STATE”

Now that you have an initial understanding of the most important characteristics or elements of the state, you will notice that the concept “state” is often used incorrectly and in most cases, it is used interchangeably with the concept “government”.

The difference between the state and the government can initially be explained as follows. The state, as you will soon notice, has a more permanent character, while authorities in a state come and go.

In a democratic state, the government, for example, may be replaced every four years after a general election, while the state continues to exist. A government is but one of the characteristics of a state and it is the total sum of all the people and institutions which exercise authority on behalf of the state. Take note that even politicians regularly interchange the two concepts when they speak.

The concept “state” can not be used interchangeably with government. In colloquial language, there are a number of different meanings associated with the concept “state”. Compare the following statements which are used regularly in colloquial language:

- The state does very little or not enough to protect ordinary people from crime in South Africa.
- The South African state’s international boundary stretches from the southernmost point to the Limpopo.
- The state is the reverse of legal order; in other words, the state and the law are the same.
- No one may interfere in the sovereignty of Zimbabwe, because Zimbabwe is an independent sovereign state.
- This infringement is an infringement against the inhabitants of the South African state.

Once you have read the different statements, it should be clear that they differ from each other. Read the first statement again. It is clear that this statement refers to the persons or bodies which exercise authority; in other words, it is referring to the government. The second statement refers to the South African territory. The third statement about the legal order focuses on one aspect, and that is that the state is a binding factor in which the law becomes progressively more valid. The second last statement refers to the state as an independent political organisation (free from external control); in other words, it refers to the sovereignty of the state. The last statement refers to the inhabitants of a specific territory; in other words, the inhabitants of the state.

When the word “state” is used it is therefore important to ascertain in what context it is being used. Each statement has a different use and focus and so must be evaluated within its context.

Even more neutral words, such as inhabitants or population, can have different meanings. When identifying the population in the concept “state”, the word “nation” is used when “people” (volk)

should have been used. Carefully read the following explanation of nation, nation-state and people (*volk*) which has been taken primarily from Jackson and Jackson.

- Nation, state, nation-state and people are concepts which are mutually interchangeable and are often, therefore, used incorrectly. The requirements or characteristics applicable to the state are set out in this study unit and in later study units. However, this still does not explain what is meant by the terms “nation-state” and “nation”.
- A nation, in contrast to a state, is a cultural entity. In essence, it is a subjective feeling, a feeling of social solidarity and strong loyalty which exists between people. The Afrikaans word which is often used in this regard is *volk* (people) which emphasises the bond between people. The permanent population (one of the characteristics of a state) may be a nation which possesses this characteristic, but it is not necessarily so. A nation (*volk*) may be a segment of society and part of the population of a state which strives for self-rule and independence. This deals with the underlying consciousness of social solidarity.
- A nation-state is a highly problematic and contentious concept. Japan, for example, is regarded as one state and one nation because 99 per cent of the Japanese population are of Japanese origin. This 99 per cent speak Japanese and belong to the Japanese culture. Most states in the world, however, consist of more than one nation. Sometimes the nation is spread over two states as until recently was the case of West Germany and East Germany. Some nations, such as Palestine and the Kurds, do not have states. States such as America which are often known as settler states are collectively known as heterogenic states.

ACTIVITY 3.2

This activity is a repetition of the first activity. Read the paragraph below. Now read the paragraph again. Do you agree with the statement made and the conclusion reached in the paragraph? If you agree, try to give a definition of the state. You will notice that we have included a basic definition after the paragraph. As we have already indicated, we will discuss the characteristics of the state more fully in the following study units.

Carefully read the following paragraph:

- (1) A definition of the state will, in many respects, be the sum total of all five statements given above. In other words, the essence of each statement will be used to form the definition of the state: authoritative body (government), specific territory, constitutional order, sovereignty and population.

Do you agree?

The following basic definition contains the essence of the statements above. *A state is a political organisation, comprising government institutions that are in a position to maintain order and to apply laws over a given population in a demarcated territory.*

Now formulate your own definition of the state and then compare it with that which has already been given.

As we have already indicated, we will give more detail about each of the characteristics in the following study units.

- (2) Just as you did with your definition of the word “state”, try to do the same with the concept “nation”. In a short paragraph, define the concept “nation” in your own words. Remember to indicate if you are dealing with one or two concepts.

If you are unsure, reread the sections above.



3.3 DIFFERENT VIEWS AND THEORIES ABOUT THE STATE

Hopefully you are now feeling more sure about the characteristics of the state, so we will introduce you to some new aspects which you need to take note of. The object “state” can be viewed from different approaches, perspectives or theoretical points of view. In other words, the ideological orientation of the person ensures that the state can be viewed in different ways.

Compare the following diverse views about the state:

- The state as an institution is a mechanism used by the ruling class to oppress the working class.
- The law and the state are the same. The state is merely the constitutional order viewed from the other side and is thus a realisation of the absolute constitutional order.
- A state is a set of political institutions which rules over a demarcated territory.

- Politics (the state) deals with the authoritative allotment of scarce resources in society.
- The state is a political actor in its own right and is a more encompassing concept than that of a neutral referee.

Now that you have read the different views on the state, you should have realised that there are a large number of diverse views and theories about the state. It is important that you take note of the theoretical context in which the theory is written so that you can understand the specific view. Political Science students must not see a definition of the state, for example, and blindly accept that it is valid for all situations. It is important to identify the political and ideological context *within which* the definition is written. The political and economic context will be dealt with in more detail in other modules; this study unit is aimed at making you *aware* of the diverse theories and views about the state and its role.

For the sake of clarity in this study guide, we will only work with a general view of the state. It is important, however, that you are aware that there are a number of different views about the state and that the state can have different meanings in different contexts. More detail about these contexts will be given in the more advanced Political Science modules.

Let us return to the different views given above. The first view deals with the state as an instrument used by the ruling class to oppress the workers. This view is the classic Marxist view of the state, which sees the state in the role of oppressor. The Utopian view believes that the state will ultimately dissolve into a classless society.

The second definition asserts that the state is the reverse of a constitutional order, but is betrayed by the fact that the state is legally strong. Kelsen, the well-known Viennese lawyer, believes that the law and the state are the same thing. You will find this sort of definition, in particular, in sources dealing with constitutional law.

The third view alleges that the state is a series of political institutions which rule over a demarcated territory. It is a minimalist view rather than a distinctly ideological view of the state.

The fact that the state assumes the functions of a referee and allocates scarce resources in society, is once again seen as a pluralistic view of the state. According to this, the state is more than just a neutral referee since it must decide what must be allocated to whom. In contrast to this view, the neoclassic theorists believe that the state's role can not be limited to that of a "neutral referee"; the state fulfils the role of referee and that of a role player in society

ACTIVITY 3.3

Read the previous sections and then do the following activity. Arrange the two lists which follow in such a way that the two terms which are the most closely related are next to each other. Try to complete this exercise without consulting the definitions above.

LIST A

State as an instrument of oppression

State as a neutral referee

Minimalist view of state

State as inverted constitutional order

State as an actor in politics

LIST B

Pluralistic political philosophy

Political institution in a demarcated territory

Neostatistical theory

Marxist theory

Legalistic view

The aim of this introductory section was only to make you aware of some of the diverse views which exist. In a module introducing politics and the state, it is not necessary to give more than an overview of the different views. As we have already explained, we will make use of a general view in this module. The starting point is to identify the minimum number of criteria which can be used to identify the existence of the state.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

We conclude this study unit with a short 10-mark multiple choice test. The multiple choice technique is one testing mechanism which may be used during the examination. In each case, indicate the correct option (ie a, b, c, d or e).

- (1) One of the following statements about the state is false. Indicate the incorrect statement.
 - (a) The concept “state” can be the end product of a long process of evolutionary development.
 - (b) The concept “state” can be the end product of a more revolutionary, rather than evolutionary process.
 - (c) The concepts “state” and “government” are sometimes used interchangeably by politicians.
 - (d) There is really only one concept and one theory about the state.
 - (e) One can view the state and theorise about it from different perspectives.

- (2) Which of the following words refers to: *“without interference from other countries”*? Indicate the correct word.
- (a) authority
 - (b) state
 - (c) sovereignty
 - (d) government
- (3) Indicate the correct statement.
A government is
- (a) a political unit in a demarcated territory
 - (b) the opposite of constitutional order
 - (c) the same concept as a state
 - (d) the sum total of people or institutions who exercise authority on behalf of the state
 - (e) none of the above-mentioned concepts is correct
- (4) Indicate the incorrect statement.
A state is
- (a) the same concept as a government
 - (b) a concept which can be used interchangeably with government
 - (c) the end product of one process of development
 - (d) a concept which can be defined in different ways
 - (e) a concept which can be summarised as a “political unit in a given territory”
- (5) Indicate the correct statement.
The concept “nation”
- (a) means the same as a state
 - (b) is a concept which has fallen into disuse in the modern era
 - (c) is a cultural entity
 - (d) ultimately means the same as nation-state
- (6) Read the paragraph below and then indicate if the statements contained therein are true or false.
- A nation, in contrast to a state, is a cultural entity. It is a subjective feeling of identity and fervent loyalty which exists between people. There are many shared values and loyalties between members of the group. It is not strange, therefore, that the inhabitants of a state form one big nation within the borders of the country. In this context, it is therefore correct to assert that state and nation mean the same.
- (a) true
 - (b) false
- (7) Indicate the appropriate option.
Of which view is the following statement typical?

The state and the law are the same and the state is the opposite of constitutional order.

- (a) minimalist view
- (b) pluralistic view
- (c) Marxist view
- (d) legalistic view
- (e) neoclassic view

- (8) Indicate the appropriate option.
Of which view is the following statement an example of?

The state is only a neutral referee which must allocate scarce resources.

- (a) pluralistic view
- (b) neostatism view
- (c) Marxist view
- (d) legalistic view
- (e) none of the above-mentioned views is correct

- (9) Arrange the following two lists in such a way that the correct terms describe the statements.

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| (a) State as an instrument of oppression. | (1) Legalistic view |
| (b) Characteristic of the state. | (2) Pluralistic view |
| (c) The state is the opposite of constitutional order. | (3) Government |
| (d) The state takes on the role of referee. | (4) Marxist view |

- (10) The following question deals with the concepts “nation” and “nation-state”. Indicate the correct option.

- (a) The two concepts “nation” and “nation-state” are identical.
- (b) Japan is an example of a nation-state.
- (c) It is not possible that one nation is spread over two states.
- (d) All the above-mentioned statements are correct.

The correct options are:

1 (d), 2 (c), 3 (e), 4 (a), 5 (c)

6 (b), 7 (d), 8 (a), 9 is as follows, a 4, b 3, c 1 and d 2,

10 (b)



STUDY UNIT 4

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN STATE (CONTINUED)

Compiled by Susan Botha

OVERVIEW

In this study unit we are looking for an answer to the question, “What are the characteristics of the modern state?”

Since the modern state (hereafter referred to only as “state”) developed historically from other forms of political organisation, it is important for us to first explain the characteristics of a state. To answer the question about the characteristics of the state, you should be able to answer the following focus questions:

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What *criteria* apply to the existence of a state?
What *false criteria* are used for the existence of a state?
In what way does the state differ from other political entities?
In what other ways is the term “state” used?

4.1 WHAT CRITERIA APPLY FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A STATE?

Here we are looking for an answer to the question, “When is a political entity (ie the way in which human beings are politically organised) a state?” In order to answer this question it is necessary for you to have knowledge of the criteria used in practice in this regard.

The criteria laid down for states in International Law (the law that applies to relations between states) and Constitutional Law (the law according to which a state functions internally) are as follows:

- demarcated territory
- permanent population
- authorities (government)
- sovereignty
- recognition

We will briefly examine these criteria. Remember that there are sometimes anomalies in the application of these criteria. In other words, the criteria are not always applied consistently.

4.1.1 Demarcated territory as a criterion for a state

One criterion which can be used to determine whether a political entity is a state or not, is the requirement that a state should have a demarcated territory. This means that a state’s authorities (those that rule and govern) have jurisdiction (the right to make authoritative decisions) over a particular territory. Territory does not include only land, but also water masses, territorial waters and airspace over land and water.

ACTIVITY 4.1



Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions:

Since South Africa’s readmission to the international community, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of South Africans going to foreign countries. At the same time, there has been an influx of foreign visitors coming to South Africa. This has resulted in South

Africa experiencing problems with handling the traffic across its borders.

- (1) What do you understand by the term “foreign countries”?
- (2) Why does South Africa have border posts?
- (3) Is South Africa the only country with border posts?



border

Under the term “foreign country”, South Africans understand that these are countries outside the **borders** of South Africa, such as Mozambique, which to South Africans is a foreign country. For the inhabitants of Mozambique, however, South Africa is a foreign country because it lies outside the borders of Mozambique. South Africa, like all other states, has border posts at which control is exercised over the movement of people and goods across country borders.

boundaries

The term “border” in this regard literally refers to the place at which a particular government’s jurisdiction (ie the territory over which the government exercises authority) ends. *Boundaries* usually define or demarcate the territory over which authority can be exercised. The jurisdiction of the government in South Africa ends where its borders end. Thus, Mozambique’s government does not have jurisdiction over South African territory.

ACTIVITY 4.2



Read the following paragraph and then answer the questions:

There have been complaints from the public that there are not enough signs indicating precisely where the boundaries of one province in South Africa are being crossed and where exactly the area of jurisdiction of another province is being entered.

- (1) What boundaries are meant here?
- (2) If we say that territory which can be demarcated is a characteristic of a state, would you say that the above statement means that the provinces in South Africa are states?



In this case we do in fact speak of a government’s area of *geographic jurisdiction* (territory), but we are not claiming that these areas and the government thereof necessarily form a state. In the example in

this activity we speak of provincial boundaries, and the various provinces which still form part of the territory over which the South African (national) government has jurisdiction. A demarcated territory as a characteristic of a state is therefore *only one of the prerequisites of a state*.

Colonial areas have borders, but not state borders. Namibia is an apt example here. During the period when Namibia was controlled by South Africa (ca 1915–1989), it was not a state, but a political entity with territory and geographical borders. Other examples are the former Portuguese colonies, Mozambique and Angola, which the Portuguese government regarded as provinces of Portugal.

Thus far we have emphasised physical ground or land. But what happens when the sea and large rivers border a country? Rivers often form important boundaries (eg the Limpopo River between South Africa and Zimbabwe and the Orange River between South Africa and Namibia). States usually reach an agreement on where the boundary runs through a river.

territorial waters

In the case of states with a coastline, the continental shelves and a part of the sea can also be regarded as territory, and the governments of these states have jurisdiction over them. This part of the sea is referred to as **territorial waters** and stretches across a distance of 12 nautical miles. However, the Law of the Sea allows states to declare an exclusive economic zone, which may extend for a distance of up to 200 nautical miles. These states and/or countries' governments have only partial jurisdiction because they utilise these economic zones in accordance with international treaties.

The requirement that a state should have a territory does not imply that the territory should be continuous. Alaska and Hawaii are separated from the rest of the USA, but still form part of the USA as a state.

Borders and boundaries, as pointed out earlier, are important characteristics of states, but boundaries are not required to be precisely demarcated. Border disputes, in other words, disputes about precisely where a boundary should run, are sometimes encountered in relations between states.

It is also not a requirement for a state's government to have jurisdiction over all its territory. It often happens that states lay claim to territory over which the government of another state has jurisdiction. In such cases, the government of the state that lays claim to a specific territory must at least exercise authority over part

of that territory. In the case of the Kurds, who occupy the historical area known as Kurdistan, control over this territory is divided among various other states such as Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Although the Kurds lay claim to a state, they still do not have one, because they have no control over any part of their traditional territory.

Data in this study unit may vary slightly in different sources.

Finally, there is no *criterion* that prescribes the size of the territory. The surface area of Monaco is only 1,6 square kilometres and San Marino (which is situated in Italy) is only 61 square kilometres in size (both are members of the UN). In contrast, the size of Russia is 17 075 400 square kilometres.

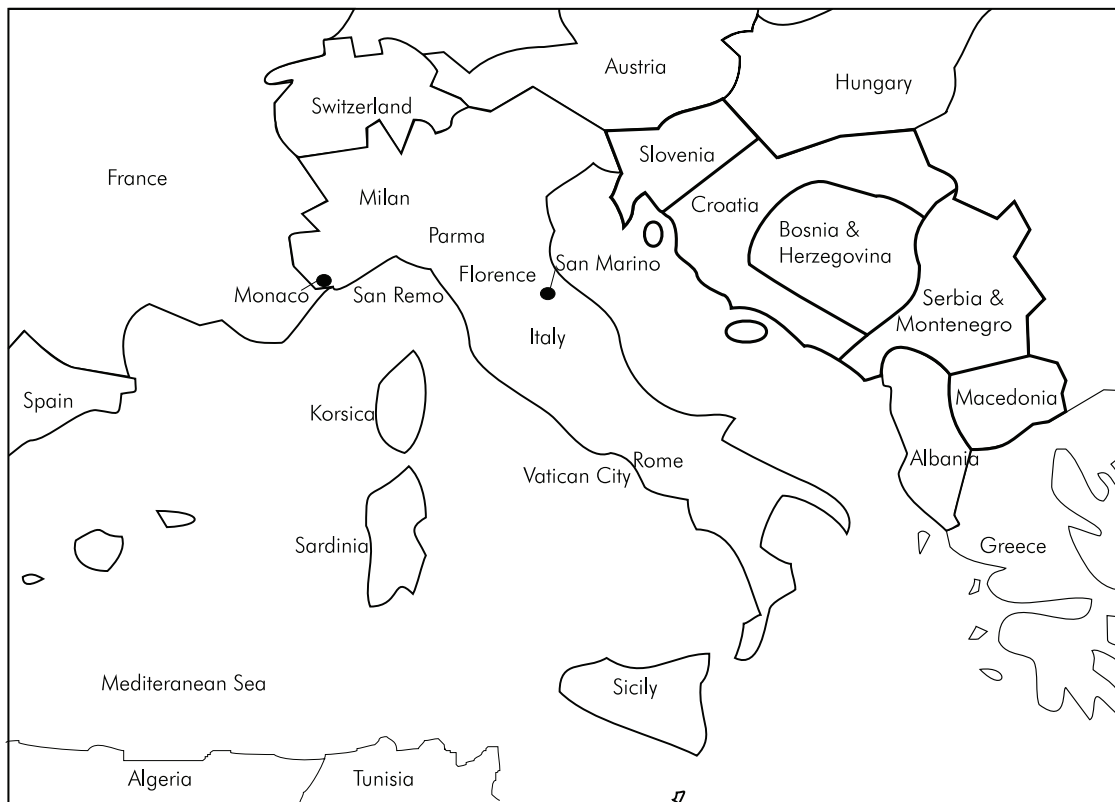


FIGURE 4.1

To sum up:

The first prerequisite for the existence of a state that we discussed is territory.

4.1.2 Permanent population as a criterion for a state

A further important criterion for a state is the presence of a

permanent population. In the discussion of territory as a criterion (prerequisite) for the existence of a state, mention was made of the fact that a state's government has jurisdiction over a specific territory. In the discussion of the concept "politics" in study unit 1, we stated that the government makes authoritative decisions for an entire society. Thus a political unit is impossible without people.

ACTIVITY 4.3

Read the following paragraph and answer the questions:

The Minister of Internal Affairs has announced that a new system has been introduced for passports. This system will make it difficult to forge passports. This step has been taken because illegal immigrants who do not have the necessary documentation are resorting to forged documentation such as passports.

- (1) Why do people need passports?
- (2) When is someone an illegal immigrant?

Passports are required to move from one country to another. Someone is an illegal immigrant when he or she enters another country or his or her homeland without the necessary permission and the necessary documentation. This control over people's movements across borders, gives us an indication that states' geographical boundaries also place restrictions on the movement of people. Thus, people are classified as citizens and/or inhabitants of a particular state.

A permanent population is, therefore, a prerequisite for the existence of a state. A region that does not have a permanent population cannot be a state. Once again, Antarctica is a good example here.

However, there are no criteria that stipulate the nature, size, population density and composition of the population. Although this may be problematic, nomads (groups of people that often move around between states) are still regarded as part of the population of a state. The size of the population varies from one state to the next. The People's Republic of China has a population of 1 218 800 000, while Nauru (an island in the Pacific ocean near Australia) has a population of only 8 100. The population density

(the number of people per square kilometre) in Namibia is 1,8 people per square kilometre, in Bangladesh it is 828 per square kilometre and in Monaco it is 18 500 per square kilometre.

ACTIVITY 4.4

Study the data below and then do the following tasks:

The details pertaining to South Africa are as follows:

Surface area: 1 223 404 sq m

Population: 43 500 000

Population density: 36 per sq km

- (1) How does South Africa's population compare with the population of the People's Republic of China and with that of Nauru?
- (2) How does South Africa's population density compare with the population density of Monaco, Bangladesh and Namibia?

To sum up:

The two criteria for the existence of a state already discussed are the following:

- demarcated territory
- permanent population

4.1.3 Government as a criterion for a state

A further prerequisite for the existence of a state is that there should be authorities that rule and govern and thereby exercise control over the population of a particular region. The government (usually the government as part of the authorities) can also act on behalf of the state in internal matters such as the prosecution of criminals. In addition, the government can also act externally on behalf of the state in the international community, by, say, concluding treaties with other states.

When a particular government collapses, for example, after elections, during political unrest and civil war, this does not mean

that the state ceases to exist. Likewise, it is not a requirement for the government to be legitimate. Although many people regarded the government in South Africa as illegitimate during the apartheid era, South Africa still continued to exist as a state. A government should have the ability to enforce its authoritative decisions either through physical force or through influence. In states such as Monaco and San Marino, influence plays a more important role than physical force.

ACTIVITY 4.5

Read the following and then do the tasks:

Imagine a demarcated territory with a permanent population, but with no government.

- (1) Indicate who will formulate the policy for the population and who will enforce it.
- (2) Who will conclude treaties with other states regarding, say, the extradition of criminals?
- (3) Do you think it is possible to speak of a political entity in such a situation?

If we go back to our definition of politics in study unit 1, we will find that it is not really possible, in the absence of a government, to speak of a political entity, and even less of a state. The existence of a government is one of the essential characteristics of politics and of human beings' political organisation — without it we are not dealing with politics.

However, it may happen that a state is temporarily without a government, but in the long term, it must have a government to qualify as a state.

To sum up:

The three criteria for the existence of a state discussed thus far are as follows:

- demarcated territory
- permanent population
- government

4.1.4 Sovereignty as a criterion for a state

The government of a region must be sovereign. This means that the government may not fall under the control, or partial control, of any other power. That is why a province such as Gauteng, is not a state. The authority of Gauteng is still under the partial control of the central or national government in South Africa. Before Namibia became independent, it was not a state because it was under the control of the South African government. When independence is obtained, especially in colonial areas, sovereignty is granted to the authorities of those regions.

Sovereignty has two dimensions, namely internal and external sovereignty. In order to be regarded as a state, a political entity must have both internal and external sovereignty.

ACTIVITY 4.6

Read the following paragraph and then do the tasks:

During the apartheid era, South Africa granted “independence” to the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and the Ciskei. Each of these “states” obtained a government. Since these areas were economically dependent on South Africa, South Africa was in a position to be extremely prescriptive about these states’ internal policy. Foreign policy was for the most part dictated by South Africa’s Department of Foreign Affairs.

- (1) Indicate whether you think these states had internal sovereignty. Give reasons for your answer.
- (2) Indicate whether you think these states had external sovereignty. Give reasons for your answer.

To sum up:

The criteria for the existence of a state discussed thus far are as follows:

- demarcated territory
- permanent population
- government
- sovereignty

4.1.5 Recognition as a criterion for a state

As a rule, the prerequisites already mentioned are regarded as adequate criteria for the existence of a state. However, recognition of a state by the international community is becoming increasingly important.

ACTIVITY 4.7

Read the following paragraph and then do the tasks:

The former “independent states” in South Africa (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) could never obtain the necessary recognition as states from the international community of states. The Republic of China (Taiwan) finds itself increasingly in the same position as these “independent states” (TBVC states) in that the international community of states is increasingly recognising the People’s Republic of China (Red China) over Taiwan.

- (1) Do you think that the recognition of a state by other states is important? Give reasons for your answer.
- (2) Suppose that the international community of states had recognised the TBVC states. Do you think this would have made any difference to the course of history of South Africa? Now write one paragraph on how you think the history of South Africa could have developed?

Unfortunately it is true that the recognition of a state by other states is important. If a state is not recognised, it means that it may be excluded from international organisations and that it cannot conclude treaties with other states.

4.2 WHAT FALSE CRITERIA ARE USED FOR THE EXISTENCE OF STATES?

Sometimes a number of false criteria are used as criteria for states. These are usually arguments that politicians put forward and even exploit, especially when specific regions insist on independence in a state. These arguments were also frequently used in the past to delay independence in colonial areas. These arguments have even

been advanced in South Africa, in differences of opinion about the Volkstaat and KwaZulu-Natal.

4.2.1 Viability as a false criterion

According to this argument, a state must be economically viable before it can be a state. Some of the poorest societies in the world are organised politically in states. Numerous states are totally dependent economically on foreign aid. Thus, economic viability cannot be regarded as a criterion for the existence of a state.

4.2.2 Consolidated territory as a false criterion

Consolidated territory is not a criterion for the existence of a state. If a state's territory is fragmented, it may happen that the government finds it difficult to exercise authority in that state. The lack of a consolidated territory may endanger the existence of a state, but consolidated territory as such can still not be regarded as a criterion for the existence of a state. Pakistan initially consisted of two regions (West and East Pakistan) which were separated by India. East Pakistan later revolted and in 1971, the state of Bangladesh developed from East Pakistan. Today, West Pakistan is the state Pakistan.

4.2.3 Power as a false criterion

Sometimes the argument is put forward that a state should have the necessary physical power to be regarded as a state. There are few states today that have the necessary power to protect themselves from the superpowers (eg the USA). Even the USA is aware that its power position can be thwarted by the cooperation of a number of states. During the war against Iraq, the USA was dependent on the cooperation of other states that were kindly disposed towards it. Hence the majority of states today are inclined to concentrate on cooperation and their potential influence in this regard rather than on brute force.

4.2.4 Homogenous population as a false criterion

A nation is a particular politically organised cultural group with a sentiment of unity.

Another argument that is frequently advanced is that a state should have a homogeneous population. This argument stems from the idea of a nation state, in which each *nation* is supposed to have its own state and in which each state should have its own nation. Fewer than five percent of states in the international community of states can be regarded as nation states. The vast majority of states have heterogeneous populations (ie populations that differ in terms of language, culture, ethnicity, religion and class). If a population is heterogeneous, the government may sometimes have difficulty exercising authority and the state may suffer as a result. This was a significant factor in the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

4.3 IN WHAT WAY DOES A STATE DIFFER FROM OTHER POLITICAL ENTITIES

In the next few study units you will be introduced to other forms of political organisation and even to primitive states. The answer that we are seeking here is: “To what extent does the modern state differ from these forms of political organisation?” We shall be dealing with the differences in the discussion in the next few study units, but at this point, a few factors need to be discussed here.

frontiers

One of the main characteristics is the existence of boundaries. Even if there are disputes about exactly where the boundary runs, modern states have boundaries. Other forms of political organisation mainly had *frontiers* as “boundaries”. The different political units were usually separated from one another by a region in which the influence of the authorities gradually faded.

The mutual recognition of and respect for a state’s borders, territory, population and especially sovereignty are also important characteristics. In the past, other political entities’ existence depended largely on their military strength.

The comprehensiveness of the modern state is important. The control that is exercised over its boundaries and the population is also significant. Think again of the necessity for passports when one travels abroad.

These are some of the characteristics that you should bear in mind when you study the following study units.

4.4 IN WHAT OTHER WAYS IS THE TERM “STATE” USED?

The term “state” is often used as a synonym for the following terms:

- nation
- society
- community
- authority and government

The above terms refer to concepts which differ from the concept “state” as conceptualised in this course. Hence the importance of briefly indicating what each of these concepts entails.

4.4.1 Nation

The concept “nation” refers to a specific type of solidarity (feeling of togetherness) among a group of people. This group of people is, therefore, also politically organised. Obtaining their own state is usually a nation’s highest aspiration (aim), although a nation need not have its own state and does not always strive to have its own state. Thus, the term “state” should not be used as a synonym for the term “nation”: “... despite the common usage of the term nation, specifically in the context ‘nation State’, and the fact that nationalism has been closely associated on a practical level with the State in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is still no theoretical warrant for it. The State is a debatable concept, but ... the coincidence between the two terms is thus a historical freak which it would be a relief to abandon” (Vincent 1994:29).

4.4.2 Society

We mentioned earlier how the term “society” is used in this module. However, the term is also used to refer to different concepts. (You do not need to know more about this here.) The relationship between the state and society depends, therefore, on how these two concepts are defined. There is a definite correlation between the two concepts, but it is not enough to imply that they are precisely the same. Society chiefly relates to the nature of the state’s population and to the interactions between members of the population.

4.4.3 Community

The concept “community” also refers to the nature of relationships between people and, therefore, also indicates aspects of the state’s population.

4.4.4 Authority and Government

The term “state” is generally used as a synonym for the terms “authorities” and “government”. This usage is particularly prevalent in the literature of the Marxists, Neo-Marxists and statistes. In American literature on Political Science, the term “state” is also used more often as a synonym for “authority” and “government” compared with European literature. Once again, authority and government are one specific dimension of the state, as conceptualised in this course — hence here they are not regarded as synonyms.

It is important for you to know about the different uses of the term “state”. However, it is even more important, each time you read about politics, for you to determine in what sense the term is being used.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions:

- (1) Name the prerequisites for the existence of a state.
- (2) In what way is a state’s territory determined?
- (3) How large should the population of a state be?
- (4) Who should comprise a state’s government?
- (5) Why is the recognition of states a prerequisite that is becoming increasingly important?
- (6) What false criteria are sometimes used for the existence of states?
- (7) Explain how the concept “state” differs from the concepts “nation”, “community”, “society”, “authority” and “government”.
- (8) Indicate whether you believe that the TBVC states were states in the true sense of the word. Give reasons for your answer.
- (9) What criteria do you think would be important if any area in South Africa wished to break away and become independent?

Read chapter 3 of the prescribed book and then do the following questions.

- (10) What three components of a state do these authors emphasise?
- (11) According to the authors, when is a state allowed to join the UN?
- (12) What two dimensions of sovereignty do the authors identify?
- (13) According to the authors, how important is the size of the population?
- (14) How do these authors define the concept “nation”?
- (15) What, according to the authors, are the characteristics of the modern state?



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STUDY UNIT 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

The following discussion deals with the development that occurred in the traditional authorities. It is important to note this development, because the modern authorities originated in the traditional authorities. Many of the characteristics of the modern authorities that we take for granted, had their roots in the traditional authorities.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What are traditional authorities?
What role did the family organisation play in the development of government authority?
In what way did the tribal level integrate into the development of government authority?
In what way did development occur at the chieftainship level?
What different levels of traditional executive authority were there?

5.1 TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

Before discussing the concept of government in its traditional form, it is necessary to look at the concept in its modern form. In simple terms, the concept “government” relates to the people who, through government institutions, such as parliament, exercise authority on behalf of the state. In other words, it refers to the role players who authoritatively assign values to a society.

ACTIVITY 5.1

- (1) Who is the present government in South Africa? Think of the role players who exercise authority on behalf of the state and, therefore, occupy positions in the government.
- (2) What happens if the opposition win the next election?
- (3) Can you spot the difference between a state and a government or authority?

Once you have reflected on these questions, you may use the following example as a practical illustration:

The Conservative Party in Britain was the ruling party in 1997, and the government was composed of the members of this party. The leader of the Conservative Party, Mr John Major was the prime minister. His colleagues in the Conservative Party were the authority which ruled the country — in other words, the government. The Conservative Party thus played the role of the government, which, for the period for which it was elected, exercised authority on behalf of the state. However, the Labour Party won the next election, and they will be the role players who exercise authority on behalf of the state, Britain.

A country's government usually consists of a legislative, executive and judicial authority. However, these branches of the government occurred later and did not exist in the forms of government that we shall be discussing in this study unit. Before we can discuss the modern forms of government in subsequent study units, it is necessary to discuss the development which occurred in the traditional forms of government.

What is a traditional form of government? The traditional form of government refers to the person or persons who exercise authority

on behalf of his or their group, family or tribe — in other words, allocate scarce resources to his or their group, family or tribe in an authoritative way.

Note that the development of government authority ranges from the earliest forms of government authority to the ancient monarchies (see the example in the next paragraph). One should bear in mind that the discussion of the traditional forms of government authority is at a general level. Within the limited scope of a study guide, it is not possible to go into all the variations and developments in traditional government authority. If you wish to read further on this subject you should consult the bibliography at the end of the study guide.

The development from the lowest level of society up to the ancient monarchies can be explained by referring to the origin of the royal period or ancient monarchy in Rome. Before the year 753 BC, the Roman families lived mainly in the region that would later become known as Rome. In approximately 753 BC, the families occupied the region as tribes. One of the heads of the tribes later united the tribes and ruled over the region as king. Can you see the development that took place?

5.2 THE FAMILY ORGANISATION AS THE EARLIEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT

The earliest form of traditional government authority of which we are aware, is the family that was grouped together as a unit. The family organisation goes back very far in the history of humankind, and is the earliest form of group integration. The family organisation that appeared throughout the ancient world before 500 BC, signified the start of the theory of evolution of authorities.

The grouping together in the family organisation was established mainly at a personal level between members of one family group. Control or authority in the group was exercised by a dominant person, known as the patriarch or matriarch. There were different relationships in the authority relationship: horizontal relationships between adults and vertical relationships between adults and their children.

The form of grouping or integration occurred mainly within a family but was also extended when intermarriage with other family groups took place. Authority was exercised when the group needed

a leader, for example, on hunting trips or when a fight broke out with neighbouring family groups.

Although family groups as a form of political organisation were present more than 2 500 years ago in the ancient world, there are several reasons why we should know about them today. Can you think of a reason why we, in the modern era, should have a knowledge of this ancient form of government?

- Firstly, the first level in the state's development will be lacking if we do not know about the earliest form of interpersonal integration.
- Secondly, you will realise after reflecting on this for a moment, that this form of authority still exists at an informal level in our society. In some cases, authority in remote areas in South Africa is sometimes exercised by a patriarch of a family. At national level, however, government authority is generally in the hands of an elected government, as is the case in South Africa.

If we briefly summarise the characteristics of the patriarchal family organisation, the characteristics are as follows:

- One or more family groups form the unit; the political unit is, therefore, the family group.
- A patriarch is the person who exercises authority over his followers.
- The relationship between members of the group and family groups is strongly egalitarian which means that there is an even distribution of authority. The position of the leader is generally functional.

5.3 THE TRIBE

The following phase of development in traditional government authority was the development from the family organisation to the development of tribes. For a variety of reasons, it was no longer possible for the family organisation to survive the demands of the time. One of the demands was that of military threat, when smaller family groups could no longer hold their own against larger and stronger groupings.

The characteristic of the tribe as a traditional form of government is

that it was larger and more complex than the family organisation. The reason for this was that family groups united to form larger units. The units that were formed from family groups were known as tribes.

The tribal system brought into being a totally new and more complex political and social unit than the traditional form of government.

The union or grouping together of different family groups in tribes is important for various reasons. Tribes unite divergent groups and thus represent a cross-section of society. Hence a new grouping, which is more complex than the family grouping, is created politically and socially.

A further consideration which is important to us, is the emergence of a strong distinguishing element. Tribes endeavoured to maintain their identity and to distinguish themselves from other tribes in the environment. Social and geographic boundaries were thus more strongly maintained than in the past.

Can you think of reasons why the tribal system is important for our understanding of the origin of the state?

If you think for a moment of the characteristics of a modern state, the fact that a state's population is united in one territory, is one of the chief characteristics. Think about the tribal system: it is clear that a form of geographical integration also took place. The line of development to a state can already be seen in the tribe.

If we look at the inhabitants of a country, it is clear that a large number of groups were joined together and that large-scale social integration took place. The line of development of this phenomenon can be traced back to the tribal system.

The main characteristics of the tribal system can be summarised as follows:

- The first important characteristic is that the development of the tribal system made a cross-section through society. In other words, it formed members of the society, who were not necessarily part of the same family group, into a new unit.
- The second important characteristic is that political and social integration occurred in a more complex fashion, in that different family groups were joined together.

- A third characteristic is that although the tribe was a more complex grouping than the family organisation, the family grouping still dominated the nature of the tribal grouping. No family group dominated another on a political or social level; egalitarian control also occurred at tribal level.

One can, therefore, infer that the tribal level, like the family level, was strongly structured into segments. In both the organisational and economic areas, the families in the tribe maintained a system of equality. Inequalities arose only for functional reasons, for example, when someone had to exercise authority because of military threats by other tribes.

It is clear that the tribal system was an important phase in the line of development of traditional authorities. The necessary integration between family groups at political and social level had already taken place. The egalitarian structure of the tribe, however, prevented development to the next phase. Thus, family grouping and the egalitarian nature thereof stood in the path of a more centralised societal form. It was only when the egalitarian nature of family groupings and tribes was broken down that the next phase of development, namely the chieftainship phase, could come to the fore.

5.4 THE CHIEF

The chieftainship level was another significant development of the traditional authorities dealt with thus far. Read the introductory part in study unit 3.1 again about the meaning of modern authorities. Think for a moment of the role that modern authorities in South Africa or any other country play. One can mention a number of characteristics which show that modern authorities differ markedly from traditional authorities.

The central consideration that comes to the fore here is the fact that the government in a country holds the highest position of authority. Put differently, this means that authorities are usually appointed to hold the power and authority position in a society. Think again of the family and tribe discussed above: what characteristic of the two traditional forms of government stands out the most? It is clear that the egalitarian nature of the family and the tribal level come strongly to the fore. Families had equal relationships with each other and did not stand in any authority relationship or hierarchy

with each other. There was thus no government structure that occupied a position of authority on behalf of the tribe or the family. In order to develop from a traditional to a more modern form of government authority, it was necessary for the egalitarian nature of the traditional authorities to first be terminated. It is this vital development in the traditional authorities that we are now going to discuss.

In the line of development from traditional to modern authorities, the chieftainship system played a crucial role in the development process. However, it is important to remember that the chieftainship system did not establish the modern government. This level was rather an important watershed in the development of the more traditional forms of government.

5.4.1 The chieftainship system as a watershed

The chieftainship system led to a watershed in the development of the traditional authorities. The name “chief” in itself indicates an important central position of authority, which generated a new principle in the development of traditional forms of government. The centralised nature of the chief’s position meant that there was a movement away from the egalitarian organisation of families and tribes, and the centralisation of power and authority became part of the traditional government authority.

Permanent leadership had a strong integrative influence on the traditional authorities. The independence that had been prevalent in the family groups largely disappeared. Families and tribes were absorbed into a larger centralised unit, the chieftainship system.

The important development from a tribal to chieftainship system led to a larger and more complex unit. However, it now became important for the chief’s leadership to be stable and enduring, and for the central control to be maintained consistently over decades. This gave rise to another new consideration, namely the system of hereditary leadership.

The system of hereditary succession, which was established by the chieftainship system means that fathers were succeeded by their sons, although other systems were also used. Since there was usually more than one aspirant to the crown and because families could improve their status in this way, in time a new grouping developed in society. The group, known in the modern era as the

aristocracy, regarded themselves as having a higher status than the rest of the tribe. This also contributed to the disappearance of the egalitarian nature of the previous groupings which we discussed above.

Central control over the political level also worked through to the other levels, and at economic level, for example, gave rise to a new system. The independence that had characterised families earlier, meant that families and tribes generally had to satisfy their own needs. Gifts were exchanged between families, which largely emphasised the decentralised nature of families and their economic activities.

Because of the centralising nature of political control, the autonomy of smaller groups, such as families at chieftainship level, was no longer possible. The logical result of the chieftainship system was, therefore, to also place economic activities under central control.

There was now greater central control over economic activities: the chief received the products and gifts and was also responsible for redistributing them. This slower and more indirect gathering and distribution from the producer to the central point and then to the consumer had two important functions:

- Firstly, the different economic activities were joined organisationally.
- Secondly, it emphasised the power and authority of the central ruler, in this case the chief. In other words, it contributed to the establishment of the central authority.

Can you now see why the developments that took place over time in the traditional authorities, are important in our modern understanding of the state?

The strongly centralised nature of the chieftainship level as government authority contributed to the **extension** of the societal grouping. Family groupings and tribes were fairly limited in terms of the number of people who could be allowed into the group.

Stemming from the above, it is clear that central control is far better than an egalitarian structure, and that it contributed to a greater absorption capacity of the government structure. It is therefore possible to make provision for more people in a more functional way.

A general assumption that can be made is that central control, as was made possible by the chief's position, led to larger groupings.

Without this, smaller groups would have existed and the consolidation of people in larger societal contexts would not have been possible.

It would also not have been possible to develop to the next level, the primitive state, or to the ancient monarchy. Centralisation of authority, as effected by the development of the chieftainship system, played a vital role in the “chain of development”, ranging from the traditional forms of government to the modern systems. Without a discussion of this development, a student’s understanding of modern authorities would be extremely limited.

The main characteristics of the chieftainship system can be summarised as follows:

- The chief’s position led to political centralisation.
- Political centralisation led to the disappearance of the egalitarian nature of the tribal system and the replacement of segmented socioeconomic activities by central control.
- Central control in the political, social and economic areas was an important political breakthrough. It led to increased and more complex integration. This answers the first requirement laid down for the existence of a state, namely that the population should be consolidated into one territory.

The development of the chieftainship system prepared the way for the next phase in the development of more complex societal contexts. The tribal system developed from the patriarchal family context in order to adapt to the changing environment. The egalitarian nature of the tribal system could also not keep up with political and military developments that took place, and a stronger centralised system, therefore, had to take over — hence the development of the chieftainship level. However, for political and military reasons, the chieftainship level and the tribes were also rapidly absorbed into larger units. Two examples of larger units, known as monarchies or kingdoms, are the Zulus and the Ashanti. However, this development will be discussed in a subsequent study unit.

The theoretical explanation above, can be illustrated in practical terms by referring to the process of political development which occurred in KwaZulu-Natal.

During the period before 1800, the Nguni were scattered over the region which we today know as KwaZulu-Natal. The Nguni led a

peaceful existence and socially were grouped primarily into families. By 1800, because of an increase in numbers, tribes came into existence and smallish tribes inhabited the region. Two of the most prominent tribes, the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo and the Ndwandwe under Zwile, developed to the chieftainship level. Due to their political and military centralisation, they soon become stronger than their opponents. Smaller tribes were quickly absorbed into the larger units. Dingiswayo, in particular, incorporated a number of tribes into his chieftainship and developed into a strong unit.

One of the tribes which was incorporated into Dingiswayo's tribe was the small Zulu tribe under the rule of Shaka. Shaka who had previously been expelled from the Zulu tribe, returned to this tribe in 1816, and took over as leader with little opposition. As a subordinate of Dingiswayo, Shaka soon made a name for himself. He distinguished himself as a leader, especially in the military field, and soon built up a sound reputation for himself. When Dingiswayo was murdered in 1818 by his arch-enemy Zwile, Shaka took over the Mthethwa chieftainship. Shaka immediately started introducing political and military reforms, and soon raised a formidable military unit. In 1819, the Ndwandwe were bowing and scraping to Shaka and the way was open for total domination of the Zulu nation.

In this way, Shaka succeeded in raising the Zulu kingdom which was without match in Africa. As king and commander of the mighty kingdom, everyone was subordinate to him. Shaka thus succeeded in uniting all the chieftainships and tribes in a powerful unit, the kingdom or simply the empire. Shaka's kingdom is also referred to as an early state or a primitive state. This will be dealt with in a subsequent study unit.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Before we move on to the next study unit, make sure that you understand all the characteristics of each study unit.

- (1) How many different levels of traditional government authority are dealt with in this study unit? Try to write them down without consulting the text.
- (2) Tabulate the different characteristics which occur at the various levels and then compare them.

- (3) What important development occurred from the tribal level to the chieftainship level? Read sections 5.3 and 5.4 and make sure that you understand it.
- (4) Why is it so important for power and authority to be centralised in order to make provision for larger units?
- (5) Is there any form of government in the examples below? State why each does/does not meet the requirements of a government.
 - (a) In a remote kraal in North Africa, the head of the family decides that the family should leave the region and migrate to another well-watered region.
 - (b) The head of a tribe decides to incorporate yet another family into his tribe so that they will be strong enough to ward off the raids of the neighbouring tribe.



STUDY UNIT 6

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

This is a very important study unit and it concentrates largely on explaining the essence of the various study units. In this respect, this study unit is very important, because you will find it very difficult to understand the underlying interdependence of the other study units if you do not understand the explanations given here.

In this study unit we will explain specific concepts which can be used to differentiate between certain societal groupings and to understand why they do not “qualify” as states. It is important that you understand the difference between a state and a society. Use the information in this study unit as a guideline when studying the following study units; it will also help you to answer any questions based on the section.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

When does a societal grouping qualify as a state?
What other characteristics are there for a state?
Did the state develop geographically in the same way?

6.1 STUDY UNITS IN THE STUDY GUIDE

In the next few study units we will introduce you to the different types of societies. Initially we will look at traditional forms of authority, such as tribes. The discussion will then move to ancient authorities, such as the monarchies, and then to the different “World Empires”, such as the Roman Empire. Innovative developments, such as the city states which appeared throughout the ancient world, will also be discussed in a study unit. We will look at the importance of the Middle Ages and the “state-like” organisation of feudalism: the *stände* state and the absolutist state.

The large variety of authorities and forms of societies which appear in this guide, can be confusing. It is important, therefore, to understand the essence and the underlying interdependence of the study units; the relationship between the study units must be clear.

The different study units, which deal with the various forms of societies or government institutions, have one common objective and that is to indicate how government authority was exercised in societies before the modern state made its appearance. We will explain what it meant by a modern state later on in the study unit. It is important to understand that collective authority was exercised collectively over a given population by a “bearer of authority” which we call a government. No state or modern state came into being which did not comply with the specific prerequisites of a state.

What do we mean by prerequisites? In the study unit dealing with the characteristics of the modern state, we identified four prerequisites which can be used to identify the state as an institution. The problem is that these characteristics can clearly also be applied to government institutions/forms of societies which do not qualify as states. This may lead to confusion about the concept of the modern state.

The aim of this study unit is thus to give further qualifying criteria/standards which may be used to differentiate between government institutions and the state.

If we look at the city state, for example, which is dealt with in a later study unit and then apply the four (five) criteria, it appears as though the city state is a state. The addition of the suffix “state” also adds to the confusion. The city state has a government, a permanent population, demarcated territory and is sovereign. In many cases, the city state is recognised by other city states and so complies with

the fifth characteristics, recognition. Is a city state a state or not? The same question can also be asked about ancient monarchies. This study unit will answer this question and provide the key to studying the following study units.

6.2 THE STATE AS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION (RES PUBLICA)

What distinguishing criteria can we use to differentiate between government institutions and the modern state?

Ancient monarchies and empires, in particular, which existed before the rise of the modern state, had one distinguishing characteristic. Most monarchies and empires were ruled by the king, since he had the power to rule — and were thus real *kingdoms*. A real state, in contrast, is not a private institution, but a public concern, the so-called *res publica*. The *Res Publica* was based on the legal interests of the citizens of the state and not on the private interests of the king.

In order to accommodate a public-law development, a process of modernisation and development must take place. Any modernisation of a government system means that a degree of development, branching out and differentiation must occur to create channels between the government and citizens. Separate groups also developed with their own internal form of organisation and legal connections. In other words, various nonstate institutions, similar to the state, developed (eg schools, churches, universities, cultural associations and sport clubs).

This diversification of the various independent life-forms, which are characteristic of the modern state, differ quite extensively from the way in which the more primitive government institutions developed. The life activities of most of the government institutions we have discussed thus far, were lumped together. The differentiation which characterised the modern state, was absent.

The modern state consequently presumes a relatively developed and differentiated society in which a variety of nongovernmental activities exist alongside the state as legal connection. The diversification of structures, institutions and roles, and the specialisation required for this process, is of great interest to the state as a successful institution.

For various reasons, therefore, we cannot classify the traditional

government institutions — for example the tribe and the ancient primitive state, and thereafter the ancient monarchies and city states — as modern states. Diversification was stopped due to the indistinct nature of the institutions. In reality, the city state was little more than a large city and can, therefore, not be classified as a state.

ACTIVITY 6.1

The following few activities will take the form of multiple-choice questions, which will be discussed at the end of the study unit as part of the self-evaluation.

Complete the following short multiple-choice test by indicating the appropriate option for each question:

- (1) When is a societal grouping regarded as a modern state? Indicate the correct option.
 - (a) when it can exercise authority
 - (b) when the majority of inhabitants accept its decisions
 - (c) when it complies with four or five of the requirements set for the state
 - (d) when the diversification, specialisation and modernisation of roles and structures has taken place
 - (e) both c and d are correct
- (2) Indicate the correct option.

The following government institutions are examples of the modern state:

 - (a) city state
 - (b) ancient monarchy
 - (c) tribe
 - (d) none of the above mentioned is an example of a state
- (3) One of the following statements about the state is false. Indicate which statement is false.
 - (a) city states can not be regarded as modern states
 - (b) res publica means that governance takes place according to the interests of the inhabitants
 - (c) public-law development is the product of a process of modernisation
 - (d) public-law development is the product of individual development
 - (e) most ancient monarchies were aimed at the private powers of the monarch

- (4) One of the following statements about the state is false. Indicate which statement is false.

Res Publica means:

- (a) the private power of the monarch is extremely important
- (b) a concept which preceded the modern state
- (c) a public-law development is the product of a process of modernisation

- (5) One of the following statements is correct. Indicate the correct statement.

King Louis IV called out, “L’etat? C est moi!” (The state? It is I!)
The exclamation is an example of:

- (a) res publica
- (b) capitulation
- (c) a kingdom
- (d) a city state
- (e) absolutist state



6.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE, THE KEY TO FURTHER STUDY UNITS

This subsection is without doubt the most important subsection of the study guide. When you study the following study units it will be prudent to keep the following sections in mind.

- The guide comprises a discussion of different government institutions/societal groupings in different stages of development all over the world.
- The societal groupings appeared in a variety of forms, from tribes to ancient kingdoms, city states to even forms of primitive states.
- Not all societal groupings were *modern states*, even though their specific characteristics were similar to those of the modern state.
- The modern state only emerged later on; 1648 (Peace of Westphalia) is the generally accepted date for this emergence.
- The societal groupings were all very important; historical

developments can be traced from these societal groupings right through to the emergence of the modern state.

- The state building phase of the modern state was very important, since it was a phase in which all the inhabitants were consolidated in a demarcated territory with a government; they were free from intrusion from outside, and could apply predetermined rules (laws) on behalf of the inhabitants. Each stage of development, whether it was tribes, city states or ancient kingdoms, contributed to the establishment and settlement of the state building phase.

It is important that you realise that government institutions/ societal groupings existed close to one another. In ancient history in certain parts of the world, ancient monarchies, for example, ruled over certain areas, while city states developed in other areas. During this period, tribes appeared elsewhere as societal groupings.

- The Western state developed according to the historical evolutionary pattern: it followed a step-by-step development. States developed more artificially elsewhere. The colonial state, for example, developed when modern constitutions were cultivated in underdeveloped areas where tribal societies were prevalent. More revolutionary developments took place where the state-building process was assisted by revolutions, such as those taking place in Eastern Europe.

In other words, the state-like development did not take place in the same way in every region.

As you work through the study guide, it is important that you keep these sections in mind. The different societal groupings should always be seen in context.

6.3.1 Feudal state/*stände* state/absolutist state

After we have examined the early societal groupings, we will introduce you to three more concepts, namely the feudal state, the *stände* state and the absolutist state.

The important question which must also be asked in this case, is if these states (the feudal state, the *stände* state and the absolutist state) can be seen as modern states. Hopefully you will have realised by

this stage that these concepts do not comply with all the requirements of a modern state.

The aim of this section is to explain the differences between the three concepts. We will assign a complete study unit to each of these concepts, but it is important at this stage that you understand the differences and development between the three. In order to obtain a more extensive knowledge on the subject, we refer you to the study units and the recommended course material on the subject.

This section is important as we will explain the underlying historical interdependence of these concepts. We encourage you to come back to this section regularly to refresh your memory.

The feudal “state” was not a state, but rather a political and socio-economic arrangement of parts of Europe while the territory threatened to decline into anarchy as a result of a power vacuum. The feudal system allowed the territory to fragment into small units where a monarch, count or even members of the church in a feudal relationship, exercised control. The feudal relationship comprised the feudal lord and the vassals (feudal tenants) with the latter working for the feudal lord in exchange for protection and land. This feudal system instilled order in a time when parts of the world threatened to decline into anarchy.

The *stände* state was a development which succeeded the feudal state in Europe. It indicated a specific relationship where feudal units were linked to a variety of groupings in Middle Age cities. These groupings consisted mainly of tradesmen who formed part of the trade revival taking place in Europe. These tradesmen were organised into various guilds and were excluded from the feudal relationship. These guilds were united into a *collective* unit called the *stände* state which contained the fragmentation that was prevalent in the feudal period. The *stände* state refers to the collectivity of the organisation with collective decision making (including government management and decision making) playing an important role.

The absolutist state took this development a step further. The fragmentation which took place during the feudal period, was curtailed by the centralisation of the absolutist state. The monopoly of power by the monarch resulted in the state-building phase being completed, since all the units were integrated as a result of his actions. The framework within which the modern state could develop, was established in this way.

ACTIVITY 6.2

The following exercise takes the form of multiple-choice questions. Indicate the appropriate option for each question.

- (1) Fragmentation of territory took place during which development phase?
 - (a) *stände* state
 - (b) feudal state
 - (c) absolutist state
- (2) During which phase of development did the monarch claim all the power for himself?
 - (a) *stände* state
 - (b) feudal state
 - (c) absolutist state
- (3) During which phase of development did collective decision making take place?
 - (a) *stände* state
 - (b) feudal state
 - (c) absolutist state
- (4) During which phase was the state-building phase completed?
 - (a) power was exercised by a monarch
 - (b) ancient monarchies' holds were broken
 - (c) feudalism was established in Europe
 - (d) inhabitants were consolidated in a demarcated territory with a government



SELF-EVALUATION

Without consulting the study guide, try to answer all the multiple-choice questions in this study unit. After you have completed all the questions, compare your answers with the answers below.

ACTIVITY 6.3

- (1) The correct option is (e). Both c and d are correct when all the

conditions laid down have been met, and diversification, specialisation and modernisation of structures and institutions has taken place.

- (2) The correct option is (d). The societal groupings named do not meet the set conditions. Consult the relevant sections if you are unsure about this question.
- (3) The incorrect statement is (d). The basic idea of this section is to indicate that *res publica* had moved away from governance based on the private powers of individuals to a development of public law.
- (4) The incorrect statement is (a). Read the appropriate sections.
- (5) The correct statement is (d), since the king rules in his own interests.



ACTIVITY 6.4



- (1) The correct option is (b). The feudal period is characterised by the fragmentation of territory into smaller units. Read more about this in the study unit dealing with feudalism.
- (2) The correct option is (c). During the absolutist state phase, the monarch claimed all the political power for himself.
- (3) The correct option is (a). Collective decision making was a product of the *stände* state, when the different units of society made decisions with the monarch.



6.4 THE MODERN STATE

The modern state first made its appearance in Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As was indicated in the sections on feudalism and the *stände* state, individuals showed loyalty primarily to feudal lords and/or religious authorities. You will remember that forms of government were largely transterritorial; in other words, without territorial borders.

Two important developments helped the modern state to develop.

- Territorial consolidation took place since monarchs/kings gained control over greater areas by means of victories and marriages. Units which disintegrated under the feudal

system, were united once again. In Germany and Italy where the process took longer than in Spain and France, for example, the territories remained fragmented for longer periods and states only developed centuries later.

- The Reformation was also an important factor since it questioned the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church. Individuals started to identify themselves in terms of religion and language. The translation of the Bible into various European languages also led to people classifying themselves as French or German speaking.

The Peace of Westphalia was an important event, because it ended the Thirty Year War in Europe. The significance of this event is as follows:

- It signalled the end of the Holy Roman Empire's dominion as the pivot of European solidarity. The supremacy of the church, as an institution in Europe, came to an end.
- The agreement was concluded and led to the view that Europe consisted of states which were equal in the eyes of the law, and each with a specific population and a demarcated territory. States undertook to respect each other's territory and diplomatic ties were established.

Jackson and Jackson point out further developments. Inhabitants of the new states developed pride in their states. New state leaders saw the advantages of strengthened and consolidated units.

The new state formed a strategic and economic unit by offering a framework which would, to a large extent, protect the inhabitants from external threats. At the same time, the technological revival at the time of the industrial revolution resulted in the focus shifting from agriculture. This helped the state to control economic activities and to guarantee economic autonomy.

Three important and original characteristics gave rise to the development of the European state. Samuel Finer explains that although the characteristics were evident elsewhere, it was only in Europe that all three were present simultaneously.

- **Legalism.** This principle, in essence, states that the relationship between the state and its subjects must be based on the law. Legalism offers the individual exclusive rights and protection, and limits the government's rights to exercise power.

- **Immutability.** This is when the social structure, political structure and the value system supported each other, resulting in the continued existence of the state. The value system was formed from within the state and not from outside as was the case during the reign of the Holy Roman Empire. The state was not bound to a higher religious power which meant that it could develop its own value system; this contributed to the continued existence of the state.
- **Multi-party system.** The rise of a relatively big state system in Europe, where each state respected the other state, was a strengthening factor which influenced the state in its formative year. Individual states could support each other and so ensure their continued existence. This development could not take place elsewhere in the world. In the Islamic parts, the centralistic nature was retained on account of common religious beliefs. In China, the dynastic dominance of one big area halted such development. The competitive nature of Hinduism and Islam prevented the development of a state system on the Indian continent.

ACTIVITY 6.5

Complete the following multiple-choice questions by indicating the correct option for each question:

- (1) The modern state developed as a result of
 - (a) the end of the Thirty Year War
 - (b) the Holy Roman Empire's hold being broken in Western Europe
 - (c) the increased influence of feudalism in society
 - (d) a and b are correct
- (2) The development of the modern state was helped by
 - (a) territorial consolidation
 - (b) the control exercised by the Holy Roman Empire
 - (c) transterritorial control
 - (d) the feudal system
- (3) The significance of the peace in Westphalia in 1648 was
 - (a) that the sovereignty of the church was established
 - (b) that the feudal system was further strengthened
 - (c) the consolidation of one big Europe
 - (d) that Europe was seen to consist of equal states, each with its own territory

- (4) The three important characteristics which were simultaneously present in Europe and which helped to develop the state system were:
- (a) feudalism, despotism, anarchism
 - (b) feudalism, changeability and legalism
 - (c) legalism, multi-state system, feudalism
 - (d) legalism, multi-state system, changeability
- (5) Legalism means
- (a) the law and the state are the same concept
 - (b) the relationship between the state and its subjects is based on the law
 - (c) the monarch has the monopoly in all matters
 - (d) none of the above is correct

Try to work out the answers yourself before looking at the answers and explanations given below.

- (1) (e) is correct. Both the Thirty Year War and the end of the Holy Roman Empire gave rise to the development of the modern state in Europe.
- (2) (a) is correct. Transterritorial control first had to be broken. This was replaced by consolidation of the states' territory.
- (3) (d) is correct. The peace of Westphalia led to Europe being seen as a multi-state system.
- (4) (d) is correct. Consult 8.4
- (5) (b) is correct. Legalism refers to the relationship between the state and its subjects. It is based on the law and it excludes the arbitrary actions of the monarch.





STUDY UNIT 7

ANCIENT AUTHORITIES AND EMPIRES

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

Ancient monarchies were an important development for a number of reasons. The characteristics that can be attributed to a state in modern times, were already present in the ancient monarchies. That is why it is important to look again at the section on traditional authorities in study unit 4. The chieftainship system discussed in this study unit did not qualify as a primitive or an early state. The ancient monarchies, as a traditional form of government, were the first to manifest characteristics of the modern state.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What is the connection to or the difference between the chieftainship system and the ancient monarchy?

What are the characteristics of the ancient monarchy, and in what way does the ancient monarchy tie in with what was discussed in study unit 4?

What is meant by the concept “empire”?

7.1 THE DIFFERENCE AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE CHIEFTAINSHIP SYSTEM AND THE ANCIENT MONARCHY

The principal difference between the chieftainship system and the ancient monarchy was that the monarch or king had the monopoly on power. Initially, the patriarchal family exercised power by force of habit, but this gradually waned until it largely disappeared in the chieftainship system. This waning of power occurred primarily because of the centralisation of power. The dynamics of the will of the ruler took a firm hold in the ancient monarchies, which resulted in the monarch or king obtaining a virtual monopoly on power.

Thus far we have used a number of concepts; let us now look at them more closely.

- The reference to the *early* or *primitive* states is to indicate that the characteristics of the modern state were not yet present in these states.
- The reference to *monarchies* and *early states* as synonyms is merely to indicate that the central control of these states was in the hands of a king or monarch.

7.2 WHAT WERE THE ANCIENT MONARCHIES?

Think again about what we dealt with in the previous study unit, namely the reference to the monarchy or kingdom that Shaka established in Zululand. What Shaka created was known as a kingdom or monarchy. Can you think of other examples of kingdoms or monarchies in history? During the 17th century there were numerous monarchies in Southern Africa, for example, those in the former Basutoland and Swaziland.

The ancient monarchies were created in a similar way, but of course as the name indicates, they existed in ancient times. In the ancient world, ancient monarchies were scattered around almost all the continents. The Incas in South America and the Siamese in the East are examples of ancient monarchies. In the Near East and in Egypt, the ancient monarchies dominated the political scene for centuries.

An important characteristic of the ancient monarchies was that the geographical limitations, which had characterised family organisation and other societal contexts, were severed. There was dynamic expansion of territory and large tracts of land were consolidated under the power of the monarch. However, there was also dynamic

extension of power, and in most cases this was deliberate and planned, which is another important aspect of these monarchies.

As mentioned previously, the ancient monarchy was an important development for various reasons. Do you know why? In South Africa, for example, we have territory within the borders of the country and our population is consolidated in this territory. If we compare this with the characteristics of the traditional authorities that we dealt with in the previous study unit, it is clear that the groups in the tribes and the chieftainship system were not as strongly bound geographically as we are in South Africa. Instead, they were bound geographically in a more informal way, which is why many of the groups also followed a nomadic lifestyle.

The one element that was missing in the traditional authorities was that the tribes and the chieftainship system could not consolidate power effectively in one territory. Power became more consolidated as the different levels developed, but power and authority could only be effectively consolidated in geographical areas during the supremacy of the ancient monarchies and the subsequent authorities. As mentioned earlier, this was also one of the requirements laid down for the existence of the modern state, namely to consolidate the citizens of a region in one territory and then of course to wield power and authority over them.

Can you now think of a few reasons why it is important to know a little more about the ancient monarchies?

The following is a summary of and a few ideas on the development of the ancient monarchy:

- It is clear from the discussion that the ancient monarchies were a crucial development in the traditional form of government authority. An important characteristic of this level of development was the consolidation of power and authority in one territory.
- The result of this consolidation was that larger territories were occupied and the geographical limitations of the previous levels of government authority were eliminated. Large areas were absorbed and placed under the supremacy of a single ruler.
- The most important factor was the monopoly of power that the king obtained. Think of the example of Shaka who literally had the power of life and death over all his followers.

- Do you think the modern state would have been able to develop without the process of geographical consolidation that occurred, being completed?

When we look at the characteristics of the ancient monarchy (or the primitive state level, as it is also known), we can recognise the following three elements:

- The first important characteristic is that the king or the ruler had the monopoly on power and authority.
- The ancient monarchy consolidated power in a particular geographical area, which was an important prerequisite for the process of state building.
- Tribes and smaller groupings were absorbed into the larger unit and prepared the way for the building of nations and the development of a national consciousness.

It should be mentioned at this point that the ancient and subsequent monarchies overemphasised the exercise of power, and in so doing, sowed the seeds of their own destruction. Strong urges towards liberation were stimulated in this way, which led to the disintegration of the monarchies. Since the monarchies, in particular, were expanding dynamically, it became increasingly difficult for monarchs to effectively wield power over the larger geographical regions. Ultimately, most of the ancient monarchies would, therefore, also disintegrate, only to be replaced by other political units.

7.3 EMPIRES

At this stage of our discussion, we have already referred to kingdoms. We know that Shaka established a kingdom or monarchy, but the question that now arises is whether a kingdom is the same as an empire.

An explanation of the term “empire” should help to explain the difference between the concepts “empire” and “kingdom”. Can you think of an example of an empire in history? A well-known example is the famous British Empire which dominated the international scene for so many years. South Africa was part of the British Empire for years, as was our neighbouring state, Zimbabwe. To tell the truth, at some stage, more than 25 percent of the world was part of the British Empire. There are many more examples of other empires in history, one such being the Holy

Roman Empire under the Roman emperor, Constantine which existed until 1806, until Napoleon formally dissolved it.

The concept “empire” is sometimes rather confusing in the literature. In 1871, for example, the Germans established the German Empire, and later in 1934, Adolf Hitler founded the third German Empire. There was also a Russian Empire in Russia before the revolution put an end to it.

It is clear from the discussion above that the concept “empire” is not used consistently. However, one should bear in mind that although the concept is used to describe a composite state such as Germany and Russia, it is also used more generally to describe empires such as that of the British and the Roman Empire.

Can you now see the difference between the two uses of the concept? In the first case, one country (in other words, a sovereign state, such as Germany) classifies or sees itself as an empire. In the case of the British Empire, for example, we see that it is a large empire that places other regions under its control. These regions are then normally controlled either directly or indirectly as a colony by the large power. Such a power, for example Britain, may have different regions under its control.

Large and influential empires existed from the earliest times and were later destroyed. Examples here include the ancient Asian empires such as the Babylonian or the Assyrian Empires, or the Greek Empire established by Alexander the Great. The Roman Empire and later the British Empire can certainly be regarded as the most dominant empires in the West, while the Chinese Empire was probably the most powerful empire in the East.

Empires come into being in different ways. The well-known examples of the Roman and British Empires were established mainly when the inhabitants of the regions were subdued by force of arms. In the 19th century, there was large-scale competition between countries in Europe to gain political control over regions in Africa and Asia. In fact, there was a race between the colonial powers to see who could get the most territory under their control.

However, it is also possible to gain control over territory in a more indirect fashion. Penetration of the economic market in areas that are largely economically dependent on the dominant country is a more modern method of gaining control. The term “neocolonialism” is used here, and will be discussed in greater detail later on.

It is important to note the existence of empires for the following reasons:

- The decolonisation of former colonies in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world gave rise to large-scale conflict. Of course, the existence of empires in the first place, gave rise to colonialism.
- The large empires such as the Roman and British Empires, dominated the international scene both politically and militarily.

In conclusion, we can summarise the main characteristics of an empire as follows:

- An empire comes into being when a dominant state politically controls a number of independent states.
- The term “empire” can be used when speaking of national states such as Germany in 1871, or it can be used more generally when we mean a group of states controlled by one dominant state.
- Empires can develop in different ways. In the previous century, the military way was the most common, while in the modern era, areas are “conquered” more subtly, especially by means of economic control.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Before continuing with the next study unit, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- (1) Can you distinguish between the two different ways in which the term “empire” is used? Read section 7.3 and compile a list of characteristics applicable to empires.
- (2) What large and important empires existed in previous centuries and still exist today? Write down at least four examples.
- (3) Do empires come into being only through military subjugation or are they established in other ways?



STUDY UNIT 8

CITY STATES

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

Most of us are familiar with the concept of city states. However, in ancient times, city states represented a new and exciting development of political institutions. The earliest form of democracy came to the fore for the first time in this interesting development.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Why is it necessary to note the existence of city states?
What are the general characteristics of a city state?
In what ways are city states politically organised?

8.1 WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO NOTE THE EXISTENCE OF CITY STATES?

Why is it important for you to note the existence of city states? If they existed 2 500 years ago, are they still relevant in the modern era?

The answer to this question is “yes”, because you should remember

that many aspects of democracy that we take for granted today, owe their existence to the development of city states.

A surprisingly advanced form of a “state” developed from the families, tribes and ancient monarchies of ancient times, namely the so-called “city state”. Cities in the ancient world unexpectedly started to develop strong democratic elements. These democratic principles were quite exceptional and new at the level of political development that was known to the ancient people of those times. Some of the principles that developed in this way still form part of our present understanding of democracy. To obtain a thorough understanding of democracy, students should note the important development that found expression in the city states.

8.2 WHAT ARE THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A CITY STATE?

It is difficult after all these years to understand what a city state was and what its geographic and physical composition was like. Look again at the word “city state”: it is made up of two components, namely “city” and “state”. An example of a city is simple — think of any city in your environment and then add your present knowledge of a state. Generally speaking, this is what the ancient city state looked like. In other words, a city state is simply a city and a state combined, united within city boundaries.

An indigenous example of a city state in South Africa is Thulamela in the northern part of the Kruger National Park. During the Middle Ages, a city state developed in this area. Within the high walls of Thulamela there was economic and military security and the small city complex soon flourished. Trade and diplomatic relations were established with eastern countries such as India and China.

As indicated above, city states introduced a surprising new facet in the development of states. As the term indicates, the elements of a city and a state are united in one concept — that is, a city that is handled politically as a state.

CITY STATES IN AFRICA

Can you think of an example of a city state that possibly existed in the early history of Southern Africa? The European examples of city

states, such as Athens and Rome, are well known. As mentioned above, there were also examples of city states in our environment.

The impressive Zimbabwe ruins are situated in the present Masvingo in Zimbabwe. Visitors to the national monument agree that there was an advanced form of state development in this region.

Unfortunately, very little remains which could show us how political participation occurred in the Zimbabwean city state. However, we do know that a Shona-speaking population occupied the region in the 13th century. Building operations were tackled during this period and the area was organised as a city for a certain period of time. This soon led to trade with the Portuguese and other groups, and resulted in a golden age. This, in turn, gave rise to the expansion of the region and an increase in population. By 1450, a large part of the present Zimbabwe and parts of Mozambique were under the political control of the rulers of Zimbabwe. Due to the increase in numbers, the natural resources in the region were exhausted and the population moved southwards. Zimbabwe ceased to exist as an early state after 1450.

One can assume that Zimbabwe as a city was politically controlled in a way that correlates strongly with the way in which other city states in the world were organised. Once Zimbabwe experienced large-scale geographic expansion in the 14th century, the city state developed into an early or primitive state. As far as the early history of Zimbabwe is concerned, it is clear that strong political elements of the city state were present.

8.3 IN WHAT WAY WERE CITY STATES POLITICALLY ORGANISED?

The political aspect of a city state is of crucial importance to students in the political sciences. We mentioned earlier that city states introduced an important new phase in political development. Think back to study unit 5, where we mentioned that the ancient monarchies obtained the monopoly in the application and control of power. It is precisely this overemphasis of power or coercion that stimulated a strong desire for freedom among people. The populations in many regions of the world strove for freedom and some or other form of political participation.

This desire for freedom resulted in cities throughout the world

developing into small “states”. The word “states” is placed in inverted commas because all the requirements for the existence of a state were not yet in place for city states. Bear in mind that similar city states developed in all parts of the world.

Highly developed city states extended geographically from the Inca Empire in the Andes Mountains of South America to the Muslim Mongolians in Asia. In China there were city states in the Tarim Valley in Mongolia, and on the banks of the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, highly civilised societies developed, with the city state as their basis.

However, the city state that certainly had the most exposure in the subject literature was that of Athens. Athens, like most city states, was small — a population of about 20 000 people was generally the norm. Geographically, the city state consisted of the city and the immediate environment.

The question why the city state was such a unique political grouping, however, largely remained unanswered. The important point here is that the populations in the other political groupings did not participate at all in the political process. The major significance of the city state was that the inhabitants saw it as a symbol of freedom and political participation. In many cases the city state developed as a counter-reaction to the arbitrary exercise of power to which people had been subjected earlier.

An example of this is the city state of Athens in which there was a strong striving for political participation. In Athens, an attempt was made to introduce a direct democracy, and all male citizens of the city state participated in the judicial, executive and legislative functions — in the period 500 BC, this was unique in politics. This is what makes the development of city states so exceptional.

Thus, democratic elements that we take for granted today came into their own more than 2 500 years ago. That is why it is important for us to take note of this important development.

- The first important point is that the overemphasis of power and authority by the ancient monarchies led to the development of city states.
- City states consisted of the city and the immediate environment — hence, the area was small and the number of inhabitants was limited to about 20 000.
- An important fact that is sometimes overlooked is that there

were city states in all parts of the ancient world. (See the examples mentioned in the text above.)

- A further point, and certainly the most important, is that the first attempt at a “democracy” originated in the city states.
- Remember, however, that city states applied democracy in a limited way. In the example of Athens, women and slaves, for example, were excluded from the process of political participation.

However, most city states did not have the ability to expand geographically outside the city boundaries. Since power and authority were wielded in a direct way, and because all citizens tried to participate, the city states were doomed to remain geographically small. City states such as Rome, on the other hand, never reached the high level of democratisation that Athens achieved. Large empires (see above) such as those of Alexander the Great and later the Roman Empire, were centralised under one ruler. The mighty empires temporarily stopped democratic development, but the city state sowed the seeds for political participation.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- (1) In a short paragraph, explain why city states existed?
- (2) What did the city state look like geographically? Write down the main characteristics in your notes.
- (3) In what way was democracy practised in the city states? Can you think of reasons why the city state did not make provision for full democracy?
- (4) Answer “yes” or “no” to the following statements:
 - (a) City states had similar characteristics to the modern state.
 - (b) City states only appeared in Europe.
 - (c) Was an attempt made to introduce direct democracy in the city states?
- (5) What developments took place once city states largely disappeared from the scene?



STUDY UNIT 9

THE SYSTEM OF FEUDALISM

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

The system of feudalism is the next important development that you should take note of. For a few centuries during the early Middle Ages, central authority largely disappeared and was replaced by a system known as feudalism. Feudalism was a system of interpersonal relationships which served as a replacement for central authority. The value of feudalism during the Middle Ages lies in the fact that it generally prevented a large part of Europe from falling into total chaos.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Why is it important to note the ways in which power and authority are organised?
What was the historical background to the rise of feudalism?
What are the basic characteristics of feudalism?
Are there still examples of feudalism in the modern era?

9.1 THE ORGANISATION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

It is important for you to briefly reflect on the subject matter that we have dealt with so far. If you were asked to formulate, in a single sentence, what fact has been central in our discussion so far, would you be able to?

Think for a minute: what fact stands out in the sections we have discussed so far?

The fact that stands out is the way in which power and authority are organised in society. Each of the above-mentioned societal contexts organised the exercise of power and authority in different ways. Put differently: at different times in history, tribes, groups, city states, empires and ancient monarchies controlled certain territories and performed functions which modern states perform today.

It is clear, therefore, that the modern characteristics which we ascribe to modern states are deeply rooted in history. It is important for you to realise this, because it will give you a better understanding of the modern state. However, it is debatable whether the modern state with all its dimensions will ever be understood without knowledge of the path that development followed.

It is also important to realise that we are still concerned with the traditional, or rather, the earlier state; the modern state only came on to the scene much later. In very simple terms, the characteristics of the modern state can be summarised as follows: the modern state is a form of political organisation with government structures that can keep order and apply rules or laws to a particular population within a specific area. The more traditional authorities still did not have sophisticated institutions. A valuable exercise would be for you to look at the above and try to determine why the traditional authorities did not satisfy the criteria.

9.2 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO FEUDALISM IN WESTERN EUROPE

Before we can discuss the feudal system in Western Europe, it would be wise to first look at its historical development.

In the preceding section we discussed the origin or existence of empires that controlled large parts of Europe during certain periods. In Europe, in particular, the Roman Empire was a powerful

autocratic form of government that swallowed all the other societal set-ups in Europe and in parts of Asia and Africa. From about the year 200 to about 476 AD, the Roman Empire dominated the international scene. The value of the Roman Empire should not be underestimated for it performed a great ordering role in society; the Roman legal system was applied in many of the areas that had been conquered.

However, the Roman Empire was increasingly exposed to attacks by barbarians in particular, from the northern regions in Europe. By 476 AD, the Roman Empire had also crumbled and was ultimately divided into two parts, East and West. It is important to remember this date, for many historians regard it as the initial phase of a new period or epoch — the Middle Ages.

This epoch was of vital importance for different reasons, for it represented a turning point in the exercise of power and authority. The discussion below will show how a more centralised form of government changed to a decentralised form of government.

- Up to this period, power and authority in Europe was wielded by a variety of government structures, the Roman Empire being the most powerful.
- The termination of the political and military domination by the Roman Empire resulted in a *power vacuum* in large parts of Europe. At this stage, therefore, there was no centralised authority to exercise control.
- Instead of power and authority being exercised in a centralised way, they were decentralised. Various institutions and individuals endeavoured to exercise power and authority by means of the feudal system. (The discussion below will explain this concept.)
- One of the most important institutions was the church, especially the Roman Catholic Church, in which the ideas of a world empire lived on. This was the result of the christianisation of the Roman emperor, Constantine, and the acceptance of the Roman Catholic religion as the official religion of the Roman Empire.
- Secular authority was, therefore, replaced by a new empire, the Holy Roman Empire.

However, the feudal lords were outside the sphere of influence of the church, and they soon clashed with the church about where to draw the line between papal and imperial authority.

- The decentralised exercise of power in Europe was possible only if the feudal system could be applied. The discussion below focuses on the feudal system.

9.3 THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

Many students may not be that familiar with the term “feudalism”, even though the system is still applied in many undeveloped regions in the world. Once you have worked through the sections below, you should try to think of examples of feudalism in South Africa, in which variations of the system are still prevalent. As in all the discussions so far, remember that the application of feudalism is different in different parts of the world. The basic principles of feudalism do apply, but they are implemented in different ways. In this section we focus mainly on the European development, for the system originated primarily in Europe.

During the period following the collapse of the large powerful empires, such as the Roman and Frankish Empires, there were serious security problems in Europe. There were no longer any centralised authorities to exercise control, power or authority. Since attacks by barbarian groups resulted in major problems, an alternative system had to take the place of central control. The feudal system thus developed to temporarily solve the problem that had arisen as a result of the power vacuum.

9.3.1 Feudalism and the nobility

The collapse of central authority resulted in the nobility being responsible for taking over control in their counties and districts. Thus, the exercise of power and authority was directly linked to the territory controlled by the nobles. The squires who owned land and who had special agreements with the particular landed nobility, could also wield power and authority in this way. Thus, control was exercised and decentralised in smaller units.

The king was at the top of the pyramid with the overlord directly below him. The overlord was usually a count or a duke, or a baron or a bishop of a lower order. The agreement was that the nobles would give or rent land to their subjects. In exchange, the subjects would pay tax and swear allegiance to the squire or landowner. In

times of war, the subjects had to do compulsory military service in order to protect the landowner's land.

Feudalism thus created a new system of political, social and economic relations which countered the lack of a central government during an interim phase. Because of the strong individual character of the feudal system, and the fact that control was directly linked to the ownership of land, control disintegrated on a large scale and was only applied in small territories. During the Middle Ages, therefore, the feudal principle strongly established the decentralisation of authority.

In essence, feudalism amounts to the fragmentation of large systems of authority into smaller autonomous units which, in comparison, were concentrated more personally and locally. Society was ordered in this way and the system prevented total anarchy in the absence of a strong central authority.

Authors who write about this period agree that feudalism gave order to society at a time when central authority had collapsed and chaos threatened. Feudalism kept kingdoms together until the rise of strong monarchies which could change them into stronger units and states. Feudalism as a system was thus a crucial pre-ordering mechanism for the development of the centralised modern state.

9.3.2 The influence of the church on feudalism (or the feudal system)

The growth of the church and the Christian organisation was one of the outstanding characteristics of the Middle Ages. Even in the early Middle Ages, the church and its related institutions developed into an extended structure that ultimately became the main framework of society. When the Roman Empire started disintegrating in the West, the church took over many of its functions and helped to prevent society from collapsing into total chaos. The influence of the church in the early Middle Ages should never be underestimated.

The fact that society did not collapse after secular control had largely lost its grip, should be attributed to the intervention of the church. The church had a stabilising influence in that it civilised and christianised the invaders, the barbarians from the northern regions, preached and applied social justice and controlled the preservation and transmission of ancient knowledge.

At first, the organisation of the church was very simple: it merely entailed the converted giving oral testimony at the home of one of the believers. Later, when the number of Christians increased, the organisation became more complex and there was clearly a need for professional priesthood. The striving for uniformity and the increasing prosecution of Christians gave rise to improved ecclesiastical organisation. In about the second century after Christ, a bishop was appointed in each city. The bishop's area of jurisdiction largely corresponded to the Roman *civitas*, the smallest administrative unit in the Roman state. As the congregations expanded, the administrative fingers of the church began to move into society, a process that was obviously speeded up when the Roman emperor, Constantine, accepted the Christian faith as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The development of the papacy, however, was the greatest stimulus for the development of ecclesiastical power and influence in Europe. The church as an institution grew to such an extent, that when the Roman Empire's political structure disintegrated, the church had enough organised frameworks in place to organise society.

However, the Roman political system was not without power, and the Frankish ruler, Charlemagne, still had both political and military power. In the eighth century, the church still relied heavily on the secular support of the Frankish Empire.

9.3.3 The Holy Roman Empire

In the year 800, Pope Leo the Third placed the crown on the head of the Frankish king, Charlemagne, thus bestowing on him the title of emperor. This ceremony meant the start of a new epoch in Europe, that of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire, therefore, became the institution of power in Europe in the early Middle Ages — thus ensuring a world empire in Europe. In the new institution, the distinction between the secular and the ecclesiastical was extremely vague.

After the death of Charlemagne, the administrative system collapsed and was replaced by a socioeconomic feudal system. The nobility and the church played a vital role in the application of feudalism, because, as a large landowner, the church also used the feudal system.

In the feudal system, the position of the individual clerics was the same as that of other members of society; their position depended largely on their place in the feudal pyramid. Bishops and abbots, as custodians of land, were mainly squires or vassals in the feudal regime. Bear in mind that the church owned large territories and thus had a great deal of secular power.

The members of the religious class played a dual role in society in that they had to fulfil their ecclesiastical obligations and in many cases, had to perform the duties of normal members of society.

The problems surrounding this are obvious; the involvement of clerics in the secular or earthly resulted in their neglecting their spiritual duties. In fact, many bishops and abbots in the Middle Ages looked more like statesmen than clerics.

Since kings and influential nobles tried to control their subordinates in every conceivable way, they also endeavoured to control the election of bishops. This led to much friction between them and the Roman Catholic Church and this friction became known as the investiture struggle.

It was also not unusual during the early Middle Ages to see clerics in military roles. All of this stemmed from the control that a king or powerful feudal lord had over the bishops and abbots. When a king or feudal lord collaborated in the appointment of bishops and other senior clerics, the cleric was not only given the usual earthly symbols of authority, but also the symbols of spiritual jurisdiction. This underlines the mixing of the two “worlds”, the spiritual and the earthly, and in many cases, worldly control over ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction gradually disintegrated as involvement in political events increased.

The church as an institution in the Middle Ages stood alongside the secular, and despite the problems experienced, had a great deal of economic and institutional power. Although many bishops and other clerics were under the influence of kings and feudal lords, the church remained an important power instrument that continued to exist alongside the large feudal units.

Why is it important to take note of the feudal system?

- The feudal system was an important ordering mechanism in the Middle Ages when central control became ineffective. It is believed that European society would have been in total chaos if feudalism had not restored some degree of order in society.

- Feudalism was used as a political, social and economic system in Europe for more than seven centuries.
- Feudalism is still found in many areas of the world today, and, although it may differ from the feudal system as it was used in the early Middle Ages, it still contains elements that applied in those times.

The following summary contains the most important elements of feudalism:

- The collapse of the Roman, and later, the Carolingian Empire, in about 500, showed that central power was no longer viable.
- A power vacuum developed and the question of security was left to the nobility. The nobility overcame this problem by introducing a feudal system.
- Feudal lords, as large landowners, wielded power over their territories. Under the feudal lords there was a chain of vassals such as nobles, counts and princes who, in turn, controlled smaller units of land.
- The feudal system, therefore, strongly established the decentralisation of authority.
- Besides the earthly or secular authority, the Roman Catholic Church also acted as a power instrument. Circumstances led to the church becoming increasingly involved in secular matters. The dividing lines between secular and spiritual matters was also not very clear and gave rise to much conflict.

9.4 DOES THE FEUDAL SYSTEM STILL EXIST IN THE MODERN ERA?

The feudal system still exists today in different parts of the world. Can you think of examples in South Africa where the feudal system is still applied?

In Europe there are still agricultural farms that operate according to the modern version of the feudal system. In the south of Sweden, for example, there are farms in which the owner cedes parts of the farm to peasants. In exchange for use of the land, on certain days, the peasants are required to render certain services on the farmer's land. The principle is the same as that applied in the Middle Ages;

in exchange for the use of land, the peasants are required to render services. The feudal system no longer includes duties such as compulsory military service for the landowner, but the system of exchange is still in use.

Can you think of examples in South Africa where the system still applies? Can you name such an example?

In conclusion, it is important to mention again that feudalism played a crucial role in history. When it was no longer possible for large empires to wield power and centralised power had failed, the feudal system, with its decentralised character, ordered society. It is important for you to answer the questions below before proceeding to the next section.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- (1) What political and military events in Europe caused the political order to change? Read the relevant part in section 9.2 again and try to explain it in a short paragraph.
- (2) In what way were power and authority exercised in the feudal system? Make a list and compare it with the preceding study unit.
- (3) What was the church's position during the Middle Ages? Try to formulate your answer in one sentence.
- (4) Why did conflict arise between the church and the nobles during the Middle Ages? Read the relevant part in section 9.3 again.
- (5) In a short paragraph, describe the basic elements of feudalism.



STUDY UNIT 10

THE POLITICS OF THE ESTATES AND THE ABSOLUTIST STATE

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

The absolutist state which developed from the feudal system first made its appearance on the political scene. The union of the feudal units was a logical development during the Middle Ages. The merging of the feudal units meant that they were far stronger militarily than the individual units. Weaker feudal units were simply absorbed into stronger units which largely speeded up the process of state building.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

Was the feudal state a full-fledged state?
What role did medieval cities play in the feudal system?
What are the general characteristics of the absolutist state?

10.1 THE FEUDAL STATE AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STATE

Was the state that existed in the feudal system during the Middle Ages a full-fledged state?

ACTIVITY 10.1

- (1) Think again of the basic requirements laid down for the existence of a state:

- (a) a demarcated territory
- (b) a permanent population
- (c) a form of government authority
- (d) sovereignty

Now make a list of the requirements and apply them to the section on feudalism that has already been dealt with. Write down the number of basic requirements of a state that were present in the feudal system.

- (2) What would be necessary for the feudal “state” to satisfy all the requirements laid down? After consulting the list in (1) above and using your present knowledge of the state, can you spot the difference? Try to write it down for yourself. If you are still unsure, read the section below and then try to write it down.

The feudal state had an individual character — in other words, it was bound by agreements between individuals. A state has a very strong territorial character, and as mentioned above, a clearly demarcated territory with a permanent population.

Another important factor that merits consideration is: what development has to take place before one can move to the next political level? Think again of the exercise of power and authority before the dawn of the Middle Ages. Remember that the large empires exercised power in a centralised way, and that the feudal system led to the decentralisation of power and authority. It is clear that the various portions of land owned by the monarchs and feudal lords first had to be consolidated before the first requirement set out above could be met.

Thereafter, a form of government authority would have to be

established over the permanent inhabitants of the consolidated territory.

To sum up:

The decentralisation of power and authority and the accompanying disintegration of control over territory would have to experience a very strong centralisation change. The feudal lords' power would have to be replaced by a central government authority and the territory would have to be consolidated.

This development took place in the late Middle Ages when a new "state" the so-called *stände* state (a German word meaning a medieval structure of the state composed of estates) developed. The word *stände* is used to indicate that organised units, that stood outside the feudal system, now appeared on the scene.

10.2 THE ROLE OF MEDIEVAL TOWNS IN EUROPE

The rise of trade in Europe heralded a new period whereby medieval towns became involved in medieval politics as a result of the increase in trade. This meant that towns started developing in order to cope with the increasing number of economic activities. The feudal system with its characteristics of decentralisation and vassal subservience was still present, but towns developed alongside the feudal system. As the famous historian Poggi (1978:23) puts it, "... the medieval towns [were] islands in the sea of feudalism".

These towns became a factor in medieval politics in about the 11th century, after trade had started to flourish. Due to the numerous economic activities and the considerable sums of money being generated, the towns became politically influential. Some of the trades in the towns started establishing guilds or collective groups which gave them a strong competitive position. As centres of economic activities in medieval politics, towns were a vital factor to be taken into consideration in medieval politics.

ACTIVITY 10.2



- (1) Why would the rise of medieval towns influence the application of the feudal system? Think of how the feudal system was applied:

- (a) A feudal lord ceded land to his vassals in exchange for loyalty and military support. In other words, there was a vertical relationship.
- (b) The existence of various individual relationships had a strong decentralising effect on society.

If you are unable to answer the question, read the section below. When you have finished reading it, try to write an answer to the question.

The medieval towns were in no way subordinate to the feudal lords. Since these towns performed new economic activities outside the quitrent land of the powerful feudal lords, they did not feel subservient to the feudal system and, therefore, did not act subserviently. Thus, the various estates in the medieval towns insisted that they should also be able to make political decisions, which influenced their existence, collectively with the monarch and the feudal lords. Since the estates in the towns were influential and were economically powerful, they were in a strong bargaining position.

We have already mentioned that the feudal system led to large-scale decentralisation. What role do you think the rise of the towns and the formation of collective-bargaining bodies had on the process of centralisation?

- (2) When you have answered question (1), try to answer the following questions in a single sentence:
 - (a) What happened in the negotiation process?
 - (b) Who took part in collective negotiations?
 - (c) What was the effect of collective negotiations between the monarch, the feudal lords and the estates on political development in the Middle Ages?

Think about this for a moment and then read the next section.



The effect of the formation of a *stände* state on political development was that it promoted the centralisation of politics and states. The fact that the various estates, the monarch and the feudal lords became involved in a collective process, necessarily led to the *stände* state becoming a stronger territorial base than the feudal state. A region, rather than individual units, was represented in decision making, which contributed to the development of the state as a concept.

10.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ABSOLUTIST STATE

The word “absolutist” actually gives away the essence of the absolutist state. At the end of the Middle Ages, the absolutist state began to dominate the scene of politics and states in Europe. It also meant the final phase in the process of forming a state — authors refer to this phase as the state-building phase.

What actually happened was that the newly formed states in the 17th and 18th centuries began competing with one another. It was important for many of the monarchs to obtain as much internal control as possible. Political power and the power of states were, therefore, centralised in the hands of the monarch. The process meant that the government system changed qualitatively from the *stände* state to the absolutist state.

The absolutist state was no longer a collective relationship between the monarch and the estates, but the entire process began revolving around the person of the monarch.

In France, the different estates still had all their rights, as embodied in the *stände* state. In practice, however, they were excluded from the government process because of the monarch’s autocratic behaviour. The body in which the estates had a seat together with the monarch in France was known as the Estates General. However, between 1614 and 1789, this body was never convened by the monarch. Successive kings in France wielded power exclusively and later could even declare: “The state? It is I.”

The period from the feudal units to the absolutist state is regarded as the state-building phase of the state in Western Europe. The democratisation phase and the rise of the constitutional state would only follow later. The value of the state-building phase is obvious: the framework of the state formed the ideal shell in which the process of democratisation could take place.

The state-building phase represents the total process in which the large feudal units were united under the national royal houses so that larger and stronger political units could be formed.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Now make sure that you can answer the following questions:

- (1) What important role did the medieval towns play in the consolidation of the feudal units? Write your answer in a single sentence.
- (2) In what way did negotiations between the monarchs and the estates take place? Can you compare this with the situation in feudal times?
- (3) The monarch changed political events through his actions. Can you describe further events?



STUDY UNIT 11

RELIGIOUS AND MILITARY FORMS OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

Religious and military government authority forms an integral part of the authorities prevalent in the modern era. Hence, knowledge of the different forms of government is essential. Bear in mind that there was little distinction between the political and religious exercise of power in the traditional communities. In more developed communities, the distinction is clearer. In the next section we will look at aspects of the religious exercise of authority.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

What is meant by religious forms of government authority?
What developments took place in the religious exercise of power?
In what way is religious authority exercised in the modern era?
What is meant by military government authority?

11.1 RELIGIOUS FORMS OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

11.1.1 The exercise of religious authority during the early republic of the Romans

What makes the Roman religion unusual during the existence of the republic, is the fact that it had a stronger political element than, say, that of the Greeks. The Roman form of religion was not focused very strongly on the needs of people, but rather at the continued existence of the state. The Roman priests or pontiffs, as they were also called, formed an organised arm of the government. The priests were not only in control of the offerings, but were also the keepers of the law. The priests laid down and kept the laws and traditions, and in this way obtained a powerful position in Roman society. The interaction between religion and the administration of the law ensured that the priests occupied an extremely dominant position in society.

11.1.2 Religious government authority: development

As indicated earlier, theocracy only comes into play when the political aspects of the state are made subordinate to the religious aspects of the state. This situation did not occur in an orderly fashion in the traditional communities, and theocracy only started to enter the political scene in Europe in about the seventh century after Christ.

A theocracy is a state ruled by clerics, priests and other religious leaders.

Example: The ancient kingdom of Tibet was a theocracy until it became an autonomous part of China in 1965.

The Islamitic religion, which came into its own in about the seventh century after Christ is now closely intertwined with the concept of a theocracy. During the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire was at its most powerful and Islamitic control was exercised over a large section of this region which is known as Iraq today. This Empire extended from this area over sections of Asia and North Africa and across the European Balkan region as far as the area of the present Austria. The Sultan who was at the head of the mighty Empire, had the position of the prophet of God, chief ruler of all the Muslims.

Smaller Christian theocracies often occurred in nation states. In the

16th century, the Swiss City of Zurich came under the control of the Protestant reformer, Uldreich Zwingli, who regarded the inhabitants of the region as a Christian congregation under the authority of God. This meant that this canton sometimes fought with neighbouring Catholic cantons for the preservation and existence of its small theocracy. This is also what the famous John Calvin did in Geneva: he simply banished all the Catholics from his canton who were opposed to his regime.

ACTIVITY 11.1

Carefully read the explanation of the concept above and then say what important principle, necessary for a state to function as a theocracy, comes to the fore.

If this is not clear to you, read the above explanation of the concept again. It is clear that here political authority is subject to ecclesiastical or religious authority. Political authority still exists, but it is combined with religious authority to form a unit. Now write this down in your own words.

11.1.3 Religious authority in the modern era

Although many countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan still combine the state and religion very strongly, the practice in most countries is to separate the church and religion.

It is interesting to note that although many states strictly observe the distinction between the church and the state, religious figures still play a vital role in the swearing in of heads of states. This tradition was continued in the Holy Roman Empire, where Charlemagne had to travel to Rome for his coronation. The tradition goes back to biblical times, when Saul was crowned king of Israel. This tradition continues in the modern era, as the examples below will show.

The medieval practice of heads of states still being sworn in in the presence of religious figures, or, for example, the use of Bibles on such occasions, is such an integral part of tradition, that most people do not even think twice about it.

In 1994, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the new head of state of South Africa. During the ceremony, he placed his hand on an open Bible and took the oath.

In 1996, Bill Clinton, was elected for his second term of office as American President. When he was sworn in, he also took the oath with his hand on an open Bible.

When the next monarch is crowned in Britain, the ceremony, like all previous ones, will be conducted by the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury.

The church played an interesting role in the build-up to the overthrow of the Polish communist dictatorship by the Solidarity Movement. Catholic ceremonies were used on more than one occasion to muster the necessary political support. One such occasion was the visit of the first Polish Pope, John Paul, to his homeland. The role of the church in the political conflict in Poland, was to guarantee the application of basic political rights such as freedom of speech. Bear in mind that this does not make Poland a theocracy. It merely shows the important power and influence of the church in many countries.

In Islamitic countries such as Iran and Iraq, Islam and the state are so strongly intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. The imams, the religious leaders who interpret the Koran and make the Islamitic laws, are appointed and remunerated by the state.

11.2 MILITARY FORMS OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

The military forms of government authority are obviously different from the religious forms of government authority. The difference is that the military authority is an agent of the central government, and as such, is there to ensure that the policy of the government is carried out. As a government agent, the defence force must protect the national interest, but only on the orders of the central authority. Military forces are not expected to formulate policy; they are merely required to help carry out policies that have already been formulated. Writers sometimes express this situation as follows: those without weapons exercise control over those with weapons.

11.2.1 Coups d'état

It often happens that military leaders move directly into positions of power after a military coup d'état (or illegal takeover of government). Various reasons are put forward for the motive of a coup d'état, but this can basically be subdivided into two categories. Coups d'état occur either as a result of private interests where an individual wishes to gain personally, or as a result of public interests, where the government, for example, is corrupt. However, it may happen that both motives are present in a military takeover, but as a rule, there is only one main reason.

Military takeovers occur regularly, but in most cases, the problems that are solved are fewer than the problems that arise after the takeover. The first problem that arises, is that the military authorities do not have the basic channels of communication with the broad population. There are no political parties, general meetings or other bodies available to communicate with the people, which may lead to further dissatisfaction. The second problem is that the military government has little or no experience in the implementation of internal or foreign policy. An undertaking on the part of the military authority to overthrow a civil government and thus stir up public unrest, certainly has advantages, but the military power is more often than not in no position to see to such matters as controlling inflation, providing job opportunities and providing essential services. The third and most important problem, is that there is no constitution to serve as a guarantee against the abuse of power.

In 1991, Algeria held its first ever multiparty election. The Islamitic Salvation Front, obtained an absolute majority in the election, which took place in a constitutionally acceptable manner. The Algerian military authorities, however, were not prepared to accept Islamitic control. The military leaders intervened, declared the results of the election invalid and appointed a council of the state as the authority. The military government then went out of their way to prevent the Islamitic theocracy.

The struggle in Algeria continues, with bomb attacks and other incidents of civil unrest still occurring in the main centres. The military authorities, however, are determined not to accept the outcome of the election, and all political activities of Islamitic groups in Algeria are suppressed. The Islamitic groups, on the other hand, are determined to ultimately establish the Islamitic Republic.

11.2.2 How a military coup d'etat can be prevented

How can a military coup d'état be prevented? There are various ways in which states have prevented themselves from falling prey to military takeovers. In the first place, it is important for the demographic composition to be in proportion to the population. This means that ethnic and race groups in the military units should be proportionately representative of the particular society. A second way to prevent a military coup d'état is to limit the size of the military forces, which of course may also create other problems. Other methods are to give the defence force a clear function, for example, making them help with public works such as road building and other projects. Planting of informants in the defence force and strong civil control are other effective measures that can be taken to prevent a coup d'état. Another method that has been used is the creation of a paramilitary unit to keep the defence force in its place.

President Skou Tour of the West African state of Guinea, used the above method to remain in control of his country from 1958 to 1984. His paramilitary forces, which were known as the popular militia, were assigned numerous duties which included internal security, protection of the countries' borders and even the protection of public morals.

Although certain people were opposed to the existence of the unit, Tour merely told his soldiers that every person who opposed the militia was in actual fact thwarting democracy.

Democratic governments succeed more in keeping the military groups under control than authoritarian regimes. The interaction between the democratic authorities and the population has a great deal to do with this.

It may also happen that the military takeover is terminated as a result of a change in the military structure and the replacement of the leaders of the coup d'état, and that control is again handed back to the civil authorities. During the colonial period, the French generals took over the power of the civil authorities in Algeria. The appointment of another general, Charles de Gaulle, in the civil position of premier led to control being handed back to the civil authorities.

However, the opposite happens in most cases, where promises are made to give back power, but this never actually happens. The general election in 1993 in Nigeria, brought little joy to the winner

of the election, Masahe Abaoola. The military leader, general Sani Abachaa, declared the election null and void, and carried out a coup d'état. Although Abachaa has on more than one occasion declared his intention of calling an election, this has never materialised.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- (1) Can you see the difference between the influence of a theocracy and the influence of the church in society? Using your own words, write a short paragraph about this.
- (2) Make a list of four examples of different theocracies.
- (3) If you were a military dictator, what measures would you introduce to prevent a coup d'état that threatened your country? How many measures would you be able to list?
- (4) Why do military authorities find it difficult to exercise political control in a country?

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STUDY UNIT 12

WAYS IN WHICH THE MODERN STATE DEVELOPED

Compiled by Pieter Labuschagne

OVERVIEW

The origin of a state and the way in which it develops is a process which may take centuries; in other cases, it may happen very quickly. External factors and internal events obviously play a crucial role in the development of a state.

The important question at this point is — how does development take place? Do all states originate in the same way? In other words, do all states follow the same pattern of development or can states follow different patterns of development?

FOCUS QUESTIONS

In what way did the modern state develop?

In what way did the modern Western state develop?

Is it also possible for states to be created by means of revolutions?

In what way are colonial states created?

12.1 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN STATE

ACTIVITY 12.1

- (1) The following activity presupposes that you have a certain pre-knowledge:

Think for a moment of the following well-known states and the way in which they developed into states:

- Britain
- China
- South Africa
- Taiwan
- Zimbabwe

These states each followed their own pattern of development which differed from the others for various reasons.

- (2) Once you have thought about these states, using one sentence, write down how each one came into being.
- (3) When you have done the above, compare your answers with the following information:
- (a) Britain developed according to the traditional Western pattern, which will be discussed in a later section.
 - (b) China and Russia initially followed the same pattern of development, but a revolution later played a major role in the development of both of these states.
 - (c) In reaction to the revolution which took place in China, Taiwan developed as an independent state.
 - (d) South Africa and Zimbabwe's development shows strong similarities: both had a colonial past which played a decisive part in the history of their development.

The point that we are making here is that no state in the modern world developed in the same way. As a result of external and other factors, each state developed in a unique way, which may differ from the state situated next to it geographically. The broad development trends will be indicated in this study unit, although there may also be differences in these trends. South Africa and Zimbabwe, for example, can be typified as states that developed from colonial states. After a moment's reflection, however, the two states' pattern of development may indeed differ from each other for political reasons.

Why do you think it is important to note the ways in which modern states developed? Can you think of a reason why it is important for us in the modern era to still take cognisance of the historical development of the state?

- Firstly, we cannot understand the present political situation in South Africa, let alone the international political scene, if we do not know about the historical development of the state. Thus, in order to fully grasp South Africa's present political situation, we should know something about the history of its development.
- The development of states in the world is still not complete — new states are still being created, examples of which will be provided later in the study unit.

12.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN WESTERN STATE

For a long time, the development of the Western state was greatly overemphasised in historical writing. Thus, in many sources, the impression was created that this was the only way a state could come into being. The development of the Western state may not be the only way in which a state can develop, but it is certainly one of the most important.

The modern state first made its appearance in Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Up to that stage, the feudal lords and the church had exercised control over the largest parts of Europe. As explained in the previous study unit, the feudal system consisted of an individual authority relationship without any territorial consolidation having taken place. Look again at the question of territorial consolidation as a prerequisite for the existence of a state and how the feudal units differed from this.

Two important developments in Europe preceded the development of the modern state. As explained in the previous study unit, the *stände* state succeeded in allowing the territorial consolidation in the later Middle Ages. The absolutist state largely completed the process of territorial consolidation: the monarch obtained control of the feudal lords by means of military occupation, voluntary affiliation or intermarriage. Large territorial units were created in this way, which could function as geographic units in which the state could be established. In regions in Europe, such as Germany and Italy, this territorial consolidation only occurred much later, and the areas remained fragmented for a long period of time.

A further development which took place, was the 16th-century development, the Reformation, which the Catholic Church opposed. One of the consequences of the Reformation was that people began to define themselves in terms of religion and language. The inhabitants of different regions developed their own identity in their language, a process that was hastened by the translation of the Bible. People saw themselves as being French or English speaking, which in turn sped up the process of nation building and nationalism.

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which brought to an end the war that had waged for 30 years in Europe, played a critical role in this process. The peace treaty practically ended the period in Europe in which the Holy Roman Empire had played a dominant role. The perception was also created that Europe was composed of legal states, each of which had control over a specific population and territory.

The development of the state in Europe heralded an important new era. The new states formed a strategic and economic unit and the inhabitants of these states were proud to associate with the new states. The state-building phase which spanned centuries, was ultimately rounded off by the process of nation building.

ACTIVITY 12.2

Using the terms below, can you chronologically order the stages of development in the state-building process of the modern Western state? You will obviously need to consult the previous study units.

- absolutist state
- patriarchal family organisation
- feudal organisation
- tribes
- *stände* state
- ancient monarchy

For the correct sequence, the phases of development can be compared with the headings in the study units.

12.3 THE CREATION OF STATES BY MEANS OF REVOLUTIONS

The historical development dealt with in the preceding study units took place over a long period of time, and can, therefore, be described as evolutionary development. The change in government authority occurred gradually and in many cases with the minimum of violence.

In some states, the movement from one phase to the next occurred more dynamically, even by means of revolutions through which the authority was replaced by violence, among other things. It can happen that authorities oppose change and development and that the population, therefore, overthrows the present government by means of a revolution in order to establish a new government level.

In Russia, the development of the state followed more or less the same path as other states in Western Europe. In the beginning, development in Russia followed the path of family organisations until a monarchy was established under the leadership of the tsars. In 1917, there was a strong feudal government under tsarist rule in Russia. The tsarist regime, however, was overthrown by a revolution because of extensive unrest among the working class and the collapse of the state and administrative structures.

The socialist revolution that overthrew the tsarist regime, replaced it with a new state structure: a new state, based on strong socialistic principles and aimed at strongly centralised state institutions, came into being. This may also be described as an absolutist state, in which power was strongly centralised in the hands of one person or a small group of people.

Think again for a moment of the way in which development occurred and look at the examples given in activity 12.2. Read the examples again and then compare them with the development that took place in Russia and China. Can you see any difference? It is clear that the historical development of the two states was characterised by strong revolutionary leaps.

What is the advantage of a more evolutionary development which states such as Britain followed? The main advantage is that there is greater stability in the states in which the transition to the next phase occurred peacefully and over a longer period. It is, therefore, not merely a coincidence that most of the states in Western Europe experience political stability.

Why do you think it is necessary to take note of revolutions and their role in the development of the state?

- It is important to note that not all states developed in the same way. There are different patterns of development that states can follow during the state-building phase. Examples are Russia and China whose development differed from that of other Western Countries.
- Development from the feudal system to the next level of authority occurred differently in different countries.

12.4 THE COLONIAL STATE

When we analyse South Africa's origin and historical development against the background of the sections discussed above, we can draw a few important conclusions. The chief conclusion is that the South African state, as well as other former colonial regions, do not fit the pattern of development discussed thus far. The development that took place in South Africa and other former colonial areas, followed a unique pattern. The origin and development of the South African state, in turn, were also different from the way in which former colonial states such as Zimbabwe came into being. Unique political circumstances such as the policy of apartheid which was followed in South Africa played a role in this regard.

On what date did the history of South Africa start? Is it 6 April 1652 when the ships of the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oos-Indiese Kompanje*) under the command of Jan van Riebeeck arrived at the Cape? Or do we accept the view that black people occupied the subcontinent long before any whites entered the region?

It is unnecessary to devote too much time to the above argument; geological and historical evidence indicates unquestionably that prior to 1652 the subcontinent was occupied by a variety of indigenous groups. The San lived in scattered groups in the interior, with a political system that showed strong similarities with the patriarchal family system. The Khoikhoi, in turn, occupied mainly the coastal regions, and it was with these groups that Jan van Riebeeck came into contact shortly after his arrival in the Cape. In approximately 1000, large groups of blacks began moving to the area in the north of South Africa, and in particular occupied the coastal region and the adjacent interior.

Political grouping and the grouping of states in South Africa

occurred in different ways. In some regions, such as the present KwaZulu-Natal, Lesotho and Swaziland, blacks developed kingdoms. The establishment of larger groups of whites in the interior, especially after the Great Trek in 1834, led to the establishment of a variety of republics, based mainly on the European models.

The political position in South Africa in the mid-1800s was that different political units were in existence:

- The Cape was a British colony.
- Natal was initially a Voortrekker state, but in 1842 was annexed as a British colony.
- In 1854, the Free State obtained its independence from Britain as a republic.
- In 1852, the Transvaal also obtained its independence from Britain as a republic.
- The Zulu Kingdom, which was extended mainly by Shaka, was destroyed by British forces in 1879.
- Other black groups whose political units continued to exist, were those of the Sotho group in the region known as Lesotho and the regions known today as Swaziland and Botswana. British imperialism incorporated the rest of the political groupings in South Africa into Britain.

British imperial intervention in South Africa occurred in various phases, for example, the first occupation which took place in 1795 and lasted until 1803. The last occupation, during the Anglo Boer War, included the capture of the two Boer Republics. This occupation meant that all independent regions in South Africa lost their independent status. By 1902, all the areas were colonies under British control. Between 1902 and 1910, however, limited self-government was granted to the regions.

On 31 May 1910, after a period of self-government in the former Boer Republics, Natal, the Cape, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State united to form the Union of South Africa. In this way, therefore, South Africa became a state although there were smaller political constraints. The way in which the state was formed in South Africa, would have numerous consequences for the country's subsequent political development, a matter that will be dealt with in another section of the study guide.

What you should take note of here is the way in which the colonial state developed, which was clearly different from the two previous

developments. Imperial interference by Britain in South Africa, clearly had a major influence on the pattern of development. Firstly, kingdoms such as that of the Zulus, were destroyed, and secondly, independence was granted to the Boer Republics and then withdrawn. Finally, the Boer Republics were subjected to British domination in 1902, they were granted self-government in 1904 and in 1910, they were united with the two colonies of Natal and the Cape as the Union of South Africa.

The above section briefly outlined the process of unification. Clearly the joining together of the four regions by Britain completed the state-building phase in South Africa. This process, therefore, had a unique pattern that was completely different from other developments, and so South Africa emerged as a colonial state.

The following is a summary of the most important characteristics of the colonial state:

- Many governments were abolished in areas in which one or other form of government already existed, such as monarchies and family organisations.
- The area was subdued by the military or in some other way, and then controlled as a colony.
- The application of policy and control by the imperial power had a decisive impact on the political development in the region after independence had been granted.

12.5 THE CREATION OF STATES BY TREATIES

Is it possible to create a new state by means of treaties? How are states created in the modern era? Are any new states being created, or has the process of state building already been completed? The development that took place when feudal units were expanded to form states, is certainly something of the past. However, there are still many colonial regions in the world that are striving for independence. Thus it is important to obtain independence from the homeland to enable the region to develop into a new state in this way. Try to think of other ways in which a region in the modern era can develop into a fully-fledged state.

One organisation that has been struggling for decades to obtain its own state is the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) under the leadership of the charismatic, Yasser Arafat. Is Palestine on the way to becoming a fully-fledged state? The struggle that is taking place

in Israel has a high international profile, and is regularly shown on our television screens and in the news media. What we see is a struggle by the Palestinians under the leadership of the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, to create their own state.

The background to this historical struggle is as follows: the modern-day state of Israel territorially comprises the historical region of Palestine which was known as Canaan in ancient times. Since biblical times, both the Jewish and the Palestinian populations have laid claim to this region. The Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the so-called “West Bank” intensified the struggle. The Israeli occupation and capture of the regions is standing in the way of the Palestines who regard the region as the heartland of the new Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital.

During 1993, a historical treaty was concluded between Israel and Palestine, which gave Palestine limited autonomy over the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho. This was the first significant development on the way to the creation of a new state for Palestine. During January 1996, the efforts to create a fully autonomous state for the Palestines was boosted even further. More than 66 percent of the inhabitants of the above-mentioned areas voted in favour of the creation of a formal leadership structure. This structure comprises a President and a self-governing transition council. The leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, won the struggle for the presidency with an overwhelming majority. Hence, there is a chance that if further negotiations are successful, a new state may take up its position in the United Nations’ world body, namely Palestine with its President, Yasser Arafat.

The ongoing conflict in Israel between the Israeli government and the Palestinians has the potential of derailing the process.

A C T I V I T Y 1 2 . 3



- (1) Give examples where an effort was, by means of treaties, to establish independent states in South Africa.
- (2) During 1997, another group also attempted to create their own state. Can you identify the group?
- (3) What is the difference between the example in the answer to question 2 and the example of the Palestinians? How are the two processes different?

Once you have thought about the above and written down your answer, consult the following:

The answer to question 1 is of course the former homelands which the previous government tried to establish during the apartheid era. Before the process of democratisation was completed in South Africa, the following independent national states were in existence: Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Bophuthatswana. The following were self-governing regions: Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, Lebowa, Qwaqwa and KwaZulu. Some of the self-governing regions were on the way to independence or, for political-strategic reasons, refused to accept the status of independence. The former South African government attempted to create independent, self-supporting states, which would ultimately gain international recognition. However, the international and domestic situation was such that the process could never be finalised, and the regions were ultimately reincorporated into South Africa. The process of creating states was never completed in this instance.

The answer to question 2 is obvious. The present Volkstaat Council of the Conservative Party is such an initiative. Think also of the Orania Movement in the North-West Cape; would you also regard it as an attempt to develop a new state? Does it differ in any way from the above example of the Palestinians' struggle to obtain their own land? If you do not agree, give reasons for your differing opinion.



12.6 THE CREATION OF STATES BY MEANS OF POLITICAL CHANGES

It sometimes happens that parts of states become states as a result of political developments in a country. In many countries there are groups that insist on separation, for example, the Basques in Spain. When international or national events lead to political changes in a country, it sometimes happens that certain regions obtain their independence in this way.

In the past two decades, a number of new states have made their appearance on the international scene as a result of political changes in those countries. Some of these states lost their independence precisely because of these political events, and then regained their independence in the same way.

ACTIVITY 12.4

- (1) Is it possible for a state to come into being in the opposite way? In other words, can a state develop by means of unification instead of separation?
- (2) Can you think of an example in Europe, where in 1991, two previously independent states were united in one state? Try to make a list of five states that developed as a result of separation. Then compare your list with the examples provided below.

The answer to the question is Germany. The two former states of West Germany and East Germany were reunited into one state after a separation of more than 40 years.

Below we provide the names of states that regained their independence after international and national events in these regions. New boundaries were demarcated, and the new states re-entered the international scene.

States that came into existence because of political events in the former USSR:

- Armenia gained its independence in September 1991.
- Azerbaijan gained its independence in August 1991.
- Belarus gained its independence in August 1991.
- Georgia gained its independence in April 1990.
- Moldova gained its independence in August 1991.
- Ukraine gained its independence in December 1991.
- Russia: after the above regions separated, the largest section of the former USSR continued to exist as Russia.

In the Baltic region, the following independent states came into existence as a result of the political changes that had occurred in the USSR.

- Estonia regained its independence in 1991.
- Latvia gained its independence in August 1991.
- Lithuania gained its independence in 1990.

In the sections above, we attempted to show that states come into existence in different ways. Obviously these types of development differ from each other because of the unique nature of political events. The way in which the state developed during the late Middle Ages will obviously be different from the way in which states will develop in the

20th century. This is an important point to remember. Now see if you can answer the questions below.



SELF-EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Read pages 43 to 44 in the prescribed book by Jackson (1997) as background to the section and then answer the following questions:

- (1) Did all states develop in the same way? If your answer is “no”, can you indicate the political differences that gave rise to the different kinds of development? Write down the different kinds of development and give an example of each new state that originated in this way.
- (2) Indicate how the following states came into being:
 - (a) France
 - (b) China
 - (c) Germany
 - (d) Zimbabwe
 - (e) Estonia

Write down the different development trends as well as the name of the state that developed in that way.

- (3) Describe the processes of creating the state of Palestine. In what way does this process differ from, say, that of Britain. In a short paragraph, write down the main differences.

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See also the bibliography in study unit 11.