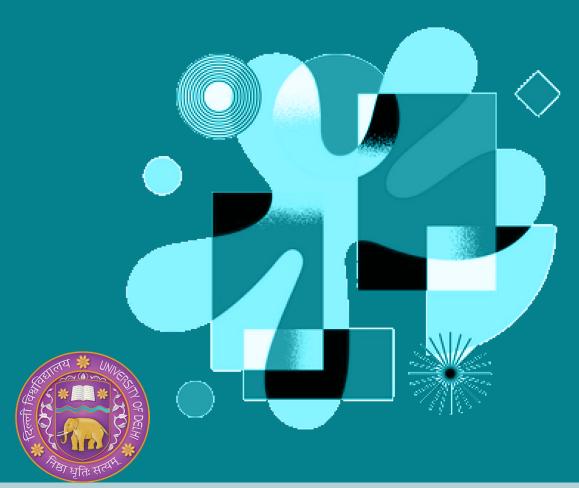# COMPARATIVE POLITICAL SYSTEMS

B.A. (HONS.) POLITICAL SCIENCE/B.A. (PROGRAMME)

SEMESTER-VI
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC CORE COURSE (DSC)
DSC-17/MAJOR PAPER

As per the UGCF - 2022 and National Education Policy 2020

FOR LIMITED CIRCULATION

DEPARTMENT OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
CAMPUS OF OPEN LEARNING, SCHOOL OF OPEN LEARNING
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

For Limited Circulation

Reviewer

Mr. Shaitan Singh

SYLLABUS

Comparative Political Systems

CONTENTS

UNIT 1
BRITAIN

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the political traditions and constitutional development of Britain.

- analyse the nature, social and economic dimensions of politics in Britain.

- understand the party system and electoral system of Britain.

- understand the unitary system of government in Britain.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Britain, also known as the United Kingdom (UK), is a union of four countries – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – known for their unique identity and rich history. The country is a mixture of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Here the king or queen is only the symbolic head of the state, while the real power lies with the Parliament and the Prime Minister. The constitution of Britain is not written, but it is based on old documents, traditions and customs, which makes it easy to change with time. Being the centre of the industrial revolution, Britain has greatly influenced the world scientifically, technologically and culturally. At one time the British Empire was so large that it was said, "*The sun never sets on it*." Today, although the empire has not been the same, Britain has an important place in global politics, trade and diplomacy. In recent decades, as part of the process of decentralization, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were given their own local governments, giving these areas more power. Britain's society is multicultural where people of different religions, languages and cultures live together. After Brexit, Britain gained its independence from the European Union, changing its global relations and business strategies. Despite this, the country maintains its commitment to democracy, freedom and the rule of law. Traditional institutions such as the monarchy and the Church of England, remain part of its cultural framework, but it also embraces modernity and globalism. The nature of Britain lies in its stability, flexibility and ability to maintain a balance between tradition and modernity. This unit describes in detail how the constitution developed in Britain, Britain's party system, election system, and current governance system.

1.3 POLITICAL TRADITIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BRITAIN

Britain was formed by combining England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There has been monarchy here since the beginning. Britain also has the oldest

and unwritten constitution in the world. This constitution has been continuously evolving, due to which the absolute monarchy here has now changed into a constitutional monarchy. The biggest feature of this change was that it happened without bloodshed. Political Traditions and Constitutional Development of Britain is one of the oldest and most influential political systems in the world. This system is a mixture of democratic ideals, historical events, and traditions, which gave it the form of today's modern constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy.

Magna Carta (1215): This document is the first important constitutional document in English history, which limited the power of the king and established the legal process. It was issued by King John. Under this, the king had promised the people that he would follow those laws and customs which were of good governance. The king will not demand unjust taxes, besides the king will not misuse his various rights. Its basic principle was that the power of law is above the king. This was the initial basis of the concept of justice and rights.

Glorious Revolution (1688) and Bill of Rights: Under this revolution, James II was removed from the throne and William III and Mary II were installed on his place. This event established the supremacy of the Parliament and laid the foundation of constitutional monarchy. The king was made subordinate to the legislature and the protection of civil rights was ensured. The divine right of the king was completely denied in the Bill of Rights. In this way, 'constitutional monarchy' was finally established under the British system. Democracy was established in Britain through a bloodless revolution, this is the reason why it is called the Glorious Revolution.

Reform Acts: The Reform Acts in the 19th century Britain were important steps towards democracy. These Acts were aimed at reforming representation and suffrage in Parliament. The first Reform Act in Britain was passed in 1832, called the "Great Reform Act". It abolished many constituencies that gave unfair representation to less populated areas and provided fair representation to the rapidly growing industrial cities. At the same time, property-based suffrage was extended, giving the middle class the right to vote. Subsequent Reform Acts

1867 and 1884 extended the franchise to the working class and people living in rural areas.

After this Act, the Constitution of Britain gradually became more inclusive, strengthening the principles of "parliamentary supremacy" and "representative democracy". As a result, the base of democracy in Britain was broadened and public participation in the system of governance became more empowered. The Reform Act provided a stable and flexible framework to the Constitution, maintaining a balance between tradition and progressiveness. This Act is an important link in the development of Britain's political system and laid the foundation of modern democracy.

Women and the working class were also given the right to vote in a limited form after the First World War through the "Representation of the People Act" in 1918, and it was extended to all adults in 1928. This progressive change made the British constitution more inclusive and led towards "universal suffrage". The Reform Acts also changed the form of Parliament; the power of the House of Commons increased, while the role of the House of Lords was limited. The Reform Acts not only made the British constitution flexible, but also gave it a structure that is capable of changing itself according to time and requirements.

Key Features of the Constitution of Britain

The Constitution of Britain is one of the oldest and unique constitutions in the world. It is not a written document, but an unwritten constitution, which is a mixture of various sources, traditions, and judicial interpretations. Its key features are as follows:

- The Constitution of Britain is not compiled in any one document. It has evolved on the basis of laws, traditions, judicial decisions and constitutional conventions of the Parliament.

- The Parliament is supreme in Britain. This means that the laws of the Parliament cannot be challenged by any court or institution. This system gives extensive powers to the Parliament.

- Britain is a unitary state, where the centralization of power lies with the Parliament. However, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been given some limited autonomy.

- There is a system of constitutional monarchy in Britain. The king or queen is the head of the state, but their powers are controlled by the Parliament. They have only symbolic and formal powers.

- The judiciary in Britain does not have the right to challenge the validity of the laws of the Parliament. Parliament is supreme and its decisions are final.

- The UK constitution is flexible, as no special procedure is required to amend it. Parliament can change the constitution through ordinary laws.

- Britain has a bicameral parliament, consisting of the House of Commons (House of Representatives) and the House of Lords (House of Members). The House of Commons has major legislative powers.

- The UK constitution is based on common law, which develops from decisions given by the courts.

- The governance of the UK depends on constitutional conventions and traditions, which are not legally binding but are effective in practice.

- Civil rights and liberties in the UK are protected through laws and traditions made by the Parliament.

- The UK constitution has been able to maintain stability over a long period of time due to its unique traditions and flexibility. It has evolved based on historical experiences and political needs.

1.4 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF BRITISH POLITICS

The British state is politically based on a constitutional structure, with the Sovereign (Queen or King) as the nominal head of state, while real powers

are vested in the Parliament and the Prime Minister. Britain has a system of government based on the "Westminster model". It has a bicameral parliament called the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The elected members of the House of Commons conduct the legislative process in the House, the main role of the House of Lords is as an advisory and reviewing body.

The central importance in Britain is given to the rule of law, independent judiciary, and protection of civil rights. The executive powers of the government are vested in the Prime Minister and his cabinet, who are accountable to the Parliament. This type of structure of the state is designed to ensure stability, accountability, and transparency.

Britain has adopted a mixed system based on socialist democracy and capitalist economy, in which the role of the state is important. The structure of society is multi-dimensional, which reflects a deep amalgamation of tradition and modernity. British society is diverse and multi-cultural, consisting of various ethnic, religious, and social groups. From the Industrial Revolution to the present time, Britain has built a rich and complex society, in which traditional values and the modern effects of globalization are clearly visible.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century established Britain as a global economic power, but the decline of colonies in the 20th century and the effects of World War II led it to economic restructuring. The modern British economy is based on financial services, manufacturing, and innovation-based industries. London, one of the global financial centres, is the main hub of the British economy.

The British state nationalized several key sectors of the economy in the 20th century, including coal, steel, and railways. Margaret Thatcher's government adopted policies of liberalization and privatization in the 1980s, increasing the role of the private sector in the economy. Today Britain is open to global trade, investment, and innovation, but it also faces the adverse effects of globalization, such as unemployment and income inequality.

The nature of the British state is multi-faceted, in that it is not only a regulatory and administrative entity, but also acts as a welfare state. Its role in

areas such as education and health are extremely important. Britain's National Health Service (NHS) is one of the largest universal health services in the world, which is funded by the government and provides free medical care to citizens. This reflects the welfare nature of the state. In contrast, tax and financial policies encourage a capitalist approach, promoting private entrepreneurship and innovation.

The social system of Britain is based on a balance of traditional class divisions, cultural diversity and the dynamism of modern society. British society has been based on a class-based structure since ancient times. From the royal family and the aristocracy to the middle and working classes, the main part of British society has been class-based. After the industrial revolution, changes in the economic and social sphere have weakened class boundaries to some extent but have not completely eliminated them. They still play an important role in the cultural and social structure of Britain.

Britain's multiculturalism is a major part of its social system. The history of colonialism and global immigration have turned it into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The city of London in England is considered one of the most diverse cities in the world, in which people belonging to Asian, African, Caribbean and European communities live. This cultural diversity has enriched British society. But this diversity has also given rise to issues of racism, discrimination and social inequality in Britain.

Britain has made great progress in the field of social mobility and gender equality. Women got the right to vote and equal rights at work in the 20th century. Despite this, issues like gender pay gap and low participation of women in top leadership positions still persist here. Economic inequality is a major part of Britain's social system. There is a huge difference in income and standard of living between urban and rural areas. London and South-East England remain the major centres of economic activity. Many parts of Northern England, Scotland and Wales are facing the problem of industrial decline and high unemployment rate.

Britain's social system has a unique blend of tradition and modernity. This society also adopts innovation, technology and globalization along with its royal

traditions and historical institutions. In this way it is clear that the British social system is a harmony of its diversity, capacity for adjustment and historical depth.

1.5   PARTY SYSTEM OF BRITAIN

In any country where there is democracy, it is essential to have political parties. Democracy cannot succeed without political parties. In democracy, governance is conducted by the representatives of the people, therefore the basis of governance in democracy is public opinion and political parties play an important role in the formation of public opinion.

Parliamentary government has been adopted in Britain. Parliamentary government cannot run without political parties, the party which gets majority in the general election forms the government. The party which does not get the majority has to play the role of opposition. Thus, parliamentary government without parties cannot even be imagined. There are mainly two political parties in Britain - Conservative Party and Labour Party. Apart from these two parties, there are other parties too but mainly two parties are playing an important role in British politics at present.

1. Origin and Development of Political Parties in Britain

Political parties in Britain originated during the reign of Charles II. During the Stuart period, when there was a struggle for power between the Parliament and the King, the public was divided into two parts. One group of the public became the supporters of the King and the other became the supporters of the Parliament. The supporters of the King were called Cavaliers, and the supporters of the Parliament were called Round Heads.

During the reign of William III, these parties became famous by the names of Whigs and Tories. The Tory party was in favour of maintaining the supremacy of the King and the Church, while the supporters of the Whig party wanted to limit the powers of the King. Thus, the role of these two parties kept increasing in British politics. In 1832, the British Reform Act was passed. After the passing

of this Act, the names of these parties changed. The Tory party came to be known as the Conservative party and the Whig party as the Liberal party. Due to the reforms happening in Britain, the workers also got the right to vote and in 1906 the Labour Party was established. This party promoted its role in the politics of Britain and this party formed its government in 1924 and replaced the Liberal Party. At present, there are two main political parties in Britain: Conservative Party and Labour Party. Apart from this, there are other parties too but mainly these two parties are given more importance and power keeps changing between these parties.

2. Main Features of the British Party System

- **Biparty System:** There has been a biparty system of governance in Britain since the beginning. During the time of Charles I, Cavaliers and Round Heads were the two main parties which became famous as Whigs and Tories during the reign of William III. Thereafter in the nineteenth century, the liberal and conservative parties were the main parties and at present, the Conservative and Labour parties are the two main parties in British politics.

- **Strict Party Discipline:** There is a lot of discipline in British political parties. British political parties are highly organized and strong. The members of these parties are also highly disciplined, directed and controlled due to which there is stability in the governments here.

- **Importance of Leadership:** In the British party system, leadership is also given great importance. The leadership of the party and the nation depends on the personality of the leader.

- **Centralization:** Due to the small geographical size and uniformity of the population in the country, the tendency of British parties is of centralization. The leader of the party has control over the entire party.

3. Main Political Parties of Britain at Present

Conservative Party: This party was earlier called the Tory party and now it is known as the Conservative party. Its main objective is to adopt traditional

traditions, customs and ideologies and gain power and run the state according to its ideology. The ideology of this party is in favour of gradual and limited changes. This party has the support of the capitalist class, landlords, priests, businessmen, doctors and teachers.

According to the Conservative Party, the English race is superior to all races, and it is their duty to civilize other races. Its main objective is to protect and expand the British Empire.

Policies and Principles of the Conservative Party:

- *Protection of Traditional Structure*: This party wants to maintain the traditional structure of society as much as possible.

- *Support of Capitalism*: It is in favour of British imperialism and capitalism system.

- *Against Economic Intervention*: It believes in the right to private property and advocates less interference of the government in economic matters.

- *Support of Free Trade*: This party is in favour of keeping trade open.

- *Opposition to the Independence of Colonies*: This party was against the independence of colonies.

- *Support to Public Welfare Schemes*: Though it opposes the expansion of the scope of the state, it supports public welfare schemes.

Organisation

The main organs of the Conservative Party's organisation are the National Union, the party organisation chairman, parliamentary party and leader, provincial councils, constituency associations and several advisory committees. The National Union is a union of several constituency unions and councils of extra-provincial areas. The National Union has an executive committee which is a governing body. The leader of the Conservative Party is very powerful. The head of the central office is the chairman of the party. The leader of the party is

elected by the party members, members of the executive committee, Conservative candidates for Parliament and all the members of the National Union. The leader appoints the chairman of the party and determines the party's policy.

Labour Party

The Labour Party was formed as a result of the trade union movement in the late nineteenth century. In 1899, trade unions and other socialist organisations together formed the Labour Representative Committee, which came to be known as the Labour Party in 1906. Its constitution was made in 1918, which is still in use today. This party is becoming increasingly popular.

Policies and Programs of the Labour Party

1. **Change in Society:**

   • The Labour Party wants major changes in the social system of Britain.

   • Its goal is to create a society where workers get full benefit of their work.

   • The means of production, distribution and exchange should be shared so that everyone gets equal benefits.

2. **Democracy and Socialism:**

   • It wants to establish a socialist society in a democratic way.

   • It wants to replace capitalism with a system where property is in the hands of the public, not just a few people.

3. **Nationalization:** It wants to nationalize (public ownership) big industries and businesses.

4. **Social Equality:** It is in favour of providing equal education, property, and equal opportunities to every person.

5. Modern outlook at present, this party supports economic reforms under globalization and liberalization.

Organization

The Labour Party is an organization based on a federal structure, which has many groups such as - labour unions, Fabian Society, Society of Socialist Lawyers and National Assembly of Workers. At the national level, it is run by the Labour Party Conference, in which representatives are sent from the following units on the basis of their population. The main responsibility of formulating the main policies of the party and running the central office lies with the National Executive Committee. This committee also works under the instructions of the party conference. The objective of the Labour Party is that every person should not face any political, social or economic inability from birth to death.

1.6 BRITISH ELECTION SYSTEM

The British election system is one of the oldest and stable democratic systems in the world. This election system is known as the First-Past-the-Post system. This system is based on a direct, simple and quick process. Under this system, only one representative is elected from each constituency. The House of Commons of the British Parliament consists of members who are directly elected by the public. The House of Lords is the second house in the British Parliament. Its members are nominated or hierarchical and they are not elected under which system.

The main basis of the electoral system of Britain is its constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. The country is divided into 650 constituencies, called Constituencies. The public elects one MP from each constituency. These MPs later become part of the House of Commons. On the day of the election, voters go to their polling station and vote for their favorite candidate through a secret ballot. The vote is then counted, and the candidate with the most votes is declared elected. It is important to note that a majority is not required here; simply receiving the most votes is sufficient.

The British electoral system is monitored and administered by the Electoral Commission. This commission is independent and ensures that elections are fair and transparent. Eligibility to vote is based on citizenship and age. British citizens aged 18 years or older, citizens of Commonwealth countries, and certain eligible foreign nationals are eligible to vote. However, registration in the electoral roll is compulsory, and a person cannot vote if he/she is not registered.

The Prime Minister is not directly elected by the people under the British electoral system. Instead, the Prime Minister is the leader of the political party that commands a majority in the House of Commons. This process is characteristic of parliamentary democracy, in which the government is accountable to Parliament. If any party fails to obtain an absolute majority, a coalition government or a minority government may be formed. An important aspect of this system is that it provides stability and accountability to the government.

Elections are held every five years, but mid-term elections can be called if Parliament approves. This usually occurs in response to a political crisis or the fall of a government. Local elections, elections to the European Parliament (before Brexit), and elections to the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish legislatures also take place regularly in the UK.

The British electoral system has many advantages. It is simple and results are quick. It also helps form a strong and stable government, as the party that wins the most seats usually gets the right to govern. However, the system is also criticised. It is said to be unequal and undemocratic because it is difficult for smaller parties or independent candidates to succeed. For example, one party may win a large number of votes across the country but not get seats in Parliament, while another party may win more seats despite getting fewer votes. Another important aspect of the British electoral system is social representation. The system provides representation to a wide range of diverse communities and ideologies. Critics believe that the current system largely benefits the two main parties—the Conservative and Labour parties—while smaller parties are at a disadvantage.

Transparency and fairness play an important role in the operation of the British electoral system. The process of secret balloting and vote counting at the polling station ensures that every vote truly counts. Also, spending limits are set for candidates and political parties so that economic inequality does not affect the election process. In addition, promotional material and media coverage are also monitored.

The British election system is known for its simplicity and stability, but with changing times, the need for improvement is being felt. With technological advancement, facilities like e-voting and online registration are being considered. Also, special efforts are being made to increase the participation of youth and minority communities. The contribution of the British election system to democracy is extremely important. It not only gives people the right to choose their representatives, but also makes the government accountable to the public. Despite this, this system demands constant review and improvement so that it can provide equal representation to all classes and ideologies.

1.7   UNITARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The British system of government is based on the Unitary System, but it also includes some federal features, which make it unique. Unitary system of government means that there is only one main centre of power, and the main centre of power in Britain is its Parliament. In the structure of the British Constitution, theoretically all power is concentrated with the Parliament, which is called Parliamentary Sovereignty. This means that the British Parliament can make or repeal any law, and no other body can challenge it. There is no written constitution in the country, but laws, traditions, and court decisions determine the framework of governance.

This unitary form of British governance distinguishes it from other federal states, such as the US or India, where power is clearly divided between the central and state governments. However, within the UK, decentralisation has

been arranged for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which gives it some of the qualities of federal states. Under decentralisation, these regions have got the right to run their own assemblies and governments, which can make laws on some subjects like education, health, transport, and local administration. Despite this, the power over main subjects like defence, foreign policy, and revenue collection remains with the central parliament.

This system of decentralisation has made the unitary system of the UK quite flexible. After the formation of the Scottish Parliament and the Assemblies of Wales and Northern Ireland, it became clear that the process of granting autonomy to these regions is under the complete control of the central government. This is why it is called constitutional decentralisation, which is part of the unitary system, not the federal system. For example, Scotland held a referendum for independence in 2014, but it was not possible without the permission of the British Parliament.

Despite the lack of federalism, local administration has been strengthened in the UK. There are also local councils and municipalities in different parts of England, but these function directly under the central government. These local bodies are allowed to exercise only those powers that are given to them by the central government. In contrast, in a federal system, state or regional governments can function independently, as seen in the US.

One of the main aspects of the unitary government system of Britain is that the division of power in Britain is balanced between the Parliament and the Monarch (King or Queen), but the real power lies with the Parliament. The King or Queen is a nominal head, and his/her function is mainly ceremonial. The head of the government is the Prime Minister, who is the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons. This form of British governance makes it strong and centralized, but the arrangement of decentralization for representation at the local level also makes it suitable for modern needs.

There are some advantages and limitations of the unitary government system of Britain. The advantages include speed in the decision-making process,

maintaining uniformity, and having a clear centre of power. This system helps in maintaining national unity, as all important decisions are taken by the central parliament. But it has its limitations too, especially in areas like Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where demands for local autonomy often create conflicts with the central government.

Ultimately, the British system of governance is a unitary system with a blend of federal features. This system is a unique combination of historical traditions and modern democratic principles, which makes it unique. Decentralisation has tried to bring it closer to federalism, but it is still unitary in its basic structure. Thus, the British system of governance is a unitary system, which introduces its flexibility and adaptability by adopting local autonomy from time to time.

1.8   SUMMARY

After studying the unit, we can say that Britain's political traditions and constitutional development are based on its unique parliamentary system and unwritten constitution, which are a synthesis of historical traditions, laws and court decisions. From Magna Carta (1215) to the Glorious Revolution (1688) and the establishment of parliamentary democracy, Britain developed the principles of rights, representation and accountability in governance. Britain's political traditions are based on stability and continuity, with constitutional monarchy and parliamentary sovereignty playing central roles. The British state is a unitary system, but decentralisation has enabled it to grant regional autonomy to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

The British society and economy are a mixed model, which strikes a balance between social welfare and capitalism. Welfare policies such as the National Health Service (NHS) and public education reflect socialism, while financial services and privatisation reflect the capitalist approach. Britain's party system

is based on two major parties—the Conservative and the Labour Party—with the Liberal Democrats and regional parties also playing an active role. The electoral system here is based on the First Past the Post system, which helps in forming a stable government, but gives limited representation to smaller parties.

In short, Britain is a constitutional monarchy, where there is a unique combination of unitarity and decentralization. Its political and constitutional traditions, social, economic structure and electoral process ensure a stable and effective democratic rule.

1.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. How have Britain's political traditions evolved, and how have they influenced the current political system?

2. Describe the process of Britain's constitutional development and explain how it differs from the constitutions of other countries?

3. What role has Britain's social and economic structure played in the development of its political system?

4. What are the main features of Britain's party system, and how do they influence the country's politics?

5. Describe the features of Britain's electoral system and discuss its advantages and challenges.

6. What are the key elements of Britain's unitary system of government, and how does it differ from a federal system?

7. Discuss the role and significance of constitutional monarchy in Britain, and how does it function in modern democracy?

NOTES

1.10 REFERENCES

- P. Rutland (2007), 'Britain', in J. Kopstein and M. Lichbach. (eds.) *Comparative Politics: Interest, Identities and Institutions in a Changing Global Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 39-79.

- Joel Krieger (2019), 'Britain', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 38-83.

- Duncan Watts (2006), *British Government and Politics: A Comparative Guide*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.

UNIT 2
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the political traditions and constitutional development of the United States of America.

- discuss the social and economic dimensions of American politics.

- analyse the party system and electoral system of the United States of America.

- understand the nature of federal governance in the United States of America.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

The United States of America (USA) is a federal republic located in North America. It is the third largest country in the world by population and area. It is made up of 50 states, a federal district (Washington, D.C.), five self-governing territories, and various subordinate territories. The capital of America is Washington, D.C., while New York City is its largest and most economically important city. The country is bordered by Canada to the north, Mexico to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. America's political, cultural and geographical diversity gives it a unique place in the world.

The country is based on democratic values, individual liberty and the federal system. The US Constitution, adopted in 1787, is the oldest and most effective written constitution in the world. The US economy is the world's largest economy, with dominance in the fields of technology, finance, defence and innovation. The country is a major member of many international organizations such as the United Nations, NATO and G7 and plays a pivotal role in global politics and security. The country is a wonderful example of diversity, where people from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds come together to form a strong and progressive society.

This unit will describe in detail the major aspects of the American system of governance. It will provide important information about the political traditions and constitutional development of the United States, its social and economic dimensions, party system and election system, and finally the nature of its federal governance system, as well as the political structure and functioning of America.

2.3 POLITICAL TRADITIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The constitutional development of the United States is evidence of a long process, which is a transformation of various historical events, conflicts and

socio-political changes. The process of constitution making in the United States began in the late 18th century when America was freed from British rule. America now felt the need to create a new national identity at the international level. In 1776, the American colonies declared independence, and in the following few years the struggle for independence resulted in the formation of the American Union. However, initially the United States did not adopt its own constitution, instead forming a loose federation under the 'Articles of Confederation'. This limited the power of the central government and provided more autonomy to the provincial governments. But the problems that arose under this system, such as lack of national unity and economic instability, showed that the central government needed to be given more powers. After this, a new constitution for America was prepared in a constitutional convention held in Philadelphia in 1787, which became the basis of the American system of governance. This constitution provided guidance for a strong central government, but at the same time the federal principle was adopted in it, giving an important role to the state governments. According to the Constitution, the government of America is divided into three major organs, the executive, the judiciary and the legislature. An attempt has been made to maintain a balance of power so that no one organ of the government gets excessive power. This constitution also included the first amendment to protect civil liberties, such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion and the right to due process of justice, which is known as the Bill of Rights. The initial form of the US Constitution was influenced by many social and political issues, such as subjugation, racial inequalities and women's rights, for which several amendments were later made.

The first major change to the US Constitution was the 13th Amendment in 1865, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude. This was followed by the 14th and 15th Amendments, which took significant steps towards equality and voting rights. The evolution of the US Constitution took place not only through legislative amendments, but the courts also interpreted the Constitution through their decisions from time to time, thereby adapting it to changing times and circumstances. An important example of the US Constitution development is the Supreme Court case of Marbury vs. Madison in 1803. This case established the

power of the Court and strengthened the Court's right to interpret the Constitution in the future. Subsequently, several other important amendments were made to the US Constitution, such as the 19th Amendment which granted women the right to vote. The civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the 24th and 26th Amendments, which further strengthened voting rights and equality. The process of the Constitution has shown time and again that it is not just a legal document, but a living and changing force in American politics, society, and culture.

During the first few decades of the United States Constitution, there was much controversy over how it would be interpreted and applied. While some saw the Constitution as a way to create a strong central government, others felt that the rights of state governments should be protected. This disagreement was resolved by creating a federal system in which state governments were given some rights under the Constitution, but the central government was also given many important powers. The Constitution incorporated the concept of a "checks and balances" system, which ensured that no one branch of government gained too much power. This system was designed to maintain a balance of power between the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the struggle for civil rights in the United States took a significant turn. In 1964, as a result of the civil rights movement, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which ended racial discrimination and strengthened the principle of equality. Subsequently, the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the 24th Amendment in 1967 secured voting rights and provided a legal framework against racial discrimination in the southern states.

The evolution of the US Constitution took place not only through legislative and judicial amendments, but it was also influenced by the influence of social movements in American society. Struggles for racial, gender and labour rights changed the way the Constitution was interpreted and applied. In fact, the process of amending the US Constitution is complex. Nevertheless, the constitutional development of America shows that it can be amended from time to time to suit the needs and changing circumstances of the society. Its constitutional process

and its development strengthened American democracy and helped make it a vibrant and developed system.

The main features of the Constitution of America are as follows:

1. **Written Constitution:** The Constitution of America is the first written constitution in the world. It was made in 1787 and implemented in 1789. It includes 7 articles and 27 amendments.

2. **Federal System:** America has a federal system of governance. In this, the division of power is clearly done between the centre and the states. The federal government has some limited powers, and the remaining powers are reserved with the states.

3. **Judicial Review:** The right of judicial review has been given to the Supreme Court in the Constitution. The court ensures that the laws and policies are in accordance with the Constitution.

4. **Division of Power:** The US Constitution makes a clear division of power between three organs:

   • Legislature (Parliament - Congress, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives)

   • Executive (the President and his/her government)

   • Judiciary (the Supreme Court and other federal courts)

5. **Guarantee of Fundamental Rights:** The first 10 amendments to the Constitution (Bill of Rights) guarantee the basic rights of citizens, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to equality.

6. **Rigid Amendment Process:** The US Constitution is difficult to amend. There are stringent provisions for proposing and passing amendments, which ensures stability in the Constitution.

7. **Democratic Form:** The US Constitution is based on democratic ideals. It gives the citizens the right to elect their representatives, and the government is accountable to the people.

8. **Flexibility and Stability:** Although it is a rigid constitution, a process of amendment has been provided to keep it updated and relevant over time.

9. **Equal Citizenship:** The Constitution provides equality and equal rights to all citizens. There is no place for any kind of discrimination in it.

10. **Presidential System:** The head of the executive in America is the President, who is directly elected by the people. The President is not answerable to the Congress for powers and responsibilities.

11. **Secularism:** The Constitution keeps government and religion separate. It provides that there will be no official religion of the state.

12. **Bicameral Form of Legislature:** The legislature of America is divided into two houses:

    • *Senate*: Equal representation from each state.

    • *House of Representatives*: Representation based on the population of the states.

2.4 UNITED STATES: SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

The United States, known as the world's most powerful economy and a diverse society, maintains a unique balance in its society and economy. American society is highly diverse, home to people of different races, religions, cultures, and nationalities. This diversity is built on America's core values—freedom, equality, and opportunity. A key feature of American society is the notion of the "American Dream," which is based on the belief that every individual can achieve success through their own efforts. It has institutions and ideologies that have global influence in education, science, arts, and technology. However, society also faces challenges such as racial inequality, social divisions, and political polarization.

The American economy is one of the world's largest and most developed economies, based primarily on capitalist principles. The economy is centred on innovation, entrepreneurship, and global trade. The United States is a leader in agriculture, manufacturing, services, and technology. Tech hubs such as Silicon Valley drive the global digital economy. Its vast financial markets, particularly the New York Stock Exchange, play a central role for capital flows and investment around the world. In the energy sector, the US has made major progress in shale gas and renewable energy in recent years, moving it toward energy self-sufficiency.

However, despite the strength of the US economy, economic inequality remains a major challenge. A large share of wealth and income is held by the top few in society, while the middle and lower classes are struggling. Inequalities are evident in areas such as health care, education, and social security. Despite this, the US economy's capacity for innovation and resilience enables it to recover from crises and create new opportunities. On the global stage, America's economic power gives it a decisive role, allowing it to influence international policies and institutions.

The US society and economy are deeply interconnected. The diversity of society, culture, and entrepreneurial spirit serve as the cornerstone for economic growth. Conversely, economic progress strengthens the social structure, leading to improvements in education, health, and living standards. Although challenges still exist, America's society and economy remain promising for future prospects because of its democratic values, innovation, and global leadership.

Racial, cultural, and social diversity has a great influence within American society. People of different races, religions, and cultural backgrounds live here, making American society rich and vibrant. However, racial discrimination and social inequality remain problems that are a constant challenge to address. Despite this, America's society remains a source of inspiration globally because of its freedom, democratic principles, and opportunities.

2.5 PARTY SYSTEM OF THE UNITED STATES

The party system of the United States is centred around two major political parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, which is why there is a bipartisan system. This system provides stability and clear competition in American politics, with both parties differing in ideology, policies, and socio-economic outlook. The Democratic Party generally favours progressive policies, social welfare, and a more active role of the government, while the Republican Party emphasizes individual liberty, limited government, and economic liberalization. Both these parties emerged in the 19th century and have maintained a prominent place in American politics.

The US Constitution does not mention political parties, but factions such as the Federalists and Anti-Federalists laid the foundation for political parties in the late 18th century. Later, the Democratic Party was formed in 1828, while the Republican Party in 1854 made its mark on the issues of abolition of slavery and federal unity. Both parties assumed political power at different times and played an important role in shaping the direction of the country. Electoral competition between these parties occurs at the presidential, congressional, and state level elections.

An important aspect of the American party system is its decentralization. Each party has separate organizations at the national, state, and local levels, which function independently. This system helps in adjusting candidates and policies according to local needs. In addition, primary elections play an important role in the functioning of parties, in which party members and registered voters select their representatives and candidates.

The American party system also faces political polarization. In recent decades, the ideological gap between the Democratic and Republican parties has increased, making politics more polarized. Along with this, the two parties also have different approaches to economic policies and foreign policy.

The party system of the United States has evolved over time and has a profound influence on American democracy. This system not only ensures political stability, but also provides citizens with an opportunity to decide the direction of the government. Although the dominance of the two major parties has sometimes limited political debate, the system has succeeded in maintaining a balance of consensus and competition in American politics.

Main Features of the American Party System

The American party system is known all over the world for its peculiarities and democratic structure. This system has developed as a two-party system, in which the Democratic Party and the Republican Party play a major role. Apart from this, some other small parties are also active, but their influence remains limited.

1. **Biparty System:** American politics is dominated by the Democratic and Republican parties. Both these parties cover a wide range of political ideologies and socio-economic policies.

2. **Ideological Differences:**
   - **Democratic Party:** Supports progressive policies, social justice, environmental protection, and government intervention.
   - **Republican Party:** Emphasizes on individual freedom, and free market economy. The division of these parties can be clearly seen on social, economic, and cultural issues.

3. **Role of Electoral College:** The Electoral College is important in the presidential election, which gives the election system more inclination towards a biparty system. This makes it difficult for smaller parties to win the presidency.

4. **Representation of Diversity:** Both major parties represent different population groups, geographic regions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Although confined to the boundary of two parties, it has the ability to include different ideologies.

5. **Limited Role of Other Parties:** Small parties such as the Green Party, Libertarian Party, and other third parties have limited influence on the political scene. However, these parties have been successful in raising important issues and putting pressure on the major parties.

6. **Social and Economic Polarization:** The American party system often promotes polarization on social and economic issues. This makes the political debate intense and active.

7. **States' Rights and Local Diversity:** Both parties represent the special needs and issues of the states even though they are unified at the national level.

8. **Party Organization and Campaign-Centric Politics:** Party organization in the American party system is more focused on election campaigns and fund raising. This system also gives importance to the individual personality and ability of the candidates.

2.6 US ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The US electoral system is a complex and multi-layered system in which elections are held at the federal, state and local levels. This system provides citizens with an opportunity to participate in political decisions while maintaining the basic structure of democracy. The most prominent aspect of the US electoral system is the Electoral College, which is used in presidential elections. The President is not elected directly by the people, but by members of the Electoral College, who are determined on the basis of the population and parliamentary representation of each state. This system is designed to maintain the federal structure of the US and ensure balance between the states, but it has also been criticized from time to time, especially when differences were seen between the results of the popular vote and the Electoral College, such as in the 2000 and 2016 elections.

The electoral system in the US operates under the First Past of the Post system, in which the candidate who receives the most votes from each

constituency is the winner. This system has promoted the dominance of the two major political parties—the Democratic and the Republican—while politically limiting smaller or third parties. Although independent candidates and smaller parties also participate in elections, their influence is usually limited to the local or state level.

The US election process is conducted in several stages. First, there are primaries and caucuses, through which political parties select their presidential candidates. Primary elections are conducted by the states, while caucuses are meetings organized by the parties. These primary elections are followed by the National Convention, where the party formally nominates its candidate. After this, there are general elections, which are held on the first Tuesday of November.

Voter registration is an important aspect of the election system. Voters in the US are not automatically registered, but they have to register themselves. This process is often complicated, and it operates differently in different states. Some states have implemented measures such as automatic registration and mail-in voting, while other states continue to debate voter ID laws and registration processes. The U.S. election system uses electronic voting machines and paper ballots, and in recent years there have been efforts to strengthen the security of the election process due to growing concerns about cybersecurity. During the 2020 elections, the pandemic led to widespread use of mail-in ballots, which made the election process more inclusive but also led to political controversy.

The influence of money in the electoral system is also profound. The Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United v. FEC decision removed many restrictions on political funding, increasing the influence of super PACs (Political Action Committees) and wealthy individuals. This system is often criticized because the influence of big money can lead to inequality in elections. The US electoral system is designed keeping in mind its federal structure and diversity. Each state sets its own election rules and procedures, which leads to a lack of uniformity, but this system ensures the rights and autonomy of the states. There is a constant debate on the need for reform in the electoral system, such as abolishing the electoral college, simplifying the voting process, and reducing the influence of money.

The US electoral system provides broad representation to citizens, but the complexities and inequalities present in it also pose challenges to democracy. Despite this, this system plays an important role in maintaining the stability and inclusiveness of America's pluralistic society and federal structure.

2.7 FEDERAL SYSTEM

The United States' system of government is based on a federal structure, with division of powers between the national government and the 50 states. This federal system operates under the U.S. Constitution, which was adopted in 1787 and was designed to unify the nation and maintain the autonomy of individual states. The U.S. federal system divides government into three main branches—the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary—and ensures an even distribution of power. Each branch is independent but acts as a check and balance on the other. In the federal system, the national government has broad responsibilities such as defence, foreign affairs, and monetary policies, while the states have autonomy in matters such as education, law enforcement, and local governance.

The U.S. federal structure is designed to accommodate diversity and local needs. Each state has its own constitution, judiciary, and legislature, and is free to set laws and policies for its citizens. However, certain powers are exclusively delegated to the national government under the Constitution, such as declaring war, issuing currency, and regulating interstate commerce. The Tenth Amendment protects states' rights, stating that powers not delegated to the federal government remain with the states and the people. This provision is the basis for maintaining a balance between the federal and state governments.

Despite the federal system, the US has many aspects that give it a unitary element. For example, the principle of constitutional supremacy ensures that federal laws and the Constitution are above state laws. Whenever there is a conflict between state and federal laws, the federal law is given priority. In addition, the

Supreme Court plays an important role in the federal system in resolving disputes and clarifying the scope of power between the federal and state governments. The court interprets the Constitution and ensures that state and federal governments do not exceed their jurisdiction.

The US federal system includes elements of cooperative federalism and competitive federalism. Under cooperative federalism, the federal and state governments work together in areas such as education, transportation, and health. This model involves sharing of resources and responsibilities. On the other hand, competitive federalism involves competition among states for tax rates, policies, and attracting investments, which makes the federal structure more dynamic.

The autonomy of states under the federal system has been challenged from time to time. There have been many occasions in American history when tensions have arisen between the federal and state governments. The Civil War (1861-1865) was an extreme example of the conflict between federal unity and states' rights. The war ensured that the federal government had supremacy and that states could not secede from the Union. In modern times, issues such as the civil rights movement, environmental legislation, and health care reform have led to disputes between the federal and state governments.

Another important aspect of the federal structure is equality among states. The Constitution provides that every state shall have equal rights and duties. Although states vary in population, economy, and area, all states are given equal representation in the Senate. Two senators are elected from each state, while representation in the House of Representatives is based on population. This arrangement provides a unique balance of federal and unitary elements.

The federal system of the US promotes economic and social mobility. It allows states to customize their laws and policies according to their needs. For example, some states are liberal in tax policy and provide incentives to promote business, while other states focus on investing in social programs and public services. This diversity provides citizens the freedom to choose the environment conducive to their lives.

This balance between federal and unitary elements is helpful in the political stability and development of the US. However, the complexity of the federal system sometimes creates administrative challenges. For example, lack of coordination between the federal and state governments can become a problem in emergency situations. The federal structure of the United States not only embraces its diversity but also strengthens it. This balance between the independence of the states and the consolidated power of the federal government makes America a nation that is able to accommodate different ideologies, cultures, and needs. This system gives America a prominent position in global politics and economy by balancing local and national needs.

2.8 SUMMARY

Thus, we can say that the system of governance of the United States of America is a wonderful combination of its constitutional development, democratic values and federal structure. The system of governance of America is based on its constitutional flexibility, federal structure and democratic principles, which gives it the ability to face and adjust to the emerging challenges from time to time. Even though there are social, economic and political challenges in the present era, its strong constitutional system and diverse society keep it on the path of stability and progress. The example of America shows how a nation can protect democratic values and civil rights while balancing tradition and modernity.

2.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate the historical background and impact of the struggle between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists in the development of the Constitution of the United States of America.

2. What impact did the Civil Rights Movement in the United States have on American politics and society? Discuss with examples.

3. Discuss the historical development of the two-party system in the United States and its current relevance.

4. Comment critically on the role of the Electoral College in the electoral system of the United States. Is this system in accordance with democratic ideals?

5. Analyse the division of power between the central and state governments in the American federal system. Is this system relevant in the present times?

2.10 REFERENCES

• Louis DeSipio (2019), 'The United States', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 324-368.

• John G. Geer, Wendy J. Schiller, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Dana K. Glencross (2012), *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government*, The Essentials, Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 36-71 (The Constitution), 284-317 (Political Parties), 360-407 (Congress), 448-453 (The Presidency)

• Robert Singh (2003), *American Government: A Concise Introduction*, SAGE Publications: London, pp. 25-45 (The US Constitution), 46-73 (Political Parties), 153-176 (Congress).

• Paul E. Johnson, Gary J. Miller, John H. Aldrich (1994), *American Government: People, Institutions and Policies*, Cengage Learning: Boston, MA.

UNIT 3
BRAZIL

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the constitutional development of Brazil.

- get information about the social and economic dimensions of Brazilian politics.

- analyse the party system in Brazilian politics and electoral system.

- understand the federal system of government in Brazil.

3.2   INTRODUCTION

Brazil, officially called the Federative Republic of Brazil, is famous for its unique natural beauty, such as the Amazon rainforest, and cultural diversity. Its history dates back to Portuguese colonialism, which established itself here in 1500 AD. Brazil is the largest and most populous country in South America. Its geographical diversity makes it important on a global scale.

Brazil's social structure is highly diverse and ethnically mixed, with major ethnic groups including Portuguese, Africans, indigenous peoples, and people of various other European and Asian races. This diversity is reflected in Brazilian culture, which includes a variety of languages, religions, traditions, and customs. Although Portuguese is the only official language of Brazil, other languages such as Spanish, German, Italian, and Portuguese dialects are also prevalent in the country.

Brazil's social structure reflects the growing inequality of both the upper and lower classes. Class divisions can be clearly seen in Brazil, where there is a huge gap between the poor and the rich. There is also a significant gap between urban and rural areas, with major cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, and Brasilia experiencing high growth rates as the centres of economic activity, while rural areas are plagued by poverty, illiteracy, and lack of employment opportunities. This also affects Brazil's economic structure, which is dominated by arable land, mineral resources, and industrial production. Brazil's economy is one of the largest economies in the world, based primarily on agriculture, minerals, oil, and manufacturing industries. Brazil's system of governance is based on democratic principles, including the protection of constitutional rights, adherence to federalism, and efforts to eliminate socio-economic inequalities. Although political and economic imbalances have posed many challenges in the past decades, Brazil has established a strong democratic framework through its constitutional development that accommodates the country's diverse and complex socio-economic context, which we will explore in this unit.

3.3 HISTORY OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL

The history of constitutional development in Brazil is deeply linked with its political, social and economic conditions. This development mainly took place during the monarchy period of Brazil, the establishment of the republic, military rule, and finally the democratic transition.

When Brazil became independent from Portugal, the first constitution came into force in 1824. It was prepared by King Pedro-I to establish a centralized constitutional monarchy. In this constitution, the king was given excessive powers. It was known as the "*Moderating Power*". The king was given the right to mediate between the executive, legislative and judicial powers. The 1824 constitution was based on oligarchy and authoritarianism. In this, only those who had property were given the right to vote. This constitution remained an obstacle in the development of democratic and federal structure in Brazil.

After this, as soon as the monarchy ended in Brazil in 1889, it was declared a federal republic. In 1891, a new constitution inspired by the American Constitution was implemented in Brazil. It was based on the principle of federalism and separation of powers into legislature, executive and judiciary. This constitution gave states more autonomy and organized Brazil as a "federal republic". However, this system continued to serve the interests of the wealthy agricultural elite and socio-economic inequalities persisted. Brazil at this time depended mainly on coffee production and export, which kept the influence of landowners strong.

The 1930s saw increased political and economic instability in Brazil, which was ended by a coup led by Getúlio Vargas. In 1934, a new constitution came into force in Brazil, this constitution gave prominence to workers' rights and social reforms instead of the interests of the elite. This constitution gave women the right to vote for the first time in Brazil and reformed labour laws. This constitution was a mixture of socialist and democratic principles. But this constitution also

NOTES

could not last, because in 1937 Getúlio Vargas declared the "Estado Novo" (New State) regime, which turned Brazil into a totalitarian system.

The 1937 Constitution was a symbol of Vargas' authoritarian rule. It severely restricted civil liberties and strengthened executive power. This constitution banned political parties and imposed strict controls on the media. It is known as the "Charter of the New State" under Vargas' rule. However, his rule also ended after World War II due to growing public protests and democratic demands. After the fall of the Vargas regime, a new constitution was again enacted in Brazil in 1946. This constitution restored democratic rights and strengthened the federal structure. This constitution guaranteed individual freedom, freedom of the press, and civil rights. It was Brazil's first constitutional arrangement, which laid the foundation of the modern welfare state. But this constitution could not eliminate Brazil's social inequalities in its entirety.

In 1964, there was a military coup in Brazil, which interrupted the country's democratic process. The military regime enacted a new constitution in 1967, which gave excessive powers to the executive branch and restricted civil liberties. This constitution was amended in 1969, legitimising the harsh policies of the military regime. This era was marked by political repression, censorship, and human rights violations. However, by the late 1970s, a growing economic crisis and mass movements weakened the military regime. Military rule ended in 1985, and Brazil's new constitution came into effect in 1988. It is called the "Citizen's Constitution" and is considered the most progressive in the country's constitutional history. This constitution gives prominence to civil rights, social justice, environmental protection, and minority rights. It strengthened the federal system and promoted citizen participation. This constitution strengthens the country's democratic structure and establishes a balance between the three organs of power. It recognizes rights such as education, health, and social security as fundamental rights.

Thus, it is clear that the history of Brazil's constitutional development is a symbol of its political and social struggles. It also makes it clear how Brazil travelled from colonial centralization to democratic decentralization. Brazilian

constitutions have, from time to time, prioritized issues such as labour rights, women empowerment, minority rights, and environmental protection. But this process has also been accompanied by challenges such as corruption, social inequality, and political instability. Brazil's current constitutional system is based on the Constitution adopted in 1988. It is also known as the "*Constitution of Freedom of the Nation*". This Constitution lays the foundation for democratic governance in Brazil and aims to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, ensure political stability, and the social responsibilities of the state. This Constitution establishes a federal democratic republic, with a clear division of powers between the central government and 26 states and a federal district. Under the Constitution, the function of the state is to protect the rights of citizens and provide them with freedom, equality, and justice.

Key Features of the Brazilian Constitution

The Brazilian Constitution, adopted in 1988, is a detailed and modern document that safeguards the country's democratic structure and civil rights. It is also called the "*Constitution Civil*" because it lays special emphasis on civil rights and liberties. Its key features include:

1. **Democratic Nature of the Constitution:** The Brazilian Constitution is based on democracy. It ensures the separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary. It guarantees a wide range of rights and liberties to citizens.

2. **Federal System:** Brazil is a federal republic, consisting of the Union, States, Municipalities, and the Federal District. Each unit has its own autonomy and rights. This federal structure is clearly defined under the Constitution.

3. **Fundamental Rights and Liberties:** The Brazilian Constitution guarantees rights such as equality, liberty, security, and education to all citizens. It prohibits any discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, and economic status.

4. **Popular Sovereignty:** The Constitution ensures that all powers are derived from the people. Citizens exercise their sovereignty through elections, referendums, and other democratic processes.

5. **Republic and Secular State:** Brazil is a secular state. The Constitution guarantees the separation of religion and state, including the right to religious freedom.

6. **Protection of Human Rights:** The Constitution gives special importance to human rights and takes measures to ensure a dignified life for all citizens. It also provides for labour rights, social welfare, and health services.

7. **Independence of the Judiciary:** The judiciary in Brazil is independent. The Supreme Federal Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal) is the highest authority to interpret and apply the Constitution.

8. **Political Pluralism:** The Constitution encourages a plurality of political parties and freedom of expression. It guarantees the coexistence of different ideologies and viewpoints.

9. **Amendment Process:** The process for amending the Constitution is clear and rigorous. Amendments require the approval of the National Congress, ensuring the stability of the Constitution.

3.4 BRAZIL: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF BRAZILIAN POLITICS

Brazil's social system is complex, multi-layered, and historically affected by inequality, reflecting its diverse cultural, racial, and economic structure. This system evolved mainly during the colonial period. Portuguese colonialism laid the foundation for racial inequalities and social hierarchy in Brazil. Ethnic diversity deeply influences Brazil's social structure. It includes white, black, indigenous, and mixed-race people. The social hierarchy is usually determined by racial and

economic factors. White and wealthy classes enjoy greater social and economic privileges, while black and mixed-race people often face poverty, discrimination, and lack of opportunities.

Brazil is a country full of social and economic diversity. Ethnic, cultural, and geographical inequalities are prominent in it. To understand the social dimension in Brazilian politics, it is necessary to consider the complexities of its social structure, developmental policies, and cultural identity. Brazilian society has historically been affected by ethnic diversity, economic inequality, and regional differences, and these elements have had a profound impact on the country's political system. Brazil is a mixture of people from different continents and countries such as African, Portuguese, Native American and various European and Asian communities. This is the reason why there is a deep cultural diversity in the society here. Political debates continue for the rights and equality of different communities.

Another important aspect of the social dimension is economic inequality. The Brazilian economy has had a problem of uneven distribution for several decades, where on the one hand there is high standard of living and prosperity in big cities, on the other hand there is poverty, unemployment and uneven development in rural areas. This economic inequality has given rise to discontent and conflict in society, which affects political decisions. Several social movements have emerged to protect the rights of the poor sections of Brazil, tribal communities and black communities in particular, such as the "Movimento dos Traveles" (Movement of the Landless) and the "Movimento Black" (Movement of the Black Community). These movements have struggled for social and economic justice and have demanded from government for land reform, education, health, and equitable distribution of employment opportunities.

The social dimension in Brazilian politics also has an impact on the rights of women and the LGBTQ community. Women's participation and the struggle for their rights have influenced Brazil's political system, where women's rights

issues, such as equal pay, education, and laws against physical violence, have consistently been part of political discourse. There have also been significant advances for the rights of the LGBTQ community, such as the legal acceptance of same-sex marriage, although this still remains a social challenge. Brazil's constitution guarantees social and economic rights and prioritizes basic rights such as education, health, and social security. Nevertheless, there are many obstacles to the actual implementation of these rights, such as the improper implementation of government policies, unequal distribution of economic resources, and lack of coordination between various state and federal governments. To address these problems, Brazilian political parties and organizations have initiated social reforms and developmental plans several times, but inequalities are deep-rooted, which undermine government efforts. Issues of ethnic identity and inequalities continue to be a subject of political conflict and debate in Brazil, particularly in terms of the rights of black and indigenous communities. These communities have historically suffered exploitation and discrimination, and numerous policies and laws have been implemented to improve their social situation. As such, the 1988 Constitution contained strong provisions against discrimination, but bringing about substantial social and economic change for these communities is still a challenge. Another aspect of the social dimension in Brazilian politics is that it influences political decisions at the local and national levels. For example, local governments in poor and developing regions often struggle to receive more aid from the federal government, while prosperous regions often have more opportunities for development. Because of this inequality, political parties have to take these regional and social interests into account in electoral strategies.

Thus, the social dimension in Brazilian politics is not only linked to the fight for social justice and rights, but it also influences political activities and decisions within economic, cultural, and geographic contexts. All these aspects of the social dimension in Brazil are interconnected and are sources of conflict and change within the country's political system. Therefore, there is a need for continuous reform of Brazilian politics towards overall equality and social justice among different segments of society, ethnic groups, and communities.

3.5 ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF BRAZILIAN POLITICS

The main reason for the high inequality in the Brazilian economy is its social structure, which has an unequal distribution of land, property, and resources. Since the colonial period, Brazil has been built on a structural imbalance where a few classes have occupied major roles, and the rest of society has struggled against it. This economic inequality was not only the result of an oppressive system, but it also gave rise to a political culture in which power and resources were controlled and centralized. Social inequalities have a long history in Brazil's political economy, and structural changes are necessary to eliminate these inequalities. The policies of the Brazilian government, especially land reform, investment in education, and social welfare schemes, have contributed to eliminating these inequalities, but inequality has not been completely eliminated.

The main feature of economic inequality in Brazil has been that it is not only the result of differences in income, but there are also inequalities in the distribution of social services and opportunities. Deep inequalities are particularly evident in the areas of health, education and employment, which lead to different experiences for different segments of society. Poorer Brazilians often have difficulties in accessing education and health services, while upper classes have better resources and opportunities. This has resulted in an unequal society in which opportunities for development have been limited to certain classes, while the wider population has not. This inequality has had a profound impact on the political economy, and as a result, Brazilian politics is often marked by conflict and dissent between different social classes.

It is also important to understand the political aspect of the economic dimension of Brazilian politics. Social inequalities in Brazilian politics have a profound impact on political parties and institutions. The poor and other marginalised communities demand inclusive policies, while upper classes promote conservative policies to maintain their position. As a result, Brazilian

politics is often marked by conflict and dissent, as there are disagreements and differences between different classes over the distribution of resources. In addition, political corruption and institutional weaknesses have also been instrumental in promoting inequality. Due to corruption of governments and lack of transparency in policy decisions, effective steps have not been taken to address inequalities.

Social movements have played an important role in addressing the impact of economic inequality in Brazilian politics. These movements, whether it is the movement of the landless or the movement of the black community, have been raising their voice against these inequalities and challenging government policies. These movements have put pressure on power structures and intensified the struggle for social justice. Despite this, the impact of these movements has not been as effective as expected, because political institutions and powers have not fully accepted these demands.

In addition, "*import substitution industrialization*" (ISI) has been an important part of Brazil's development model, which aimed to boost domestic production and reduce foreign dependence. Although ISI had some success initially, the imbalances created by this model and the limited success of industrialization further increased economic inequalities. As a result, Brazil faced an economic crisis in the 1980s, and this vicious circle of inequality deepened even more.

Various reforms are needed in Brazil's political decisions and government policies to address social inequality. Effective solutions to inequality require more inclusive and equitable policies that provide equal opportunities to all classes and ethnic groups. In addition, institutional reforms, such as government transparency, political participation, and better implementation of social welfare programs, are necessary to reduce inequalities.

Overall, the economic dimension and inequality are deeply intertwined in Brazilian politics. Governments, political parties, and social movements must work together to address these inequalities to ensure greater equality, prosperity, and social justice in the country.

3.6 PARTY SYSTEM

Brazil's political landscape is typically based on a multiparty system, which includes many political parties representing different ideologies, social classes and regions. All of these generally operate under a democratic system of government. This system fosters a culture of political competition, cooperation and coalitions, reflecting the country's social and political diversity.

The development of the party system in Brazil began during the colonial period, when political activities were mainly controlled by the colonial rulers and their subordinates. After gaining independence in 1822, Brazil formed various political parties, mainly one party that advocated bona fide rights, and another party that took a more democratic approach. Ideological differences and power struggles among these political parties led to an unstable party system. This often led to political discontent and divisions.

The biggest turning point in Brazil's party system came in 1964, when the military regime ended the democratic system and established a centralized political system. After this, came the restoration of democracy in 1985, a changed form of party system emerged in Brazil. This new perspective developed into a multi-party system, which included many parties representing different ideologies and interests. Major political parties of Brazil: Brazilian politics mainly includes many political parties, which are representatives of different social classes, religious groups and regions. Some of the major parties among these are as follows:

1. **Working Party:** The most prominent and influential party in Brazil is the Working Party. It is a party of left-of-centre ideology. The party was formed in the 1980s by the working class and supporters of leftist ideology. The Working Party has gained an important place in Brazilian politics. This party brought leaders like Lula Dr. Silva and Dilma Rousseff to the presidency. The party worked towards many social

reforms for the poor and workers. This party has also faced corruption charges which has damaged its political influence.

2. **Brazilian Social Democratic Party:** The Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) is the main centre-right party of Brazil. This party advocates reform of Brazil's economic policies and economic liberalization. This party claims support especially from the urban middle class and the business community. Prominent leaders of this party, such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, introduced extensive economic reforms in Brazil, and the party made important political reforms in the 1990s. The party's popularity declined in the late 2000s, as its policies proved ineffective for the poor and workers.

3. **Democratic Party:** The Democratic Party is a right-wing party that mainly represents Brazil's business and financial class. The party is against left-wing policies and is in favour of a free market economy, low taxes, and less government interference. The party has played an important role in political changes in recent years. The party has often played its role in power by being part of centre-right coalitions.

4. **Socialist Party:** The Socialist Party is a centrist party that adopts socialist and social democratic ideologies. The party stands for the rights of the poor and workers. An inclusive approach to development in Brazil is promoted by this party. The ideologies of this party have changed from time to time, and it has collaborated with various coalitions, keeping its political influence stable.

5. **Republican Party:** The Republican Party is a right-wing party that supports religious and traditional values. This party is especially popular among the religious community, especially Protestant Christians. The party has strengthened its political position in recent years.

Brazil's Party System and Coalition Government

Due to the multi-party system in Brazilian politics, the party system here is based on a coalition-based political system. Due to the large number of parties, no single party in the country is able to obtain an absolute majority. Therefore, coalitions

are formed between political parties. The purpose of these coalitions is to win the presidential elections and get effective support in the parliament. This coalition politics shows the complexity of Brazil's party system, as forming a government requires compromise between different ideologies. Despite coalitions, tendencies of instability and political competition persist in Brazil's party system. Since party coalitions in Brazilian politics are often unstable, parties have to constantly make compromises to maintain support and popularity. These coalitions are part of the strategies to establish harmony between parties, balance their ideologies and stay in power.

Challenges in Brazil's Party System

Brazil's party system faces many challenges. Some of the major problems are as follows:

1. **Instability and Coalition Politics:** Difficulties arise in political decisions due to instability in the party system of Brazil and the high number of coalition governments, parties have to make compromises with their allies to come to power, due to which it takes time to take any kind of important decision and sometimes the efficiency of the government is affected.

2. **Corruption:** Corruption has been an important problem in Brazilian politics. Leaders of various political parties keep getting accused of corruption. Due to which there has been a decrease in public trust among the people.

3. **Change in Political Ideologies:** The ideologies of Brazilian political parties keep changing from time to time, due to which there is instability in the position of the party. Many parties have changed their ideology so that they can get support among different social groups and economic classes.

3.7 ELECTION SYSTEM OF BRAZIL

The election system of Brazil is based on a democratic and multi-party system. It reflects the diverse social, political and cultural structure of the country.

The election system here works according to the Constitution of Brazil. The Constitution of Brazil was adopted in 1988, the main objective of which is to give all the citizens of the country the opportunity to exercise their voting rights. Universal suffrage has been adopted in Brazil. All citizens of the country who are between 18 and 70 years of age have been given the right to vote without any discrimination. It is optional for citizens between 16 and 17 years of age and citizens above 70 years of age. This system has been designed to promote equal representation and active citizen participation.

The electoral structure of Brazil provides for the election of the President, MPs, Governors and local officials. The election system of Brazil is completely based on a mixture of proportional representation and majoritarian system. The President is elected once every four years and it is done directly by the people. If no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote in the first round, a second round is held in which only the top two candidates compete. The Brazilian presidential system is based on a democratic system. Whoever wins the election gets a clear mandate of public support. The Brazilian Parliament has two houses - an upper house, called the Senate, and a lower house, called the Câmara dos Diputados. Members of the Senate are elected through elections once every eight years, while members of the Câmara dos Diputados are elected through elections every four years. The Senate has equal representation for each state, while representation in the Câmara dos Diputados is based on population.

Brazil also holds state and municipal elections, in which governors, legislatures and local officials are elected. Governors are directly elected, while members of state legislatures and local officials are elected under a proportional representation system. Moreover, an important aspect in the Brazilian election system is that voters cast their votes through electronic voting machines (EVMs), which ensures a highly efficient and transparent process. This system is designed to prevent corruption and fraud. There are no physical ballots, which eliminates the possibility of paper-based fraud. There is also a problem of corruption in the Brazilian electoral process, and allegations of electoral fraud have surfaced from time to time, however, these cases have reduced significantly due to the electronic voting system. Despite this, various parties and leaders are often accused of

corruption and political manipulation in politics. Due to which the election results are also affected. Electoral laws in Brazil are also very strict, and any kind of rigging or electoral fraud during elections is considered a serious crime.

The independent election commission is responsible for maintaining transparency in elections, which monitors the elections and ensures that the elections are conducted in a fair and free manner. The main functions of this commission are to monitor the electoral process, ensure the security of voting machines, announce election results and ensure compliance with the electoral code of conduct. During elections, it is also necessary for political parties and candidates to follow the rules set for electoral campaigning. These include the limit of promotional material, limit of election expenditure and measures to influence voters. Another important aspect in the Brazilian election system is that citizens are encouraged to actively participate in the electoral process. Its purpose is to promote confidence in democratic institutions and electoral practices.

Brazil's electoral system faces challenges such as attempts to influence voters among political parties and candidates, unequal distribution of money and resources, and electoral corruption. Despite this, the electoral system has been improved over time through reforms such as the development of electoral technology and the introduction of new measures to promote transparency in the voting process. In addition, extensive security measures are also taken during elections to prevent electoral violence and negative impacts. Overall, Brazil's electoral system is based on democratic principles and respects the right of citizens to participate in elections. Nevertheless, there remains a need to improve the electoral process to ensure that democracy in Brazil works in a completely fair and transparent manner, and result in a strong and stable political structure in the country.

3.8   FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

When the Constitution of Brazil was adopted in 1988, a federal system of government was established under the Constitution in which power is divided

between the central government and various state governments. The Constitution of Brazil establishes governments at different levels of the country and this constitution distributes functions and powers between the states, municipalities and the federal government. Under the federal system, Brazil has a total of 26 states and one federal district (Brasilia), which have their own legislatures, executive authorities and judiciary. States are free to perform government functions within themselves. But they are bound to follow the federal constitution and laws.

State governments have the right to collect various types of revenue, such as collection of taxes, but they are also bound to give a part of the taxes to the federal government. Special provisions have been made in the Constitution to maintain a balance of powers between the federal government and state governments in Brazil. In the federal system of governance of Brazil, each state also has its own constitution, which divides the functions of the legislature, executive, and judiciary, the structure of governance within that state. State governments have independence in their electoral and political functions, but some policies of the federal government, such as foreign policy, defence, and general economic regulation, are controlled at the federal level. States have autonomy due to their constitution, yet they must exercise their independence within national laws and the national constitution.

An important feature of the Brazilian federal system is that it acts as an accommodative system, in which the states and the federal government cooperate with each other. This ensures that all regions within the country receive equal opportunities for development. This system helps strengthen democratic principles. It empowers local communities to govern themselves according to their needs and priorities, while at the same time requiring a central government to maintain national identity and unity. For example, in Brazil's federal system, states develop plans for their particular social, cultural, and economic contexts, while the central government is responsible for implementing national development plans. However, Brazil's federal system has been criticized in some cases for lack of coordination and uneven development. In particular, poorer and less developed

states receive fewer resources than richer states, leading to economic inequality.

Uneven distribution of resources and political corruption in elections are also challenges of the federal system in Brazil. This power struggle and cooperation between state governments and the federal government sometimes leads to political instability and disputes. Attempts by the federal government to maintain control over various states, such as financial aid or approval of national plans, sometimes cause controversy for state governments. Despite this, Brazil's federal system has contributed significantly to the political, social and cultural development of the country. It has provided a platform for citizens from different regions to connect with their governments and raise their voices, and it helps promote democratic participation.

3.9 SUMMARY

In summary, it can be said that Brazil's constitutional development and the nature of the state have undergone complex changes over time. Brazil has adopted several constitutions since gaining independence in 1822, including the Republic Constitution of 1889, the Constitutions of 1934, 1946 and 1988. The 1988 Constitution, which is currently being implemented, guarantees democratic and social rights and is regarded as an inclusive system of governance.

The Brazilian political system is federal, with powers distributed between the central and state governments. The state is confederal in nature, where the central government has some significant powers, but the states are given autonomy. Social and economic dimensions are also important in Brazilian politics, as the country has deep economic inequalities and ethnic diversity. Inequalities in land distribution, education, health and employment have led to political conflicts. Despite social movements and attempts at reform, economic inequality remains an issue in Brazil.

The Brazilian party system is diverse and sees competition among major parties, with major leftist and rightist parties active on political platforms. Brazil's

electoral system is multiparty, with elections for the president, congress and local representatives held freely. Voters essentially vote in the electoral system, and most elections are majority-based. The federal system seeks to create a balance of powers between the central and state governments, but relations between the federal and state governments may sometimes be strained due to political and economic inequalities. Overall, Brazil's constitutional and political framework is dynamic, with a constant struggle to address socio-economic inequalities.

3.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTION

1. Analyse the main features and significance of the 1988 Constitution in Brazil's constitutional development.

2. Discuss the role of social and economic inequalities in Brazilian politics.

3. Evaluate the main features of Brazil's electoral system and its effectiveness.

4. Analyse the impact of Brazil's multiparty system on political stability and government formation.

5. Write a note on the problems of balance of power between the states and the central government in Brazil's federal system.

3.11 REFERENCES

• Alfred P. Montero (2019), 'Brazil', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 369-414.

• Frances Hagopian (2019), '*The Political Economy of Inequality*', in Barry Ames (eds.), Routledge Handbook of Brazilian Politics, Routledge: New York, pp. 375-390.

UNIT 4
RUSSIA

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

• understand Russia's political traditions and constitutional development.

• analyse Russia's society and economy: the nature of the state.

• discuss Russia's party and electoral system, and the federal system.

4.2   INTRODUCTION

Russia, officially called the Russian Federation, is the world's largest country by area, stretching from Eastern Europe to Northern Asia. It covers approximately 17.1 million square kilometres and is divided into 11 time zones. It borders 14 countries and stretches to the Arctic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and significant landmasses in Europe and Asia. The capital of Russia is Moscow, which is the centre of its political, economic, and cultural life. In terms of history, Russia has seen various phases of monarchy, communism, and democratic transition. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia became an independent federal republic, and today it is a presidential system, with President Vladimir Putin leading the most influential party. He has emphasized national unity, military strength, and increasing international influence.

Russia's political structure is based on federal and multiparty democracy, although the bulk of power is concentrated with the president. The parliament, called the Federal Assembly, has two houses—the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house). In recent years, Russia has faced many challenges domestically and internationally, such as tensions with Western countries, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In 2022, military action against Ukraine forced Russia to face international criticism and strict economic sanctions, affecting the country's economy and global diplomatic standing.

From a social perspective, Russia's population is diverse with more than 190 ethnic groups and languages. Russia's predominant religion is Russian Orthodox Christianity, but Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism are also practiced here. There is a government focus on education and healthcare, and the country has been a leader in scientific research and cultural contributions. Economically, Russia is an energy-rich country, a major producer and exporter of natural gas and oil. However, its economy has been facing challenges in recent years due to international sanctions and global instability.

Currently, Russia's political position is challenging on the global stage. Growing tensions with Western countries and the Ukraine conflict have complicated its diplomatic position. Nevertheless, Russia remains an influential force in global politics due to its military and energy resource potential. President Putin's leadership prioritizes national security and international influence, while the government's crackdown on internal critics and opposition parties is often a matter of controversy.

4.3 RUSSIA'S POLITICAL TRADITIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Russia's journey of constitutional development began amid the political and social turmoil of the 1990s after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in December 1991, Russia not only had to redefine its independence but also create a constitution that suited the new political, social and economic realities. Earlier, during the Soviet era, the 1977 Constitution was in force, which was based on communist ideology and lacked concepts such as multiparty democracy, individual freedom and market economy. The new Russia needed a constitution that would embrace these aspects and lead the country to a stable future.

In 1993, President Boris Yeltsin ordered the drafting of a new constitution. At that time, Russia was at the peak of political instability and power struggles between the parliament and the president. This struggle led to the dissolution of the Russian parliament and military intervention. Amidst these difficult circumstances, on 12 December 1993, the Russian people voted in favour of the new constitution, and it came into force on 25 December 1993. The constitution declares the Russian Federation to be a federal, democratic and multi-party republic.

The new constitution clearly separated three independent organs of power: the executive (led by the president and prime minister), the legislature (the bicameral Federal Assembly, consisting of the State Duma and the Federal

Council), and the judiciary (the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court). The president was given the title of head of state and extensive powers, making him a strong executive. The prime minister was made the head of government, appointed by the president with the consent of the parliament.

The Constitution guaranteed personal liberties and human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of religion, the right to equality, and provisions for social security. It recognizes local self-government and guarantees welfare services such as free health care and education. In addition, the Constitutional Court was established, which reviews the constitutionality of laws and orders issued by the President/Parliament.

The Russian Constitution is divided into two sections: the first section, which contains 137 articles, and the second section, which deals with transitional provisions. It is recognized as the supreme legal document, and it applies throughout the Russian Federation. No law or action can be against the Constitution.

Although the Constitution gave Russia a new direction, its implementation also faced challenges. The balance of power remained a matter of dispute due to the excessive powers of the presidency and the weak institutional framework of the multi-party system. Despite this, the Constitution is an important stage in the constitutional development of Russia, which defines the country's complex political structure and democratic values.

The following are the major features of the Constitution of Russia:

1. **Written and Rigid Constitution:** The Constitution of Russia is written and difficult to amend. It was adopted through a referendum on 12 December 1993 and came into force on 25 December 1993.

2. **Federal Structure:** Russia is a federal state, consisting of 85 federal units. These include republics, regions (krais), provinces (oblasts), federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg), and autonomous regions.

3. **Presidential System:** The president is the head of state in Russia. The president enjoys broad executive powers, and he/she appoints the head of government (prime minister).

4. **Division of Power:** According to the Constitution, the power of government is divided into three organs:

   - *Legislature***:** The Federal Assembly (State Duma and Federation Council).

   - *Executive***:** The president, prime minister, and their government.

   - *Judiciary***:** The Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and other courts.

5. **Constitutional Supremacy:** The Russian Constitution is the supreme legal document. No law or other legal action can go against the Constitution.

6. **Guarantee of Human and Civil Rights:** The Constitution provides citizens with fundamental rights and freedoms, such as:

   - Freedom of expression, religion, and thought.

   - Right to equality.

   - Access to social security, education, and healthcare.

7. **Secularism:** Russia is a secular state. There is a clear separation between state and religion in the Constitution, and no religion is given the status of a state religion.

8. **Multiparty Democracy:** Russia has a multiparty political system. Political parties can function freely, and elections are held through a democratic process.

9. **Local Self-Government:** The Constitution recognizes local self-governance and allows it to function independently.

10. **Social and Welfare Provisions:** The Constitution promotes social justice and guarantees welfare facilities such as pensions, free health services, and education for citizens.

11. **Judicial Review and Independent Judiciary:** The Constitutional Court and Supreme Court in Russia play the role of judicial review. The judiciary is independent and ensures the protection of the Constitution.

12. **Respect for International Law:** The Constitution respects international laws and treaties. If there is a conflict between national law and international treaty, the international treaty is given priority.

13. **Constitution Amendment Procedure:** A special procedure is prescribed for amending the Constitution. Certain specific articles, such as those relating to federal structure and human rights, are even more difficult to amend.

4.4 RUSSIAN SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

Historically, the socialist model during the Soviet era shaped society towards collectivism and centralization, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia attempted to re-establish itself in a rapidly changing global order. This transition involved a move towards capitalism, privatization and economic reforms. However, this process was unbalanced in many ways. The economy experienced a sharp decline in the 1990s, and privatization led to the concentration of most wealth in the hands of a selected few individuals, called "*oligarchs*". This led to deep economic inequality and class divisions in society.

Russia's economy today is largely based on the export of natural resources, especially oil and gas. This energy resource is the country's economic backbone, but it is also a major weakness, as fluctuations in global energy prices directly affect the country's economic condition. Russia's politics have a direct impact on society and the economy. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has developed

a system of "managed democracy", where centralization of power and political control is key. This model helps maintain political stability, but critics believe it has weakened democratic institutions and human rights. Foreign policy and Russia's relations with Western countries also affect society and the economy. Issues such as Western sanctions and the Ukraine conflict have put pressure on Russia's economy, leading to a decrease in foreign investment and a rise in inflation. Despite this, the government has taken steps to self-reliance and seek alternative markets. In terms of society, Russia embodies cultural diversity and national pride. Its people take pride in traditional values, Orthodox Christianity, and cultural heritage. However, urbanization and globalization have promoted modernity and progressive ideology in society. Lifestyles in large cities have become more Western and dynamic, while traditional lifestyles still persist in rural areas. The government has used historical events and cultural symbols to promote nationalist sentiment in society, which serves as an effective means of maintaining social cohesion in difficult times. Overall, Russia's society and economy are based on political power, cultural identity, and natural resources. However, progress toward economic diversity, social equality, and democratic reforms still remains a challenge for Russia.

4.5 PARTY SYSTEM

Russia's party system is complex and specific, shaped by its history, culture, and political system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia established a multiparty system, but this system gradually degenerated into a kind of "controlled multipartyism." Currently, Russia is primarily dominated by the United Russia party, which is an influential political force under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin. This party plays a central role in supporting government policies and maintaining stability. In addition, some other major parties, such as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), and Just Russia (Spravedlivaya Rossiya), are also active, but their influence is limited. Russia's party system makes it challenging

for opposition parties and independent candidates to participate in the electoral process, as resources and media are widely used by the government and the dominant party. The electoral process is often criticized, with questions being raised about its independence and fairness. Russia's political landscape shows a tendency towards centralisation, where the opposition enjoys limited freedom and is often pressured. Civil society and independent media can play an important role in bringing about change in the party system, but the existing structure hinders this. The role of the President in Russia's political system is extremely influential, and it is difficult for a party to be effective without his support. Overall, Russia's party system presents a structure that represents centralisation of power, limited scope of opposition, and controlled multipartyism, with a deep gap between the democratic ideal and reality.

The main features of Russia's party system are as follows:

1. **Controlled Multipartyism:** A multiparty system exists in Russia but it is in a controlled form. The electoral process and political activities are mainly conducted under the dominance of the ruling party, United Russia.

2. **Dominance of the Ruling Party:** The United Russia party plays a permanently dominant role in power. It has the strong support of President Vladimir Putin and the government.

3. **Direct and Indirect Control:** Political and administrative pressure is exerted on opposition parties and independent candidates. Opposition influence is limited through control over institutions such as the media, the election commission, and the judiciary.

4. **Weak Opposition:** Major opposition parties, such as the Communist Party (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), and Just Russia, are active but have limited independence and influence. Independent and progressive opposition is often banned or suppressed.

5. **Party Registration and Electoral Barriers:** Registration of new parties and participation in elections is difficult. Candidates face strict rules and vetting processes.

6. **Presidential Influence:** The role of the president in Russia's political system is highly influential. It is almost impossible for any party to be relevant at the national level without the president's support.

7. **Control over the Media:** State-controlled media are widely used for political propaganda and party activities. Independent media find limited space.

8. **Regional Influence:** United Russia dominates Russia even at the regional level. At the local level, the opposition faces even greater challenges.

9. **Irregularities in the Electoral Process:** Elections are often reported to be rigged, results manipulated, and pressure on voters. For this reason, Russia's electoral system has to face international criticism.

10. **Centralization of Power:** Russia's party system is inclined towards centralization of power, where policies and decisions revolve around the president and the ruling party.

Major Political Parties of Russia

1. **United Russia:** It is the ruling party of Russia which was established in 2001 and dominates the country's politics under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin. Its ideology includes nationalism, conservative values, and support for political stability. This party has extensive influence in parliament and regional governments. United Russia maintains its dominance with the help of the administrative system and the media, which makes it called the "party of power".

2. **Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF):** Established in 1993, this party is the main opposition party of Russia and keeps the legacy of the Soviet Union alive. Its ideology is based on Marxism-Leninism, and it supports socialist policies such as income equality and nationalization. Its supporters are mainly elderly citizens and people from rural areas. This party opposes capitalism and social inequality.

3. **Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR):** Established in 1991, this party was led for a long time by Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Its ideology is to promote right-wing nationalism and traditional Russian values. The party is known for its fiery and controversial rhetoric and has often been described as "*the Kremlin's controlled opposition*" because its policies are similar to those of the ruling party.

4. **A Just Russia:** Founded in 2006, the party supports socialist democracy and social justice. The party has emerged as an alternative between the ruling United Russia and the Communist Party. Although it sometimes supports the policies of the ruling party, it still presents itself as the opposition.

4.6 ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Russia's electoral system is a complex political structure which operates under the country's constitution, laws and political process. Although the system formally looks democratic, it has been accused of centralization of power, restrictions on the opposition and controlled process. The electoral system in Russia is based on presidential elections, parliamentary elections (State Duma and Federation Council), regional elections and local body elections. A thorough study of the processes, policies and political mechanisms in all these elections helps us understand the democratic and administrative system of Russia.

Structure of the Election System of Russia:

The foundation of the election system in Russia is based on the Constitution of 1993. This constitution declares Russia a federal republic, where the multiparty system is recognized. The election process can be divided into three levels:

1. Presidential Elections

2. Parliamentary Elections

3. Regional and Local Elections

These are explained in detail below.

Presidential Elections

The President of Russia is the most influential leader of the country, who leads the government, military and foreign policy. The President is directly elected by the voters.

• **Process of Election**

    o The presidential election is held every six years.

    o Any candidate who is above the age of 35 and has been living in Russia for the last 10 years can contest the presidential election.

    o A candidate has to get at least 50% of the votes to emerge victorious. If this does not happen, a second round of elections (runoff) is held.

• **Challenges and criticisms**

    o Questions are raised about free and fair elections.

    o Opposition candidates are often excluded from elections or face obstacles in campaigning.

    o State-controlled media and administrative machinery are used in favour of the ruling party candidate.

Parliamentary Elections

The parliament of Russia is divided into two houses:

1. State Duma: Lower House

2. Federation Council: Upper House

State Duma

• It consists of 450 members, elected through direct election.

• The election is based on a mixed system.

• 225 seats through the party list system (Proportional Representation).

• 225 seats through single constituencies (Single Member Constituency).

• **Electoral Barriers**

o A party has to get at least 5% of the vote to enter the State Duma.

o Smaller parties and independent candidates face challenging hurdles.

Federation Council

o It consists of two members from each federal region.

o Members are nominated by regional legislatures and executive authorities.

o This election system is not direct.

• **Regional and Local Elections**

o There are elections for regional governors, city councils and other local bodies.

o This election is done directly by voters at the local level.

o The ruling party "United Russia" also has a great dominance in regional and local elections.

Key Features of Russia's Electoral Processes:

1. Multi-Party System

• A multi-party system exists in Russia, but in reality "United Russia" dominates.

• Freedom for opposition parties and candidates is limited.

2. Control of the Election Commission

• The Central Election Commission (CEC) oversees the election process.

• This commission is often accused of working in favour of the government rather than impartially.

3. Propaganda and Use of Media

- The ruling party and the government make extensive use of state-controlled media.

- Independent media and opposition parties do not get equal platform for campaigning.

4. Electoral Hurdles

- Hurdles in registration of candidates and campaigning.

- Allegations of rigging in the electoral process.

5. Voting Process and Technology

- Voting takes place both manually and electronically.

- Modern technologies are used, but questions arise about their transparency.

Challenges of the Election System:

1. Lack of Freedom and Fairness

- Elections often lack fairness and freedom.

- Opposition parties have difficulty in actively participating in the electoral process.

2. Political Pressure

- Opposition candidates are pressurized or disqualified.

- Many times prominent leaders of opposition parties are arrested or cases are registered against them.

3. Rigging and Irregularities

- There are allegations of manipulation in the electoral process from voting to the results.

- International organizations have also raised questions on the transparency of Russia's electoral processes.

Russia's election system is formally democratic, but in reality, it reflects the tendency of centralization of power and suppression of the opposition. The

extensive influence of President Vladimir Putin and his party "United Russia" controls the electoral process. Large-scale reform is needed to increase the possibility of fair and free elections. If these reforms are implemented, it could not only improve Russia's democratic image but also give the country's citizens more confidence in the political process.

4.7   FEDERAL SYSTEM

The federal system of government in Russia, defined as a "federal republic", has distinctly centralized and authoritarian elements in its form and operation. The Russian Federation was formed under the 1993 Constitution, which defines it as a federal state consisting of 89 federal subjects (constituent units). These include 21 republics, 9 krais, 46 oblasts, 3 federal cities (Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Sevastopol), 1 autonomous oblast, and 4 autonomous okrugs. This federal structure theoretically reflects Russia's diverse population and geographical expanse, but in practice, it operates under deep centralization and extensive powers of the office of the President.

Russia's federal structure recognizes multiethnicity and multilingualism. Each republic enjoys a special autonomy and can maintain its own constitution, language, and cultural identity. The autonomy of federal units is limited in practice, as the centralized power structure and the system of governors subordinate to the president have hindered real decentralization of power at the local and regional levels.

After Vladimir Putin came to power in the early 2000s, Russia's federal system underwent significant changes. Under the principle of the "ruling vertical of power", extensive steps were taken to reduce the autonomy of regional leaders and federal units. Direct election of regional governors was abolished, and they were appointed by the president. Although the election of governors was later reestablished, it remained subject to strict control and approval procedures. The central government's extensive control over the budgets and administrative policies of federal subjects limits local decision-making.

Inequalities and contradictions are also evident in Russia's federal system. Larger and more resource-rich regions, such as Tatarstan and Chechnya, have entered into special agreements with the federal government, which give them greater autonomy than other federal units. On the other hand, economically weaker and remote regions are more dependent on the federal budget and have a relatively weak political voice. This inequality challenges the balance of power within the federal structure.

The role of laws and policies is important in federal and regional relations. The Constitution and federal laws define the boundaries and rights of federal units, but their interpretation and implementation are often biased in favour of the central government. The role of the judiciary in the functioning of the Russian federal system is also limited, as the Constitutional Court and other institutions are not completely free from the control and influence of the federal government.

Managing social and cultural diversity is a major challenge in Russia's federal system. Many federal units, such as Dagestan, Bashkortostan, and Tatarstan, are multiethnic and their cultural, religious, and linguistic peculiarities conflict with federal government policies. The conflict in Chechnya and other regional discontents highlight the weaknesses of the federal structure.

Internationally, Russia's federal system is considered crucial to its geographical and political stability. However, its centralized nature and the limited autonomy of federal units take it far from the ideal of true decentralization. This model of federal governance is subject to the centralized and extensive powers of the presidency, which prioritizes centralization of power rather than a balance of power at the federal and regional levels.

In short, Russia's federal governance system is a complex and dynamic structure that formally recognizes multilevel division of power but in practice operates under centralization and presidential leadership. Its structure and functioning reflect Russia's political, social, and geographic diversities as well as its authoritarian elements.

NOTES

4.8 SUMMARY

Thus, we can say that the constitutional development of Russia and the current form of its political system are linked to the Constitution of 1993, which came into force after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This Constitution declares Russia a federal semi-presidential republic, where the President is the most powerful position. The Constitution provides for separation of powers, giving separate powers to the executive, legislature, and judiciary. The President is the head of state, who plays a key role in foreign policy, national security, and emergency decisions. The legislature consists of two houses—the State Duma and the Federation Council—which participate in functions such as lawmaking and budget. The political system was significantly transformed by the leadership of President Vladimir Putin since 2000, in which centralization of power increased and the "United Russia" party became dominant. Although the Constitution talks about democratic principles and a federal structure, in practice there have been allegations of restrictions on political opposition and independent media. Currently, Russia's political system is a strongly centralized system, where the policies of the president and government shape Russia's identity domestically and internationally.

4.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the features of Russia's 1993 Constitution and its separation of powers system.

2. Compare Russia's presidential electoral system and parliamentary electoral system.

3. Discuss the development of the multiparty system in Russia and the role of the "United Russia" party.

4. Evaluate the challenges of maintaining a balance between Russia's federal system and regional autonomy.

4.10 REFERENCES

- Joan DeBardeleben (2019), 'The Russian Federation', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 555-606.

- Eric Shiraev (2021), *Russian Government and Politics*, 3rd Ed., Red Globe Press: London, pp. 22-67 (Political and Tradition Soviet State), pp. 71-88 (The Executive Branch), pp. 119-132 (Political Parties).

- Graeme Gill and James Young (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*, Routledge: Oxon, pp. 71-80 (The Russian Constitution), pp. 81-91 (Presidency), pp. 102-114 (The Duma's Electoral System), pp. 115-128 (Political Parties).

- Vicki L. Hesli (2007), *Governments and Politics in Russia and the Post-Soviet Region*, Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston.

UNIT 5
CHINA

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand China's political traditions and constitutional development.

- discuss China's society and economy.

- analyse the party and electoral system in China.

- understand the unitary system of government.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

China's political background is enriched by thousands of years of rich history and political changes. From the feudal era of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties in ancient times, to the establishment of the unified empire by the first emperor Qin Shi Huang in 221 BC, China has seen several periods of centralization and decentralization. Imperialist intervention and internal rebellions led to the collapse of the Ching Dynasty in the 20th century and the establishment of the Republic in 1911. However, political instability and civil wars led to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by the Communist Party of China (CPC) under the leadership of Mao Zedong.

Under Mao, China attempted to transform the social and economic structure through socialist policies. These included plans such as the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution", which aimed to promote rapid industrialization and collective farming.

China's current political system is based on one-party rule, where the Communist Party of China (CPC) dominates. In this system, political dissent is often suppressed, and the CPC assumes all major responsibilities for policymaking and governance. Currently, China under the leadership of Xi Jinping has focused on increasing global influence by strengthening its military, economic, and diplomatic power. Major projects such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" have been launched during Xi Jinping's reign, which seeks to expand China's sphere of influence through international trade and expansionist policy.

5.3 POLITICAL TRADITIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA

There have been many important events and changes in the constitutional development and political traditions of China. These changes have been helpful in shaping the modern political structure. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

under the leadership of Mao Tse Tung established the Republic of China in 1949. After this, a one-party rule and socialist state was formed in China. This was a historic event for China, because before this, the imperial rule of various empires was going on in China. But after 1949, the power in China completely came into the hands of the Communist Party.

The first constitution was implemented in China in 1954. This constitution reflected the establishment of a socialist republic in China and under it, a promise was made to give equal rights to all citizens in China. This constitution was in the direction of protecting public property, protecting the rights of workers, and promoting collectivization of agriculture and industry.

Mao's "*Great Leap Forward*" policy was implemented in 1958, which was aimed at reforming agriculture and industry with the goal of extreme centralization and greater production. However, this policy proved to be a failure and led to massive famine and economic crisis. As a result, Mao had to change his policy, and many changes were made in the Chinese Constitution.

After this, in 1978, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China took important steps towards economic reforms. He implemented the "Open Door Policy", under which China tried to connect with the global economy. During this time, private investment, foreign trade and market-based reforms were promoted in China. However, China did not make any major changes in the political system during this period and maintained one-party rule. From this time onwards, the Constitution of China started changing towards making it more flexible and in line with the global economy.

In 1982, a new constitution was implemented in China, which is known as the current constitution. Some important changes were made in this constitution, such as efforts were made towards increasing the rights of citizens, but it was also made clear that loyalty to the party and maintaining one-party rule is mandatory. Under this constitution, some rights were given to the citizens in China, such as limited rights of freedom and security measures to maintain the socialist system.

In the 1990s and 2000s, some more changes were made in the Chinese constitution, which were in the direction of economic reforms and connecting

with global markets. Under this, China adopted capitalist principles and moved towards a socialist market economy. During this time, China made significant progress in the field of industrialization, urbanization and technology. China's constitution was now more liberal, but no major changes were made in the political structure.

In the 21st century, especially under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the boundaries between party and state in China became even stricter. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China has further strengthened one-party rule. In 2018, an important amendment was made to the Chinese Constitution, which abolished the term limit for the president. This meant that Xi Jinping was allowed to serve as president indefinitely. In addition, he strengthened his grip on the key positions of the party and the state and established a centralized leadership model.

The Constitution has clearly established the communist vision of the state in China's political structure, with the key elements being socialism, collective power, and government authority.

The main features of the Constitution of China are as follows:

- The Constitution of China declares the country to be a socialist state. Its aim is to establish a society based on the fundamental principles of socialism.

- The leadership of the Communist Party in China is supreme. The Constitution recognizes it as indispensable for national governance and development.

- The constitution follows the principle of "democratic centralism", in which power is decentralized but the final decision-making power rests with the centre.

- Citizens are given rights such as education, employment, health, and equality. Along with this, it is their duty to be loyal to the country and follow the laws.

- The constitution gives priority to state and collective ownership. Private property is recognized in a limited scope.

- The Constitution of China recognizes the supremacy of law, but the law is followed under the leadership of the Communist Party.

- It is the supreme law of the country. All citizens and government institutions have to follow it.

- Amendments to the constitution can only be made through the National People's Congress (NPC), which is the highest legislative body of the country.

5.4 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF CHINESE POLITICS

The Chinese polity was established in 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded. This political system was moulded in accordance with socialist principles, which brought about major changes in the socio-economic structure of China. While studying the political system of China, the analysis of its socio-economic basis is extremely important, as it highlights the fundamental structures that determine the direction of governance.

Population and Natural Resources:

China is the largest country in the world in terms of population, and it also comes third in terms of area. Despite this, the availability of land is low, and only seven percent of the arable land is with China, while its population is 20 percent of the world. China used a huge population for agricultural labour, but it could not succeed in ensuring adequate production. It was realized in China that with the increase in population, there is also a need to increase production.

Moreover, the condition of natural resources was not that bad, but there was a lack of technology and capital investment required to extract these resources. Coal, water power, and other mineral resources were abundant in China, but to use them required capital, which China did not have at that time.

Socio-Economic Development Programmes:

In the early years of Chinese Communist rule, the main focus was political consolidation, economic reconstruction, and social transformation. Under land reform, land was distributed among the peasants and campaigns were also launched on social issues such as prostitution and opium addiction. This effort mobilized public support for social change.

China made five-year plans for development in the fields of industry and agriculture. The first five-year plan (1953-1957) emphasized the expansion of heavy industry, and an attempt was made to collectivize agriculture. Collective effort was encouraged with the formation of cooperatives among the peasants, although this process did not work properly for some time.

By the end of the 1950s, China made significant progress in the industrial sector. Technical assistance was received from the Soviet Union for the construction of heavy industry and China strengthened its production base.

Education Policy:

The aim of China's education policy was to provide such education to the citizens that would enable them to understand and support the goals of the state. In 1949, 80 percent of the population was illiterate, but today the literacy rate in China has increased significantly. The Chinese government took several steps to reform the language and script, so that people could be educated.

Marriage and Family:

Traditionally, the family was considered the basic unit of society in China, and the family was dominated by men. During Mao's reign, an attempt was made to change the traditional family structure, so that women could get equal rights as men. A new marriage law was implemented in 1950, which abolished social evils like child marriage and concubinage.

Maoist Development Path:

Mao Tse-tung's development path was based on communist ideology, but Mao adapted it to the special conditions of China. Mao believed that in an agricultural

country like China, the peasant class would be the main source of revolution, while Marxist theories gave priority to the working class. Mao believed that revolution could not be successful by merely increasing production; the role of politics was more important for this.

Initial Efforts:

When the communist government was established, Mao launched land reforms, reconstruction of industrial production and mass propaganda campaigns to garner public support. This period was a new beginning for China, in which many experiments were made with the aim of political consolidation, economic reform and social transformation. Though there were many ups and downs during these efforts, China finally established a strong and effective central government.

Thus, the socio-economic basis of China has been a major part of its political decisions and development plans, which established it as a communist nation.

Cultural Revolution of China (1966-1976):

The Cultural Revolution of China lasted from 1966 to 1976, and its aim was to bring about deep ideological changes in the Chinese society. This movement took place under the leadership of Mao Zedong, and it mainly aimed to destroy four old elements: old ideology, old culture, old habits and old traditions. The aim of this movement was to create a new socialist culture in the society, in which the concepts of communism could be established and the capitalist, bourgeois ideology could be got rid of.

Start of the Cultural Revolution:

Mao Zedong realized in 1965 that some high officials in China, such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, had deviated from the government policy and tried to push the country on the capitalist path. According to Mao, socialist ideology should be implemented not only from the economic point of view, but also from the cultural and social point of view. He believed that only the improvement in economic life cannot bring about a revolutionary change in thoughts.

Therefore, he called for a '*cultural revolution*', under which workers were instructed to go among the farmers and workers and spread socialist consciousness. He believed that change in thoughts should come from among the common people themselves, and not from the consciousness imposed by the party workers. Under this, Mao started a massive mass movement, in which millions of students, workers and others participated. This movement was for political, social and cultural change, which led to an atmosphere of chaos throughout China.

Movement of Red Guards:

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao formed the '*Red Guards*', which was mainly a group of students. The Red Guards spread the movement across China and targeted the 'enemy' elements within the party. They would catch and publicly humiliate those whom they thought were against the basic ideology of the party. During this time, a kind of chaos and violence spread in Chinese society. The working system in government offices and schools came to a complete standstill.

All universities were closed, and students were sent to agricultural areas, where they worked in the fields. Due to this, the education system of the country was severely affected and many intellectuals, teachers and leaders had to suffer. They were tortured and some were even killed.

Consequences of the Cultural Revolution:

The movement resulted in a massive damage to the social and economic order in China. There was chaos in business, education, and administrative institutions. In addition, many people lost their lives, and millions were persecuted. Senior leaders within the party who disagreed with Mao's views were either removed from power or publicly humiliated.

Although the movement was aimed at establishing socialist ideology, it became controversial over time even for Mao himself. Mao had started the movement, but later when the situation went out of control, he realized that the situation had to be corrected. After Mao's death in 1976, the Cultural Revolution was seen as a serious error in China.

Criticism of the Cultural Revolution:

There were many criticisms of the Cultural Revolution in China later on. It was considered a chaotic movement that caused great damage to the cultural and social structure of China. Many people said that many innocent people suffered, and their rights were violated while implementing Mao's ideas. The Cultural Revolution left deep mental and physical scars on society. Many intellectuals and leaders were persecuted, while even Mao's most staunch supporters joined the movement, creating an atmosphere of discontent and violence in society.

China's direction after Mao:

After Mao's death, his successors and other party leaders such as Deng Xiaoping acknowledged the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution and adopted a policy of reform and open market in China. In the 1980s, China moved towards economic reforms and implemented the 'Chinese version of socialism'. This paved the way for China to emerge as a global power.

In conclusion, China's Cultural Revolution is remembered as a deadly experiment that left a deep impact on society and the economy. The movement became a symbol of violence and brutality in the name of political dissent and ideology and proved to be a dark chapter in China's history.

5.5   PARTY SYSTEM

China's party system is based on a typical socialist framework, which operates under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP is the most dominant and ruling party in the country, implementing a one-party system of rule. However, China also has eight other political parties, called "democratic parties", but these fully accept the leadership and control of the CCP and do not participate in power independently. These parties play only a consultative role in the government and political system and are considered part of the "multiparty cooperation system". The main purpose of this system is to maintain national unity, promote socialist ideology and ensure stable governance.

Institutions such as the CCP's Central Committee and Politburo play a major role in policymaking, while the National People's Congress (NPC) serves as the country's supreme legislative body, although its job is usually to formally approve the CCP's decisions. China's party system is characterized by the absence of the traditional roles of an independent media, opposition, or democratic elections, which makes it different from Western democracies. Critics say the system lacks transparency and freedom of expression, while supporters believe the model has been instrumental in China's stability and economic progress.

The power structure within China's party system is highly centralized, where the supreme leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exercises complete control over the policies and administrative processes of the entire country. The party general secretary, who is usually the country's president, is the most powerful person in the system. The main objective of the CCP is to establish "socialism with Chinese characteristics", which is a combination of economic development, socialist ideology, and national unity. The party's policies extend to the provincial, district, and local levels, ensuring that government at every level is under the party's control.

An important aspect of China's party system is that bodies such as the National People's Congress (NPC) and the People's Political Consultative Conference of China (CPPCC) play only a consultative and consensus-giving role. The NPC is technically the country's highest legislative body, but it is commonly known for approving policies already set by the CCP. The CPPCC, on the other hand, represents various social, religious, and cultural organizations, but its role is limited to making suggestions and building consensus.

There are many aspects of criticism of China's party system. The most prominent criticism is that the system lacks opposition parties or independent institutions, which affects the transparency and accountability of governance. In addition, censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression have led to dissatisfaction with the party system. However, the Chinese government argues that their system has significantly contributed to political stability, rapid economic growth, and poverty alleviation.

Through this party system, China has effectively accomplished its developmental goals. But its limitations in matters of human rights, democratic reform, and individual liberties remain a matter of international concern. China's party system is a complex and unique model that stands out from other political systems in the world because of its socialist basis and strong centralization. There is no clear balance of power between the central and local administrations in China's party system, as the Party's control is paramount throughout the system. The Politburo and Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which comprise the country's most senior leaders, make all major policy and administrative decisions. This ensures that all institutions—whether legislative, executive, or judiciary—work in accordance with the CCP's objectives.

At the local level, the Party Secretary is the most important person, directing government officials and the administrative machinery. It is seen as an effective mechanism for maintaining coordination between central and local administration, but critics believe it limits the possibilities for decentralization of power and grassroots public participation.

Under China's model of "multilateral cooperation and political consultation", the role of the other eight political parties is merely symbolic. These parties, which usually represent academics, business groups, and other elites, conform to party directives rather than presenting independent views. This model gives the appearance of political diversity, but in reality, it is only a means of legitimizing the CCP's leadership.

Supporters of China's party system consider it an ideal for stability and continuity. They argue that this model has kept China economically strong, globally influential, and socially stable. Especially under the economic reform and opening-up policies after the 1980s, the CCP showed flexibility in its economic approach while maintaining tight political control.

However, there are also internal and external challenges to China's party system. Internally, the party faces concerns over corruption, regional inequalities, and demands for civil rights. Anti-corruption campaigns, such as those led by Xi

Jinping, attempt to address these issues, but they also partly tarnish the party's image.

Internationally, criticism over human rights violations and lack of democracy make China's party system controversial. Supporters of the Western democratic model consider it undemocratic and autocratic. Despite this, the Chinese government claims that their system has effectively achieved the goals of rapid growth, poverty alleviation, and global leadership.

In short, China's party system is the result of specific political, cultural, and historical conditions. The system is based on socialist principles, strict centralization, and the priority of economic development. However, as China increases its role on the international stage, the stability and effectiveness of its party system will continue to be tested over time.

5.6 ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The electoral system in China is a structure of one-party rule led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which operates in a hierarchical framework from the local to the national levels. Direct elections are held at the village and township levels, but indirect elections are adopted at the district, provincial and national levels. The National People's Congress (NPC), the country's highest legislative body, is formed through this process and confirms the election of the President and Prime Minister. The CCP exercises full control over candidate selection and the election process, while other political parties play only a consultative role. Critics believe the electoral process lacks transparency, competition and independence, but the government considers it a model for ensuring stability and economic progress. Suggestions for reform have emphasized increasing the participation of independent candidates and bringing transparency to the electoral process. The system is considered appropriate for China's specific social and political needs, although it's democratic legitimacy remains debated.

China's electoral system is a unique model that departs from traditional democratic standards and prioritizes centralized control of power by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). People's participation is ensured through direct elections at the village level, but indirect elections are adopted at the district, provincial, and national levels, where representatives are selected by lower-level delegates. The National People's Congress (NPC) is China's highest legislative body, but its function is mainly to formally approve the CCP's policies and decisions.

The CCP not only controls the candidate selection process, but also ensures that the entire electoral system works in accordance with the party's ideology and goals. As a result, voters face a lack of real choices. Although eight other political parties exist in China, they cannot freely compete in elections and are limited to supporting the CCP's leadership.

The Chinese government claims that their electoral system has significantly contributed to political stability, rapid economic growth, and poverty alleviation in the country. There are growing calls for reform of the electoral system, stressing the need to increase the participation of independent candidates, strengthen the role of civil society, and allow the media to monitor the electoral process. In the coming years, potential changes in the form of China's electoral system will depend on the extent to which the government embraces democratic reforms and transparency.

However, the provision of direct elections at the grassroots level indicates that China's electoral system has some flexibility. Direct participation of the people at the village and township level helps strengthen local governance and solve public problems. But at the district and national levels, the same people are dependent on indirectly elected representatives, whose selection is often perceived to lack transparency and fairness.

There are mixed views on the prospects for reform of China's political system. Some scholars believe that the current system is appropriate for China's cultural and historical conditions and does not require major changes. On the other hand, many critics emphasize that the inclusion of competition, freedom, and transparency in the political process could further strengthen the country's

global position. If China decides to reform its electoral system in the future, it must first ensure the participation of independent candidates. In addition, the media and civil society must be given the right to monitor the election process, so as to promote trust and transparency in the electoral process.

Ultimately, the future of China's electoral system will depend on whether the CCP is willing to pursue democratic reforms and whether it is willing to develop its system in line with global standards. Efforts to make the electoral system more inclusive and transparent will not only strengthen the rights of China's citizens but also improve its image internationally.

5.7   UNITARY STATE

China is a unitary state, which means that there is centralization of political power, and provincial or local governments enjoy limited autonomy. Its entire structure is based on the Chinese Constitution and the central role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Under the unitary state, all administrative units of the country are directly under the control of the central government. This system of China is inspired by historical and cultural traditions. A centralized system of governance has been prevalent in China since ancient times, which was further strengthened by the imperialist era and later the Communist Revolution. The purpose of this system is to maintain stability and unity throughout the country. Policies and plans start from the central government and are implemented throughout the country, making it possible to implement development plans quickly.

The National People's Congress (NPC) holds a prominent place in the unitary state of China, which is the highest legislative body of the country. Its approximately 2977 members are elected from various provinces, regions and military units. The main functions of the NPC are to make laws, amend the constitution, and appoint the President, Vice President, Prime Minister and other high officials. This institution reviews and approves the budget and plans of the central government. However, the autonomy of the NPC is limited, and it works under the instructions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP

has complete control over China's politics and administration, which keeps the country's policies centralized. This model is helpful in speeding up decision making and maintaining the pace of development.

China's unitary state has been effective in ensuring development and stability, but it also has some negative sides. This system does not adequately address the autonomy and diverse needs of local administration. Cultural tensions and demands for independence in regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang highlight the limitations of this system. The CCP's authoritarian structure limits democratic institutions such as an independent judiciary, press and civil rights, raising questions about human rights and personal freedom.

Still, China has attempted to strike a balance between centralization and decentralization in its unitary state. Under economic reforms, provinces have been given more economic freedom, allowing them to develop according to their needs. But the CCP retains a tight grip on political matters. Thus, China's unitary state is not only a symbol of its administrative system, but also a reflection of its social, cultural and political ideology. This model is successful in maintaining national unity and stability, but the ongoing debate over democratic values and human rights makes it a complex and unique system.

5.8 SUMMARY

China's politics is based on an authoritarian unitary state with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in absolute control. China's constitution establishes the central role of the CCP and the centralization of power. Elections in the political system are limited to the local level only, while national and provincial representatives are elected under the instructions of the CCP. The party system is dominated by the CCP, and other parties act only as formal allies.

After the economic reforms of 1978, China achieved rapid economic growth, but this also increased regional disparities and social inequalities. Under the unitary state system, all administrative units are subordinate to the central

government. However, autonomous regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang are given symbolic autonomy. This system helps China maintain stability and development, but it also faces criticism for restricting human rights and freedoms.

5.9   SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. What are the main provisions of fundamental rights and duties given to citizens in the Constitution of China?

2. How is the election process conducted in China, and how does it differ from the electoral systems of other democratic countries?

3. What role does the Communist Party of China play in governance in China, and what is the role of other political parties?

4. What impact do major policies related to social classes and public welfare have on society in China?

5.10   REFERENCES

• William A. Joseph (2019), 'China', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 653-700.

• Michael Dillon (2009), *Contemporary China: An Introduction*, Routledge: New York, pp. 10 20, pp. 137-160.

• Elizabeth Freund Larus (2012), *Politics and Society in Contemporary China*, Lynne Rienner Publisher: London, pp. 81-114.

• P. W. Preston (eds.) (2003). *Contemporary China: The Dynamics of Change at the Start of New Millennium*, Routledge Curzon: London.

UNIT 6
SOUTH AFRICA

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

6.1   LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the constitutional development of South Africa.

- discuss the nature of the state, society and economy.

- analyse the party system, electoral system of South Africa.

- understand the federal system of governance of South Africa.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

South Africa, located at the southern tip of Africa, is a symbol of diversity and conflict that has encompassed many important chapters in human history. Surrounded by natural boundaries such as the Orange River in the northwest and the Limpopo River in the east, the nation's geographical location gives it a unique position. The confluence of people of African, Asian and European descent makes it Africa's most multiethnic nation, with 11 official languages and a population of over 49 million underlining the diversity. The 2010 racial census data describe its social composition as 79.4% black, 9.2% white, 8.8% coloured, and 2.6% Indian or Asian. The country is known not only for its cultural pluralism but also as Africa's largest economy and centre of industrialization. However, its past has been filled with the harsh realities of colonialism and racial discrimination. British imperialism sought to unify the region, created by the merger of British colonies in 1910, but laid the foundation for division by excluding blacks from political rights. This division eventually led to the inhumane system of apartheid, which continued from 1948 to 1994. However, in 1994, a wave of democratic change and international pressure ushered in a new constitutional democracy under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, which laid new foundations of equality, freedom, and human dignity.

6.3 CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

The history of South Africa's constitutional development marks a complex journey towards struggle, change and democracy. This history can be divided into three major phases – the early period of independence from 1909 to 1910, the depth of apartheid and division from 1910 to 1990, and the transition towards democracy and equality after 1990. This development shaped the story of change from a white-dominated regime to an inclusive and democratic nation. It was not

just a legal process, but it was the result of a long struggle for human dignity, freedom and equality.

Independence and Early Constitutional Development (1909-1934):

South Africa's constitutional history began in 1909, when the British Parliament passed the South Africa Act. This Act established the Union of South Africa, uniting the Cape Colony, the Orange Free State, Natal and the Transvaal. The Act was a symbol of independence, but its limitations were clear. The British Crown remained South Africa's formal head of state, and the white minority continued to dominate political power. The black population was excluded from the political process, reflecting the depth of division and inequality.

In 1931, the enactment of the Statute of Westminster gave greater autonomy to the British dominions. Following this, the South African Parliament passed the Status of the Union Act of 1934, which ensured that any act of the British Parliament would come into force only if the South African Parliament endorsed it. This move was supposed to increase South Africa's autonomy, but black citizens still remained disadvantaged in politics and governance.

Apartheid Era and Discriminatory Constitution (1961-1983):

In the 1960s, a new chapter in South Africa's constitutional history began. In 1960, white voters voted to make South Africa a republic in a referendum. As a result, a new constitution came into effect in 1961, breaking all ties with the British Empire. This constitution made the President the head of state, who previously acted through the British Crown and the Governor General.

However, the 1961 constitution perpetuated the dominance of the white minority over political life. Black citizens were denied the right to vote, and their political participation was restricted to homelands called *Bantustans*. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 further strengthened this system. In the same period, between 1964 and 1968, some reforms were made that allowed limited political participation to the Coloured and Indian communities.

In 1983, a new constitution was enacted, known as the Constitution Act of the Republic of South Africa of 1983. It established a tricameral parliament,

with separate representative assemblies for whites, coloured people, and Asians. Although the reform claimed political inclusiveness, black citizens were completely excluded. This tricameral system further increased racial inequality, as the white assembly-maintained dominance in political decision-making.

Democratic Transition (1990-1996):

The 1990s proved to be a turning point in South Africa's history. International pressure, economic sanctions, and internal instability destabilized the system of apartheid. President F.W. de Klerk began the process of ending apartheid in 1990. He released Nelson Mandela from prison and lifted the ban on several banned political organizations, including the African National Congress (ANC).

In 1993, an interim constitution was promulgated, paving the way for a transition to democracy. This constitution provided for a government of national unity and a five-year transition. Under this constitution, the first multiracial elections were held in May 1994, in which Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first non-white president.

1996 Constitution – Symbol of Equality and Democracy:

In 1996, South Africa adopted its current Constitution, which is considered a masterpiece of post-conflict constitutional construction. The Constitution is based on the principles of racial, gender, and social equality. It abolished white supremacy and discriminatory policies.

The 1996 Constitution declares South Africa to be a democratic republic, where all citizens are equal before the law. It appoints the President as the head of state and government. It ensures a clear division of power between the parliament, judiciary, and executive.

Developments After 1996:

The 1996 Constitution has been amended 16 times so far, but it remains the basic law of the country even today. These amendments have made it more relevant to changing times and social needs. The Constitution is a source of inspiration for democracy and human rights not only in South Africa, but all over the world.

Key Features of the Constitution of South Africa:

The Constitution of South Africa came into force in 1996 and is considered one of the most progressive and democratic constitutions in the world. This constitution not only symbolizes the new beginning of the country, but it also reflects the highest values of human rights, freedom and equality. The key features of the Constitution of South Africa are described as follows:

1. **Supremacy and Constitutionalism:** The Constitution of South Africa is the supreme law of the country. No law, policy or action of the government can be contrary to the Constitution. If any law or action violates the provisions of the Constitution, it can be declared unconstitutional.

2. **Republic and Democracy:** South Africa is a democratic republic, where the government is elected by the people. Pluralism and participation have been given importance in this constitution.

3. **Bill of Rights:** The most important part of the Constitution is its "Bill of Rights", which ensures the fundamental rights of the citizens. These include the right to life, equality, freedom, expression, education and rights related to health. This section also resolves to eliminate racism and discrimination.

4. **Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination:** The Constitution of South Africa provides the right to equality to all citizens. Discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, language, or any other basis is prohibited. This is a revolutionary step especially against the country's former apartheid policy.

5. **Federal Structure:** The country has three levels of government: national, provincial and local. Each level has its own rights and responsibilities.

6. **Independent Judiciary:** The judiciary of South Africa is independent and impartial. The Constitutional Court is the highest authority to interpret and apply the Constitution. This court plays an important role in protecting the rights of citizens.

7. **Linguistic and Cultural Rights:** The Constitution of South Africa recognizes 11 official languages and talks about the protection and promotion of all cultural communities. This provision is an example of respecting the diversity of the country.

8. **Social and Economic Rights:** The Constitution also gives importance to social and economic rights. This includes the right to housing, health care, food, water and education. These rights have been provided with the aim of improving the standard of living of citizens.

6.4 SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICS

The social structure of South Africa represents racial and cultural diversity. The country's population is mainly divided into four major groups: black Africans, whites, coloureds, and Asians. Racial classification has played a profound role in political and social policy making.

(i) **Racial Inequality and Impact of Apartheid:** The policy of apartheid (1948-1994) created deep inequality among racial groups. Black communities were deprived of basic rights such as education, health, and employment. Although political equality was established after the establishment of the democratic system in 1994, racial inequality still affects social life and economic opportunities.

(ii) **Education and Social Mobility:** The impact of racial and economic divisions is still seen in the field of education. Access to high-quality education is easy for urban white and coloured communities, while the black rural population receives low-quality education. This results in hindering social and economic mobility.

(iii) **Social Integration and Identity:** Social integration is an important issue in the country's politics. Different ethnic and cultural groups strive to maintain

their own identities as well as contribute to the overall national identity. Parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) have promoted a message of multiracial inclusion, but social inequality and racial tensions continue to influence politics.

6.5 ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Economic issues have always played a central role in South African politics. The economic structure established during apartheid marginalised the black majority. After 1994, economic restructuring and development policies were implemented, but deep economic divisions remain.

(i) **Economic Inequality and Poverty:** South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The distribution of income and wealth is highly unequal. White communities in urban areas prosper economically, while rural and black-majority areas suffer from poverty and unemployment.

(ii) **Unemployment and Deindustrialisation:** Unemployment is one of South Africa's major economic challenges. The problem is more severe among black youth. During apartheid, the economy, which was based on primary sectors such as mining and agriculture, confined black workers to low-paid jobs. Attempts were made at industrialisation and liberalisation in the democratic era, but these could not reduce unemployment effectively.

(iii) **Land Reform and Redistribution of Property:** Land reform is a sensitive issue in South African politics. In the apartheid era, the majority of land was held by the white minority. After 1994, land reform programmes were initiated, but their results were slow and limited. Ensuring access to land for black communities is important for economic justice and social stability.

(iv) **Economic Empowerment Policies:** Policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) were implemented with the aim of reducing racial economic inequality. These policies aim to empower black entrepreneurs

and create economic opportunities for them. However, these programmes have also been criticised, as their benefits mainly accrue to the politically connected.

Challenges and the Way Forward:

The social and economic dimensions of South Africa's politics are crucial to its democratic journey. However, some major challenges still persist:

- **Economic Inequality:** Uneven distribution of income and wealth increases social and political tensions.

- **Education and Skills Development:** Without quality education and skills development, social and economic mobility remains limited.

- **Corruption and Administrative Inefficiency:** Corruption has weakened the credibility of the political system and government institutions.

- **Land and Resource Distribution:** Equitable distribution of land and natural resources is essential for social justice.

South Africa needs to reform its social and economic policies for an inclusive and sustainable development. Political leadership must move forward with mass participation, transparency, and accountability to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens of the country.

6.6 PARTY SYSTEM

The party system of South Africa is a multi-party system, in which political parties have to represent the diverse ethnic, social and economic composition of the country. This system evolved after the restoration of democracy and the end of apartheid.

1. **Historical Perspective of the Party System:** The history of South Africa's party system begins with the apartheid era, when only the white minority

had political representation. After the formation of the South African Union in 1910, white-dominated parties such as the National Party and the United Party dominated politics.

Apartheid policies were formally implemented after the National Party came to power in 1948, completely excluding the non-white population from the political process. In the 1960s and 1970s, parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) opposed apartheid.

The country's party system underwent a major change after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 and the lifting of the ban on the African National Congress. The first multiracial elections in 1994 ushered in a new democratic political system.

2. **Structure of the Current Party System:** South Africa's political system is a multiparty democracy, with parties competing at the national and provincial levels. Representation in parliament is determined through a system of proportional representation, which also provides opportunities for smaller parties.

   (i) **African National Congress (ANC):** Since 1994, the ANC has been South Africa's dominant political party. It is seen as a symbol of the struggle against apartheid. The ANC was led by leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, and Jacob Zuma. The party's ideology is based on inclusive democracy, social justice, and economic empowerment. However, in recent years, corruption and governance issues have affected its popularity.

   (ii) **Democratic Alliance (DA):** The Democratic Alliance (DA) is the main opposition party, with a base among the urban middle class and the white minority. The party advocates liberal democracy and economic reform. Although it is often criticised as a "white man's party", it is gradually making efforts to embrace racial diversity.

(iii) Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF): Founded by Julius Malema in 2013, the EFF is a left-wing party that advocates aggressive policies for land reform, economic redistribution, and social justice. The party is popular among the youth and the poor.

(iv) Other Parties:

- **Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP):** It mainly represents the Zulu ethnic group and is dominant in the KwaZulu-Natal province.

- **United Democratic Movement (UDM):** It operates on a small scale and has limited appeal.

- **Freedom Front Plus (FF+):** This party represents the interests of the white minority, particularly the Afrikaner community.

3. Features of the Party System:

(i) Multiparty Competition: There are many parties active in South Africa's party system, but in practice it is a dominant party system, dominated by the ANC.

(ii) Ethnic and Regional Representation: Political parties often represent ethnic and regional interests. For example, the IFP is popular among the Zulu community and the DA among urban whites.

(iii) Proportional Representation System: South Africa's proportional representation system allocates parties the number of seats in parliament based on their vote percentage. This system also gives smaller parties a chance to be represented in parliament.

(iv) Participation of Youth and Women: Political parties promote the participation of youth and women. Parties like the ANC and the EFF emphasize social inclusion.

6.7 ELECTORAL SYSTEM

South Africa's electoral system is based on an inclusive and proportional representation system, which was implemented during the establishment of democratic governance after the end of apartheid in 1994. The system was developed keeping in mind the country's diverse ethnic, social and cultural composition. It grants equal voting rights to all adult citizens, and the system ensures broad representation at all levels. South Africa's electoral system can be understood in terms of elections to its parliament, provincial assemblies, and local governments.

1. **National Assembly Elections:** South Africa's national parliament is bicameral, consisting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). Elections to the National Assembly are based on a proportional representation system, in which voters vote for parties at the national and provincial levels.

   - *Proportional Representation System*: Under this system, parties are allocated seats based on their total vote percentage. For example, if a party receives 10% of the total votes, it will get 40 out of 400 seats in parliament.

   - *Voting Process*: Voters vote for the party, not individual candidates. Parties release their priority lists before the election, based on which elected representatives are selected.

   - *Inclusiveness and Representation*: The system allows even smaller parties to gain representation in Parliament, thereby giving space to a broader range of ideologies and interests.

2. **Elections to Provincial Assemblies:** South Africa has nine provinces, and each province has its own assembly. The same proportional representation system applies at the provincial level as well.

- *Provincial Voting*: Voters vote at the national and provincial levels at the same time.

- *Selection of Premier*: Provincial assemblies elect the premier of the province, who is the head of that province.

- *Focus on Local Issues*: Provincial elections give more priority to local issues and regional politics, which may differ from national-level politics.

3. **Elections to Local Governments:** Local government elections use a mixed system, combining proportional representation and the majority system.

Mixed System:

- Half of the representatives are elected through a ward-based majority system, where the candidate with the most votes is elected.

- The remaining half of the representatives are elected on the basis of proportional representation.

Focus on Local Issues:

- These elections focus on issues such as service delivery, town planning, and infrastructure at the local level.

4. **Election Commission and Management:** The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa is responsible for the management and conduct of elections.

Role of Independent Electoral Commission (IEC):

- Conducting voter registration and awareness campaigns.

- Monitoring the election process and ensuring fairness.

- Resolving disputes and complaints.

Transparency and Independence:

- The independence and transparency of the IEC have ensured the legitimacy and credibility of South Africa's elections.

5. **Features and Benefits of the Electoral System**

- *Social Inclusion*: The proportional representation system has given all sections of society, especially smaller parties and disadvantaged communities, an opportunity to participate in the political process.

- *Political Stability*: This system helps maintain political stability despite diversity because it gives place to all ideologies in Parliament.

- *Symbol of Peace and Democracy*: The first multi-racial elections of 1994 paved the way for peaceful democratic change, earning international praise for the electoral system.

6. **Challenges of the Electoral System**

- *Distance between Candidate and Voter*: The direct link between voters and elected representatives is weak due to the party-based voting system.

- *Dominance of Party Leadership*: Since representatives are elected on the basis of party lists, the party leadership has a great influence on the selection process.

- *Influence of Small Parties*: Due to the proportional system, even small parties get a place in the parliament, which can sometimes create complications in government formation and decision-making process.

- *Corruption and Administrative Inefficiency*: There are complaints of administrative inefficiency and corruption in the election process at the local and provincial levels.

7. **Efforts to Reform the Electoral System:** Reforms are being discussed to make the electoral system in South Africa more effective and accountable.

- *Direct Representation*: Reforms have been proposed to establish a direct link between voters and representatives.

- *Performance based System*: Performance-based evaluation has been recommended to ensure accountability of elected representatives.

• *Increasing Transparency*: There are efforts to bring more transparency to electoral funding and candidate selection processes.

6.8   FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

South Africa's federal system of governance accommodates the country's historical and political diversity while also advancing the democratic process and social justice. Following the end of apartheid and the restoration of democracy in 1994, South Africa established a unified, inclusive, and democratic constitution, which forms the foundation of the federal system of governance. South Africa's constitutional arrangement aims to provide equal rights and opportunities to the various racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic communities, while ensuring that the interests of all provinces and citizens are protected as a unified nation. The federal system of governance in South Africa can be seen as maintaining a balance of power between the constitution, federal bodies, and provincial governments, and there is a clear division of powers and responsibilities between the central government and the provincial governments.

South Africa's Constitution, which was ratified in 1996, is the basic framework and provides direction for the country's system of governance. The Constitution contains features of a federal government, but South Africa cannot be viewed as a fully traditional federal state because it is a "decentralized" system. The central government has major powers at the national level, while provincial governments have the authority to make decisions on specific regional issues. Provincial governments have a limited domain, and they have authority over issues that apply specifically to their region.

The major organs of the central government include the President, the Cabinet, and the National Parliament (which consists of two houses—the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces). The National Council of Provinces serves as an important federal body, representing provincial interests and ensuring provincial influence in central policymaking. Members of this body

are elected from each province, and it serves to convey the voice of the provincial governments to the central government.

The provincial governments have powers mentioned in the Constitution, including important issues such as education, health, transportation, land development, and local governance. However, the central government has supreme authority on certain issues, such as national security, foreign affairs, and other legal issues. The power of the central government exceeds that of the provincial governments, but the provinces have the right to autonomy and self-governance on their regional issues. In addition, the Constitution has made the judiciary independent and powerful to encourage federal governance, so that judicial review can take place in case of any constitutional dispute or abuse of power.

In South Africa's federal system, provincial governments are given powers and resources to increase their importance. Each province has its own legislature that can make laws and control its regional administration. In addition, provincial governments have the right to decide on their education policy, health policy, and other regional matters. Under federal governance, each province gets the opportunity to formulate policy according to its special needs, but they have to work within the basic guidelines set by the central government.

Many safeguards have been made in the constitution to maintain the balance of power in South Africa's federal system. If any dispute arises between the central government and the provincial governments, the constitution provides judicial remedies to resolve this dispute. For this, the Constitutional Court has been formed, which plays a major role in resolving constitutional disputes. In addition, the independent existence of the judiciary ensures that there is no abuse of power at any level.

Although South Africa's federal system has promoted democratic governance, it also has many challenges. Such as unequal distribution of resources, regional inequalities between provincial governments, and the issue of central government control. These problems are resolved from time to time,

but it is an ongoing process. Despite this, South Africa's federal system of governance has tried to create a balance between the country's various social and ethnic groups, making it possible to build a democratic and inclusive society.

The system aims to provide equal opportunities to all sections of society, and ensure that a reciprocal relationship is maintained between the provincial and central governments. At the same time, this system promotes political stability and social justice, which helps to accept and accommodate the country's diversity. Ultimately, South Africa's federal system has strengthened democracy, and it respects the country's political, social and cultural diversity.

6.9   SUMMARY

To summarise, South Africa's constitutional development is a profound historical process that has traversed the struggles of colonialism, apartheid and democracy to become a modern multiracial democracy. The end of apartheid in 1994 and the first democratic elections led by Nelson Mandela led to the creation of a new constitution. This constitution is considered one of the most progressive and inclusive in the world, with extensive provisions for civil rights, freedom, equality, and social justice. South Africa is diverse in nature, home to a variety of ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities. Socially and economically, the country faces deep inequalities; while there has been progress in some areas, problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality persist. The country's electoral system is based on proportional representation, which allows even smaller parties to be represented in parliament. The political landscape is dominated by a political party system, with the African National Congress (ANC) being the dominant party, but in recent years opposition parties such as the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters have also gained ground. Built on the foundations of constitutionalism, inclusiveness, and democratic values, South Africa is still struggling to heal its historical wounds and bring about socio-economic reforms.

6.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Analyse the process of constitutional development in South Africa. How is this process linked to the end of apartheid and the establishment of democracy?

2. Why is the Constitution of South Africa considered the "most progressive constitution in the world"? Highlight its major principles and features.

3. Explain the historical causes of social and economic inequalities in South Africa.

4. Explain the electoral system in South Africa. Mention the advantages and limitations of the proportional representation system.

5. Discuss the party system in South Africa. What impact has the role of the African National Congress (ANC) and the rise of opposition parties had on the political landscape?

6.11 REFERENCES

• Tom Lodge (2019), 'South Africa', in Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger and William A. Joseph (eds.), *Introduction to Comparative Politics: Political Challenge and Changing Agendas*, 8th Ed., Cengage Learning: Boston, MA, pp. 462-508.

• Anthony Butler (2004), *Contemporary South Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, pp. 6-30.

UNIT 7
ISRAEL

Dr. Shivu Kumar
Assistant Professor
School of Open Learning
University of Delhi

STRUCTURE

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the constitutional development of Israel.

- discuss the nature, society and economy of the state of Israel.

- analyse the party, election system of Israel.

- understand the Unitary Government.

7.2   INTRODUCTION

The historical and political system of Israel has developed within the context of its unique geographical, cultural, and social circumstances. The Jewish people established Israel as an independent state in 1948. Israel was established with international support, following the Holocaust and atrocities against the Jewish community during World War I and World War II. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations approved the partition plan of Palestine. This plan proposed the creation of a Jewish and an Arab state. However, the plan was rejected by the Arab side. This began a long series of conflicts and wars between Israel and its neighbouring Arab countries that continues to this day.

Issues of security, religion, and national identity play a central role in Israeli politics. The country seeks to establish democratic principles while maintaining its identity as a Jewish state. Its social fabric is diverse, including Jews, Muslims, Christians, and other communities. The Israel-Palestine conflict and relations with Arab countries continue to shape its politics. Issues of maintaining a balance between Judaism and secularism are also deeply intertwined in Israel.

Israel is a nation that has faced immense security challenges on the one hand and has excelled in technological innovation, education, and economic progress on the other. Israel's development is a testament to its historical heritage, political ideals, and the struggle and adjustment of a multicultural society.

7.3   CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISRAEL

After its establishment, Israel began the process of adopting a written constitution, but it was not successful in doing so. Subsequently, Israel adopted a framework of "Basic Laws". It has a semi-constitutional status. The lack of a constitution reflects the complexities related to Israel's initial politics and social structure.

Establishing a balance between Jewish and democratic values has been the main objective of Israel's constitutional development. The Basic Laws do not have the status of a full constitution, but an attempt has been made to gradually give it constitutional recognition. A Constituent Assembly was formed in 1949 to draft the constitution. In this assembly, sharp differences emerged between religious and secular groups. Its religious group demanded priority for Jewish traditions and laws in the constitution, while its secular group wanted to create a constitution based on modern democratic principles. As a result of the deadlock between the two groups, Israel developed a gradual framework based on the Basic Laws instead of a constitution. These Basic Laws mainly included provisions related to the parliament (Knesset), government, judiciary, president, and civil rights.

An important aspect of Israel's constitutional development is that these Basic Laws provided stability to Israel's system of governance, especially parliamentary democracy. The first Basic Law was passed in Israel's parliament (Knesset) in 1958. This law defined the composition, tenure, and functioning of the parliament. After this, the second important law was passed in 1968, the Basic Law related to the judiciary. The independence of the judiciary and the role of judicial review were established by this law. Two important Basic Laws, "*Human Dignity and Liberty*" and "*Freedom of Occupation*", were passed in 1992. These laws provided constitutional protection to civil rights and established Israel as a progressive democracy. Israel's Supreme Court interpreted these laws, giving them a constitutional basis and used them to protect fundamental rights.

The role of the judiciary has also been important in Israel's constitutional development. Israel's Supreme Court, called the "Baghdats", has ensured the interpretation and implementation of constitutional laws through a number of landmark decisions. Israel's constitutional development is also a reflection of social and political changes. Conflicts between religious and secular groups, inequality between Jewish and Arab citizens, and regional security challenges have influenced constitutional development. The constitutional framework has attempted to address these complexities and promote inclusiveness.

Israel still faces many constitutional challenges, including the relationship between religion and state, protection of minority rights, and political polarization. The process of elevating the Basic Laws to a full constitution is slow and requires broad social consensus. Israel's constitutional development can be seen as a symbol of its diversity and complexity. It is a continuous effort to strike a balance between Jewish identity and democratic values. Through the Basic Laws, Israel has established a strong constitutional framework, but there are still many obstacles to converting it into a full constitution.

The following are the key features of the Israeli Constitution:

1. Israel has no formal, written constitution. Instead, documents called "Basic Laws" perform constitutional functions.

2. Israel's constitutional structure is based on these Basic Laws, which are passed by the parliament (Knesset) and function as the constitution.

3. Israel is a parliamentary democracy, with universal suffrage and equal rights for all citizens.

4. Israel is defined as a "Jewish and democratic state", in which Jewish culture and traditions are given prominence.

5. The Supreme Court has the power to review the constitutional validity of laws and government actions.

6. Minorities in Israel have equal civil rights, but their status is a sensitive issue.

7. Jewish religious law (halakha) applies to personal matters, while secularism is also respected.

8. Security is considered one of the state's priorities, and the military has significant influence over the constitutional order.

9. Coalition governments are common in Israel's political system, which influences parliament and law-making.

7.4 NATURE OF ISRAEL

The political nature of Israel is multifaceted, which places it in an important position on the global stage. Established in 1948, it is a democratic and Jewish majority state. The foundation of its political structure is based on the parliament (Knesset) and the multiparty system. The Knesset consists of 120 members, who are elected on the basis of proportional representation. Under this system, any party that crosses the minimum vote threshold can gain representation in the Knesset. This system often requires coalitions to form a government in Israel, making political stability a challenge.

A major aspect of Israel's political nature is that it is a Jewish state. It recognizes itself internationally as a nation for the Jewish people. This fact is also reflected in its laws and policies. For example, the "Law of Return" grants automatic citizenship rights to Jews. This nature has often caused controversy, especially with regard to Arab Israeli citizens, who make up a very small percentage of Israel's population. They demand equal rights, but sometimes find themselves struggling to balance Jewish identity and democratic values.

The issue of security is extremely important in Israel. The country has faced conflicts and wars since its founding, especially with its neighbouring Arab countries and the Palestinian issue. Israel's military power and strategic decisions are central to its national security policy. The Israel-Palestine conflict is a dimension of its politics that has had profound effects domestically and internationally. The conflict has not only led to political polarization but has also influenced the agenda of Israel's various political parties.

Another important aspect of Israeli politics is the tension between religious and secular groups. There are frequent social and political disputes between religious Jews and secular citizens in Israel. Religious parties, such as Shas and United Torah Judaism, play important roles in the Knesset and are decisive in the formation of the government. Internationally, Israel's political nature is

reflected in its foreign policy and diplomatic relations. Its close partnership with the US, controversial position in the United Nations, and relations with Arab countries are major dimensions of its foreign policy. In recent years, Israel has normalized relations with some Arab countries through the Abraham Accords, which is considered its diplomatic achievement.

Thus, Israel is a state with a mixed political nature, including democracy, Jewish identity, security issues, social divisions, and international relations. This nature not only affects its internal politics, but also makes it an important player in global politics.

7.5   ISRAELI SOCIAL SYSTEM

Israeli society is a unique blend of diversity, multiculturalism and dynamism. It is a Jewish state as well as a democratic and pluralistic society, where various ethnic, religious and cultural groups coexist. Jews form the majority of its population. But it is also culturally divided. Ashkenazi Jews, who are of European origin, have traditionally been dominant in social and political life. On the other hand, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, who are natives of North Africa and the Middle East, faced social discrimination in the early years but are now making their presence felt in various sectors of Israeli society. Communities of Ethiopian Jews and Russian immigrants are also part of Israel's social structure. Arab citizens, who number about 20% of Israel's population, include Muslims, Christians and Druze. They have equal rights legally, but in practice they face many social and economic inequalities.

Religion in Israel has a profound influence on the social order. Judaism not only gives rise to much of the religious identity of the majority community but also influences the legal and cultural framework of the state. There is constant conflict between religious and secular Jews, especially in matters of marriage, divorce and other personal laws, where religious courts dominate. Secular Jews demand a clearer separation between state religion and politics, while religious Jews want society to be governed according to halakha (Jewish law). Israel's

minority religious groups, such as Muslims and Christians, manage personal affairs according to their own religious laws.

Gender-based divisions are also an important factor in the social order. Women are legally entitled to the same rights as men and have made significant contributions to politics, the military and other fields. But gender inequalities persist within traditional religious communities. At the same time, Israeli society has been constantly changing under the influence of immigrants. Since Israel's founding, the arrival of Jews from around the world has brought cultural diversity to society, but it has also created challenges in the distribution of resources and social integration.

The urban and rural divide is also evident in the social system. Israel's urban areas symbolize modernity and progress, while cooperative agricultural communities in rural areas, such as kibbutz and moshav, represent the basic principles of socialism and collectivism. These communities have not only strengthened Israel's agriculture but also promoted a spirit of collective cooperation in society. Education and the military play an important role in Israel's social system. Education has been made compulsory and free for all citizens, which has empowered and awakened society. The military, especially compulsory military service, not only ensures security but also promotes social unity among different communities.

Israel's social system also faces many challenges. These include social divisions between Jewish and Arab citizens, conflicts between religious and secular groups, and problems of social integration of migrant communities. In addition, the Palestinian conflict and security concerns have also had a profound impact on Israel's social system. This conflict not only increases polarization in society, but also gives rise to discrimination and social discontent towards minority groups.

Thus, it is clear that Israel's social system is a reflection of its historical heritage, cultural diversity and national identity, which makes it a dynamic and challenging society.

7.6   ECONOMY OF ISRAEL

The economy of Israel is primarily known for its flexibility, innovation, and diversity, making it a dynamic economic force in the Middle East. Israel's economy has made remarkable progress despite limited natural resources, persistent security challenges, and socio-political challenges. After its founding, Israel transformed its economy from a small and agriculture-dominated society to a high-technology and innovation-based system. In the early years, agriculture and cooperative models such as the kibbutz and the moshav provided stability to the economic structure. Israel developed technologies such as drip irrigation to revolutionize water conservation and management, enabling it to increase agricultural productivity. Although its natural resources were limited, human resources and technical efficiency gave it a competitive edge in the modern economy.

Despite economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, Israel pursued a policy of economic reform and liberalization. This resulted in privatization, financial stability, and foreign investment. The backbone of Israel's economy is the high-technology industry, which has earned it global recognition as the "Startup Nation". It is a leader in cybersecurity, biotechnology, software development, and defence technology. Israel has the most startups per capita and ranks high in innovation indices. The defence industry, which includes advanced weapons systems and surveillance technologies, is an important part of Israel's economy.

Israel's business sector has also grown rapidly and is deeply integrated with major international markets. Its major exports include electronics, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products, and defence equipment. Israel's major trading partners include the US, the EU, and Asian countries. The service sector, especially tourism, contributes significantly to Israel's economy. Modern cities along with historical and religious sites have made it a major tourist destination. The success of Israel's labour market is based on its high-quality education and

research system. Investments in science, technology, and innovation have made it globally competitive. The participation of women and minorities in Israel is also increasing. But challenges such as gender and ethnic inequality still persist in Israel.

The Israeli economy faces many challenges. These include high cost of living, social and economic inequality, and regional divisions. Israel's Arab citizens and the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish community are not fully integrated into the mainstream economically. In addition, the Palestinian conflict and security challenges also impact the economy.

The stability and growth of Israel's economy is based on its global integration capacity, innovation, and diversity. It reflects the symbiotic relationship between society and economy, where social progress drives economic growth. Overall, Israel's economy embodies its strategic foresight, scientific prowess, and social resilience, which have made it an economic power in the Middle East and a global innovation hub.

7.7   ISRAEL'S PARTY SYSTEM

The Israeli party system was initially dominated by Mapai (Labor Party) led by David Ben-Gurion, which influenced Israeli politics for a long time. But over time, the system underwent significant changes. The historic victory of the Likud Party in 1977 marked the emergence of right-wing parties in Israeli politics for the first time. This change was a reflection of changes in Israel's social structure and the growing importance of issues such as national security, economic liberalization, and religious identity.

The Israeli party system has a clear division between secular and religious parties. Secular parties, such as Labor and Likud, focus primarily on economic and security policies, while religious parties, such as Shas and Yahdut Hatorah, work for religious laws, Jewish identity, and the rights of the ultra-Orthodox

community. In addition, Arab parties also play an important role in Israel, raising the rights of minority communities and Palestinian issues. However, these parties often remain isolated from mainstream politics.

Another important aspect of Israel's party system is regional and ethnic divisions. Parties of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, such as Shas, have traditionally stood against Ashkenazi-dominated parties, increasing political polarization. In addition, the rise of parties raising issues of Russian and Ethiopian immigrants has also been seen in recent decades.

Multi-party coalition governments are common in Israel. Ideological differences between parties in coalition governments often make policymaking and governance difficult. Smaller parties have a lot of influence in these coalitions, as their role is decisive in making or toppling governments. As a result, governments often make compromises to meet the demands of smaller parties, leading to instability in policymaking. Israel's party system has undergone many changes over time. A system of direct election of the prime minister was adopted in the 1990s, but this experiment failed and was abolished. In addition, the electoral threshold was raised to control the number of smaller parties and increase the stability of governments.

Despite the instability and complexity of Israel's party system, it has succeeded in maintaining democratic values and reflecting diversity. The system represents Israel's multicultural and multiethnic society, where different communities and ideologies have the opportunity to be expressed on the political stage.

Israel's party system symbolizes its social, cultural, and political diversity. The system has been constantly changing, demonstrating not only the strengths of Israel's democracy but also its weaknesses.

Major Political Parties of Israel

The major political parties of Israel play an important role in its politics and policy-making process. Under Israel's multi-party system, different parties represent different ideologies, social groups, and interests which are as follows:

1. **Likud Party:** Likud is the main right-wing party of Israel. It was founded in 1973. This party emphasizes on security, economic liberalization, and promotion of Jewish identity. Its leader Benjamin Netanyahu has dominated Israeli politics for a long time. The main focus of Likud is to take a tough stand on the Palestinian issue and ensure the security of Israel.

2. **Avoda Party (Labor Party):** This left-wing party has been playing a major role in politics since the formation of Israel. Avoda gives priority to social justice, economic equality, and the Israel-Palestine peace process. This party is the successor of the Mapai Party founded by Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

3. **Yesh Atid:** This centrist party maintains a strong position in Israeli politics under the leadership of Yair Lapid. Yesh Atid's main focus is on socio-economic reform, education, and secularism. The party represents citizens who are beyond the traditional left-right divide.

4. **Shas:** Shas is a religious right-wing party, which mainly represents Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews. Its main objective is to preserve Jewish traditions and religious laws. The party works to promote religious education and social services.

5. **United Torah Judaism (UTJ):** This is an ultra-Orthodox religious party, which mainly represents Ashkenazi Jews. The party encourages religious studies, Jewish law, and traditional lifestyle.

Apart from these parties, there are other political parties that influence Israeli politics. These major political parties of Israel reflect the diversity of its politics. They not only represent different ideologies and communities, but also make important contributions to Israel's policies and governance. Competition and cooperation among these parties is the basis of Israel's multiparty system.

7.8   ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Israel's electoral system is entirely based on proportional representation, which awards seats in the parliament (Knesset) to political parties in proportion to the total number of votes they receive. The country is not divided into any geographical constituencies, but Israel functions as a single national constituency. The system also provides substantial representation to smaller parties, keeping Israel's political landscape multi-party and diverse. However, this also leads to the need for coalition governments, which leads to political instability and complexity in policymaking.

Elections in Israel are held every four years, but early elections are also common, which is caused by the instability of party coalitions. Voters do not elect their representatives directly but vote for political parties. Each party submits a list of candidates, and according to the election results, parties are allocated seats in the order of their list. The electoral threshold, currently set at 3.25%, ensures that only parties that can garner sufficient popular support enter parliament.

The main feature of Israel's electoral system is that it reflects the diversity of society in the Knesset. Various communities, including Jews, Arab citizens, religious and secular groups, immigrants, and minorities, participate in elections. The system promotes democratic ideals and ensures broad political participation.

Israel's electoral system also faces many challenges like:

- Excessive influence of small parties often hinders government formation and policymaking. Coalition governments are based on agreements between parties, making it difficult to formulate decisive and long-term policies.

- Regional and ethnic divisions also affect Israel's electoral system. The political interests of secular and religious parties, Jews and Arab citizens, and various immigrant communities often clash. This is why despite ideological and cultural diversity in the Knesset, a lack of unity is seen in policymaking.

Transparency in the electoral process and extensive use of technology is a key feature of Israel's democracy. From the registration process of the voter list to the counting of votes, the Election Commission ensures that the process is fair and independent. However, given external threats and cyber security challenges, attention is also paid to the security of the electoral process.

7.9 UNITARY GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Israel's system of governance is unitary. In this, the central government has full control of power, and regional or local governments are given only limited administrative powers. This system has developed due to Israel's small geographical size and its political-social context, which makes centralized governance effective. Israel has a 120-member parliament (Knesset). It is the highest legislative body of the country. All laws, policies, and administrative guidelines are determined from here. Local bodies, such as municipalities and regional councils, work under the central government and have very limited power to take autonomous decisions. This system of Israel ensures unity, efficient governance, and effective implementation of national policies. A major drawback of this system is that it is unable to effectively address the special needs and problems of local communities. Under the unitary governance system, all major decisions in Israel, whether related to security, economic reform, or foreign policy, are made at the central level. This speeds up policy making and administrative processes within the country, but sometimes it lacks local representation. This centralized system in Israel helps keep its national identity strong, but to balance it there is also a need to promote the participation of local bodies and communities.

Israel's unitary system of government is a perfect example of centralization of power and authority in the central government. This system organizes the country's political structure in such a way that all major decisions are taken by the Knesset. The Knesset, Israel's parliament, is not only the centre of legislative powers, but it also holds the Prime Minister and the Cabinet accountable. Israel's model is mainly adopted due to its historical and geopolitical circumstances.

After gaining independence in 1948, the country chose the unitary system of government to implement its security, economic and social policies with maximum efficiency and uniformity. There is no independent governance system at the regional or state level, as is the case in federal countries. Although local bodies are given responsibilities such as municipal services, education and infrastructure management, all of them operate under the rules and policies of the central government.

The biggest advantage of the unitary system is that it simplifies and speeds up the decision-making process. Due to the country's small geographical boundaries and limited population, centralized governance helps in implementing policies quickly. For example, centralization plays an important role in decision-making in sensitive areas such as defence and security. Israel, which constantly faces external threats, has been able to make quick and effective decisions through its unitary system.

This system also has some limitations. Under the unitary governance system, regional diversities and local needs are likely to be ignored. Israel is home to various cultural, religious and social groups with special needs. But the centralized governance system often fails to effectively address the local demands and expectations of these groups. Despite this, Israel has built a stable and progressive society through its unitary governance system. While this system prioritizes national unity and security, it also encourages community development by giving the necessary level of power to the local administration. Despite the challenges of this system, the Israeli experience demonstrates how even a small and diverse country can achieve stability and progress through a unitary system of governance.

7.10 SUMMARY

In conclusion, it can be said that Israel, after the establishment of the state in 1948, did not formally adopt its constitution, but developed the constitutional

framework through the "Basic Laws". These Basic Laws describe in detail the structure of the state, civil rights and the functions of the government. Israel's democratic traditions are reflected in its diversity and multi-party system, where all citizens have equal suffrage.

Israel's society and economy clearly reflect the nature of its state. Despite being a Jewish majority country, Arab citizens, minority groups and immigrants play an important role here. Social diversity sometimes creates social tensions, but it is part of Israel's democratic structure. The economy is dominated by technology and innovation-based industries, agriculture, and military equipment manufacturing, leading Israel to be called the "Startup Nation".

Israel's party and electoral system is based on proportional representation, making it a multiparty democracy. Political parties must pass a minimum vote threshold to gain representation in the Knesset. Coalition governments are common, as no party can often obtain a majority on its own. The system promotes political diversity, but also poses a challenge to stability.

Israel's system of governance is unitary, with centralization of power. This is in contrast to a federal system, where regional governments are given autonomy. However, local bodies have a degree of administrative independence. The system suits Israel's needs as a small and security-focused state.

7.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. In what major stages did Israel's constitutional framework develop? What kinds of historical and political factors played a role in its formation?

2. What are the main features of Israel's multi-party system? What is its impact on its electoral system and coalition politics?

3. Analyse Israel's electoral system. Discuss its main features, characteristics, and impact on its political system.

4. In the absence of a constitution, how do the 'Basic Laws' define the nature of the state?

5. How is Israel's political, social and economic system affected?

7.12 REFERENCES

• Don Peretz (1983). *The Government and Politics of Israel*, second ed., Wetview Press: Boulder.

• Gregory S. Mahler (2016). *Politics and Government in Israel, The Maturation of Modern State*, third ed., Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham.

• Sunil K. Choudhary (2018). *The Changing Face of Parties and Party Systems*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Department of Distance & Continuing Education, Campus of Open Learning,
School of Open Learning, University of Delhi
20CUS01428