

Introduction to Politics

State and Government

State

Defining The State

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

State

Defining the State

- The *idealist approach*- Hegel identified three ‘moments’ of social existence: the family, civil society and the state. Within the family, he argued, a ‘particular altruism’ operates that encourages people to set aside their own interests for the good of their children or elderly relatives. In contrast, civil society was seen as a sphere of ‘universal egoism’ in which individuals place their own interests before those of others. Hegel conceived of the state as an ethical community underpinned by mutual sympathy – ‘universal altruism’.
- *Functionalist* approaches to the state focus on the role or purpose of state institutions. The central function of the state is invariably seen as the maintenance of social order, the state being defined as that set of institutions that uphold order and deliver social stability.

State

Defining the State

- The *organisational* view defines the state as the apparatus of government in its broadest sense; that is, as that set of institutions that are recognizably ‘public’, in that they are responsible for the collective organization of social existence and are funded at the public’s expense.
- The *international* approach to the state views it primarily as an actor on the world stage; indeed, as the basic ‘unit’ of international politics. This highlights the dualistic structure of the state; the fact that it has two faces, one looking outwards and the other looking inwards.
- **Nation-state:** A sovereign political association within which citizenship and nationality overlap; one nation within a single state.

State

Origin of State

- **Divine Right** - The doctrine that earthly rulers are chosen by God and thus wield unchallengeable authority; a defence for monarchical absolutism.
- **Social Contract Theory**- A social contract is a voluntary agreement made amongst individuals through which an organized society, or state, is brought into existence.

State

Key Features of State

- The state is sovereign.
- State institutions are recognizably ‘public’, in contrast to the ‘private’ institutions of civil society.
- The state is an exercise in legitimation.
- The state is an instrument of domination.
- The state is a territorial association.

State

Rival Theories of State

- The **Pluralist theory** of the state has a very clear liberal lineage. It stems from the belief that the state acts as an ‘umpire’ or ‘referee’ in society.
- The **Capitalist State**- This view has usually been understood in terms of the classic formulation that the state is nothing but an instrument of class oppression: the state emerges out of, and in a sense reflects, the class system.
- The **Leviathan State**- In this view, the state, instead of being, as pluralists suggest, an impartial umpire or arbiter, is an overbearing ‘nanny’, desperate to interfere or meddle in every aspect of human existence.

State

Rival Theories of State

The Patriarchal State-

- **Liberal feminists** believe that sexual or gender equality can be brought about through incremental reform, have tended to accept an essentially pluralist view of the state.
- **Radical feminists** argue that state power reflects a deeper structure of oppression in the form of patriarchy. Whereas **Marxists** place the state in an economic context, radical feminists place it in a context of gender inequality, and insist that it is essentially an institution of male power.
- **The instrumentalist argument** views the state as little more than an agent or ‘tool’ used by men to defend their own interests and uphold the structures of patriarchy.
- **The Structuralist arguments** tend to emphasize the degree to which state institutions are embedded in a wider patriarchal system.

State

Role of the State

- **Minimal State-** The state is merely a protective body, its core function being to provide a framework of peace and social order within which citizens can conduct their lives as they think best.
- A **developmental state** is one that intervenes in economic life with the specific purpose of promoting industrial growth and economic development.
- Whereas developmental states practise interventionism in order to stimulate economic progress, **social-democratic states** intervene with a view to bringing about broader social restructuring, usually in accordance with principles such as fairness, equality and social justice.
- While developmental and social-democratic states intervene in economic life with a view to guiding or supporting a largely private economy, **collectivized states** bring the entirety of economic life under state control.
- The essence of **totalitarian state** is the construction of an all-embracing state, the influence of which penetrates every aspect of human existence. The state brings not only the economy, but also education, culture, religion, family life and so on under direct state control.

State

Is the state a force for good?

YES	NO
Key to civilized existence	Cause of disorder
Foundation of public life	Enemy of freedom
Agent of social justice	Recipe for poverty

Government

Meaning

- Government in its broadest sense, refers to any mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained, its central features being the ability to make collective decisions and the capacity to enforce them.
- However, the term is more commonly understood to describe the formal and institutional processes that operate at the national level to maintain public order and facilitate collective action.
- The core functions of government are, thus, to make law (legislation), implement law (execution) and interpret law (adjudication). In some cases, the political executive alone is referred to as ‘the government’.

Government

Types of Government/ Political System

- Monarchy (Constitutional and Absolute)
- Democracy (Parliamentary and Presidential)
- Communism
- Socialism
- Aristocracy
- Oligarchy
- Military Dictatorship
- Theocracy
- Totalitarianism
- Colonialism

Government

Key Functions of Government

- Law-making, Execution and Interpretation
- Public Administration
- Maintenance of Law and Order
- Supervision and Resolution of Conflicts
- Regulation of Economy
- Protection of Citizen's Rights