

PART-A

1 CHAPTER

A Conceptual Review of the Evolution and Relevance of the State in International Relations

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Why we need to study International Relations?
- Evolution of the state from the ancient times till the present

WHY STUDY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

The world in which we live is divided into nation states. All men, women and children inhabit some state or the other. No state lives in isolation. All states interact with each other. The interaction amongst the states has been occurring since ancient times. The nature of this interaction has certainly got transformed in the modern, globalised age. When the states interact, these interactions affect the domestic populations of these states. When all the states in the world interact, it creates an international state system. The interaction that happens amongst the state in the international state system creates historical, political and socio-economic consequences for the domestic populations. International Relations (hereafter IR) is the study of all these interactions and the subsequent consequences.

However, the question that now arises in our minds is about what the concept of the state primarily entails? How did it evolve? What is the present situation of the conceptual state in a globalised world?

The next section attempts to provide a brief glimpse of the evolution of the state. The subsequent chapters of Part-B of this section would help us to understand the deeper nuances of study of the state in an international historical context from ancient times till the age of globalisation. Let us turn first our attention to the gradual historical evolution of the state.

HOW DID THE STATE EVOLVE?

The 'State' is a creation of man and not a creation of mother earth or nature, which makes it a man-made 'construct'. Man was initially a hunter-gatherer. He was leading a nomadic life. Over a period of time, as man developed techniques of agriculture and learned domestication of animals, he decided to do away with his nomadic life in favour of a settled life. As he settled in an area, the population in that patch of land began to grow. It

gradually transformed into a microcosmic society. As this mini-society got established at one place, so it did in other areas. Initially, a majority of these societies got established near rivers or other water sources. This is also one reason why we had a majority of all ancient civilisations established near rivers. Our own Indus Valley civilisation, which flourished on the banks of the Indus river, is testimony to the fact.

As the societal groups enlarged over a period of time, there was felt a need to establish a code of conduct for the members of the society to impose a form of order on the chaotic tribes. Once the rules of societal interactions were established, further need arose to create an authority to enforce these rules. Initially, it saw its manifestation in the form of conferring the authority on the most elder people but, this gradually shifted to the strongest man amongst the group. Over a period of time, a need was also felt to protect the group of persons, now in the form of a settlement, from attacks by members of the other groups. This manifested not only in the physical protection of people but also the land occupied. Thus, protection emerged as the most rudimentary reason of political formations, headed by a strong chief.

These groups from one place interacted with other groups situated some distances away as well. The nature of this interaction often varied. The interaction at times was to subjugate the other area and enhance one's own area or, at times, it was to achieve mutual coexistence. The protector of the area and its population by now was called the king and the king was thought to possess divine powers during these ancient times.

In the ancient times, there was a complete absence of the concept of sovereignty. Yet, in the absence of the state sovereignty we have seen ancient empires flourish. One of the very successful ancient empires was the Greek city state system. It had a common language and religion. The Greeks later became subjects of the Romans. During Roman times, the concept of authority got significantly transformed. A new authority of the papacy (Pope) emerged along with the Emperor.

Medieval society got established in the form of feudalism. The feudal medieval order was effectively broken down with the coming of the Renaissance and Reformation which ultimately culminated in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which created the first ever modern nation states based on the idea of sovereignty. This was followed by geographical discoveries, enlightenment, age of reason and imperialism. The mercantilism that emerged during this period along with industrial revolution and colonisation led the world ultimately to the World War-I.

What is worth noting is that, since the Peace of Westphalia and emergence of Westphalian nation state, the kings in command or monarchs not only became absolute in their power but also went on to shrug off Papal authority over the state. It is in reality **this** transformation in the governance of the state that gave birth to modern statecraft. The nation states began to flourish under the rule of these monarchs. The new-found growth led to an urge to expand and indulge in practices like imperialism and colonialism. The imperialist world learnt its hard lesson during the World War I, but the settlement reached through the infamous Treaty of Versailles post-World War I also sowed the seeds for the next total war—the World War II.

The period post world war-II witnessed the rise of super powers—the USA and the

USSR—with their mutual mistrust leading the world into an extended Cold War period. The end of communism and the eventual collapse of the USSR in 1989 led to the rise of unipolarity, with the USA emerging as the surviving power bloc. This period of unipolarity saw a subsequent rise of a new force in the world called globalisation. As the states got affected by globalisation, many scholars in the twenty first century began to advocate that the relevance of state in a globalised world would become redundant. However, this was not the truth as, though, undoubtedly, globalisation has (and continues to) affect the states, it has only transformed the nature of the states in terms of their being demonstrators of absolute power in the world. The role of the state remains intact even in a globalised economy as globalisation can flourish only with rule of law and a stable social order which can only be guaranteed by the instrument called the state.

Please keep the meanings of the three following terminologies in mind throughout your reading of the book:

- **State** – It is a political association that has a defined territory with a permanent population to be governed by a government which is sovereign.
- **Sovereignty** – It means a situation of an absence of an authority higher than the state. It means state has the freedom to take independent decisions in domestic and international affairs without being answerable to any authority above it.
- **Security** – It means a situation of an absence of any threat. Security at a micro level is called human security, at state level is called national security and at a global level is called international security.