

Concepts related to Government/Political Science/Social Studies

Politics

The activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties having power.

Politics is the means by which people determine whose views of government will prevail.

the activities of the government, members of law-making organizations, or people who try to influence the way a country is governed:

Politics itself is a mixture of the high and the low. Politics is the realm in which we attempt to realize some of our highest aspirations: our desire for political freedom, our longing for justice, our hope for peace and security. At the same time, politics is laced with individuals and groups seeking their selfish interests at the expense of others.

State:

A nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government.

Constitution

"Constitutions is the way of life that the state has chosen for itself" by Aristotle

A body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is acknowledged to be governed.

Government

A group of people that governs a community or unit. It sets and administers public policy and exercises executive, political and sovereign power through customs, institutions, and laws within a state. A government can be classified into many types--democracy, republic, monarchy, aristocracy, and dictatorship are just a few.

Rights:

Rights are legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or entitlement; that is, rights are the fundamental normative rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people, according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory

Pluralism

A condition or system in which two or more states, groups, principles, sources of authority, etc., coexist.

Dogmatism

The tendency to lay down principles as undeniably true, without consideration of evidence or the opinions of others.

Bill, Law, Ordinance

A bill is proposed legislation under consideration by a legislature. A bill does not become law until it is passed by the legislature and, in most cases, approved by the executive.

Law is a system of rules that are enforced through social institutions to govern behaviour. Laws can be made by a collective legislature or by a single legislator, resulting in statutes, by the executive through decrees and regulations, or by judges through binding precedent, normally in common law jurisdictions.

Ordinance is an authoritative order. In the context of Bangladesh, President declared ordinance while the parliament not active enough to deal a sudden situation.

Civil Society

Civil society can be thought of as associational life. It's the organized activities and institutions in which people with shared interests and values participate.

Civil society is neither based on for-profit business or the government. Civil society, instead, is somewhere in between the public sector and the private sector. In fact, some refer to it as the third sector. Examples of associational life include participation in organizations and institutions - such as business associations - charitable organizations, unions, social movements, community organizations and political advocacy groups.

Fundamental Rights vs. Human Rights

Fundamental rights are similar to human rights but are different in the sense that they have legal sanction and are enforceable in a court of law whereas human rights do not have such sanctity and are not enforceable in courts. Then there is difference of universal appeal because fundamental rights are country specific that have been made keeping in mind the history and culture of a country whereas human rights are designed in such a way that they are of even more basic nature and apply to all human beings across the world without any discrimination. The right to a dignified human life is one such human right which cannot be questioned whether you are in US or in a poor African country.

Government - a political order that maintains and perpetuates the community. It is said to possess "sovereignty" if it can successfully assert its claim to rule. And it is said to "legitimate" if its claim to rule (authority) is willingly accepted.

Nation is a distinct group of people who share a common background including any or all of the following: geographic location, history, racial or ethnic characteristics, religion, language, culture, and belief in common political ideas.

Nation-state - most distinctive and largest self-sufficient political configuration in the modern world... its actions and reactions affect not only the welfare and destiny of its own people but, increasingly, the fate of peoples in other lands

Public Opinion

Public opinion, an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community. Some scholars treat the aggregate as a synthesis of the views of all or a certain segment of society; others regard it as a collection of many differing or opposing views.

Good Governance

Good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. It's not about making 'correct' decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions.

Good decision-making processes, and therefore good governance, share several characteristics. All have a positive effect on various aspects of local government including consultation policies and practices, meeting procedures, service quality protocols, councillor and officer conduct, role clarification and good working relationships.

Bureaucracy

A bureaucracy (/bju:'rɒkrəsi/) is "a body of non-elective government officials" and/or "an administrative policy-making group". Historically, bureaucracy was government administration managed by departments staffed with nonelected officials

Decentralization:

Decentralization or decentralisation is the process of redistributing or dispersing functions, powers, people or things away from a central location or authority.

'Federal'

'Federal' refers to the form of our government: An alliance of States with close cultural and economic ties associated together in a "federation" with a national government to which is delegated supremacy over the States in specifically defined areas.

What is Power?

Power is the ability to command obedience from others using force or influence. It is the capacity to affect another person's behavior by the threat of sanction. The sanction may be negative or positive. Therefore, a political leader may have the ability to control the actions of others by promising those who support him wealth or honour, or he may threaten to deny such rewards to those who oppose him. Sanctions are used if there is no compliance.

What is Sovereignty?

Sovereignty is the power that an independent country has to govern itself without any form of interference or intrusion. It is the power of supremacy that a truly independent nation enjoys. It is the supreme power and authority of the state over its citizens and operations. It is the power of the state to make laws and enforce them with all the means of coercion it cares to use without any interference by other states.

State; Concept, Origin, Elements and Necessities for Human Civilization

The modern term "state" is derived from the word "status". It was Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) who first used the term "state" in his writings. His important work is titled as "Prince". The state is the most universal and most powerful of all social institutions. It is the highest form of human association. It is necessary because it comes into existence out of the basic needs of life. It continues to remain for the sake of good life. According to Woodrow Wilson "State are a people organized for law within a definite territory". The most commonly used definition is Max Weber's, which describes the state as a compulsory political organization with a centralized government that maintains a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a certain territory. General categories of state institutions include administrative bureaucracies, legal systems, and military or religious organizations. Finally state can be defined as an organized political community living under a single system of government.

The question about the origin of the state has been discussed for centuries. In the historical and philosophical arena, this question is a debated issue among scholars. With no concrete evidence to support any of the proposed theories, it remains as speculation. All of the most accepted theories do agree that the state must have certain basic elements: territory, population, government and sovereignty.

Theories of State:

Force Theory

This theory proposes that the origin of state is developed through the use of force. One person or a small group of people claim control over the population in a specific area by force. Once the rule is well established the state is established. This theory is generally a result of war. One example: Adolf Hitler and his control over Germany that led to the attempted control of Europe, as well as the mass genocide of the Jewish population.

Natural Theory

The social urge of the human being to be within a group of people in the community as in sociology describes that "man is a social being." The social group provides the political development to stay and work together with common standard law in the community later on transform as a state.

Patriarchal Theory

The origin of the state evolves from the enlargement of family under the authority of the parents or the elders. Later on, it will develop into a tribe, kingdom then state.

Evolutionary Theory

This theory states that the state evolved over time, starting with the primitive family. One person in the family was determined to be the leader of the family. On a primitive level, a basic government was formed. Over decades, the family became a clan and a clan became a tribe. The state was identified when the tribe settled in a designated area and claimed it as their own.

Divine Right Theory

The divine right theory holds that God created the state. God gave certain individuals of royal birth the divine right to rule. Since God divinely ordained its rulers and they were accountable to God, the population obeyed the ruler as they were required to obey God. This theory existed in many countries such as England and Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

Social Contract Theory

In the social contract theory, a specific population within a given designated area gave up as much power to a government as needed to promote the well-being of all. Specifically, the community population and the leader have a contract. The state has power and authority over the territory. The community receives certain services such as a safe, crime-free area in which to live and keep their rights protected. This theory was developed in the 17th and 18th centuries by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. The U.S. political system is based on the social contract theory.

What are the important elements of the State?

These definitions draw attention to the fact that the state has four essential elements. These are: (1) population, (2) territory, (3) government, (4) sovereignty (or independence). The first two elements constitute the physical or material basis of the state while the last two form its political and spiritual basis.

1. Population: The state is a human institution. So population is its primary element. There is no hard and fast rule about population. The ancient Greek writers like Plato and Aristotle favored a small population. According to Plato, an ideal state should have a population of 5040. Aristotle laid down a general principle that the population of a state should be large enough to make it sufficient and small enough to make good government possible. It must be remembered that both of them were thinking in terms of small city-states. In modern times, Rousseau, prompted by considerations of direct democracy, fixed the number at 10,000. In modern times states vary greatly from the few thousands of Monaco or of San Marino to the crores of China or of India. The modern tendency is in favour of large states. All that can be said is that a large population is an advantage from the point of view of military defense. However, a large population can be a liability if the resources of the state are not adequate for its maintenance. One of the main problems faced by developing countries is over-population. Thus there should be a happy balance between the size of the population and material wealth of a state.

2. Territory: A definite and more or less permanent territory is also regarded as an essential element of the state. In modern times, the citizens are bound together by residence on a common territory. Land, water and air space comprise the territory of a state. As in population, so in territory, no limit can be laid down. Small states and large ones exist side by side. We have tiny states like San Marino with an area of less than twenty-five square miles. On the other hand, there are giant states like the Russian Republic, China, U. S. A., and Australia with millions of square miles. According to international law, all states are equal in status and right, no matter how unequal they are in population and area. It is claimed that small states are good for efficient administration and inculcating among the people a sense of unity and love for the state. However, the truth is that a small state is at a disadvantage in its relations with larger ones. Small states are under the influence of one or the other large and powerful state. It is said in favour of large states that they are strong in defense and because of availability of resources they are economically self-sufficient. It may be pointed out that the power and security of a state are not determined only by the size of its territory. Some other factors in this regard are geographical location, resources and climate.

3. Government: A people occupying a definite territory cannot form a state unless they are politically organized i.e., unless they possess a government. Government is the political organization of the state. It is the concrete and visible instrument of state power. According to Garner, government is the agency through which "common policies are determined and by which common affairs are regulated." The state wills and acts through the government. Government must be effective; it must possess the capacity to maintain order and enforce obedience. Without a government there

would be lawlessness and anarchy and ultimately the state would be dissolved. Government consists of three organs, namely, legislature, executive and judiciary. The legislature makes laws; the executive enforces laws while the judiciary adjudicates cases or disputes. There are different kinds of government in different states such as monarchy, democracy and dictatorship. Most of developed states are democracies. Many developing countries including India have democratic governments. Whatever may be the form of government, one thing is clear - there can be no state without government.

4. Sovereignty: By far the most important characteristic of the state is its sovereignty. It is the characteristic which distinguishes the state from all other associations. It denotes the supreme power or the final authority from which there is no appeal. Sovereignty has two aspects internal and external. Internally viewed, the state has supreme power over all individuals and associations within its fixed area. It can compel obedience of its people to its laws and commands. Externally viewed, the state is free from control of any foreign state or alien rule. Before independence India was not a state as it was ruled by the British. Similarly, the Indian federation consists of many constituent units called 'states', but they are really not states in the eyes of international law, as they are not sovereign. In the same vein, the United Nations (UN) is not a state as it is not sovereign. It should be noted, however, that absolute sovereignty is a legal concept. In actual practice no state is able to exercise unlimited power either over individuals and associations within its territorial domain or in its international relations. A state respects and abides by international laws, treaties and the policies of the international organizations like the UN and its agencies. A number of writers who have attacked the concept of absolute sovereignty on theoretical grounds also hold that it is undesirable. H. J. Laski, for example, regards it as incompatible with the interests of humanity and world peace.

5. International Recognition: In modern times relations among nations have grown and many international organizations and institutions have come into being. Therefore some scholars have argued that international recognition be an essential element of state. The recognition of the sovereign status of a new state by other states is called international recognition. According to famous jurist, Oppenheim, "A state is and becomes an international person by recognition only and exclusively. But there is no agreement on how many countries would have to recognize a new state so that the latter gains statehood in the eyes of international law. Recognition has also a political dimension. China was already a full-fledged state for many years before the UN was established in 1945. China came under communist rule in 1949. Communist China was not recognized by the US for cold war. So communist China, though ruling the mainland China, was not allowed to become the member of the UN due to America's opposition. Communist China took its legitimate place in the UN in 1970's only after the establishment of rapprochement between the US and communist china. It needs to be emphasized that even when communist China was not a member of the UN, it was very much a state. Absolute sovereignty is not feasible. A state needs to abide by international laws. Otherwise there will be international anarchy causing serious threats to international peace and security. Laski has rightly argued that unlimited sovereignty is a threat to world peace and humanity.

Necessity of the State:

1. State is the Natural Institution:

Man is a social animal. His nature impels him and necessities compel him to live in society and enter into social relations with others. He is by nature a gregarious animal. He always wants to live and remain in the company of fellow human beings. State is needed by him for providing security law and order as well as for punishing all criminals and anti-social elements.

2. State is a Social Necessity:

When man lives in the company of others, he naturally develops social relations with other human beings. He forms family and several other groups. He gets involved in a system of relations. He inherits several relations and throughout his life remains bound up with these.

Further, his physical and economic necessities always force him to form economic trade and cultural relations. He and his society need security for their life, property and relations. The state serves this need, by protecting the society from internal and external dangers.

3. Economic Necessity of State:

In each society the people need the state because provides currency and coinage for the conduct of economic business and trade relations. State formulates and implements all financial policies and plans for the benefit of all the citizens. It provides financial help to the poor and weaker sections of society. By providing security law and order, the state helps the people to carry out their economic relations and activities.

4. State secures Peace, Security and Welfare of all in Society:

Social relations continuously need peace, security and order. Man is a social being. However along-with it some selfishness is also a part of his being. At times, selfishness of some persons can cause some difficulties and harms to others. This is prevented by the state. While living in society, man needs protection for his life and property. This is provided by the state.

5. State is needed for Protection against War and External Enemies:

State is needed for getting protection and security against external aggressions, wars and internal disturbances and disorders. The society needs the state for security, peace, order stability and protection against external aggressions and wars.

State maintains defence forces for fighting external wars and meeting aggressions. The state works for the elimination of terrorism and violence.

State is the sovereign political institution of each society. It protects the people and tries to ensure conditions for their happiness, prosperity and development

Each society needs the State. It satisfies several important needs of society:

- (1) State provides security against external aggressions and war. For this purpose the state maintains an army.
- (2) State ensures security against internal disturbances disorders and crimes. For this purpose the state maintains police.
- (3) State legally grants and guarantees the rights of the people.
- (4) The state issues and regulates currency and coinage.
- (5) State undertakes steps for the creation of necessary conditions for the socio-economic-politico-cultural development of the people.
- (6) State grants citizenship and protects their interests and rights.
- (7) State conducts foreign relations, foreign trade and economic relations.
- (8) State secures the goals of national interest in international relations.

Government: Concept, Organs/body, types and functions

A group of people that governs a community or unit. It sets and administers public policy and exercises executive, political and sovereign power through customs, institutions, and laws within a state. A government can be classified into many types-- democracy, republic, monarchy, aristocracy, and dictatorship are just a few.

Organs of Government:

To ensure that these representatives work effectively, and to control misuse of power and authority by them, the democratic governments are generally divided in three broad organs or branches of government. These are legislative, executive and judiciary branch.

The legislative branches makes the laws, that defines rights and obligations of the people and of various arms of government, and defines rules of conduct of various actions and functions affecting the well being of the collective good of the society.

FUNCTIONS

- i. its main function is law making
- ii. it approves annual budget
- iii. it give approval to nominees of chief executive
- iv. ratification of treaty negotiated by the executive
- v. it performs semi-judicial function in some countries
- vi. it can carry out investigation on issue of public interest
- vii. it performs enlightenment campaigns through its activities like debates

The Executive branch is responsible for managing the affairs of the country in accordance with the laws passed by the judiciary branch. This includes among other things collecting taxes, and operation of common services in the society such as roads, water supply, policing, and defence.

It is in two forms (a) Parliamentary Executive and (b) Presidential Executive

FUNCTIONS OF EXECUTIVE

- i. implementation of laws
- ii. Maintenance of law and order through police
- iii. making of law through its power of delegated legislation
- iv. it prepares budget
- v. it oversees day to day running of the administration
- vi. the chief executive signs bills into law
- vii. it initiates bills into parliament

The judiciary branch is responsible for interpreting the laws passed by legislative branch, and settling disputes between people and between people and government regarding correct application of law. It also awards appropriate punishment for violation of law.

FUNCTIONS OF THE JUDICIARY

- i. it interprets laws
- ii. it settles conflicts in the society
- iii. it protect the right of individuals
- iv. it protects the constitution from both executive and legislature

Government can be classified into several types. Some of the more common types of governments are:

1. Democracy

The word "democracy" literally means "rule by the people." In a democracy, the people govern.

2. Republic

A literal democracy is impossible; in a political system containing more than a few people. All "democracies" are really republics. In a republic, the people elect representatives to make and enforce laws.

3. Monarchy

A monarchy consists of rule by a king or queen. Sometimes a king is called an "emperor," especially if there is a large empire, such as China before 1911. There are no large monarchies today. The United Kingdom, which has a queen, is really a republic because the queen has virtually no political power.

4. Aristocracy

An aristocracy is rule by the aristocrats. Aristocrats are typically wealthy, educated people. Many monarchies have really been ruled by aristocrats. Today, typically, the term "aristocracy" is used negatively to accuse a republic of being dominated by rich people, such as saying, "The United States has become an aristocracy."

5. Dictatorship

A dictatorship consists of rule by one person or a group of people. Very few dictators admit they are dictators; they almost always claim to be leaders of democracies. The dictator may be one person, such as Castro in Cuba or Hitler in Germany, or a group of people, such as the Communist Party in China.

6. **Anarchy** - a condition of lawlessness or political disorder brought about by the absence of governmental authority.

7. **Authoritarian** - a form of government in which state authority is imposed onto many aspects of citizens' lives.

8. **Commonwealth** - a nation, state or other political entity founded on law and united by a compact of the people for the common good.

9. **Communist** - a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single -- often authoritarian -- party holds power; state controls are imposed with the elimination of private ownership of property or capital while claiming to make progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are equally shared by the people (i.e., a classless society).

10. **Confederacy (Confederation)** - a union by compact or treaty between states, provinces or territories that creates a central government with limited powers; the constituent entities retain supreme authority over all matters except those delegated to the central government.

11. **Constitutional** - a government by or operating under an authoritative document (constitution) that sets forth the system of fundamental laws and principles that determines the nature, functions and limits of that government.

12. **Constitutional monarchy** - a system of government in which a monarch is guided by a constitution whereby his/her rights, duties, and responsibilities are spelled out in written law or by custom.

13. **Islamic republic** - a particular form of government adopted by some Muslim states; although such a state is, in theory, a theocracy, it remains a republic, but its laws are required to be compatible with the laws of Islam.

13. **Oligarchy** - a government in which control is exercised by a small group of individuals whose authority generally is based on wealth or power.

Parliamentary government (Cabinet-Parliamentary government) - a government in which members of an executive branch (the cabinet and its leader - a prime minister, premier or chancellor) are nominated to their positions by a legislature or parliament, and are directly responsible to it; this type of government can be dissolved at will by the parliament (legislature) by means of a no-confidence vote or the leader of the cabinet may dissolve the parliament if it can no longer function.

Presidential - a system of government where the executive branch exists separately from a legislature (to which it is generally not accountable).

Theocracy - a form of government in which a Deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, the Deity's laws are interpreted by ecclesiastical authorities (bishops, mullahs, etc.); a government subject to religious authority.

Totalitarian - a government that seeks to subordinate the individual to the state by controlling not only all political and economic matters, but also the attitudes, values and beliefs of its .

Major Functions of Modern Government:

Major functions of modern government include (1) foreign diplomacy, (2) military defense, (3) maintenance of domestic order, (4) administration of justice, (5) protection of civil liberties, (6) provision for and regulation of the conduct of periodic elections, (7) provision for public goods and services, (8) promotion of economic growth and development, (9) operation of social-insurance programs to prevent future poverty, and (10) operation of social-welfare programs to alleviate existing poverty.

a. Foreign Diplomacy. Handling *foreign diplomacy* is one of the most important functions performed by the national, or central, government of a *sovereign state*--i.e., the central government of a completely independent political society that maintains formal diplomatic relations with a significant number of other sovereign states in the world, sovereign states whose central governments officially recognize the independence, or sovereignty, of the particular political society and are willing to maintain diplomatic relations with its established, existing central government. Foreign diplomacy is the process of a sovereign state conducting *formally peaceful* relations with other sovereign state--i.e., all formal relationships and interactions short of war. In handling foreign diplomacy, the central governments of sovereign states may apply pressure and issue warnings and veiled--and not so veiled--threats to one another as well as negotiate, bargain, compromise, and conclude treaties and alliances with each other.

b. Military Defense. A political society's national, or central, government is responsible for preserving the security of that society from foreign aggression. The government maintains armed forces and, when necessary, utilizes them to protect the territory and people it governs from attack and invasion by foreign powers. Military defense is one of the oldest and most important functions of government.

b. Domestic Order. A government must control the people it seeks to govern and protect. The government must maintain *internal peace*--i.e., peace among individuals and groups within the society. In the Preamble to the United States Constitution, internal peace, or domestic order, is referred to as "*domestic tranquillity*." Ensuring domestic tranquillity was another great purpose for which the Constitution was ordained and established.

c. Administration of Justice. To enforce the "rule of law," a government must operate a system of laws and courts that (1) makes all adult citizens equal under the law and (2) provides them equal opportunities to obtain just settlement of their civil disputes and receive fair treatment if suspected or accused of engaging in criminal activity. In other words, the government must operate a system of administering justice, a system which gives to every person what is his due.

d. Protection of Civil Liberties. A most important function of government in a constitutional democratic society is to protect civil liberties--i.e., preserve and safeguard the basic rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution to the individual members of the society. In American society, the basic, constitutionally guaranteed rights and liberties which government must preserve and protect include (1) the right to free exercise of religion, (2) freedom of speech and press, (3) the right to hold peaceful meetings and to organize, or associate, for peaceful purposes, (4) the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances, (5) the right to equal protection of the laws, (6) immunity from deprivation of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

e. Provision for and Regulation of the Conduct of Elections. In a constitutional democratic society, a vitally important constitutional duty of government is to (1) provide for free and meaningful elections, held at frequent intervals to fill major public-policy decisionmaking offices in the government, and (2) regulate the conduct of these elections so as to ensure that they are carried on fairly, honestly, and peacefully.

In the U.S.A., performance of the duty of providing for and regulating the conduct of elections is primarily the responsibility of the fifty states. The national government, however, also has some important powers and responsibilities in connection with this particular governmental function.

f. Provision for Public Goods and Services. *Public goods and services* are goods and services provided by government. They are goods and services provided by *public* institutions, rather than by private institutions.

Governments can and do tax citizens to raise money to spend on goods and services which will or are expected to benefit all or virtually all citizens but which, according to widespread perceptions within the society, are not likely to be supplied through voluntary, market-induced activities of private individuals, groups, and firms. The market mechanism and profit motive in the private sector of the economy, according to widespread perceptions, cannot be relied upon to satisfactorily provide these goods and services.

g. Promotion of Economic Growth and Development. The central government of a modern society seeks to facilitate and foster the growth and development of the nation's overall economy. The government actively pursues public policies--especially in the areas of taxation, foreign trade, and regulation of and subsidies for domestic economic activities-- designed to promote increased capital formation and industrial production, higher levels of commercial activity within the society, a more favorable balance of trade with foreign nations, and hence low levels of unemployment and widespread economic prosperity among the members of its own society.

h. Social Insurance. In order to ensure the income security of citizens and thereby prevent future poverty, contemporary governments in relatively wealthy societies provide for *social insurance*--government-mandated insurance programs designed to protect the individual members of society from economic misfortune widely perceived to be due to circumstances beyond the control of the individuals, circumstances such as old age, physical disability, poor health, and temporary unemployment. The benefits distributed under a social-insurance program are paid for by the program's participants; the benefits are not funded out of general-tax revenues. The benefits are paid out of the program's trust fund, to which the beneficiaries have made compulsory contributions. Each participant in the program is required to contribute to his own protection against future impoverishment.

i. Social Welfare. *Social-welfare policy*--also known as "*public assistance*," "*public aid*," and "*public welfare*"--consists of government programs to provide assistance to the poor. These programs are designed to alleviate existing poverty, providing aid to particular categories of persons who are unable to adequately support themselves, due to circumstances widely perceived within the society to be beyond the control of the indigent persons. The categories of persons eligible for public assistance generally include (1) women with dependent children in families where the father is absent or unemployed and (2) persons who, though aged, blind or disabled, are not covered by social-insurance programs and are therefore ineligible for benefits under them.