

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF POWER(a Synopsys)

1) PLURALISM

Based on functionalism with emphasis on equilibrium, stability and gradual change, conservative perspective.

Key Pluralists: Arnold Rose, Peter Bentley, Talcott Parsons, Neil Smelser

Key features:

- societal power is decentralized, widely shared, diffuse and fragmented, deriving from many sources, i.e. power pie divided into many pieces
- society consists of many diverse groups and associations (e.g. business, labour, professional, religious, etc...) and constitutes a conglomeration of dissimilar and often conflicting interests, no none of which plays a singularly dominant role, through a process of democratic competition the nature and direction of society are determined
- society is made up of a multitude of conflicting interest groups balanced by the state, groups are equally influential in their impact on government policy and major institutions
- assumption of a natural balance of power among various groups which is preserved through bargaining and compromise, win some and lose some, give and take, and thus equilibrium is reached in group struggle
- existence of shared acceptance of basic political framework, i.e. consensus of values, democratic traditions, procedures & principles
- economic and governmental institutions are separate not overlapping power sources
- tension between necessity for strong, modernizing, central coordinator on one hand and a relatively equal distribution of social powers on other reflects cross-pulls of two allegedly functional pre-requisites – need of autonomy and need of integration

Role of the state

- Society is a struggle of competing groups within an arena refereed by the state
- State represents institutionalized power and authority
- State is supreme guardian of representative democracy in modern society, from tension paves way for political competition and pluralist democracy
- State serves neither its own interests nor those of any single group or class
- State can act as bargaining agent or mediator
- Primary task of state is to balance interests of a multitude of competing groups, represents interests of society as a whole, coordinating the other major institutions OR
- Primary function is to promote harmony within system to secure equilibrium and order OR
- Or to police conflicts of interest
- From these roles, state is able to institutionalize its rule and maintain order in society
- Separation of governmental power: plurality of competing governmental agencies, divisions and branches, existence of political parties, thus

individuals/groups can have various points of access to decision-makers

Role/nature of the individual and of groups

- Individuals with common interests exert influence on decision-makers by collective action thus average citizens can have meaningful input into decision-making
- Political power is distributed over as many citizens working through their associations as want to take responsibility for power, through the voluntary association the ordinary citizen can acquire as much as power in the community or nation as their free time, ability and inclinations permit them (Arnold Rose)
- Political process is made up of social groups and policy outcomes are result of group process, each group being autonomous and democratic
- Potential groups: people who have shared attitudes, unorganized could organize
- Cross cutting group membership: overlapping membership of groups, one individual may have many memberships and each group may have conflicting views on one issue, thus never have one all powerful group agreeing on all issues

In US, pluralism is popular; consider slogans of “government of, by and for the people”, “equality before the law” and “separation of power”

ELITE PLURALISM

Seymour Martin Lipset, Robert *Dalh's* polyarchy, or democratic Elitism or strategic Elites

- Fuses reality of Elite rule and democratic principles
- Meaning of democracy is changed from one of direct popular rule to that of competition between and within Elites to control the state
- Elites are not single integrated group, multiple centers of political power
- Assumption of balance
- Assumption that minority will have influence on Elite
- Distrusts of mass participation in politics

CRITIQUE

Pertains to voluntary associations, class bias of interest group activity, inequality of power resources, role of the state, consensus of political values, and democracy

- Rationale for status quo, defense of current US political system, parochial focus, not widely applicable – just to US
- Actual versus perceived role of voluntary associations, simply another level of bureaucracy
- US society is not one of joiners, few are members of voluntary associations, usually the better educated, wealthier and higher social status
- Those who are members of voluntary associations, the groups are social, cultural, youth, church or other whose primary interests are not political, and many of these groups lack any democratic control by ran an file and are bureaucratically structured which prevents direct individual participation in decision-making
- Voluntary associations are asymmetrical in the amount of power they wield per member, e.g. union versus business association
- Assumption that there is a balance of power among various groups, from

religious groups to business groups, and pervasiveness of economic institutions ignored, balance of power as it is favors some and not others

- State is not neutral mediator, rules change, agenda setting occurs
- Assumption of widespread agreement on rules of the game, whose rules and who agrees, what of those who oppose
- Modern version of democracy or perversion of democracy in complex, modern industrialized societies
- No concern for minimal participation of masses
- Focus is governmental, public and not including private sector politics, what of Elites in educational sector, corporate sector, communication sector, labour sector, thus picture of societal power is limited
- Pluralists are preoccupied with analyzing formal political institutions, confuses how politics is supposed to work and how it actually works under capitalism

2) ELITE THEORY

Societal power is concentrated in elite groups who control resources of key social institutions and are not accountable to the masses, origins of societal power lie in control of social organizations, regardless of how (un)democratic a society maybe, Elites hold the bulk of power; use all and any means to retain power, power becomes end in itself.

Debated issues among Elite theorists

- Initially are all societies stratified?
- Is power used for society's benefit and welfare or for personal gain?
- Necessary for society or not?
- Elites closed and cohesive units or open and diverse?
- One or more ruling Elites?
- What are the characteristics and patterns of Elites?
- Are Elites and powerful persons the same?

CLASSIC ELITE THEORY (aristocratic version)

Based on two ideas:

- 1) Fundamental psychological difference sets Elites apart from masses, natural process, having personal resources such as intelligence, cunning or skill, and masses are apathetic, incompetent and unable to govern themselves OR
- 2) Unavoidable product of modern social organization such that organizational complexity necessitates a leader, i.e. functionally necessary, power lies in positions of authority in key political and economic institutions

Pareto

- Stressed the psychological and irrational aspects of Elites, i.e. psychological and intellectual superiority
- Elites are the highest achievers essentially in any and all areas of intelligence, character, skill, capacity, etc...
- Have two types of Elites - governing Elites and non-governing Elites who govern by means of coercion or cunning
- Developed fundamental idea of circulation of Elites comprised of two processes – process in which individuals circulate between elite and nonelite, and process in which a whole elite is replaced by a new one

Mosca

- Stressed the sociological, organizational and personal characteristics
- Elites are an organized minority
- The ruling/political class includes the ruling Elite and sub-Elite (technocrats, managers, civil servants)
- Masses are not organized
- Personal characteristics include the intellectual, material and moral superiority which is highly esteemed and very influential in the society in which they live
- Dominant interests of society which are the social and political forces, i.e. prevailing ideas and institutions of the time, become reflected in the ruling class and thus they dominate the structures and values
- Believed that all societies are divided into two groups, the ruling class and the class that is ruled and thus argued for the universal necessity and inevitability of class rule.

Michels: Iron law of oligarchy

- Tendency for most social and political organizations to be run by a few individuals who make most of the decisions
- Oligarchy arises out of complexity and size of organization – the organizational form - where there is a delegation of power in terms of specialized expertise initially for efficiency and stability but transformed into self-serving conservative Elite
- Social organization and division of labour are key variables
- Have combination of apathy, insufficient time, lack of expertise and need for guidance of the masses and the natural greed for power of the Elites
- Elites have resources of information and control its flow, credibility and prestige and cohesive organization
- Three basic principles of Elite formulation that take place within bureaucratic structure of political organization – the need for specialized staff, facilities, and above all leaders; the utilization of such specialized facilities by leaders within these organizations; and, the psychological attributes of the leaders (e.g. charisma)
- Believed all organizations to be elitist, the organizational form is basis for conservatism and this conservatism is inevitable outcome of power attained through political organization

WEBER'S THEORY OF BUREAUCRACY (not per say a theory of power or political sociology but relevancy is clear)

- Having arrived at the conclusion that economic relations, i.e. class relations based on wealth and income, lie at the source of power and politics, Weber focused on manifestation of class power exercised through the state
- Assigns a quasi-autonomous role to the state in which state bureaucrats appear to be serving their own interests and the bureaucracy appears to be a power unto itself
- Bureaucracies are skilled bodies of specialists and experts, a rational form of organization organized on the basis of specific functions, not on basis of authority of personalities and traditions, a social machine with individuals as

depersonalized objects

- With modernization of society and greater legal-rational authority, there is increasing professionalization of leadership, power becomes concentrated in bureaucracies which maintain control over vast human, material and intellectual resources – they have monopoly of expertise and have capacity to carry out or not policies of political leaders (policy administration)
- Bureaucracies are stable but intransigent with a remote and unanswerable bureaucratic elite, thus with citizens removed from control of and input into political decision-making
- Question is determining who controls and directs the complex bureaucratic machine
- Does not believe bureaucracy to be an autonomous power unto itself (as Michels does) but rather it is a tool or instrument of power, argues bureaucracy and power are the manifestations of the real material forces that dominate social-economic structure of modern society, to give primacy to analytic strength of these concepts is to study surface phenomena

CONTEMPORARY ELITE THEORY

Power Elite theory aka Radical Power Elite theory - C.W. Mills

- Societal power rests in control of key societal institutions - corporation, executive branch of government and Pentagon in US, i.e. the economy, the state and the military
- Elites not inevitable or natural, nor that masses are incompetent, apathetic or untrustworthy, masses are manipulated and exploited and kept in a state of ignorance and thus powerless by Elites who rule in own interest, this accounts for non-participation
- Elites are from upper class and perpetuate themselves through selective recruitment and socialization to Elite values

Governing Class model - W. Domhoff

- Class hegemony framework combining Power Elite theory and Class theory, reconceptualizes the power Elite in class terms
- Argues in US there is a corporate upper class that owns major business assets and controls the bulk of wealth, including major banks, corporations; major newspapers, radio, television and other mass media; elite universities; foundations; important advisory groups and organizations e.g. Council of Foreign Relations and Committee for Economic Development; executive branch of government, cabinet, judiciary, military and the regulatory agencies
- This class by virtue of its economic power, also controls and influences important departments and agencies of the state and in this way becomes a governing class – the American business aristocracy

CRITIQUE Concerns Elite inevitability, cohesiveness and Elite-mass relations

- Does there maybe exist an iron law of democracy instead due to persistence of democratic ideals & tendencies
- Consider how do organizations inhibit authority not just democracy
- Idea of coalitions, power changing moment to moment, issue to issue
- Increased specialization and complexity so different Elite groups, and several classes not just two

- Accountability functions of electoral politics and public opinion ignored
- Altruistic motives do exist
- Other groups benefit from Elites' actions
- As social class rises apathy decreases

3) MARXISM - CLASSIC MARXIST THEORY

Society is ruled by those who control the means of production – the economic system

Key features:

Marx

- Class basis of politics is the major determinant of political phenomena, must ask which class controls and dominates the state
- Reality is world of human effort – WORK, people realize themselves through work and around this productive process history unfolds
- Dynamics of society originate in its economic activity which is essentially the production of material life – food, clothing, shelter - and culture arises out of this process of economic activity
- Foundation or basis of society is the economy from which the legal, political, religious, cultural and educational institutions derive; i.e. societies in different stages of developments create different productive systems which are the economic institutions which in turn shape general nature of beliefs and practices in all areas of social life including political organization
- A form of economic determinism
- Obedience of all classes is found not on coercion but on virtual dependence of working class on capitalist class for subsistence and false consciousness
- *Power* flows from economic relations, who rules, those who control the economic resources, societal power is a product of economic forces, *Political power* is not centered in the state but in the nature of the class relations, who owns and controls the means of production
- Economic dominance is translated into power in all other societal realms, especially the state, thus dominant economic class is ruling political class
- Since classes are political groups, political conflict is class conflict

Gramsci

- Focused on the ideological apparatuses of the capitalist state
- Introduced concept of cultural ideological hegemony – the ruling class controls and shapes the ideas and hence consciousness of the masses, the dominant class uses its political, moral and intellectual leadership to establish its view of the world as all inclusive and universal, and to shape the interests and needs of subordinate groups
- The ideological hegemony of the ruling class operates through the state itself

Role/Functions of the state

- Perpetuation and legitimation of the social class system:
 - Maintaining and reproducing the capitalist system and its class relations
 - Protecting system of property relations
 - Propagating dominant values in schools, media and other social institutions, fostering dominant ideology
- Accumulation function
 - Guaranteeing the conditions for capital production and accumulation
 - Intervening directly in this process through tax collection & spending

- Financing economic growth

MARXISM - CONTEMPORARY MARXIST THEORIES

Althusser

- Structural Marxist – combines Marxism which relies on social & historical analysis with structuralism which relies on ahistorical and asocial analysis
- Does this by distinguishing between ideologies (historical/social) and ideology (structural): IDEOLOGIES are specific, historical and differing, there are various ideologies i.e. Christian, democratic, feminist, Marxist ideologies; IDEOLOGY is structural and eternal and has no history since ideology is part of the superstructure, (links structure of ideology to the idea of the unconscious from Freud and Lacan); because ideology is a structure its contents will vary but its form remains the same; ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence, ideology doesn't represent the real world per se but human beings' relation to that real world or to their perceptions of the real conditions of existence
- Expands analysis of the base-superstructure relationship to include such other superstructural institutions as the cultural, religious, educational, legal and family
- As hegemony of ruling class in these spheres becomes critical for its control over the dominated classes, and society in general, the class struggle takes on a tri-level character consisting of economic, political and ideological levels
- State is a kind of governmental formation that arises with capitalism, i.e. a state is determined by the capitalist mode of production and formed to protect its interests
- Identifies two major mechanisms for insuring that people within a state behave according to the rules: 1) repressive states apparatuses (RSA), e.g. police, armed forces, prisons (criminal justice and prison systems); 2) ideological state apparatuses (ISA), e.g. schools, religions, family, legal systems, politics, cultural activities such as arts and sports, system of mass communication, which are institutions which generate ideologies (systems of ideas and values) which we as individuals and groups then internalize

Poulantzas - STRUCTURALISM

- Emphasis is on the structural imperatives of the capitalist system as they affect the state and its relative autonomy, emphasized ideological factors
- Focus on structural constraints of the capitalist system that set limits to the state's autonomy and force it to work within the framework of an order that yields results invariably favourable to the dominant capitalist class
- Argues that it is by virtue of the system of production itself in capitalist society that the state becomes a capitalist state even in the absence of direct control of the state apparatus by capitalists
- The direct participation of members of the ruling class in the state apparatus is the effect, not the cause
- Structure of political and economic institutions in capitalist society constrain the political Elite so that it serves those interests regardless of direct/indirect role of business in state affairs, i.e. mechanisms are built into the modern capitalist political economy

- Viability of state dependent on healthy economy, state leaders must promote interests of big business
- Belief that capitalist class is internally divided and thus state protects capitalist interests in general, i.e. on behalf of all capitalists and thus state is autonomous

Miliband - INSTRUMENTALISM

- Simplistically and initially government serves interests of capitalist class
- The idea is that the state is an instrument of the capitalist class as a whole and this class contains fractions thus it has relative autonomy from one fraction
- Emphasis is on the direct and indirect control of the state by the dominant capitalist class
- Focuses on the special relationship between the state and the capitalist class, and the mechanisms of control of the state by this class that, de facto, transform the state into a capitalist state
- Capitalists do not govern, i.e. do not occupy political offices, but they rule by controlling political officials and institutions, directly through manipulation of state policies or indirectly through exercise of pressure on state
- Social and strategic ties among corporate and government leaders is key, between individuals occupying positions of power in different institutional spheres

NOTE: There is a convergence of 2 positions where the state is both controlled by and at the same time relatively autonomous from various fractions of the capitalist class in order to perform its functions in advancing the interests of the capitalist class as a whole, and maintain its legitimacy over society

Offe (comes from Hegelian-Maxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, once a student of Jurgen Habermas, similar to Poulantzas)

- Explains state through economic role
- Emphasis on state's necessity for capital accumulation involving extraction of surplus and the reproduction of capitalist relations
- Focuses on internal mechanisms of the state in terms of its dependence on capital accumulation which is vital for its survival
- Introduced concept of selective mechanisms: negative selection - selective mechanisms that systematically exclude anti-capitalist interests from state activity; positive selection - from the range of remaining alternatives, the policy which is in the interests of capital as a whole is selected over policies serving the parochial interests of specific capitalist groups; disguising selection – the institutions of the state must somehow maintain the appearance of class neutrality while at the same time effectively excluding anti-capitalist alternatives
- Mechanism are contradictory in nature and present problems for state in carrying out its dual role of maintaining accumulation and legitimation, results in crisis of legitimation

4) REALISM - Machiavelli & Hobbes: “end justifies the means”, “might makes right”

- Politics is the way it is
- It is autonomous - separate from moral or other nonpolitical struggles
- National interests of nation-states are what is key and from which there are

struggles with other nation-states vying for power

- Belief in absolute power of the state, single minded pursuit of power, national security and interest

Six principles

1. Politics and society are governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature (determinism & darwinism)
2. Political realism is defined in terms of interest with interest being defined in terms of power, not concerned with motives and ideological preferences (not psychology or emotions)
3. Realm of moral principles and ethics is separate from realm of politics
4. Moral aspirations of nation are not identical to moral laws which govern universe, e.g. foreign policy based on national interest not moral interest
5. Objectivity

Neorealists focus more on international relations and foreign policy

CRITIQUE

- Reductionist
- Separating ethics from politics not possible
- Not objective

5) CORPORATISM (post-Pluralism – reformulation of the pluralist problematic; more sophisticated form of Elite Pluralism; within capitalism, aka as Keynesian corporatism, see it in Europe more than US)

- Strong central state, state is the supreme organ responsible for organizing and leading society under its own directives
- Representing the common good, state is guardian of order and moral authority then can bring about class harmony and national unity
- State takes on responsibility of leading the nation by taking an active role in major institutions of society including the economy, i.e. direct intervention
- A partnership/alliance between state/government, business/corporations and union/organized labor creating political stability, reciprocal relationships, i.e. agreement between the state, capitalists (management) and trade unionists (workers) to guarantee high levels of employment, capital investment and accumulation, and citizen consumption
- Corporatist state included aims of economic redistribution and extension of citizenship rights, reducing levels of unemployment and inflation in order to bring workers into the mainstream of the capitalist system
- Organized interests are legitimate
- State interventions are acceptable as long as they fall within capitalist principles

Two types:

- state (top down) corporatism which is closer to elitism
- societal (bottom up) corporatism which is closer to pluralism

CRITIQUES

- Designed to protect interests of monopoly capital

- Results in consolidation of capitalist class power since state is controlled by capitalist class
- Can give rise to authoritarian states in crisis ridden states, and ultimately providing material base for emergence of fascism in response to economic and political crises of advanced capitalism, .e.g Germany & Italy

Introduction

As I have tried to indicate, the concept of the State in modern, industrialized, societies is crucial to an understanding of the nature and distribution of power in society, if only because it plays such a large, over-bearing, part in our lives. The State in Britain, for example, impinges on our behaviour, as individuals, in numerous ways:

It regulates social relationships (laws)

It specifies legal forms of contractual relationships (marriage, etc.)

It levies taxes.

It makes education a legal requirement between 5 and 16.

It empowers a range of people (from Civil servants to social workers, Court officials, the police, doctors and so forth) with the ability to legally interfere in the way in which we behave.

It provides a range of services (paid for through taxation), such as hospitals, schools, local services and so forth.

It employs hundreds of thousands of people - both directly (in the form of civil servants, the police, the armed forces, politicians) and indirectly, through the vast range of contracts that it issues...

Although I have referred to the State as "it", it is clear that the State is not a thing, but a set of inter-locking institutional relationships and arrangements - in this sense, it is a concept that can be applied to a form of (structural) social relationships. The State is not simply "the government" or the "monarchy" or the civil service but, on the contrary, it is something created out of the relationship between such institutions in society.

Given that the State does play such an important part in social life, it follows that any group or class (or even, in some instances, an individual) that can control the various agencies of the State is potentially very powerful in political, economic and ideological terms. For this reason, therefore, we have now got to turn towards an understanding of various theories concerning the nature and distribution of power in any society that make particular reference to the role of the State...

Theories of Power

What I propose to do in the following section is offer a broad outline of various theories of power distribution along the following lines:

1. Pluralist theories of power.

In this respect, power is seen to be held by a variety of groups in society (some of which are more powerful than others), who compete with each other. Since no one group or class is able to dominate all other groups (because of checks and balances built into a democratic system of government), a "plurality" of competing interest groups, political parties and so forth is seen to characterize democratic societies.

A variant on this theme ("Elite Pluralism") will also be considered, since this theory attempts to account for the fact that, as noted above, some groups are potentially more powerful than others in society.

2. Elite Theory.

This theory involves the idea that rather than there being a simple plurality of competing groups in society, there are instead a series of competing elites - powerful groups who are able to impose their will upon the rest of society. Two basic forms of elite theory will be considered:

- a. The theory of "circulating elites" (a conservative form of theorizing associated with writers such as Mosca and Pareto).
- b. Power Elite theory (a more radical form of theorizing developed by and associated with, C.Wright Mills).

3. Ruling Class Theory.

This is a Marxist form of theorizing which argues that power is fundamentally lodged with the owners and controllers of economic production (the bourgeoisie). Political power is seen to derive from economic ownership and, in this respect, we can identify a Ruling Class which not only controls the means of production, distribution and exchange in capitalist society but which also dominates and controls the institutions of political power. Again, two main forms of Marxism will be considered:

a. Instrumental Marxism:

Primarily associated with the work of Ralph Milliband ("The State In Capitalist Society"), this form of Marxism attempts to demonstrate empirically the nature of Ruling Class domination in society.

b. "Structuralist" Marxism:

Primarily associated with the work of writers such as Poulantzas ("Classes In Contemporary Capitalism") and Althusser, this variant of Marxism concentrates more upon the structural arrangements of capitalist society, attempting to show how a Ruling Class is able to dominate the rest of society economically, politically and ideologically without the need for its members to personally oversee the workings of the State.

In addition, I will also make reference to the work of Parsons (Functionalist theories of power), Weber (a non-Marxist Conflict theory of power) and Gramsci (a neo-Marxist theory of power).

Summarize the basic differences between Pluralist and Marxist theories of power distribution.

Power and the State.**Pluralist theories.**

Pluralist writers (such as Dahl "Who Governs?" 1961), whilst sharing a number of theoretical similarities with functionalists such as Parsons, can generally be differentiated from functionalism on the basis of three main ideas:

1. The nature of power:

Like Weber, pluralist writers tend to theorize power in terms of what is called a "zero-sum" or "constant-sum" capacity. That is, the amount of power in any society is seen to be relatively fixed ("constant"). For any group to accumulate power, it has to do so at the expense of another social group (hence the idea of a "zero-sum" totality of power).

For example, within the classroom, a teacher has more power than her students. However, if her students decide that they are going to disobey their teacher (shout, scream, run riot and so forth) and the teacher is unable to stop them, then here we have evidence for the idea of a "constant sum" theory of power.

Whilst the teacher controls her class, she has power and they do not. If her class decides that they are going to take control, then they have power and the teacher does not (since the students have effectively taken the power that was once exercised by their teacher).

In this situation, what options does the teacher have in order to take-back the power her students have taken from her?

For example, what other sources of power can a teacher call upon when control of her classroom breaks down?

2. Value consensus:

Again, like Conflict theorists, pluralist writers argue that there does not have to be a value consensus in any society. As societies become larger, they become more-differentiated and such differentiation is expressed in terms of sectional interests - groups of people organized around a set of interests, particular to that group, which they seek to advance at the expense of other sectional interest groups.

Whilst various divisions in society clearly exist along class, age, gender, religious and ethnic lines, no one division is seen to dominate an individual's life. Thus, pluralists tend to reject the Marxist notion that class is the most significant social attribute of the individual, whilst also rejecting the functionalist argument that such sectional conflicts are relatively unimportant in the explanation of the distribution and theorising of power relationships.

3. The State:

For pluralist writers, the State is considered to be a form of "honest broker" between the various sectional interests that exist in society. In this respect, the State is seen to mediate between various interests, promoting compromise between competing groups where possible and generally attempting to take a "long-term" view of social development.

For example, sectional interests (such as road builders) have to be balanced between sectional interests promoting rail and air development and these, in turn, may have to be balanced against sectional interests promoting environmental conservation and so forth.

Before we turn to look at what is usually termed "Classical Pluralist" theory (as opposed to "Elite Pluralism" - not to be confused with the similar-sounding "Elite Theory"), it might be useful to look, by way of comparison, at Talcott Parsons' functionalist theory of power.

Parsonian Functionalism and Power.

There are two main elements to Parsons' view of power:

1. The idea, contrary to Weber and Pluralism generally, that power should be conceived in "variable-sum" terms. That is, the idea that power levels can vary within any society (it can increase or decrease) since, as Parsons argues, power is something "possessed by society as a whole".
2. Power is viewed as a social resource, much like any other resource in society (for example, the number of people available for work, the provision of raw materials for economic production, the numbers of people being born and dying are all, in their different ways, social resources available to a society).

Power, in this sense, represents the capacity to mobilize general resources in society for the attainment of social goals. Thus, societies have general, collective, developmental goals (such as the desire to raise living standards, eradicate poverty and so forth) and the more these goals are realized, the greater the levels of overall power that comes into existence in society.

The United States, for example, is a powerful nation precisely because it has been able, collectively, to realize various goals (such as Territorial Unity, Consensual Government, Ideological Homogeneity (effective value consensus on a wide range of goals and issues), Economic Success).

Power, according to Parsons, is exercised in the general interests of society as a whole and, although some groups will be more powerful than others, this is necessary ("functional") because:

- a. The realization of collective goals requires co-operation.
- b. Co-operation requires organization.
- c. Organization requires command.
- d. The ability to command requires power...

Explain in your own words why functionalist sociologists generally tend to see inequality (of power, access to social resources or whatever) as necessary and function in modern societies.

As with all modern functionalist theory, power differences are functional only for as long as they do not become imbalanced - if power is too one-sided it becomes dysfunctional and powerful groups pursue short-term sectional interests that may not be in the interests of long-term social development. Various "checks and balances" are therefore built-into society (free elections, a Constitution, Freedom of the Press, an independent legal system and so forth) that prevent sectional interests seizing power.

We have come across this idea (the concept of "dysfunction") many times in various sections of the course.

a. Explain what is meant by this idea.

b. Show how the concept can be used as a kind of "catch-all" concept to "explain away" theoretical problems in the functionalist analysis of social systems.

Parsons argues that, precisely because levels of power are not constant, there does not necessarily have to be a struggle for power in society. By co-operating, everyone can gain a share of an expanding level of power. Just as levels of economic resources can expand, so too can power as a social resource. Co-operation, therefore, is not seen as some form of optional extra, but a structural imperative if a society is to develop and expand...

Classical Pluralism.

As I noted above, the classical pluralist conception of the State sees it as a set of "neutral" social institutions that does not favour any one group or class over any other. The State has no existence outside of the way its various machinery is controlled and exploited. In this respect, the essence of the pluralist case is that, in a democracy, political groups organize themselves to take control of the machinery of the State.

Although the existence of competing political parties means they will each represent a "core" or "fundamental" sectional interest (for example, the Conservative Party appealing to business, the Labour Party representing organized labour), the political system itself involves a number of structural checks and balances over the exercising of power. For example:

a. Political parties have to have a sufficiently broad appeal to collect enough votes to win an election. In this respect, they have to broaden their appeal to different sectional interests.

b. Governments subject themselves to re-election after a set period of time and abuses of power can then be punished by the electorate by voting a party out of office.

c. Governments operate within the confines of some form of Constitutional norms (either written norms, as in the case of America or informal, unwritten, norms in the case of Britain). These norms represent the "basic rules of democratic organization" in society.

d. An independent, autonomous, judiciary, different Houses of government (the Commons and Lords in Britain, Congress and Senate in America) supply checks to the power of government. In the case of Europe, an additional layer of checks and balances is included through the Treaty of Rome, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and so forth.

In addition, political parties are only one source of power for sectional interests:

Interest groups (or "Pressure groups") may be formed. These groups differ from political parties insofar as they do not seek elected office, but merely to influence the decision-making processes. Interest groups represent explicitly sectional interests ("narrow based" such as the R.S.P.C.A., or relatively "broad based" such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Trades' Union Congress (TUC) and so forth) and compete with each other to influence political policy-making.

For Classical Pluralists, therefore, democracy is characterized by:

1. A plurality of political parties:

These are predisposed towards sectional interests but have to appeal to a broader social grouping (a wide range of sectional interests) in order to gain and retain power.

2. A plurality of interest groups.

These appeal to sectional interests only, and no attempt is made to incorporate other, contradictory, sectional interests.

3. A broad value consensus over the legitimacy of political institutions (but not necessarily a value consensus in society as a whole). There may be conflicts over how political system should be specifically organized - for example the "first past the post" system or "proportional representation" - but fundamental agreement exists over the democratic nature of the political system.

Martin Deutsch has argued that classical pluralism generally consists of two main forms in relation to the way in which the State is theorized:

- a. Conservative Liberals who see the State as passive, only responding to wider social changes that might affect the stability of society.
- b. Social Democrats who see the State as being open to capture for the purpose of intervening in society to bring-about reforms (such as the development of a Welfare State, for example, which can only be brought into being by the over-riding influence and political will organized at the level of the State).

In both cases, the State is seen as being:

- a. Open to capture / influence.
- b. Responsive to social pressures.
- c. Neutral - not favouring one sectional interest over any other.

A good example of Classical Pluralist writing is that of Dahl ("Who Governs", 1961). In his study of local politics in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, Dahl conceptualized power in terms of "decision making".

Stephen Lukes ("Power: A Radical View", 1974) has termed this conceptualization the "first face or dimension of power", and in this respect, this face of power represents "the ability to make decisions". [Lukes argues that there are actually three dimensions to power and we will consider these dimensions in a moment].

Dahl argued, empirically, that the decision-making process in New Haven involved a variety of interest groups, all attempting to influence political decision-making. Some groups were dominant over some issues, whilst others were dominant over other issues. Dahl explicitly rejected the idea that this decision-making process could be characterized as an economically dominant group / class also dominating the political decision-making process.

Along similar lines, Hewitt's study of 24 policy issues in Britain between 1944 and 1964 ("Elites and the Distribution of Power in British Society", 1974) compared Parliamentary decisions, views of interest groups and public opinion (as measured through opinion polls) and found that there was no evidence of a consistent bias towards one section of society over another. Whether this is still the case, after nearly 15 years of the same political party in government is perhaps open to doubt...

Lukes has argued that, whilst this may be the case in relation to decision-making (the first dimension of power), classical pluralist writers have ignored a second dimension to power, namely "non-decision-making".

As Urry and Wakeford note, ("Power In Britain", 1973), pluralists, by concentrating upon power as a "decision-making" process, ignore the fact that powerful groups can prevent issues from ever reaching the point at which a decision is made. In this respect, there may exist a filtering process whereby decisions are only ever taken on "safe matters" - upon issues that do not fundamentally challenge or upset the balance of power. Thus, powerful groups may exercise power in ways that are hidden from public view, through:

Management of particular situations (for example, control of information).

The power to define certain situations (the difference between "terrorism" and "freedom fighting", for example)

For example, the Thatcher governments in Britain during the 1980's:

1. Repeatedly changed the basis upon which unemployment figures were calculated (resulting in a net decrease in "unemployment" - people were still without jobs, they simply didn't appear in the statistics).
2. Failed to collect statistics about the extent of poverty in Britain, the distribution of wealth, social class differences in terms of medicine, education, housing, taxation and so forth.
3. Pursued a campaign against Trade Union organizations (through a "friendly" mass media) that characterized them as "anti-democratic" organizations opposed to the basic interests of the majority of people in Britain...

Lukes' third dimension of power is also relevant in this context, insofar as it involves the ability to "shape desires". The argument here is that pluralists over-emphasize the distinction between:

- a. Decision-making,
- b. Public opinion and
- c. Power,

(in the sense that decision-making is held to be a reflection of public opinion).

Lukes argues that ideas about the social world do not arise in a social vacuum - people's opinions are based upon numerous sources of information (many of which can be controlled by the powerful - mass media, education and so forth). In this respect, public opinion (whatever the term may actually mean - little attempt is ever made to realistically measure it), can be shaped by the exercise of power to conform to the desires of the powerful.

In the above respect, the three dimensions of power outlined by Lukes can be summarized as:

1. The ability to make decisions.
2. The ability to manipulate the debate over the kinds of decisions that actually reach the stage of "being made".
3. The ability to shape public opinion so that it reflects the interests of the powerful.

Westergaard and Resler ("Class in Capitalist Society", 1976) argue, from a Marxist perspective, that in addition to the above, the over-concentration upon a narrow definition of power, politics and decision-making (such as that held by pluralist writers generally), hides the reality of power. For example, there may well be a separation between political decisions and the reasons for their being made:

Thus, the decision by the Major government to pump money into the NHS immediately prior to the 1992 election may have been the result of a desire to head-off protests in a pre-election period, rather than a desire to genuinely see an improvement in health care...

Elite Pluralism

This development in pluralist thinking arose as a response to criticisms that not all interest groups in a society have:

- a. Equal levels of power.
- b. Equal access to power.

In this respect, the concept of elite groups was developed, whereby elites were seen as the main participants in a decision-making process. Such elites might include:

Business organizations,
Government administration,
Political parties,
Trade Unions,
Cultural elites
and so forth.

Democracy, therefore, became characterized as a system of competing elites which over-lapped in terms of influence, membership and so forth.

In this sense, elite groups are seen in terms of strategic forms of power. For example, a strategic elite in Britain might be the Conservative Party as the party of government.

A strategic elite, therefore, is one of a number of competing groups whose power waxes and wanes at various times and over various issues - an idea that can be expressed as a system of countervailing power (that is, power never becomes concentrated in the hands of a small, unrepresentative, minority group).

For elite pluralism, power is:

- a. Situational - different groups have power in different social situations.
- b. Non-cumulative - power is effectively compartmentalized, such that power in one area (for example, economic power) is not necessarily translated into power in another area of society.

If we use the example of the Conservative Party, we can understand the idea of Structural and Strategic levels of power in the following way:

1. Structural Level:

As a political party, it competes with other parties for power. In this respect, the party presents a set of policies to the electorate that both differentiates them from other parties and, most importantly, attempts to appeal to a wide range of sectional interests. In government, this party has the power to make decisions, but these decisions are made in the light of influences from various sectional interests (Business, labour, environmental, etc.).

2. Strategic Level:

Within the party, different sectional interests are in evidence (for example, the Thatcherite radical right, the Heathite liberal conservatives and so forth). Additionally, sectional interest groups may arise in the party over specific issues (Europe, Capital Punishment, etc.).

Thus, there is seen to be competition at both the structural and strategic levels amongst various sectional interests.

Elite pluralism stresses the idea that representation is secured by the organization of sectional interests into elite groups who then compete with other elite groups for power. Richardson and Jordan ("Governing Under Pressure", 1979) argue that there are two basic forms of elite groups:

1. Insider groups: These elites are accepted by governments as legitimate representatives of particular interests in society and are regularly consulted.
2. Outsider groups: Such groups are not seen as legitimate, they lack governmental recognition and are not regularly / routinely consulted.

Recently, for example, we have seen the way in which environmentalist groups have been transformed from outsider to insider groups, whereby such groups are now routinely consulted for their views on environmental issues in a way that they were not consulted in the past.

In terms of Lukes' view of power, elite pluralism examines the first and second dimensions of power (the power to make decisions and the power to keep issues off the political agenda), but still fails to address the third dimension, namely the ability to shape people's desires.

Additional unresolved problems with elite pluralism include:

1. Even in a democracy, there are clear, widespread, disparities of power (even amongst well-organized elite groups). The extent to which power is actually widely-spread in society is not clear.
2. The lack of a third dimension of power means that elite pluralists fail to analyse the way in which elite groups can monopolize power to:
 - a. Use power in their own, sectional, interests.
 - b. Shape the desires of the "general public" so that public opinion simply reflects the interests of powerful groups at the expense of other groups in society.
 - c. Translate power in one area to power in another area. for example, the extent to which elites overlap is significant, insofar as economic power clearly appears to translate into political and ideological power.

In this respect, because elite pluralists tend to concentrate upon the strategic level of power, they pay little attention to the structural level, whereby the "rules of the power game" can be determined by a minority of very powerful interest groups.

Elite Theory (1)

This form of theory concerning the nature and distribution of power was originally developed by:

- a. Pareto ("The Mind and Society", 1916)
- b. Mosca ("The Ruling Class")

at the beginning of the 20th century. Elite theory should not be confused with elite pluralism.

Both Mosca and Pareto saw rule by elite groups as inevitable (even in supposedly democratic societies) and, as such, considered this state of affairs to be desirable - it was, effectively, "right and proper" that elite groups should dominate the political decision-making process.

What arguments, for and against, can you outline in relation to the view that rule by elites might / might not be "right and proper"?

Whilst Pareto saw political power in terms of a "continuous circulation of elite groups" who rule because of their members superior intelligence, education, cunning and so forth (that is, their superior personal qualities), Mosca argued that elite groups ruled politically because of their superior organizational ability.

In this latter respect, elites came to power because of their superior internal organization - they took power in the face of the disorganization of other elites, the general mass of the population and so forth.

Both writers saw the general (politically disorganized) mass of the population as being controlled through manipulation, propaganda and the like to serve the interests of powerful elites.

Summary of Pareto's arguments:

Following the ideas of Machiavelli, he distinguished two main types of elite group:

- a. "Lion elites" who were able to rule by force (for example, military regimes).
- b. "Fox elites" who were able to rule by manipulation (for example, liberal democratic regimes).

Given that Pareto's view of political power was pretty-much all-encompassing, he attempted to resolve the problem of political change (how, if an elite was effectively all-powerful, could it be replaced by another elite?) by reference to the idea that elites, after they achieve power, have a relatively limited life-span. That is, they grow decadent, decay, lose their vigour and so forth and, in turn, come to be replaced by other, more-vigorous, elite groups.

In this respect, we can see the theory of "circulating elites": powerful groups arise in society, take power, lose their political vitality over time and are replaced.

A contemporary example might be the Conservative party 1970 - 1990. Within this party, various elite groupings existed that rose to prominence, took power within the party and, after a few years, began to decay (Heath, through Thatcher, to Major...).

There are, however, numerous problems with this form of analysis:

1. Pareto, for example, simply assumes that elite groups are somehow superior to all other groups in society. He gives little real idea about how and why they are supposedly superior.
2. The distinction between types of elite is simplistic and does not recognize the fact that, in democratic societies, the politically powerful may rule through a combination of economic, military, political and ideological power.
3. His explanation for the replacement of elites is over-simplistic, insofar as he provides no real explanation as to why elites should necessarily become decadent or decay.
4. For Pareto, there appears to be little basic difference between democratic societies and totalitarian societies.

Summary of Mosca's arguments:

Although Mosca shared with Pareto the idea that elite groups had superior qualities to "the masses" (who were effectively born to be lead / controlled), he emphasized the social background of elites rather than their "personal qualities". In this respect, elites ruled because of their superior internal organizational abilities (some elites were better equipped than others to take power) and Mosca recognized that the organizational qualities needed to assume power varied from society to society.

Unlike Pareto, Mosca did attempt to distinguish between democratic and totalitarian societies, insofar as, in the former, the masses could have some input into the political process. However, his basic position was that democracy could never be anything more than a manipulative, legitimating, process whereby elites consolidated their power by co-opting the masses to support the interests of the powerful (rather than by truly representing the interests of the masses).

Briefly summarize the main differences between Mosca and Pareto's "elites theory"

Elite Theory (2)

A more-radical and theoretically well-developed form of elite theory was proposed by C. Wright Mills. Whilst Mills concentrates upon the way elite groups organize and take power in democratic societies, he argued this process - far from being right, proper and inevitable (as argued by Mosca and Pareto) - was neither inevitable nor necessarily beneficial to society as a whole. In this respect, Mills elaborated a form of non-Marxist Conflict theory concerning elites in democratic societies.

Mills' analysis stems from the idea that certain elite groups arose to control various institutions in society. Since some institutions were more-powerful than others (an economic elite, for example, was likely to be more powerful than an educational or religious elite), it followed that the elite groups who controlled such institutions would hold the balance of power in society as a whole - they would dominate politically on the structural level of power.

In his analysis of American society in the 1950's, Mills identified three major institutions (or "power blocs") within the State that he considered to be of primary significance in terms of the potential for wielding power in society:

- a. Major Corporations.
- b. The Military.
- c. Federal Government.

Each of these institutions formed a power bloc in its own right (since each has a set of specific interests) and each was dominated by an internal elite (the leaders of the most-powerful corporations, the upper echelons of the armed forces, the leaders of the political party in government). Although such elites were powerful in their own right, in any society there exists a necessary degree of overlap and co-operation between these power blocs:

- The Military requires political co-operation (identification of legitimate enemies, for example) and economic co-operation.
- Major Corporations require co-operation from government, defence contracts etc.
- Federal government requires the support of the Military, a strong corporate sphere and so forth.

Thus, Mills argued that the degree of necessary co-operation between elites within these power blocs effectively meant that they formed a "power elite" within society. Their overlapping general interests meant that, whilst they may have differing specific interests, these are subjugated to the wider interest of maintaining elite status, power and rule. The social cohesiveness of the power elite was seen to be strengthened by such things as:

- a. The centralization and concentration of economic power amongst a minority of powerful groups / individuals.
- b. The centralization and concentration of political power amongst a minority of powerful groups / individuals.
- c. The shared social backgrounds (and hence values) of the members of each elite.

Thus, for Mills, the members of different elites frequently inter-changed, such that certain powerful individuals could be members of more than one elite at any given time (for example, military leaders could take-up political appointments, become directors of major corporations. Major business leaders could take-up political appointments in government and politicians could sit on the boards of major corporations).

In this respect, political power becomes increasingly concentrated and enormous political decisions (about investment, whether or not to go to war, civil rights and so forth) were effectively taken by a small elite minority. In this respect, politics declined into a manipulation of debate - Mills characterized it as a necessary exercise where political choice is limited because political parties who wanted power could only achieve it on the basis of co-operation from economic and military elites.

In America, for example, in order to fund an election campaign, aspiring politicians require money from businesses, the rich and so forth and, in return, are encouraged to pursue policies that are favourable to this power bloc. Politics, according to Mills, becomes thoroughly permeated by a business / military ideology - there may be different parties and different politicians, but they will pursue the same basic policies because they are effectively tied-into the military / industrial complex of power.

If we apply this form of analysis to Britain over the past 20 years, it becomes evident that the Labour Party, for example, has been forced to progressively jettison any pretence it may have had to being a "radical", "socialist" party that will carry-through wide-ranging changes in the balance of economic power. whilst the Conservative and Labour parties differ in relation to specific policies (over "safe decisions"), a basic, underlying, consensus exists about the overall nature of society and its political / economic institutions (over "non-safe" decisions).

Again, a power elite in Britain might be identified, its various leaders being characterized by similar social backgrounds and values. In this respect, political power resembles a "self-perpetuating oligarchy", whereby the faces may change, but basic political policies remain much the same...

Communist societies also seem to be a clear example of power elite societies and, in this respect, may display more theoretically coherent forms of elite co-operation. Budge, McKay and Marsh ("The New British Political System", 1983) attempt to refine Mills' basic argument by noting that, in democracies, a form of fragmented elites tends to exist - a large number of competing elites exist, each of which may have internal and external divisions.

UNIT 21 PRESSURE GROUPS

Structure

- 21.0 Objectives
- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Meaning of Pressure Groups
- 21.3 Role of Pressure Groups
- 21.4 Techniques of Pressure Groups
- 21.5 Pressure Groups and Political Parties
- 21.6 Types of Pressure Groups
- 21.7 Comparison of Indian and Western Pressure Groups
- 21.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.9 Some Useful Books
- 21.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

21.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- analyse the role of pressure groups in democratic politics;
- explain the types of pressure groups; and
- compare the Indian and Western pressure groups.

21.1 INTRODUCTION

In democratic politics, pressure groups are organisations which attempt to influence the government. The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences describes the groups as representing the interest of the sections into which a society is divided. With advanced specialisation groups will be more numerous and specialised. Such groups represent interest of various sections of society viz., farmers, labourers, government employees, businessmen, professional people and even students. Pressure groups are also known as interest groups.

21.2 MEANING OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups are organised associations, unions or organisation of people having common interest. Their aim is to seek better conditions for their members through organised efforts. They try to influence the legislature, executive and other decision makers to have decisions made in their favour.

According to V.O.Key, a striking feature of American politics is the extent to which political parties are supplemented by private associations formed to influence public policy. These organisations are commonly called pressure groups. David B.Truman defines an interest group as “a shared attitude group that makes certain claims upon the other groups in the society.” One of the major trends in democratic political process is the increasing role of pressure groups. Herman Finer viewed that it is perhaps now an axiom of political science that, where political parties are weak in principles and organisation, the pressure groups will flourish; where pressure groups are strong, political parties will be feeble; and

where political parties are strong, pressure groups will be curbed. In the context of the USA, the rigid nature of its constitution, the doctrine of separation of powers, difficulties of conveying the grievances of the people to the government, etc. contribute to the growth of pressure groups in American politics. American pressure groups are not much influenced by the political parties whereas in Britain pressure groups implicitly or explicitly have attachment with political parties.

Indian political parties are weak in principles and organisation. Therefore, pressure groups are supposed to be very significant in the functioning of the Indian Political System. In parliamentary system of government, pressure groups exert pressure mainly on the executive with the assumption that legislature is under the control of executive. Here executive includes both the political and permanent executive.

21.3 ROLE OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Group activities are generally more effective than individual activities. Therefore, pressure groups play a vital role in a democratic society in terms of influencing the government for expressing the common concern of a section of society and promote their interest. The vitality of the pressure groups is mainly determined by their ability to influence the government. Influencing the government involves influencing the public policy decision makers, law makers, implementers of policies and decisions, etc. The role of pressure groups is closely connected with politics. Here our assumption is that power is an essential element of politics which implies the study of influence. In this context Harold D. Lasswell in his early work on politics, uses the subtitle, "who gets what, when, how?" and says that, "the study of politics is the study of influences and influential." In view of this understanding, the state of pressure groups in democratic countries constitutes an important dimension of the study of politics because the primary objective of any pressure group is to influence the government on a specific public policy issue or problem.

Pressure groups do not contest elections and they may not have political programmes. Pressure groups informally attempt to influence the government on a specific public policy issue of a section of society.

Freedom of association is generally found in all democratic societies. This is required in order to identify and promote common interest or well-being of the people through the collective activities. This is regarded as the basic factor which tends to the establishment of pressure groups. So, pressure groups play a crucial role in interest formation and interest aggregation.

Pressure groups play the mediatory role between the people and government. They balance the national interest and interest of individuals. Generally interests of the common people are not organised. Pressure groups contribute to give concrete shape to the interests of people. This role of pressure groups is significant in interest formation as well as interest aggregation. The groups have to move demands before the government based on the difficulties or grievances of people. Interest formation may occur through the reactions of groups of people on issues of public importance like GATT, Nuclear explosion, reservation policy, environmental issues, price rise, regional imbalances, rural development program, etc.

According to Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell, converting the demands into policy alternatives is interest aggregation. In this process also, pressure groups play a significant role in terms of identifying possible policy alternatives or options. They also explain the pros and cons of each policy alternative which is a very

helpful information for the policy makers to select the best alternative. This role of pressure groups is to provide inputs to public policy making. On the whole, pressure groups contribute to democratise the public policy making and law making.

When it is found that political parties cannot adequately represent the aspirations of the people, pressure groups become the devices for representing the aspirations of the people. In this sense, pressure groups perform the representation function.

In a welfare state, the growing functions of government may tend to affect the responsive capability of the political system. Besides the members of government may not be able to get sufficient time to get all the details of a particular issue of public importance as the political elites are preoccupied in the political activities. In view of these, pressure groups are essential to make the political system respond to the aspirations of people and provide the details of a particular policy issue of public importance to the ruling political elites. This will contribute to work out development activities very effectively.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the meaning and role of pressure groups in democratic politics.

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21.4 TECHNIQUES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

The main techniques of pressure groups are manipulating public opinion, persuading legislators and administrators, etc. When some project, as for instance the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) in Gujarat, and the Kaiga project in Karnataka, are likely to affect the interest of a section and region, pressure groups attempt to promote environmental awareness by providing the necessary information to the concerned people. This role of pressure groups tends to change the public attitude towards a specific issue. The extent of influence of pressure groups on government is mainly determined by their position to represent public opinion. Hence it is necessary on the part of pressure groups to influence the process of formation of public opinion. As a consequence, pressure groups seem to manipulate public opinion.

Pressure groups have friends and allies in the legislatures as in the case of American Congress and the Indian Parliament. Influence of pressure groups is through the legislators for making specific provisions or deleting some provision in legislation. This involves lobbying and it is particularly influential in the USA.

Pressure groups attempt to influence the process of implementation of decisions through the administrators. Besides, pressure groups adopt the technique of

influencing the government through public interest litigation in courts of law. When we talk of the techniques of the pressure groups, we should take into account the political form in which the pressures are to be exercised. In the U.S., the pressure are exercised in the presidential form. In India, they are to be exercised in the context of the cabinet form of government. The methods of pressure groups in India may be said to be ill-defined and, to some extent, crude. The methods of the American pressure groups are highly developed and routine. In the U.S, the need for the pressure groups is felt greatly because the executive is separate from the legislature and both of them of course are separate from the judiciary. In India, the co-ordination between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary is well defined. The judiciary is independent but does not have the powers of judicial review as wide as in the U.S. In India, the judiciary is asserting its position under the influence of the pressure groups which are bringing before it the public interest litigation which is seen clearly in case of environmental pressure groups and economic pressure groups. Medha Patkar and her associates have exercised a vast amount of pressure on the executive at the state and central level over the question of the Narmada dam and particularly the resettlement of the people affected by the dam. There are pressure groups which have been working on the problems of daily wage workers and women and many of them are exercising pressure by bringing their cases before the courts in the form of public interest litigation. Even in the limited context of municipal government, as in case of Bombay, citizens are taking cases to the high courts to exert pressure on the municipal authorities to clean streets and undertake environmental measure. In the context of India, as in several developing countries, these techniques are new. Therefore the pressure groups have to work hard to organise the members of the public in order to be effective in relation to government and public administration. In active cities like Pune, citizens have gone to the extent of bringing back the transferred commissioner in the teeth of opposition of the state government.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What are the techniques adopted by the pressure groups in different forms of government?

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21.5 PRESSURE GROUPS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Pressure groups and political parties constitute very important structure of a political system. Both pressure groups and political parties are extra-constitutional agencies and play a crucial role in the political process. Sometimes, pressure groups become political parties. In Maharashtra, the Shiva Sena was a pressure group and it has now become a political party. Similarly, the Karnataka Rajya Sangh (KRRS) in Karnataka, was initially a pressure group. After sometime, the KRRS became a political party in Karnataka.

Pressure groups may give rise to political parties. The cultural and religious pressure group (the RSS) gave rise to the establishment of Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951. The Indian political parties have corresponding students organisations namely, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Students Federation of India (SFI), All-India Students Federations (AISF), etc. which are regarded as pressure groups of students affiliated with one party or the other. There can be pressure groups within a political party. The Seva Dal was a unit of the Indian National Congress before independence and it was working as a pressure group. After independence, the Seva Dal has continued to be a pressure group but it is not so effective now as in pre-independence days.

A political party is a larger organisation, while a pressure group is comparatively a small organisation. The main objective of a political party is to come to power whereas the main concern of a pressure group is to influence the government for promoting its specific interest. However, political parties have to represent the aggregate of diverse interests of the people. That is why pressure groups are regarded as non-political. Parties put up their candidates, try to win maximum number of seats in the legislature and form government, if possible. Pressure Groups do not, on their own, do any of these things.

A political party requires an ideology which enables it to have an identity. Pressure groups do not need ideology and sometimes they may be subjected to the influence of an ideology.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) How are pressure groups different from political parties?

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21.6 TYPES OF PRESSURE GROUPS

Rationale and methods of operation of various pressure groups may not basically vary from one country to another country. The generalisations that can be made are broadly applicable to understanding of the working of pressure groups in various countries. The origin of pressure groups is diverse since they represent a particular dimension of interests like economic, social and political interests. Pressure groups exist for protecting or promoting particular interest(s).

Pressure groups can be broadly classified into the following categories :

- 1) Business Groups
- 2) Labour Organisations
- 3) Farmers' Groups
- 4) Professional Groups
- 5) Religious Groups

1) Business Groups

Businessmen are generally well-organised and their concern would be to get reasonable restrictions imposed on the production and distribution of goods, import and export of commodities, determination of price of commodities, etc. There are business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers in the USA, the Federation of British Industries, the National Council of French Employers, the Federation of German Industry, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), etc.

In India the British merchants established the Chamber of Commerce in 1830s. In 1926, it was decided to establish a national Indian business organisation. In the following year the same business organisation became the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The support of the wealthy businessman like G.D.Birla made this business group an important and influential force. In addition to the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry there are other national business groups namely the All-India Manufacturers' Organisation, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India etc. These business groups keep in touch with political parties and contribute to party funds and some candidates in elections are financed by the businessmen.

The primary function of any business group is to protect its business interests like opposing tax increase, minimum control on labour, etc.

2) Labour Organisations

In the USA trade union politics began with the establishment of the American Federation of Labour in 1886. There are labour organisations like the communist dominated Confederation of Christian Trade Unions in France, German Confederation of Trade Unions, Transport and General Workers' Union in England, Indian National Trade Union Congress, etc. The labour organisations are concerned with payment of adequate wages and emoluments, reasonable working hours and conditions of service, compensation in case of some accident, etc. They are often associated with one party or the other.

In India the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), the Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh have links with political parties like the Congress (I), Communist parties, the Socialist Party, the BJP etc. All these trade unions are regarded as major Indian Labour Organisations.

3) Farmers' Groups

Farmers' groups are basically concerned with protecting the interest of farmers from adverse effects of modernisation and getting facilities of modernisation to the farmers. These include continuation of subsidy to the farmers, minimum price for agricultural products, etc. In the USA, the farmers' groups like American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Grange, the National Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union of America are regarded as very important farmers' groups for getting their just dues from the government. In India, we have farmers' groups like Karnataka Rajya Raith Sangh, Setkari Sangh of Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra and similar organisation of Mahendra Singh Tikait in UP.

4) Professional Organisations

Professional organisations are mainly concerned with the service conditions and other facilities for their respective professions. Associations like teachers'

association, medical association, bar association, etc. are regarded as pressure groups based on their professions. The American Association of University Teachers, All-India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations, the American Bar Association, the Indian Political Science Association, the British Medical Association are some of the examples of professional pressure groups.

5) Religious Organisations

Religious pressure groups generally attempt to protect the interest of a particular religion. In the USA, the National Council of Churches is a religious pressure group. The other religious pressure groups are the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, etc. In the Indian context, the caste and communal associations can be categorised as religious pressure groups. In Indian politics, caste associations are increasingly getting prominence and becoming very influential.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Describe the various types of pressure groups.

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21.7 COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND WESTERN PRESSURE GROUPS

Both India and Western countries are democracies. But within western countries there are differences between Presidential and Parliamentary forms of government. India though a parliamentary democracy differs from such countries of the West in terms of developmental levels. Therefore there are some differences in the role of pressure groups.

Firstly, the American pressure groups are regarded as the fourth organ of the government but the Indian pressure groups are not yet able to play such significant role in politics.

Secondly, in India and Great Britain the cabinet and civil service are the main targets of pressure groups for lobbying purposes rather than the parliament. However, the targets of American pressure groups are the Congress and its committees rather than the President for lobbying purposes.

Thirdly, Indian pressure groups based on caste, religion, region, etc. are more powerful than the modern groups like business organisations.

Fourthly, a significant feature of American pressure groups is that in the USA pressure groups take interest in foreign policy issues while in India pressure groups do not seem to have interest in foreign policy matters. Comparatively, the Indian pressure groups are concerned more with domestic policy issues and problems, and less with foreign policy matters.

However in general, despite the differences, democratic politics presupposes the crucial role of pressure groups for serving the interests of different sections of society.

21.8 LET US SUM UP

Pressure groups play a vital role in democratic politics in terms of representing and promoting the aspirations of the people. The significance of pressure groups is mainly determined by the political parties, the forms of government, attitudes of people towards politics, the nature of leadership etc.

Pressure groups are different from political parties mainly because their main purpose is to secure maximum advantage for their members whose interests are common. Political parties contest elections to legislative bodies, and those who get majority form the government and control the administration. Pressure groups do not seek political power. They only try to influence the decision-makers.

There are different types of pressure groups, such as business groups, labour organisations (trade unions), farmers' associations, professional groups (e.g. bar associations, medical associations, teachers associations and chartered accountants groups), and religious groups. Some of the pressure groups associate themselves directly, or indirectly, with one political party or the other, without formally joining it.

21.9 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

V.O.Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, New York, Thomas & Crowell Company, 1969, p.18.

Herman Finer, *Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Delhi, Surjeet, 1977.

Pressure Groups in Indian Politics, New Delhi : Radiant Publishers, 1980, p.38.

Verinder Grover (Ed.) *Politics of Influence, Violence and Pressure Groups*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Publication, 1990.

21.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) These are groups of people organised to achieve a common goal. They try to influence decision-makers to seek maximum concessions for their members. (See Sections 21.2 and 21.3)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Manipulation of public opinion, persuading legislators and administrators. They have their friends in legislatures and administration. They often offer benefits to decision-makers to favour their groups. (See Section 21.4)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Political parties have clear and distinct ideologies, pressure groups merely promote the collective interests of their groups. Parties seek political power

and contest elections; groups do not. Groups only exercise influence or pressure over the decision makers. (See Section 21.5)

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) They are mainly labour (trade) unions, business groups, farmers groups, religious groups and professional groups, such as doctors' associations, bar (lawyers') associations, teachers organisations, traders groups, etc. (See section 21.6)

Unit 29 Social Movements: Meanings and Dimensions

Contents

- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Concepts of Social Movements
- 29.3 Origin of Social Movements.
- 29.4 Components of Social Movements
- 29.5 Transformation of Social Movements
- 29.6 Conclusion

Learning Objectives

Social movements have emerged to be a crucial area of social science inquiry. This unit deals with

- the concepts of social movements
- origin of social movements
- element of social movements and
- transformation of social movements

29.1 Introduction

Social Movements are parts of social progression. These phenomena represent varieties of collective actions across time and space. As social processes social movements emerge as manifestation of collective discontent against the established social, economic and political orders. These emerge as the collective critic of the society rejuvenating vital social forces. As student of sociology you would be interested to know the meanings and several social, political, economic, cultural etc dimensions of social movements.

This unit introduces you to some of the fundamental issues of social movement. It aims to conceptualize social movement from a socio-historical perspective. There are several traditions of conceptualizing social movements. Glimpses of these traditions are also presented here. There are several causes of social movements. In this unit we have elaborated the causes or origins of social movement and have explained the roles of ideology, leadership and organization in social movements. The processes of transformation of social movements are in also discussed here. Since we would be dealing with varieties of issues, involved in social movements in the following units of this block these key issues are clarified at the outset for cognitive coherence of this the block.

29.2 Concept of Social Movements

Social movements have broadly been perceived as 'organized' or 'collective effort' to bring about changes in the thought, beliefs, values, attitudes, relationships and major institutions in society or to resist any change in the above societal arrangements. Blumer (1951) defines social movements as 'collective enterprises to establish a new social order of life'. To Toch (1965) social movement is an 'effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common'. According to Haberle (1972) it is 'a collective attempt to bring about a change in certain social institutions or to create entirely a new order', J.R. Gusfield (1972) perceives a social movement as a socially shared demand for change in some aspect of the social order'. To Wilson (1973), social movements may either be for a change or resistance to

change. Thus to him, a social movement is an organised endeavour to bring about or to resist large-scale changes in the social order by non-institutionalized means.

a) Historical and Social Context of Conceptualization

It is significant that social movements are conceptualized in a particular historical and social context. For example in the North American society, in the wake of the emerging threat from the Fascist and the Communist movements in the 1930s "social movements are conceptualized by scholar like Haberle in 1951 as the potentially dangerous forms of non-institutionalized collective political behaviour which if left unattended, threatened the stability of the established ways of life". Social movement however, is not solely destructive. As a collective agency it possesses several creative potentials. Thus many scholars like Blumer and many other have highlighted the emergence of new norms of adaptive behaviour, problem solving and learning orientation potentially present in social movements. In the 1950s and 1960s the scholars like Turner and Killian (1957), Parsons, (1969) Smelser and others viewed social movement from collective behaviour perspective. In this approach social movements are viewed as non-institutionalized collective actions, which are not guided by existing social norms, formed to meet undefined or unstructured situations and are understood in terms of a breakdown either in the organs of social control or normative integration, due to structural changes. The resulting strains, discontent, frustration, and aggression from this situation ultimately lead the individual to participate in non-institutionalized. It is also pointed out that this behaviour pattern has a 'life cycle', which moves from spontaneous crowd action to the formation of public and social movement (Cohen, 1995:671-72, cf. Jamison and Eyerman, 1991:14).

Again each society has its own perception on the social movements which is developed based on its own socio-economic, cultural and the intellectual tradition. For example, the scholars in the Europe conceptualized social movements in a somewhat different term, based on their socio-political conditions and the intellectual heritage, from that of the Americans. While in the US it is an empirically observable phenomenon, in Europe it has emerged to be theoretically connected object. The Marxian theoretical position was widely followed in Europe; Weberian position was widely used in the United States.

It is significant that after the World War II the philosophy of the 'welfare state' was widely accepted all over the world except in the authoritarian regimes. As a corollary to this welfare state philosophy institutionalized conflicts between labour and capital were recognised as legitimate collective social behaviour in the modern society. According to Eyerman and Jamison the existence of strong, institutionalized, reformist social democratic labour movement in all the countries of Western Europe affected the way social movements were conceived by social scientists. As the conflict between labour and capital got institutionalized in the social democratic tradition, labour movement also got a legitimate place as organised collective behavior in the modern societies. In the United States social movement has remained anti ideological and the distinction between social movement and social institution. Thus Smelser distinguishes between general movement (long term shift in societal norms and values and change in attitude and consciousness) and social movements (immediate observable outburst of collective behaviour pushing long term changes along with it). Thus he distinguishes between norm and value oriented social movements respectively. And accordingly, a social movement to him, was an observable expression of general movement (Eyerman and Jamison , 1991:17-18)

Social movements in the developing countries were manifested in different

socio political contexts. Anti colonial, workers and the peasant movements were the dominant patterns of collective actions with a wide political connotation in built in these movements. While the anti colonial movements aimed at the liberation of the colonized countries from the imperial powers, the workers and the peasant movements were directed against the oppressive capitalists and landowners of these countries. Significantly, the nationalist spirit of the cross section of the population was the most appealing force in the anti colonial movement, while the workers and the peasant movements were mostly organised based on the Marxian philosophy of class struggle. In the post World War II period success stories of the workers and the peasant movements in the then Soviet Russia, China, Vietnam and Cuba had become the guiding spirit to the workers and the peasant movements in the developing countries. Social movements of various forms have got wider legitimacy in the political culture in the societies. In a state of increasing poverty, illiteracy, corruption and sharpening class inequality a vast section of the population have accepted organised collective action as a mode of protest and survival. However, in the wake socio political transition, globalisation and introduction to new economic order in these countries the forms of collective action have under gone a qualitative change.

b) Change in Perception since late 1950s

The established social and the political order of Europe and America received a severe jolt in late 1950s and 1960s with the vehement outburst of the Black civil rights, students, women's, peace, gay and environment etc. movements. The hitherto existing theoretical perspectives however, were unable to explain these movements which marked a sharp departure from the earlier organised movements of labor and the working class. These departures were largely viewed in terms of the emergence of new social actors and categories due to the fundamental shift in social structure and the emergence of post-industrial society. The 'postindustrial movements engage different actors, different loci of conflict and different issues than those of the industrial society. Even at the empirical level, these social movements exhibited new characteristics and new ideas. Hence there was a need to move beyond the existing framework of explanation.

Touraine (1981, 1983) observes these phenomena as 'new social movement being potential bearers of new social interests'. To him, it is through the process of collective will formation that social movements come to recognize themselves as collective actors with a historical project. The European tradition tried to discover a process of new knowledge and collective identity formation in these actions. Here the most common approach has been to analyze social movement to be the carriers of political projects, and historical actions.

Thus in the European tradition social movement is seen in terms of structures and long term processes. There is a concern for distinguishing the new from the old social movements.

For the European sociologists, it is the political meaning of the movement that is of utmost significance. For example, Alberto Melucci (1988) sees social movements in primarily symbolic terms and identity formation as a kind of dramaturgy. Social movements make power visible, and they challenge the dominant meaning systems or symbols of contemporary everyday life. He talks about the issues of identity in social movements in great length. We shall discuss this issue in the next two units of this block.

The American sociologists have however, seen knowledge and identity as non-empirical objects. The knowledge component of a social movement to them provide the issues or ideologies around which movements mobilize resources or socialize individuals.'

Since 1960s and onward the collective behaviour approach is being contested by the resource mobilisation theorists to emphasis on the effectiveness of the movement organization (see Zald and McCarthy 1987). As an alternative to collective behaviouralism, the theory of resource mobilisation has emerged in the American tradition to explore why some movements are more successful than others. Tilly (1978) for example identifies collective action in terms of the pursuit of common interest, which is typical of social, all movements. This approach assumes that collective actions are related to the specific opportunity structures. Here importance is given on the rationality of human action, whereby the participants in the social movement calculate the cost and benefits of their participatory action in collective mobilization. In this approach social movements are seen 'either as the creation of entrepreneurs skillful in the manipulation or mobilisation of social resources or as the playing out the social tensions and conflicts'. Thus the motivation of the actors is seen as rational economic action. The resource mobilization theory, indeed, aims to interpret those sets of social movements that are the visible parts of the American social reality in management term. It is linked to the policy problem of containment. (Ibid: 47)

Social movements in the developing countries have conventionally been conceptualized either from the Marxian or from the Functionalist perspectives. However the proliferation of the new social movements, manifestation of new form of collective actions, resurgence of the violence in the new contexts and the articulation of new forms of collective actions in these societies have generated enormous interests among the social scientists, policy planners and social activists for the study of social movements. However there has been a tendency to analyze social movements of these societies following the theoretical tools widely used in the western societies.

Reflection and Action 29.1

What do you mean by social movements? How has the issue of identity been conceptualized as an essential part of social movements?

29.3 Origin of Social Movements.

There are several schools of thoughts on the origin of social movements. The classical model of thought is represented by the versions of mass society, collective behaviour, status inconsistency, raising expectations, and relative deprivation.

- a) The mass society theorist, like Kornhauser (1959), is of the view that due to the lack of an intermediate structure people in the mass society are not integrated in the society. This leads to alienation, tension and ultimately social protest. In the mass society individuals are related one another not by variety of groups etc., but by their relation to a common authority, i.e. the state. In the mass society, in the absence of independent groups and associations people lack the resource to ward off the threat to their autonomy. In their absence people lack the resources to restrain their own behaviour as well as that of others. Social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore, the disposition to engage extreme behaviour to escape from these tensions (Kornhauser 1996 : 92). It is pointed out that the mass society is conditioned by elite domination over the mass. It replaces the democratic rule. In this society individuals are objectively atomized and subjectively alienated. In this system people are available for mobilization by elite. To Kornhauser "alienation heightens responsiveness to the appeal of mass movements because they provide the occasions for expressing resentment against what is, as well as promises of a totally different world. In short, people who are atomized readily become mobilized" (Ibid: 92).

- b) The proponents of the theory of **status inconsistency**, like Broom (1959) and Lenski (1954), are of the view that the objective discrepancy between persons ranking and status (dimension e.g., education, income, occupation) generate subjective tensions in the society leading to cognitive dissonance, discontent and protest. The state of severe status discrepancy, according to these scholars, lead to subjective tensions and dissonance. According to Geschwender (1971) the set of circumstances described by the status inconsistency hypothesis would produce varying intensities of dissonance and dissonance-reducing behaviour according to the degree of discrepancy between relevant status dimensions (cf. Mc Adam 1973 : 136).
- c) The theory **structural strain** as propagated by Smelser, Lang and Lang, Turner and Killian suggests that any severe structural strain can help manifest social movements. To Smelser the more severe the strain, the more likelihood of social movements. In general it is argued that there are sequences leading to the manifestation of social movements. These sequences move from structural weakness due to the strain in society leading to psychological disturbances and ultimately to the manifestations of social movements. There are, however variety of reasons behind the structural strain. Individuals experience strain out of disruption in the normal functioning of the society. this disruption may be caused by the process of industrialization, urbanization, migration, increase in unemployment. The increase in the quantum of disruption is positively related to the manifestation of social movement. In this perspective social change is the source of structural strain. Social change is described as stressful because it disrupts the normative order in which people are accustomed leading to a feelings of anxiety, fantasy and hostility (Mc Adam 1997). Thus in general this theory visualizes social movements as collective relations to such strains that create severe tensions. Some aggregate of there tensions reach reach to a "boiling" point triggering social emergency. This model emphasizes wage on the psychological effect that strain has on individuals than on the desire for a political goal (Ibid)
- In this context it is important to mention here that Smelson has highlighted the significance of the **generalized beliefs'** in conjunction with other five factors - structural conduciveness, structural strain, a precipitating factor, mobilization of the participants for action, and the failure of social control are necessary conditions for a collective episode (Smelson, cf. Walsh 1978: 156)
- Thus the classical model has observed social movements as response to structural strain, it is concerned with the psychological effect that stain has on individual and that collective participation in the movement is guided by urgent psychological pressure and not by the aim to change the political structure. (McAdam, D. 1996: 135-143)
- d) The **theory of Relative Deprivation** has been got a place of prominence in the social movement study. In the Marxian analysis economic deprivation has been identified to be the prime cause of social conflict among the two antagonistic classes i.e. the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. To Aberle (1966) deprivation has also non-material base e.g. status, behaviour, worth etc. Relative deprivation, i.e., the discrepancy between legitimate expectations and the reality is the central point of social movement. Gurr (1970) has perceived deprivation as a gap between expectations and perceived capabilities involving three generalised sets of values: economic conditions, political power and social status (cf.Rao, 1982)
- e) The **theory of Cultural Revitalization**. As propagated by Wallace (1956) expresses the view that social movements are manifested out a deliberate, organised and conscious action of the member of the society to construct a more satisfying culture for themselves. To him, the revitalization

movements undergo four phase of progression: from cultural stability to increased individual stress to cultural distortion and disillusionment to cultural revitalization.

It is to mention here that no element of strain and deprivation alone can produce a movement unless there is a subjective perception about these objective conditions of deprivation. Ideology, organization and leadership play crucial role towards the manifestation and sustenance of social movements. We shall be dealing with the issues in the next section of this unit.

Reflection and Action 29.2

You must have seen several discontents to get collectively manifested in your society. Are all these discontents being termed as social movements? What are their origins?

29.4 Components of Social Movements

Conventionally ideology, collective mobilisation, organisation and leadership are identified to the vital elements of social movements. Ideology provides a broad frame of action and collective mobilisation in the social movement. It also provides legitimacy to the process of interest articulation organized collective action. There are different ways of formulating ideology in a social movement. However, in the context of new social movements role of ideology has been a subject of close scrutiny. Some aspects of this issue we shall discuss in the next unit.

Collective mobilization is again a central element of a social movement. The nature and direction of a social movement is widely shaped by the nature of collective mobilisation. Collective mobilisation may be radical, non-institutionalized, spontaneous, large scale or it may be non-violent, institutionalized, sporadic, restricted. It may also undergo a process of transformation from radical to reformative or institutionalized. Routinisation of charisma is an illustration to this point.

Leadership and organization are closely linked to the process of collective mobilisation. A leader can be charismatic figure or a democratically elected one. In the context of new social movements the issues of leadership, organization ideology and collective mobilisation have acquired several new dimensions.

For years, social movements as an area of legitimate sociological research have occupied a position of marginality both in the functionalist and Marxist paradigm. For the functionalists social movements were sources of potential disruption to an entity. Here only by assigning a marginal position to social movements was 'integrity of the functional theoretical system ensured. On the other hand, though the Marxist analysis is concerned with social transformation, this has identified the "classes" as the sole agents of social transformation. Non-class movements are viewed critically, and sometimes with contempt or hostility' (Scott, A. 1990: 2). Over the years, however, these single order explanations have proved to be inadequate in analyzing the complexity of the phenomena of social movements, and a vast body of literature has emerged in this emerging area of social inquiry. These studies have made sincere efforts to comprehend the issues and dynamics of social movements by using cases from various parts of the world. Significantly, the dynamics and components of the social movements—ideological orientation, organizational set-up, patterns of mobilization, leadership, tactics of collective action, issues involved in the social movements and their linkages with the wider social processes and so on—are critically scrutinized through their efforts to explain the phenomena of collective mobilization with new perspective(s). Thus in these efforts of the social scientists there has been not only the quest for

identification of the 'newness' in the emerging social movements of the 1960s and thereafter, but also a genuine urge to locate the various elements of commonalities in these episodes.

New Components: New ideals, Collective identities and Resources

In the context of the emergence of new social movements the issues of values, culture, subjectivity, idealism, morality, identity, empowerment, etc., have got new coinage and added prominence in these efforts. Thus Bertaux (1990) adds the view that 'subjectivity' and 'idealism' are essential elements of social movement and must be taken seriously.

Similarly, social movements help generate a sense of collective identity and new ideas. Melucci has emphasized on collective identity formation in the context of new social movements. To him, social movements grow around relationships of new social identity that are voluntarily conceived 'to empower' members in defense of this identity (Melucci, 1996). Eyerman and Jamison (1991) assert that 'by articulating consciousness, social movement provides public spaces for generating new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas (1991: 161-66). To Hegedus (1990) involvement in an action is a matter of conscience and emotion, of responsibility (1990: 266).

However participation in social movements may not necessarily always be for the quest of an identity; rather, it may be for the gratification of political and material interests. Tilly (1978a): McAdam (1982), Tarrow (1994 and many others are of the view that social movements manifest in response to the increase in the potential political opportunities and growing receptivity of the state to the activities of the challenging groups. In general, these scholars emphasize on the various resources involved in the manifestation and operationalisation of social movements.) Tilly (1978a) for example identifies collective action in terms of the pursuit of common interest, which is typical of social movements. This approach, known as resource mobilization, assumes that collective actions are related to the specific opportunity structures. Here importance is given on the rationality of human action, whereby the participants in the social movement calculate the costs and benefits of their participatory action in collective mobilization. In this approach social movements are seen 'either as the creation of entrepreneurs skillful in the manipulation or mobilization of social resources or the playing out the social tensions and conflicts'. Thus the motivation of the actors is seen as rational economic action. The resource mobilization theory, indeed, aims to interpret those sets of social movements that are the visible parts of the American social reality in management terms. It is linked to the policy problem of containment (47).

Reflection and Action 29.3

Critically analyze the relevance of identity and ideology in social movements.

29.5 Transformation of Social Movements

Every social movement is having a life history and undergoes a process of transformation. The movement may emerge to be routinised accompanying a decline in support for a movement, (Clark, Grayson & Grayson 1975: 19). Such process of transformation of the movement is indeed contextual and cultures, polity and economy specific. Zald studied transformation to social movements in the comparative frame. He finds that the process of transformation of social movements in the United States and Western Europe has been oriented to be reformist while in the Eastern Europe social movement transformed itself into regime challenges (Zald 1988: 19-24). It is observed in the developed societies that in the absence of a shared culture of popular opposition to the authorities and powerful groups, in the absence of a grass-roots organisation structure, lack of space for unconventional tactics and likely co-option of the dissidents

and critics by the state, collective mobilization are not sustained for a larger time (Oberschall 1978, Gamson 1975, Walsh 1978). Here most of the social movements are institutionalized in nature.

The emergence of a 'national social movement' from within the institutionalized frame of reference of the state, as pointed out by Tilly (1998), "a social movement is neither a party nor a union but a political campaign. What we call a social movement actually consists in a series of demands or challenges to power-holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position" (Tilly 1985: 735-36).

As pointed out earlier, ideology, organization, leadership, subjectivity, idealism and orientation towards change are important components of social movements and closely attached to the process of collective mobilization and new identity formation. Change in the form of these components brings tremendous change in the character of the social movements, and accordingly social movements may also be categorized. P.N. Mukherjee (1979) categorizes social movement as 'revolutionary movement' and 'quasi-movement' based the nature and direction of change initiated by the process of collective mobilization (in a movement under reference). To him, when collective mobilization aims at effecting wide-ranging and far-reaching changes of a system it may be called a revolutionary movement, and when it aims for changes within a system only it may be called a quasi-movement. Sociologists observing the life histories of various social movements point out that sooner or later a social movement becomes subject to the process of routinization. Often a protest movement starts off with a radical ideology but develops its own establishment in turn. To Rao (1985), when a movement with a defined ideology becomes a well-established political party, it ceases to be a movement (1985: 251). SinghaRoy(1992) highlights that in the Indian context any attempt to analyze social movements ought to reflect upon the dynamics of the movements over a period of time since the transformation of these movements are not discreet. Rather, the ideological re-orientation and organizations of those movements continue to remain attached with the collective mobilization in one form or the other. Thus over a period of time there is the process of institutionalization of mobilization. T.K. Oommen (1994) points out that the processes of mobilization and institutionalization do co-exist, and that 'institutionalization provides new possibilities of mobilization'. According to him, the processes of institutionalization and mobilization are to be viewed essentially to be the two different phases of a movement 'rather than mutually inimical processes ... In the final analysis mobilization is not displaced by institutionalization but goes hand-in-hand to a large extent and often the later process accentuates the former' (Oommen 1994: 251-53). (We shall discuss this issue in unit to 32 again)

The process of institutionalization, according to Oommen (1984), refers to a 'socially prescribed system of differentiated behaviour based on a relatively stable interaction pattern hinged on socially accepted values, norms, roles and practices'. While studying the process of institutionalization of collective mobilization he emphasized the role of institutional entrepreneurs towards the process of institutionalization. He however visualizes a contradiction in the institutional role of such entrepreneurs, as all may not accept their initiatives. Thus to him institutionalization of mobilization may not lead to bureaucratization, formalization or a status quo. It may rather bring 'with it possibilities of change, because the value-dissensus it creates may eventually lead to confrontation between the contending collectivities which provide the potential for continuous change' (Oommen 1984: 234-5). In his study of the agrarian labour movement in Kerala he highlights that the emergence of movement organization leading to routinization of charisma, development of bureaucratic structure, emergence of a parallel elite, persistence of mobilization beyond the purpose for which it emerged, invariably lead to the institutionalization of social movement. He argues that 'there is no inherent

tendency towards institutionalization of a social movement even when it occurs, it does not necessarily stop or even decelerate the process of mobilization which is so fundamental and prime to the very survival of a movement'. To him mobilization implies a collective action affecting the quality of politics. It calls for the 'induction of new structure into the system to meet the new challenges. That is mobilization necessitates the creation of new institutions and their institutionalization'. He also finds that mobilization is a continuous process with a varying scale and intensity over a period of time (Oommen 1984: 238).

While examining the issues of transformation of social movements in India, the observation made by Bipin Chandra (1996) in the context of the Indian national movement is worth mentioning. He highlights that this movement 'derived' its entire force from the militancy and spirit of self-sacrifice of the masses, including a large section of the peasantry and small landlords. This movement followed the strategy of truce-struggle-truce, in which phases of extra-legal mass movements alternate with more passive phases carried on within the confines of legal space. To Chandra, this strategy of Gandhi had the capacity to utilize the constitutional space without getting co-opted, and to maintain contacts with the masses and absorb their creative energies. This strategy, according to Chandra, bears close resemblance to the strategy of war of position as put forward by Gramsci. Gramsci saw India's political struggle against English as containing three forms of war: war of movement, war of position and underground warfare. Gandhi's passive resistance was a war of position, which in certain movements becomes war of movement and in others, underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes are war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belong to underground warfare (Gramsci 1996: 23).(1998)

The Indian National Congress accepted the strategy of war of position, which had two basic thrusts. It was hegemonic and it alternated between phases of extra-legal mass struggle and phases of truce functioning within the law. This entire political process of 'truce-struggle-truce' was an upwardly spiraling one which also assumed that the freedom struggle would pass through several stages ending with the transfer of power by the colonial regime (Chandra 1996: 26-9).

Reflection and Action 29.3

From you known experience or bases on secondary source of information write a life history of transformation of a social movement in about 500 words.

29.6 Conclusion

In this introductory unit of this block we have raised several issues for discussion which would be dealt with in the remaining three units of the block. As the outset we have clarified the meaning and dimensions of social movements. The conversional modes of conceptualization of social movements, the shift in this mode since late 1950s, the emergence of new social movements, the European, American and the Indian orientation of social movement studies are discussed here. We have also examined the issues origin and vital elements of social movements. A brief discussion on social movement studies in Indian is also presented in this block.

Further Readings

1. Shah, G. (ed.) 2004 *Social Movements*. Sage Publication: New Delhi
2. SinghaRoy, D.K. 2004 *Peasant Movements in Post Colonial India: Dynamic of Mobilisation and Identity*, Sage Publication: New Delhi
3. Singh, R. 2003 *Social Movements, Old and New*. Sage Publication: New Delhi

UNIT 11 REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The Making of a Revolution
 - 11.2.1 Revolution as a Part of Social Change
 - 11.2.2 Causes of Revolution
- 11.3 Successful Revolutions
 - 11.3.1 Mexico
 - 11.3.2 Bolivia
 - 11.3.3 Cuba
 - 11.3.4 Nicaragua
- 11.4 Comparative Analysis
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 Exercises

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Revolutionary movements are harbingers of radical transformations not only politically, but also socially, economically and culturally. In Latin America, the term revolution is more often defined very loosely. It is related to violence, social change or regime change and has even been used in the context of military authoritarian rule. There are four very conspicuous revolutions that can be considered successful in the 20th Century—Mexico (1910), Bolivia (1952), Cuba (1959), and Nicaragua (1979). However, these are considered very rare amongst the wide range and variety of revolutionary movements in Latin America. For, these revolutions have had a tremendous impact not just within those countries and the Latin American region, but on the hemispheric relations and world politics as well. To understand the accompanying social change, it is essential to discuss the causes, course, and outcome of the Latin American revolutions, especially highlighting the peculiarities of Latin American revolutions. Apart from the four successful revolutions, there are other revolutionary movements in Latin America, which are not considered successful such as the Farabundo Marti National Liberation (FMLN) movement of El Salvador and the *Sendero Luminoso* (“Shining Path”) movement of Peru. This unit gives a brief view of the number and variety of revolutions witnessed in Latin America, drawing attention to the similarities as well as the peculiarities of such movements.

11.2 THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTION

11.2.1 Revolution as a Part of Social Change

Many factors that contribute to social change fall in the category of “social mobilisation” i.e. urbanisation, education, mass communication and rising expectations. One factor is the circulation of new ideas imported from other societies (like liberalism at the turn of the 19th Century and Marxism at the turn of the 20th Century) or revived from the pre-conquest eras (like Mexican

indigenismo/nativism or Nicaraguan *Sandinismo*) gives a sense of direction to sporadic and unfocussed social unrest.

Another factor contributing to social change are agents of social change be it foreigners with new ambitions, Latin Americans associated with new institutions or old institutions assuming new roles. Students, Catholic clergymen inspired by the Liberation Theology can be taken as an example. Pressure for change may also be generated by natural disasters, wars, or reaction by the ruling class to a minor incident or protest.

If the political elite is able to share power and incorporate new groups, social change will evolve naturally. But if the elite is unwilling to share and tries to repress the changes, they may take the form of revolution or counter-revolution. While revolution does not result in the displacement of previous systems and participants of the system, revolution involves displacement or dis-establishment of groups representing the upper strata of society. In counter-revolution, it is the groups from the lower strata of society, which are displaced from effective participation in power politics.

In the case of Latin America, the social distance to be bridged in the incorporation of new groups into the polity in the southern cone countries of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay were not very great. This region was not rich in gold and silver and not very exploitable by the colonisers. It was thus settled by Europeans relatively late and also the first to win independence. The population at the time of independence was mostly *mestizo* and homogeneous. Effective working class participation and thoroughgoing redistribution came about through the evolutionary process. Thus economic elite (foreign and domestic) with middle class support backed by the dominant foreign power and the armed forces silenced the lower classes. But in countries like Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua and Bolivia, it was more a revolutionary change accompanying violent confrontation.

11.2.2 Causes of Revolution

As we have seen, revolution is a part of social change. But social change or mobilisation does not in itself lead to a revolution even though it does add to the pressure leading towards it. It is only when there are impediments to an evolutionary change that a revolution occurs. There are many reasons or factors that explain impediments to change.

A low level of political participation, with a great social distance between the elite and the masses is an important factor. The traditional hierarchical structure of society in Latin America with its attendant economic problems has always led to popular discontent. The social hierarchical structure of small elite of European origin with their proximity to foreign powers is vulnerable to the slightest change in the traditional system of authority. Thus the elite would not tolerate any breakdown of this system. Rather than accept marginal change and welcome the development of a middle class that might play a brokerage role, the elite strive to maintain *status quo* and a vacuum in the centre. This ensures that they do not have to allow concessions to middle or lower classes.

Even after independence from European powers, Latin American countries were overwhelmed by foreign domination. Independence was a mere exchange of one master for another. The ruling aristocracy were eager to ensure their security under the clout of a strong country even at the cost of national sovereignty. Major corporations of the United States became an integral part of the power elite of those countries and the US had made it clear that it would intervene militarily

to protect its economic interests. This meant that relatively few families had economic interests to protect and very few had a stake in political order. Thus the US had emerged as the dominant force in Latin America.

Another factor was the physical uprooting of the peasants and the indigenous population in Latin America. The indigenous peoples had been displaced from their traditional territory by Hispanic elites or the US corporations and thus, were deprived of their communally held land. Much of the unrest was a direct result of alienation.

All of these factors resulted in a multi-class alliance in opposition to the ruling elite particularly in Cuba and Nicaragua and to a large extent in Mexico, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Most of the Latin American revolutionary movements thus had this in common that they were multi-class popular movements largely agrarian in nature and with no fixed ideology that can be stated to be a common factor.

11.3 SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTIONS

11.3.1 Mexican Revolution

In the Mexican political arena of the late 19th Century, the *caudillo* regime of Porfirio Díaz or Porfiriato was marked by the systematic violation of the principles of the constitution of 1857. He believed that dictatorship was essential to transform a backward nation into a modern one. It was believed that Mexico's economic development depended on attracting foreign capital through special subsidies and concessions. By 1910, US interests controlled 75 per cent of Mexican mines, 72 per cent of metal industry, 68 per cent of the rubber business and 58 per cent of the oil production. Other foreigners controlled 80 per cent of the rest of Mexico's industry. Not only did Díaz court foreign interests, he allowed the clergy to become openly influential in temporal matters, and gave the army a free hand to violate guaranteed civil liberties. Opponents of the regime were either coopted or sent to jail.

Francisco Ignacio Madero, the son of a *hacendado*, issued the Plan of San Luis Potosí in October 1910 asking for political reform and the restoration of democratic principles. The Plan was enthusiastically received. By January 1911, a large-scale insurrection had broken out in the northern state of Chihuahua, led by Pascual Orozco, a local merchant, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Madero, who had declared himself provisional president in the Plan of San Luis Potosí returned to Mexico to lead the nascent revolution. The successes of the rebel bands in Chihuahua sparked similar uprisings throughout the country. As early as 1909 in Morelos, the peasant leader, Emiliano Zapata, recruited thousands of *hacienda* labourers and landless peasants to attack the *haciendas* and reclaim the lost lands. By May 25, 1911, Porfirio Díaz submitted his resignation and turned power over to a provisional government.

Madero assumed the presidency in November 1911. The new administration faced insurmountable problems. The fall of Díaz raised popular expectations of far-reaching social reforms, especially land reform. Zapata had come to Mexico City to claim *hacienda* land for the peasants of Morelos, which to him was the only acceptable result of the overthrow of the Díaz regime. Even in the

revolutionary ranks, the revolution meant something different to different sections of the population. Madero soon realised that to the liberals, the Revolution meant political change, but to the revolutionary fighters it meant radical social and economic transformations that Madero would not be able to fulfill. Labour unrest continued and even the Zapatista faction revolted.

Revolutionaries from other areas began to challenge the new government. Meanwhile, Félix Díaz (Porfirio's nephew) and other counter-revolutionaries plotted a military coup. With the aid of loyal troops under Huerta, Madero initially resisted the Díaz forces, but Huerta changed sides and defeated Madero. Opposition to Huerta began to emerge once he assumed power. Zapata and others remained in revolt against Huerta. The latter responded by increasing the size of the military. The country faced other problems. The federal treasury was empty, and each faction began issuing its own currency. Importantly, Huerta's government had not been recognised by the United States. By 1914, Huerta had to resign.

After the fall of Huerta, the country went through another period of civil war and anarchy in which four governments claimed to represent the will of the people: Carranza in Veracruz, Obregón in Mexico City, Roque González Garza (supported by the Zapatistas), and Villa in Guanajuato. Later that year, Carranza emerged as the victorious commander of the revolutionary forces with the support of the US. Carranza presented his draft of a constitution to the congress. The final version of the constitution of 1917, however, gave additional rights to the Mexican people. It was the fruit of the Revolution—an expression of popular will that guaranteed civil liberties, no presidential succession, and protection from foreign and domestic exploitation to all Mexicans.

After formally accepting the Constitution of 1917, Carranza won the presidential election and was sworn into office on 1 May, 1917. Conditions in Mexico were again close to chaos: the economy had deteriorated during the years of civil war, communications had been seriously disrupted, and shortages had led to rampant inflation. Land and labour remained the basic issues for the Mexican people, but Carranza chose to overlook the constitutional provisions dealing with these issues and returned lands expropriated during the Revolution. In 1918 fighting continued in Morelos. The Zapatistas in that area, who had very specific grievances, wanted more than a constitution. However, Carranza's men killed Zapata on 10 April 1919. By 1920 the Mexican Revolution was over with Carranza too being eliminated and General Obregón coming to power.

11.3.2 Bolivian Revolution (1952-1964)

Most of the countries of Latin America had suffered greatly during the Great Depression and Bolivia was no exception. Added to that were the after-effects of the Chaco War (1932-1935) in Bolivia which created outrage amongst the Bolivian population. The War was a result of a border skirmish in the disputed Chaco region with Paraguay. The war effort mobilised a large part of the population of indigenous and *mestizo* peasants, and created a lot of dissatisfaction and social ferment. So much so, the so-far ineffectual left wing could galvanise an outrage against the political system that had produced a war. Several political parties were formed including three socialist parties and two pro-fascist parties. The most talented leadership was from the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), which dropped its fascist tendencies. In 1952, after years of repression of the middle class from the right wing rulers, the MNR organised a revolt against the regime.

Under Paz Estenssoro's presidency in July 1952, the government established universal suffrage, with neither literacy nor property requirements thus increasing the population of eligible voters. The government also moved quickly to control the armed forces, purging many officers associated with past conservative party regimes and drastically reducing the forces' size and budget.

The government then began the process of nationalising all mines of the three great tin companies turning two-thirds of Bolivia's mining industry over to a semi-autonomous enterprise to run state-owned mines, the Mining Corporation of Bolivia (Comibol).

This was followed by a far-reaching agrarian reform. The government decreed the Agrarian Reform Law, which abolished forced labour and established a programme of expropriation and distribution of the rural property of the traditional landlords to the Indian peasants. Only estates with low productivity were distributed. More productive small and medium-sized farms were allowed to keep part of their land and were encouraged to invest new capital to increase agricultural production.

During the first years of the revolution, miners wielded extraordinary influence within the government based on the miners' decisive role in the fighting of April 1952. Miners organised the Bolivian trade union federation (Central Obrera Boliviana—COB), which demanded radical change as well as participation in the government and benefits for its members. The peasants also exerted a powerful influence and the MNR eventually gained control of the peasants.

During the presidency of Siles Zuazo (1956-60) the United States economic aid reached its highest level. Advised by the United States government and the IMF, the Siles Zuazo regime then in power reduced inflation with a number of politically dangerous measures, such as the freezing of wages.

Conflicts within the MNR increased during Paz Estenssoro's second term (1960-64). Paz Estenssoro endorsed the "Triangular Plan," which called for a restructuring of the tin-mining industry demanding the end of the workers' control over Comibol operations, the retrenchment of workers, and a reduction in their salaries and benefits which was strongly opposed by the COB. Moreover, rivalry among peasant groups often resulted in bloody feuds that further weakened the Paz Estenssoro government.

The country faced severe economic problems as a result of the changes enacted by the government. The nationalisation of the mines had a negative effect because of the lack of technical expertise and capital to modernise the ageing plants. Agricultural production too faced a decline in the first years of the revolution. Although anarchy in the countryside was the main reason for the decrease in production, the peasants' inability to produce for a market economy and the lack of transport facilities contributed to the problem. High inflation, primarily caused by social spending, also hurt the economy. The divisions within the MNR seriously weakened its attempt to incorporate the support of the Indian peasants, the workers, and the middle class for the government. In 1952 the MNR was a broad coalition of groups with different interests. The bankrupt economy increased the factionalism within the MNR. Because the majority of the MNR elite wanted a moderate course and the left wing demanded radical change, the polarisation increased and eventually led to the destruction of the MNR in 1964.

During its twelve-year rule, the MNR had failed to build a firm basis for democratic, civilian

government. Increasing factionalism, open dissent, ideological differences, policy errors, and corruption weakened the party and made it impossible to establish an institutional framework for the reforms. Not even the peasants, who were the main beneficiaries of the revolution, consistently supported the MNR.

The MNR had succeeded because it could unify several major political forces of the country: the miners, the armed forces and large sections of the middle class and the peasants, which was the fourth group that emerged after the revolution. The MNR failed for the same reason—it was unable to maintain this coalition.

11.3.3 Cuban Revolution

The Cuban revolution was a unique phenomenon in many respects. It revolved around the personal charisma of Fidel Castro, a young lawyer who successfully carried out a guerrilla warfare that overthrew the military regime of Fulgencio Batista. The aim of the revolutionaries was to redistribute wealth through land reform and Communism. By late 1960, the state owned a significant portion of the means of production. The sense of nationalism led the revolutionaries to turn to socialism away from the United States.

Thus power in Cuba was seized without a revolutionary theory or party, whereas Communism necessitated the presence of both. It was only later in December 1961 that a revolutionary party began to be formed. The first party Congress was held thirteen years later.

In the first sixteen years of the revolution, the Communist Party played no important role but concentrated on the development of mass mobilisation of labour, women, students, farmers and defenders of the revolution. The role of the Party when it was institutionalised in 1975 was simply to co-ordinate and supervise the tasks of the state and mass organisations without administering them. The Communist Party became the locus of political power. The Party, the State and the Government are thus functionally differentiated.

The revolutionaries had inherited a capitalist economy that relied on sugar production controlled in its numerous facets by the US capital as well as an economy that was unable to generate sufficient jobs to absorb surplus labour. In the first two years after the revolution itself, house rents were lowered by as much as 50 per cent, free universal education established, social security made available to all workers, Agrarian Reform Law began the redistribution of land, transportation costs were lowered, and child care centres were subsidised by the state. Critical areas of the economy like banking, export-import operations, and energy were taken over by the state. More than three-quarters of the industry, construction and transportation too was in the hands of the state. Soon health care too became free. Since Cuba did not have material incentives, moral incentives were used to motivate workers. Charismatic authority went hand in hand with moral incentives and mass mobilisation to achieve economic goals. From 1970s, there was a shift towards rational-legal authority in both political and economic spheres.

11.3.4 Nicaraguan Revolution

The dictatorship established under General Anastasio Somoza García in Nicaragua was one of the most enduring in Central America's political history. The most basic reasons for the success of the Somoza dynasty was its control of the US-created National Guard, a mixed military-

police force that monopolised armed power within Nicaragua and a constant cultivation of US support. As long as the economy continued to grow and the traditional elite and the opposition parties got a share in the profits, they largely accepted this state of affairs. The devastating earthquake of 1972 almost caused a breakdown of this entire structural set up, but the system managed to survive with US support. This only served to increase the popular discontent with the Somoza regime. The Sandinista National Liberation Front guerrillas (FSLN) increased their activities. The killing of Nicaragua's leading newspaper publisher and opposition ruler Carlos Fonseca Amador in January 1978 by Somoza's business associates resulted in national defiance and international indignation. A series of popular uprisings and heavy fighting by the FSLN along with international opposition compounded the dictator's problems.

A mediation process led by the OAS collapsed during January 1979, when president Somoza refused to hold a national plebiscite and insisted on staying in power until 1981. As fighting increased, the Nicaraguan economy faced a severe economic crisis, with a sharp decline in agricultural and industrial production, as well as high levels of unemployment, inflation, defence spending, and capital flight. The government debt also increased mostly as a result of defence expenditures and the gradual suspension of economic support from all international financial institutions.

On 1 February 1979, the Sandinistas established the National Patriotic Front (Frente Patriótico Nacional—FPN), which included *Los Doce*, the PLI, and the Popular Social Christian Party (Partido Popular Social Cristiano—PPSC). The FSLN launched its final offensive during May, just as the National Guard began to lose control of many areas of the country. In a year's time, bold military and political moves had changed the FSLN from one of many opposition groups to a leadership role in the anti-Somoza revolt. On 19 July 1979 the Sandinistas entered Managua bringing to an end the longest lasting family dictatorship in the Latin American history.

The five-member junta consisting of Daniel José Ortega Saavedra of the FSLN, Moisés Hassan Morales of the FPN, Sergio Ramírez Mercado of *Los Doce*, Alfonso Robelo Callejas of the MDN, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the widow of *La Prensa's* editor entered the Nicaraguan capital and assumed power, reiterating its pledge to work for political pluralism, a mixed economic system, and a non-aligned foreign policy.

The new government inherited a country in ruins, with a stagnant economy and a debt of about US\$1.6 billion. Most Nicaraguans saw the Sandinista victory as an opportunity to create a system free of the political, social, and economic inequalities of the almost universally hated Somoza regime.

The first or immediate goal of the new government was the reconstruction of the national economy. The new government enacted the Agrarian Reform Law, beginning with the nationalisation of all rural properties owned by the Somoza family and their associates representing more than 20 per cent of Nicaragua's cultivable land. These farms became state property under the new Ministry of Agrarian Reform. Financial institutions, all in bankruptcy from the massive capital flight during the war, were also nationalised.

The second goal of the Sandinistas was a change in the old government's pattern of repression and brutality. Most prisoners accused of injustices under the Somoza regime were given a trial

and the Ministry of Interior forbade cruelty to prisoners. Amnesty International and other human rights groups found the human rights situation in Nicaragua greatly improved.

The third major goal of the country's new leaders was the establishment of new political institutions to consolidate the revolution. This was done by abolishing the constitution, presidency, Congress, and all courts through the proclamation of the Fundamental Statute of the Republic of Nicaragua on 22 August 1979. The *junta* ruled under emergency powers. National government policy, however, was generally made by the nine-member Joint National Directorate (Dirección Nacional Conjunto—DNC), the ruling body of the FSLN. A consultative corporatist representative assembly, the Council of State approved laws submitted to it by the *junta*. The *junta*, however, had the right of veto and retained control over much of the budget. The membership of the *junta* changed during its early years. By 1983 the *junta* was reduced to three members, with Daniel Ortega clearly playing the lead role.

Immediately after the revolution, the Sandinistas had the best-organised and most experienced military force in the country, a new national army, the Sandinista People's Army (Ejército Popular Sandinista—EPS), as well as a police force, the Sandinista Police (Policía Sandinista—PS). The FSLN also developed mass organisations representing most popular interest groups in Nicaragua which were instrumental in consolidating Sandinista power over political and military institutions—the Sandinista Workers' Federation (Central Sandinista de Trabajadores—CST) representing labour unions, the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Nicaraguan Women's Association (Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza—AMNLAE), and the National Union of Farmers and Cattlemen (Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos—UNAG) composed of small farmers and peasants.

The new Sandinista government was not universally welcomed. On the domestic front, the ethnic minorities from the Caribbean coast rejected Sandinista efforts to incorporate them into the national mainstream. The United States government accused the government of supplying arms to guerrillas in El Salvador and even supported groups of counter-revolutionaries known as *Contras*. The bishops of the Roman Catholic Church distrusted the Sandinista ideology and although supportive of the anti-Somoza movement during the late 1970s, opposed the Sandinista regime in the 1980s.

In mid-1984, the Electoral Law was passed setting the date and conditions for the election. By July 1984, eight parties or coalitions had announced their intention to field candidates: the FSLN with Daniel Ortega as presidential candidate; the Democratic Coordinator (Coordinadora Democrática: CD), a broad coalition of labour unions, business groups, and four centrist parties; and six other parties—the PLI, the PPSC, the Democratic Conservative Party (Partido Conservador Democrático: PCD), the communists, the socialists, and the Marxist-Leninist Popular Action Movement. On 4 November 1984, about 75 per cent of the registered voters went to the polls. The FSLN won 67 per cent of the votes, the presidency, and sixty-one of the ninety-six seats in the new National Assembly.

Daniel Ortega began his six-year presidential term on 10 January 1985. The Reagan administration ordered a total embargo on United States trade with Nicaragua the following month, accusing the Sandinista regime of threatening United States security in the region. The FSLN government responded by suspending civil liberties. The media of the church as well as the conservative

newspaper *La Prensa* were censored or closed for various periods and the Sandinista government was forced to divert more and more of its economic resources from economic development to defence against the *Contras*.

An additional step toward the solution of the Nicaraguan conflict was taken at a summit of Central American presidents held on 15 January 1988, when President Daniel Ortega agreed to hold direct talks with the *Contras*, to lift the state of emergency, and to call for national elections. In March the FSLN government met the representatives of the *Contras* and signed a cease-fire agreement. By mid-1988, international institutions had demanded that the Sandinistas launch a drastic economic adjustment programme as a condition for resumption of aid. This new economic programme imposed further hardship on the Nicaraguan people. With the country becoming bankrupt and the loss of economic support from the economically strapped Soviet Union, the Sandinistas decided to move up the date for general elections in order to convince the United States Congress to end all aid to the *Contras* and to attract potential economic support from Europe and the United States.

The FSLN government reinstated political freedoms. Many Nicaraguans expected the country's economic crisis to deepen and the Contra conflict to continue if the Sandinistas remained in power. In contrast, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro promised to end the unpopular military draft, bring about democratic reconciliation, and promote economic growth and won in the 25 February 1990, elections. The FSLN accepted its new role of opposition and handed over political power to Violeta Barrios de Chamorro and the UNO coalition on 25 April 1990.

11.4 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Generally, successful revolutions (which run through a course without falling prey to a counter-revolution) go through certain definitive phases like transfer of power, redistribution of resources, institutionalisation of the change, and reconstruction/reconcentration.

- i) *Power transfer*: The process of power transfer is not an easy one. The displacement of the old regime calls for its replacement with a new one. The process of reaching an agreement on what kind of government the people want can be a struggle.

In Mexico, after the demise of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz in 1911, armed struggle continued for 10 years before power was consolidated. In Bolivia the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) which took power in 1952 could not sustain its alliance with the miners and the peasants leading to the tenure of the revolution being very short. The MNR, miners and the peasants could not gain control. In Cuba, consolidation of power was successful because of the mass exodus of the upper class to the United States. In Nicaragua, the multi-class coalition of 1979 began to unravel within the year. The upper class businessmen mobilised in support of the Sandinistas turned to subversion along with the National Guardsmen hand-in-glove with the United States.

- ii) *Class Demolition and Redistribution*: For a revolution to be successful, the colonial hegemonic power backing the ruling elite has to be displaced. This has varied from country to country in Latin America. It means that the external hegemonic power is deprived of some

of the points of access or direct participation in the domestic affairs of the country. In most Latin American countries, the colonial powers and the landed aristocracy are the same.

In Mexico, the revolution dis-established the landowning aristocracy and the Church, which had been a major landowner. It also weakened the business elite with an export-import business and weakened the role of the United States in manipulating the domestic power relationships, giving rise to a national industrial sector. In Bolivia, the landowning aristocracy was displaced along with private interests controlling the tin mines. But in Bolivia, the revolutionary forces accepted the help of the United States with strings attached, instead of making it a target and accomplishment of the revolution. It is this, which became a factor in nurturing a new military elite and the failure of the alliance amongst the revolutionary forces. In Cuba, the US had a major stronghold and thus the revolution accordingly targeted the United States and the military establishment that served it. The nationally oriented business class in Cuba was extremely weak. In Nicaragua, the target was Somoza's dictatorship, his domestic supporters like the National Guard and the United States which was a benefactor of the dynasty. The Catholic Church in Nicaragua at least to begin with was committed to the revolutionary coalition.

Redistribution of Wealth: Redistribution of wealth in a revolution depends on how much wealth is there to redistribute. Cuba was a prosperous country at the time of revolution. Therefore redistribution took the form of the extension of services and Cuba had one of the most comprehensive public health and educational systems in the hemisphere. In Bolivia and Nicaragua, there was relatively little wealth to redistribute.

- iii) *Institutionalisation:* The institutionalisation of a revolution requires an entirely new set of political support groups as well as new constitutions, laws and behaviour patterns. The most important umbrella organisation for new support groups is a political party. In Mexico, the revolutionary political party took shape in 1929 and was reorganised in the 1930s and 1940s and renamed the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). For Bolivia, the MNR was supposed to be the institutionalising vehicle. But the party did not succeed in incorporating the miners or in institutionalising succession. Thus it succumbed 12 years later to counter-revolution. For Cuba, the Communist Party and the revolutionary armed forces were the dominant vehicles of institutionalisation with control in the hands of Fidel Castro. The national political super structure was built on the base of popular organisations. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which began in 1959 as a tiny insurrectionary group, was the dominant group at the time of revolutionary triumph. The Sandinista leadership enjoyed strong support of the members of popular organisations representing workers, peasants, women and youth.
- iv) *Reconstruction/Reconcentration:* Revolutions like all other readjustments of power are impermanent. Wealth and power tend to reconcentrate and the power and position of the people from the lower strata of society begins to weaken.

In Mexico, revolutionary leaders became a 'new class'—an economic and political power elite. In Cuba, although Castro and his supporters have avoided an elite status, rank differentiation and privileges have crept into what was once a people's army. Nevertheless, it is generally perceived

that countries, which have undergone revolutions, tend to be more stable than those that have not.

Latin American movements were undoubtedly multi-class in nature. All these movements may not have equally led to social and political change of significance, but what made them revolutionary was the way they involved the masses. The post-revolutionary elite too were state-builders but they created a mass society instead of the factional and fragmented society that existed before. Some historians have tried to downplay the popular and agrarian side of these revolutions but it is clear especially in the case of Mexico, that there were massive and violent rural rebellions. Of course, it cannot be equally clearly stated that the revolutions were 'purely' agrarian in nature. Even the Mexican revolution had non-peasant leaders playing an important role. Pancho Villa's popular army from the North was very different from the peasant villagers who constituted the core of Emiliano Zapata's army from the South.

11.5 SUMMARY

Revolutionary movements in Latin America have been defined in a very loose manner and related to violence, regime change, social change and even military authoritarian rule. This unit gives a brief view of the more successful revolutionary movements in Latin America bringing out the causes, main characteristics and the phases through which they evolved. In Latin America, a low level of political participation and the great distance between the masses and the elite with the elite striving to maintain *status quo* has always led to popular discontent. More so, the United States of America has emerged as a dominant force in the sphere.

11.6 EXERCISES

1. How would you distinguish a revolutionary movement from other social movements? Giving examples from Latin America explain what in your judgement may be termed as a relatively 'successful revolution'.
2. What were the causes of revolutionary movements in Latin America?
3. How far would you consider the Bolivian revolution to be a success?
4. What are the similarities between the phases through which the Mexican Revolution of 1911 and the Cuban Revolution of 1959 evolved?
5. Briefly sketch the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and explain its limited success.

UNIT 10 STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Structure

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- 10.4 Concept of Civil Society: An Overview
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10.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of state occupies a central place in Political Science. No discussion on political theory is complete without reference to the word 'state'. The state, indeed, touches every aspect of human life, and this is why it has, very rightly, captured the attention of all political philosophers since the days of Plato. To understand the state as an administrative machinery ordering public life is to know its one aspect. Important though this aspect is, it is not the only aspect which explains as to what it is. The state is where it operates on. Its real meaning together with its other related implications emerges more clearly when it is understood in relation to the domain of its area of operation, which is what society is.

What is state? What is society or civil society? What is the relationship between the two or how do the two stand in relation to each other? What is so particular about civil society that gives the state a different connotation? These questions have been, and actually are, central to the themes of political theory and to these questions, answers have been addressed by numerous political theorists.

A discussion on issues relating to these two terms, the state and civil society, would help us to know their meanings, implications and the relative perspectives in which these two concepts stand to each other.

10.2 STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY: MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

It is very common to address society as civil society, civil society as political society, political society as state. To understand each as one or the other is to know none of them. While the concept 'society' is a generic term, the term civil society denotes a type of society particular to a time and set in a particular situation. 'Society' refers, in general terms, to the totality of 'social relationships', conscious or unconscious, deliberate or otherwise. 'Civil Society', on the other hand, concerns itself to matters relating to 'public'. This brings the term 'civil society' close to the concept of 'political society'. Indeed, the two terms presuppose a society where civility is their characteristic feature, but 'civil society' extends to areas *far away* from the reach of 'political society'. The institution of family, for example, is an area covered by 'civil society', but it is a domain where 'political society' does better to stay away from. 'Political society' covers a whole range of activities related to 'political' directly or indirectly, but it remains *wider* than the term 'state' when the latter is treated merely as a matter of governance.

It is indeed, important to know the meanings of these terms clearly if one seeks to understand the relationship between them, especially between the state and civil society.

10.2.1 Meaning of State

The state, as a word *stato*, appeared in Italy in the early part of the sixteenth century in the writings of Machiavelli (1469-1527). The meaning of the state in the sense of a body politic became common in England and France in the later part of the sixteenth century. The word *staatskunst* became the German equivalent of *ragione di stato* during the seventeenth century and a little later, the word *staatrecht* got the meaning of *jus publican* (see Sabine, "State", *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* Vol. XIV). Thus, came the use of the term 'State'.

The state has included, from the beginning, a reference to a land and a people, but this alone would not constitute a state. It refers also to a unity, a unity of legal and political authority, regulating the outstanding external relationships of man in society, existing within society. It is what it does, i.e., creates a system of order and control, and for this, is vested with the legal power of using compulsion and coercion.

A state, thus, is found in its elaborate system. It is found in its institutions which create laws and which enforce them, i.e., in institutions such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. It is found in the bureaucratic institutions which are attached to every executive branch of the government. It is found in the institutions which are called into operation when its will is challenged, i.e., the military and the police. The state is the sum – total of these institutions. Ralph Miliband (*The State in Capitalist Society*) writes, "These are the institutions – the government, the administration, the military and the police, the judicial branch, sub-central government and parliamentary assemblies – which make up the state...". In these institutions lies the state power; through these institutions come the laws of the state, and from them spring the legal right of using physical force.

The state as governance is a system related to what may be called the political system or the political society. It includes, on the one hand, institutions such as the political parties, pressure groups, the opposition, etc., and on the other, large-scale industrial houses, religious and caste institutions, trade unions, etc. These institutions, existing outside of the state system, attempt to

influence the functioning of the state, somewhere even dominating it, and somewhere in collaboration with it. Skocpol (*States and Social Revolution: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*) sums up what Neera Chandhoke (*State and Civil Society*) calls the statist perspective of the state, “the state properly conceived is rather a set of administrative, policing and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations.... Moreover, coercive and administrative organizations are only parts of overall political systems. These systems also may contain institutions through which social interests are represented in state policy-making as well as institutions through which non-state actors are mobilised to participate in policy implementation. Nevertheless, the administrative and coercive organisations are the basis of state power.”

The other strand giving the state a meaning comes from Michael Foucault (‘Truth and Power’ in P. Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 1987) who regards the state as built on power relations already existing in society. Chandhoke writes about Foucault, “The state, he (Foucault) concluded, can only operate on the basis of existing relations of domination and oppression in society.”

Rejecting both the perspectives of the state, Chandhoke says, “The statist (Skocpol and others) concentrate on the state at the expense of society, and the theorists in the Foucauldian mode concentrate on social interaction at the expense of the state.” She concludes that the state, with a view to understanding it in relation to society, and vice-versa, “is a social relation because it is the codified power of the social formation.”

10.2.2 Meaning of Civil Society

The concept of civil society, to give it a meaning, embraces an entire range of assumptions, values and institutions, such as political, social and civil rights, the rule of law, representative institutions, a public sphere, and above all a plurality of associations. Commenting on it, David Held (*Models of Democracy*) stated that it retains “a distinctive character to the extent that it is made up of areas of social life the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities and political interaction ... which are organised by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals, and groups outside the direct control of the state.” Adding to political interaction, civil society constitutes what Jurgen Habermas called ‘the public sphere’. Enlarging the view of civil society, one may include in it the structure of modern national state, economic modernization, great interconnectedness with other societies, free enterprise and what John Dunn (*Western Political Theory*) refers to as “the modern representative democratic republic.”

Chandhoke sums up the meaning of civil society “as the public sphere where individuals come together for various purposes both for their self-interest and for the reproduction of an entity called society.” “It is a”, she continues, “sphere which is public because it is formally accessible to all, and in principle all are allowed entry into this sphere as the bearers of rights.”

The concept of civil society came up as and when a social community sought to organise itself independently of the specific direction of state power. Historically, the concept, Chandhoke says, “came into existence when the classical political economists sought to control the power of the Mercantilist State”. With the passage of time, the concept of civil society moved on progressively: becoming a central plank of democratic movements in eighteenth century.

10.2.3 Characteristics of State and Civil Society

State exists within the society. This makes the state and society analytically distinct. The two are not the same. Society is a web of social relationships and as such, includes the totality of social practices, which are essentially plural, but at the same time, are relational. The hierarchically organised and maintained social practices of a given community establish, in their turn, all kinds of power equations and relations among its members. The state comes in to give these power relations a fixity, and thereby to society its stability. The state gives legitimacy to social relationships as expressed in social practices because it recognises them and codifies them through legal acts. It is in this sense that the state can be described as the codified power of the social formation of a given time.

The state, so considered, is itself a distinct and discrete organisation of power in so far as it possesses the capacity to select, categorise, crystallise and arrange power in formal codes and institutions. And this capacity gives to the state its status – power, power to take decisions, power to enforce decisions, and also power to coerce those who defy them. But the state so considered derives its power from society. It is, in this sense, a codified power, but within the framework of the society in which it operates.

The state, as a social relation and also as a codified power in a given society, would have certain characteristics of its own. These characteristics can be stated as:

- a) The state is a power, organised in itself. It has the power to legitimise social relations and gives them recognition through formal codes and institutions. This gives the state a distinct and irreducible status in society while making it autonomous from classes and contending factions existing in it.
- b) The state emerges as a set of specifically political practices which defines binding decisions and enforces them, to the extent of intervening in every aspect of social life.
- c) The state monopolises all means of coercion. No other organisation in the society has this power.
- d) The state gives fixity to social relations, and social stability to society. The social order, according to Chandhoke, “is constituted through the state and exists within the parameters laid down by the state.”
- e) The state exists within the framework of a given society. As society responds to the changing conditions compelled by numerous social forces, the state responds to the changing society. The state always reflects the changing relations of society. As society constantly re-enacts itself, so does the state.

The liberal and the marxist perspectives of civil society differ drastically. For the liberals, civil society presupposes democratic states together with the accountability of the states, the limits on state power, the responsiveness to the spontaneous life and the interactions of civil society. For the marxists, civil society is the arena of class conflicts, selfish competition and exploitation, the state acting to protect the interests of the owning classes. A definition of civil society comprising the insights of both the liberals and the marxists must take into account the following:

- a) The state power must be controlled and it has to become responsive through democratic practices of an independent civil society

- b) Political accountability has to reside not only in constitutions, laws, and regulations, but also in the social fabric or what Habermas calls the competence of the 'political public' which, in turn, has the following implications: (i) it implies that the people come together in an arena of common concerns, in debates and discussion and discourse free from state interference (ii) it implies that the discourse is accessible to all (iii) it implies a space where public discussion and debate can take place.
- c) Democratic norms and processes have to be imbibed in the social order.
- d) Civil society is the public sphere of society. It is the location of these processes by which the experiences of individuals and communities, and the expression of experiences in debates and discussions, affirmation and constitution are mediated. It is also a theatre where "the dialectic between the private and the public are negotiated. It is the process by which society seeks to "breach" and counteract the simultaneous "totalisation" unleashed by the state" (Bayart, "Civil Society in Africa", in Chabal, P., ed., *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*). It is a site where the state is forbidden to shape public opinion and perceptions.

10.3 CONCEPT OF THE STATE: AN OVERVIEW

The state, being at the very core of political theory, has been defined differently by different political philosophers since the time of the ancient Greek. For some, it is an institution of coercion, while for others, it is the custodian of the rights of the people. While some, like the anarchists, would like to abolish the state straight away, others like the socialists of the non-marxian shade would want it to stay to establish socialism.

Despite the fact that the state has meant different things to different people, one cannot ignore the central place the state has in political theory. One would do better, if one attempts to discuss the meaning of the state vis-à-vis society which has come to us by a host of eastern political philosophers.

10.3.1 The Pre-modern Tradition

In all his works in political theory, there is a strong case which Plato (428/7- 348/7 BC) builds in favour of an omnipotent rule. The problem to which Plato addressed himself was not as to how best a government could be created, but as to how the best government could be installed. It is the job of the government, Plato affirmed more than once, to help people live a complete life. It is, thus, with Plato a matter of just not a government, but a just government, just not a government any how, but a perfect government, the government that was able to deliver happiness for all who lived therein. For Plato, a state is a system of relationships in which everyone does his own business and where the job of the state is to maintain, and promote such relationships.

Following his teacher Plato, Aristotle (384-322 BC) defined the state as *polis* (the ancient Greeks used polis for the state) as a community, which exists for the supreme good. He says that the state is "an association of households and villages sharing in a life of virtue, and aiming at an end which exists in perfect and self-complete existence."

Both Plato and Aristotle, and for that matter all Greeks, thought of polis as more than a state. It was an arrangement of administrative machinery, a government or a constitution, but was also a school, a church laying the guidelines for a way of life, which for them, was nothing but

leading a full life. For Plato and Aristotle, there was no distinction between the state and society: the state was an organ and a part of the society; it was submerged in the society itself. In addition, the Greeks thought of the polis as an ethical entity and that was why they assigned, ethical functions to be performed by the rulers of the state, i.e., good, happy and complete life. Barker writes, "It (the polis) is more than a legal structure: it is also a moral spirit". An ancient Greek would never imagine himself without the polis, he was only a part of the polis, a part of the whole. Barker says, "Here (in ancient Greece) were individuals, distinct from the state, yet in their communion forming the state." Wayper also says "For life to be worth living must have a meaning, and only in the polis they (the Greeks) were sure, did it acquire meaning. There was no distinction between political, social and ethical life in ancient Greece. The society was the state as the state was with Plato and Aristotle, a government: the freeman, the master was a citizen, a legislator and a member of the society; he as the ruler ruled the individual as a member of the society, all the individuals, the whole society. The slave-owing society of ancient Greek times could hardly be expected to give a theory of state, nay a theory of society, more than that of the government, precisely, the rulers".

To Cicero's writings would go the credit of giving a notion of the state which is not a polis, but a commonwealth. Like the ancient Greeks, Cicero also regards the state submerged in the society, a part, i.e., an integral part of the society. Cicero says, "The Commonwealth, then, is the people's affairs, and the people is not every group of man, associated in any manner, but is the coming together of a considerable number of men who are united by a common agreement about law and rights, and by the desire to participate in mutual advantages." From this, Cicero's theory of state can be summed up as: (i) the state is differentiated from people's gatherings, i.e., society (ii) the people enter the state after they agree on certain rules, giving people a 'legal' status, which lead them to form 'legal community (iii) the state exists when people agree to participate in its affairs. In Cicero's theory, there is a theory of state different from the theory of society; he makes a distinction between the state and the society; his theory of state is the theory of government as well as a theory of political community.

The medieval political theory in the West was mainly concerned with Christianity where social life was more a religious life regulated by the dictates of the Roman Catholic Church headed by the Pope. Christendom ruled the universe and politics was controlled by the Church. The temporal power was regarded inferior to that of the ecclesiastical, the state acting as a footnote to the wider world. The state, in the medieval European world, was thought of as a means for reaching the *City of God* (St. Augustine), and the human law was to work under the divine law, natural law and ultimately, under the eternal law (St. Thomas). It was not the society that controlled the state, but those who controlled the society— the Pope, the Church priests, the monarchs and the feudal lords— who controlled the state i.e., the state machinery.

10.3.2 The Liberal-Individualist Tradition

With the modern age ushering in the Western World during the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, there appeared a definite theory of state. The liberal-individualist philosophers, with Hobbes (1588-1679) onward, came to make a clear distinction between the state and society by making the state a matter of mere governance. All liberals, basing their political theory on individuals, came to build political power, the state, as an instrument, some like Hobbes giving all powers to the state while others like Bentham (1748-1832) making it a non-interventionist one. All liberals argue for an autonomous individual, the degree for individual autonomy differing from philosopher to philosopher. The liberals' laurels included "individual liberties, rights as sacred as natural, property ethos, rule of law, free, competitive and market economy ... all to remain free

from the interference of the state. The early modern political theory could not make distinction between state, and government, ... All regarded state power as political power, and political power as the power of the government”.

The Machiavellian state (credit goes to Machiavelli for introducing the word ‘state’ in Political Science), whether principedom or republic, is a power state, meaning thereby that it exists for power and exists because of the power whose main interest is to maintain, enhance and enlarge its own authority. For Bodin (1530-1596), the state is “a lawful government, with sovereign powers, of different households, and their common affairs”, considering the state affairs as concerning the ‘public’. “The final cause, end, or design of men”, Hobbes says, “is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life”.

With Locke (1632-1704), the liberal theory gets impetus and the state comes to protect property, and promote a better economic life, for liberalism comes to stay as the political philosophy of the capitalist class, the democratic flavour joining it at a later stage of development. The early liberal-democratic theory restricted the role of the state to the minimal, protecting life, liberty and property of its citizens from external aggression and internal chaos on the one hand, and providing a system of justice and public works, and amenities on the other hand, with no role for the welfare of the people.

It was John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) first, and T.H. Green (1836-1882) later who expanded the positive role of the state in preparing a conducive atmosphere where the individual could enjoy a better way of life. Mill and Green introduced democratic elements in the organisation and functioning of the state, though both could hardly leave their capitalistic shackles.

To sum up, one may, therefore, conclude that the early modern political theorists such as Machiavelli and Bodin could hardly see beyond the omnipotent state. The contractualists, especially Hobbes, had thought that in order for society to come into existence, a strong state is required. The early liberals such as Locke, Smith, Bentham held the view that as the society has the capacity to reproduce and regenerate itself, the state and its power should be minimal. But the later liberals, J.S. Mill, T.H. Green, De Tocqueville felt that numerous social associations, while enhancing social ability, could become instruments through which individuals could fashion a political discourse which could limit the nature of state power. The liberal pluralistic, in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century were able to build a strong case for the numerous associations, existing in society, to control the omnipotence of the state while balancing the latter against the claims of the society.

10.3.3 The Marxian Tradition

The Marxian theory of the state emerged, as a reaction against liberalism. For the Marxists, state and society are two distinct entities, though the state is not independent of society. The society type explains the type of state, society providing the base on which stood the superstructure. The Marxists, regarding the state as a product of a class society, believe the state to be a class institution, protecting and promoting the possessing class, and oppressing and coercing the non-possessing class. For them, the state is an engine of class rule. But it is also an instrument of social and political change, its negative function is to destroy the remains of the earlier society, while it, through its constructive functions, builds the structure and culture of the class it is manned with.

Chandhoke discerns three theoretical moments of the Marxist theory of state. The first such moment has been when Marx and Engels, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)

regard “the executive of the modern state ” as “a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”. Marx also writes in the preface to *Towards a Critique of Political Economy* (1859), “the totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.” This base-superstructure model of the state was a reaction to the liberal concept of the disembodied state standing apart from society as also a reaction against the Hegelian model of the all-powerful state while subordinating civil society to it. The second moment, appearing around the 1960s and with Ralph Miliband and Hanza Alvi, questions the nature of the state and its relationship with society. In it, the state emerges as a distinct theoretical object in its own right and state-centric theory emerged as the dominant stream of political theory. The third theoretical moment was made possible through the contributions of Nicos Poulantzas and Claus Off. This moment saw political theorists preoccupied with concepts and theories. Following Gramsci, who had conceptualised the state as the political consideration of civil society, the Marxist political theorists of the third theoretical moment began a spiralling interest in civil society as the sphere where meaningful practices, both hegemonic and subversive, are generalised.

10.4 CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY: AN OVERVIEW

The concept of civil society is associated with the Western intellectual tradition. With the epochal changes in the West, the idea of civil society has grown progressively. Many factors have gone into developing the concept of the state as it has come to stay with us. These factors, to mention a few, include the emergence of secular authority, the development of the institution of property, the decline of the absolutist state, the growth of urban culture, the rise of nationalist and democratic movements, until the end of the nineteenth century and the rule of law. As the capitalist economy with its democratising features has developed, so has the concept of civil society.

10.4.1 The Pre-Modern Tradition

If the idea of civil society contains in it the idea of what relates to public, the pre-modern times may well be regarded as opposed to the concept of civil society. The Platonic rulers alone were the administrators and a large number of those who constituted ‘the producing class’ had no role to play in public affairs. The Aristotelian notion of ‘*zoon politikon*’ (man as a political animal) was elitistic in the sense that (i) the political animal was a male, (ii) he alone was a citizen and (iii) he alone was a property holder. The rest of the population, the women, the slaves etc., constituted Oikes, i.e., the private world and that could hardly be termed as constituting the civil society. As the ‘private’ was not ‘public’, it was not political and none belonging to it had any citizenship rights. The Greek society, Chandhoke points out, did not ‘possess any notion of inalienable rights of man to individual freedom which became so prominent a feature of early version of civil society.’

By developing the concept of rights, legally ordained, and especially relating to property of the individual, there did emerge the notion of ‘civil society’ in ancient Roman thinking. Indeed the notion of ‘civil society’ did need such an atmosphere to shape itself, but the ancient Roman thought could hardly rise above that, notwithstanding the attempts at making distinction between ‘private’ and ‘public’ which the ancient Romans really did.

During the whole medieval period in the West when politics took the back seat, the idea of civil

society got eclipsed. What related to 'public' as 'political' was limited to a very few people called the feudal lords, barons, dukes and counts. The idea of civil society was almost unknown.

10.4.2 The Liberal-Individualist Tradition

The early modern period with Machiavelli and Bodin saw the emergence of politics, but the period itself did not witness the corresponding growth of the idea of civil society. The civil society, as a concept, rose with the idea of individuals with rights, individuals related to the state, and individuals related to others in society.

There is the clear reference to civil society both in Hobbes and Locke when the two sought to make a distinction between the 'state of nature', and the 'civil society' or the 'political society' after the contract was made. Both talk about the rights-bearing individuals; both sought the state to protect these rights. It is difficult to regard the contractualists, Hobbes and Locke, as theorists of civil society because (i) their formulations on civil society are found in an embryonic form and (ii) their attempts, despite a rational and persuasive explanation on state and society, remained arbitrary (see Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society*).

The concept of civil society has emerged clearly between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, especially with the classical political economy theorists such as Adam Smith. Classical political economy, echoing individual rights like laissez faire, freedom, equality, made the institution of state as simply irrelevant, devaluing it, and that of civil society as what Marx had said 'theatre of history'. This helped "the civil society", Chandhoke writes, "as a historically evolved area of individual rights and freedoms, where individuals in competition with each other pursued their respective private concern."

The advent of the idea of civil society, coming from the writings of political economy theorists, was to have its shape vis-à-vis the state. J.S. Mill and De Tocqueville who thought that the state had become much more powerful than desired, sought to limit the power of the state through the mechanism devised in the ever developing concept of civil society. Chandhoke sums up this phase of liberalism, saying: "... Civil society was used as a concept primarily for organizing state-society relations. The expansion of the state, it was perceptively recognized, would contribute to the shrinkage of the civil arena. State power could be limited only with the expansion of civil society."

The process of democratisation in the west made it possible for civil society to expand itself, and in the process, restricted the area of the state. But elsewhere, the concept of the state gained prominence restricting thus, the arena of civil society. The views of Hegel, and therefore, of Marx and Gramsci should be of some interest.

10.4.3 The Hegelian, Marxian and Gramscian Traditions

There is a definite relationship between the state and civil society in the writings of Hegel (1770-1831). He views the state as the latest link growing out of the development of various institutions. Describing the state as the synthesis, representing universality, of the thesis of families and the anti-thesis of civil society, Hegel recognises the state as higher in kind than civil society. Hegel regards the state as the highest, the latest, and even the final form of social institutions. For him, civil society, as the anti-thesis of the thesis of family is "an expression for the individualist and atomistic atmosphere of middle class commercial society in which relationships are external, governed by the 'unseen' hand of the economic laws rather than by the self-conscious will of

persons.” So, civil society, a negative institution as it is for Hegel, belongs to the “realm of mechanical necessity, a resultant of the irrational forces of individual desires”, governed, as Sabine says for Hegel, “by non-moral casual laws and hence, ethically anarchical.” The thesis (the family) and the anti-thesis (the civil, the bourgeois society) merge into what Hegel calls the state (the synthesis). Thus, the state comes to have the universality of civil society and the specificity and the individuality of the family.

Thus, while the political economy and the liberal-democratic theorists had given primacy to civil society, and had given the state a back seat, Hegel reverses the position and puts the state in the position of civil society. According to Hegel, ultimately civil society is subordinated to the state, and the individual, to the whole. “Consequently, in Hegelian formulation”, Chandhoke says, “there can be no interrogation of the state, of its designs for universality, or of its rationale. The resolution of the contradiction of civil society is the state, and therefore, between the people and the state, there is no dichotomy, only legitimacy and acceptance.”

Marx, unlike Hegel who had made the civil society a hostage and who had idealised the state, seeks to restore the civil society to the position of making it the theatre of history. But the civil society, Marx argues, has failed to live up to its promises, had failed to create a situation where the individual could find freedom and democratic transformation, had to seek ways and means through which individuals could integrate into the society and the state.

Gramsci (1891-1937) following Marx and developing his theory of state takes into account the reality of civil society. His main proposition is that one cannot understand the state without understanding the civil society. He says that the ‘state’ should be understood as not only the apparatus of government, but also the ‘private’ apparatus of hegemony or civil society. Building on the Marxian notion of the state, Gramsci makes a distinction between the state as a political organisation (the integral state, the visible political constitution of civil society) and the state as government. The integral state keeps reproducing itself in the practices of everyday life through activities situated in civil society. It is hegemony which provides moral and intellectual leadership to practices in civil society. Hegemony, for Gramsci, works for both, for the dominant as well as the subaltern class in civil society. Each class must, Gramsci says, before seizing power, hegemonise social relations in society.

To sum up, it may be said that for both the liberals and the Marxists, civil society is primary. While the liberals argue for the separation of civil society from the autonomy of the state, the Marxists, on the other hand, create an alternative tradition of civil society, in which, the civil society, with its all potentialities, has to keep itself always reorganised and transformed.

10.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The relationship between state and civil society is important in so far as it suggests the comparative position of each in relation to the other. In some analyses, this relationship is depicted as a zero-sum game: the stronger the state, the weaker the civil society; the weaker the state, the stronger the civil society. Obviously, the expansion of the area of state activity would help minimise the role of civil society; the expansion of the area of civil society would help, on the other hand, minimise the role of the state. In modern liberal societies of our time, the civil society ‘sphere’ is larger than that of the state, while in dictatorial regimes of any sort, the state’s ‘sphere’ is larger than that of civil society.

10.5.1 State and Civil Society: Integrative Relationship

State and civil society are not two opposite concepts. One does not stand in conflict with another. Neither is one the anti-thesis of the other. The two should not be regarded as usurping the area of each other. It is not a zero-sum game relationship between the two. Indeed, the relatively stronger state would put a premium on the role of civil society, but this, in no way, diminishes the effectiveness of civil society. The libertarian view, expressed in the writings of Hayek or Nozick, that the state is likely to oppress civil society is, more or less, ill-founded. The fact of the matter is that the relationships between state and civil society are reciprocal; the relationships are of an integrative nature, each strengthening the cause of the other. It is, in fact, difficult to conceive of civil society functioning successfully without the state. We see the citizen simultaneously constrained by the state and protected by it. It is the state which provides the integrative framework within which the civil society operates; civil society cannot function properly without the state. The integrative framework, as expressed in laws and rules, is accepted as valid by all, the framework needs to be administered neutrally and in a manner consistent with the shared culture of society. We cannot imagine life without this integrative framework, which creates a degree of coherence and without which civil society is likely to become uncivil. Civil society has to open up, in the face of the all-powerful state, to challenge the bureaucratic devices lest it ends up in rigidity. It is, thus, the reciprocity between state and civil society that is significant or at least, should be considered significant. State power is to be exercised within the larger and wider sphere of civil society, and civil society has to keep state power on its toes so that it does not degenerate into absolutism.

10.5.2 State, Civil Society and Democracy

The two concepts, state and civil society, are not in conflict with each other. Democracy integrates the two. The claims of the state get strengthened by civil society and civil society is made more stable through the state. The two have to work in a democratic frame: the democratic state within the framework of democratic civil society. In a democratic system, state and civil society can collaborate for effective functioning of each. The state has to be constituted democratically, wherein its powers are decentralised and its functions are performed within the rules and procedures already laid. Such a state has to respond to the ever-growing demands of civil society. Its role, more or less, is to coordinate, it has to interfere least in the social and economic life of the people; it has to be regulative in character.

Civil society has to be more open and diversified. It has to keep the dialogue continuous and constant with the state and within all the constituents making it. Its area has to be ordained freely and openly, devices making up public opinion and public discourse state-free.

In liberal-democratic states, there is a constant interplay of forces belonging to the state and civil society, each putting an imprint on the other. In dictatorial regimes, state power is used to control civil society and civil society gets integrated into the state: the state speaks for the civil society. Democracy alone unites the state with civil society. The state cannot exist for long if it is not democracy laden; civil society cannot exist unless it is democratically structured and functions democratically.

A democratic state cannot exist if it is restrictive, coercive, prohibitive, and imposing; it cannot exist if it does not provide the civil society frame in perfect order; it cannot exist if it does not guarantee rights and freedoms to individuals. Likewise, a democratic civil society cannot exist if it does not allow every individual to act in the public sphere, it cannot exist if each and every citizen does not have equal claim on the state, if each citizen is not respected as a human being.

10.6 SUMMARY

State is not mere governance; it is a political community as well. It is, what Gramsci says, the visible political constitution of civil society, consisting of the entire complex of activities with which a ruling class maintains its dominance, and the ways in which it manages to win the consent of those over which it rules. It is, in other words, a complex of institutions and practices resting upon the nodal points of power in civil society. It is a social relation and as such, it is the codified power of social formation.

Civil society consists of the entire range of assumptions, values and institutions such as political, social and civil rights, the rule of law, representative institutions, a public sphere and above all, a plurality of associations.

The two concepts, state and civil society, have grown over time and along with them, their characteristics also developed. They have stood in relation to each other, each giving another a corresponding value. With the emergence of political economy and liberalism, civil society got a definite connotation, especially in relation to the state.

State and civil society are closely related to each other. The state cannot be imagined without civil society, and civil society cannot be thought of without the state. The two exist in integrative relationships. The state, in democratic systems, protects civil society and civil society strengthens the state. In dictatorial regimes, the state controls the civil society.

10.7 EXERCISES

1. How did the term 'state' come to be used in the West?
2. Explain briefly the characteristic features of the State.
3. State briefly the ancient Greek view of the State.
4. Why do Marxists regard the state as the committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie?
5. Explain the early modern view of the state.
6. What is civil society?
7. Explain Hegel's view of civil society.
8. Explain the relationship between state and civil society.
9. How does democracy ensure an integrative relationship between the state and the civil society?