MASTER OF ARTS SOCIOLOGY

CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

(CODL)

MSO 202: POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

BLOCK I

CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)

TEZPUR, ASSAM - 784028

INDIA

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Mission

To provide quality higher education at door step through barrierless, flexible and open learning mode in conformity with national priority and societal need.

Objective

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MSO-202: POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr Rabin Deka	Head and Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma	Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Prof. Kedilezo Kikhi	Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Dr Amiya Kumar Das	Assistant Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Ms Ankita Bhattacharyya	Assistant Professor, Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University

CONTRIBUTORS

	Mr Digantaraj Medhi	Research Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, Tezpur University
Module I & II		
	Ms Ankita Bhattacharyya	Assistant Professor, Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University

EDITOR

Dr Preeti Singh	Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, Vasanta College for Women

BLOCK I

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course aims to acquaint the learners with the major concepts, theoretical approaches and perspectives of political sociology. It seeks to prepare the learners to apply these concepts and approaches to the understanding of the nature of the political processes and institutions in India. The course also exposes the learners to the emerging perspective on the polity-society relationship in contemporary times.

The course is divided into four Modules, each consisting of multiple units. This has been done to discuss the major concepts more elaborately and, in a learner-friendly way.

Module I gives an introduction to political sociology. **Unit 1** is devoted to the emergence and scope of political sociology. **Unit 2** discusses the different approaches to the study of politics. **Unit 3,** on the other hand, deals with the approaches to the study of power and authority. The last unit of the module, **Unit 4**, explains the basic concepts of political sociology like elite and masses, consensus and conflict, state and stateless societies.

Module II is about the different perspectives on political sociology. **Unit 5** gives an overview of the different perspectives on state, covering the liberal, Marxist and pluralist perspectives. **Unit 6** deals with state and class structure.

Module III deals with institutions and political process and it consists of three units. **Unit 7** explores political parties. The characteristics and compositions of political parties are discussed in this unit. On the other hand, **Unit 8** is devoted to pressure groups and interest groups, focusing on their political significance. **Unit 9** discusses democratic decentralisation and local self-government.

Module IV discusses political sociology in the context of India. This module is divided into five units.. **Unit 10** deals with the state and society in India, focusing on the colonial and post-colonial developments.

An important feature of India, i.e. caste and its role in Indian politics is discussed in **Unit 11. Unit 12**, on the other hand, deals with class and politics in India. **Unit 13** discusses religion, focusing on the debate on secularism and communalism in India while **Unit 14** discusses the role of region and language in the context of politics in India.

The complete course is divided into two Blocks. **Block I** contains Module I and II. **Block II** will have Module III and IV.

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MODULE I: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1: POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY: EMERGENCE AND SCOPE

UNIT STRUCTURE

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first semester, you learned about the discipline of Sociology in general where you studied the works of the founding fathers- Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim and their way of analysing society. Apart from these three thinkers, you also learned about the works of other important scholars such as Vilfredo Pareto and George Simmel. Besides learning about sociology in general, you now have a fair understanding of Indian society and are familiar with peculiarities that exist in our society. By now you are also aware of social stratification that exists in societies.

In this paper- 'Political Sociology', which is divided into four modules and fourteen units in total, we will learn about power and politics and we will use a sociological approach, i.e. we will study the concepts of power and politics, the distribution of power and the power relations that exist in societies, by applying various sociological perspectives. In the first unit, we will learn what we understand by political sociology, the relationship between political sociology with sociology and political science, the emergence and scope of this branch of sociology and a slight background on how the discipline evolved in India.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we introduce and explain to you the branch of sociology known as political sociology. By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the branch of sociology that deals with power and politics, i.e. political sociology;
- Explain the meaning of political sociology;
- Differentiate between political sociology and political science;
- Describe how this branch emerged historically;
- Explain the scope of political sociology.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS 'POLITICAL'

Before we go into the details of the field of political sociology, let us first try to understand what is meant by the term 'political'. The term 'political' has no fixed or unique meaning. However, it can be said that there has been two approaches of defining politics - traditional and modern. While the traditional approach 'confined politics to the study of the state, government or formal political institutions', the modern approach attempted to de-link politics from formal political institutions and to make it society-oriented in place of state-oriented (Mukhopadhyay, 1977: 16). Behaviouralist scholars like Charles E. Merriam, David B. Truman, Harrold Lasswell, David

Easton have made significant contribution in giving the new meaning to politics. Now, quite simply, the term political is related to power. It has multiple, though related meanings (Bhargava and Acharya, 2008: 4).

We can look at the concept, 'political' in multiple ways. One way to look at is that we can say that political means the exercise of power. Secondly, it is that domain or dimension of our collective life where we fight for our interests; make claims (including moral claims) on each other, where important and urgent issues are contested. But we must also remember that demands, claims, protests and complaints generate conflict. Therefore the 'political' is inherently related to the conflict. Thirdly, we can view the political as where new worlds are imagined since it involves the vision of a future world (Bhargava and Acharya, 2008: 4).

The meaning of 'political' has changed over the years. In classical Greece, the term political had to do with fundamental decision making about the affairs of the community. But to make decisions, however, one must first have the power to do so. The term may then refer to this collective power, to the use of this power to make decisions (Bhargava and Acharya, 2008: 4). However, the meaning of the term power has changed in the modern age. Power in modernity is seen as the capacity of some people to act in a manner that obstructs the significant interests of others, that marginalises and excludes them so that they are left with no ability or capacity to make decisions about themselves or about the whole community. Power came to simply mean power *over* others. Therefore, the term political could refer to this power over others (ibid).

Thus, to summarize, we can say that the term political has multiple meanings:

(a) The collective power to make decisions about every aspect of the community.
(b) The power of some groups to control or subordinate others in order to realize their own narrow interests.

(c) State power (power exercised by the state) used to realize the common good/values or

(d) State power used to exercise domination by one group over others (ibid).

Thus, we see that the central component of the term political is about power. The above-given ideas of power are quite preliminary and are only meant as an entry point to the discipline. Later on, we will learn about more precise definitions of power and the various approaches to power and politics in Unit 2 and Unit 3.

It must be kept in mind that in political sociology, we generally study about power meant in the modern sense since it is closely tied with sociology, which itself is a modern discipline. The classical ideas about power are not given much attention. With that in mind, now let us look at discipline called political sociology and we begin by starting with the inter-relationship between sociology and political sociology.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
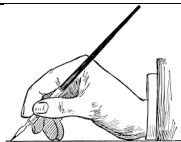
Fill up the gaps:

1. Quite simply, the term political is related to -------------

2. In classical Greece, the term political had to do with -------------------- --------------about the affairs of the community.

3. ------------in modernity is seen as the capacity of some people to act in a manner that obstructs the significant interests of others.

1.4 SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

Political sociology is one of the sub-disciplines under the discipline of sociology. Therefore it must be understood in the larger context of its parent discipline, i.e. sociology. Political sociology is not simply a little political science that sociologists do on the side, but is an integral component of sociology (Gupta, 1995: 1).

Sociology by itself is a relatively new discipline which emerged in the modern era in the nineteenth century. A fundamental characteristic of sociology is the importance of the collective and it is predisposed towards themes that have the collective at the centre. Therefore the recurrent themes in sociology are those of roles, status, stratification, family and kinship, political authority and classes because in each of these the collective is at the centre (Gupta, 1995: 1-5). Now, when we say that the collective is important, it does not simply negate the individual or does not imply that the individual is not important. In sociology, collectives are not understood as eternal entities, but rather as dynamic phenomena that change, grow and arise because of individual actions pressure collectivities (Gupta, 1995: 3). However, the collective in sociology is conceptualized as something which is qualitatively different from aggregates, and that the whole is greater than the sum total of its parts. Individual action is thereby both constrained by and is an instance of the collective (Gupta, 1995: 9).

At this point, it also helps to draw the distinction between sociology and psychology, both of which deals with human behaviour. In sociology, human behaviour is an instance of and is constrained by, the collective, while in psychology human behaviour is an outcome of internal drives and biographical specifics (Gupta, 1995: 5). Thus, it is the collective rather than the individual that is central to sociology.

It is this characteristic of the collective in sociology which is so central and plays an important role in any sociological analysis. Therefore, when we look at any of the sub-disciplines in sociology, including political sociology, we have to try to view and understand these sub-disciplines

within these sociological concerns. We have to understand and locate them in the larger context.

1.4.1 What is Political Sociology?

Different scholars have given different opinions on the nature of political sociology. Let us look at how different scholars have conceptualized the discipline.

Tom Bottomore, a British sociologist says that political sociology is concerned with power in its social context. By power, he means the ability of an individual or a social group to pursue a course of action (to make and implement decisions, and more broadly to determine the agenda for decision making) if necessary against the interests, and even against the opposition, of other groups and individuals. He says that the principal object of political sociology has been, and should be, the phenomenon of power at the level of an inclusive society (whether that society is a tribe, a nation-state, an empire, or some other type) (Bottomore, 1979: 7).

The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology quotes the definition given by Lewis Coser, a German-American sociologist, who defines political sociology as "The branch of sociology that is concerned with the social causes and consequences of given power distributions within or between societies, and with the social and political conflicts that lead to the change in the allocation of power" (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 575).

Robert E. Dowse and John A. Hughes, say that political sociology is mainly concerned with the analysis of the interaction between politics and society. It involves the study of the political behaviour within a sociological perspective or framework, but it is not an act of social reductionism which reduces political events to by-products of the social, but rather sees the problem as one of the interactions between the social and the political (Guru, 2015: 10).

Anthony Orum provides a definition of political sociology and says that it directs attention toward the social circumstances of politics, that is, to how

politics is both shaped by and is shapes other events in societies. Instead of treating the political arena and its actors as independent from other happenings in a society, political sociology treats that arena as intimately related to all social institutions (Nash, 2000: 2).

Michael Rush and Philip Althoff say that political sociology is concerned with the examination of the links between politics and society, between social structures and political structures, and between social behaviour and political behaviour (Guru, 2015: 10).

Sudipta Kaviraj, an Indian scholar, says that political sociology represents the discipline which seeks an understanding of the political world through the sociological bases of political action. It seeks to understand systematically the underlying social forces that determine the shape and lines of movement of political life (Kaviraj, 1997: 2)

Thus, from all these above definitions by various scholars, we see that political sociology is not concerned with power at an individual level; it is rather concerned with power at the level of a society. Mukhopadhyay rightly argues that political sociology is the product of a cross fertilization between Sociology and Political Science that studies the impact of society on politics and also the reverse, although viewing the substance of politics in a social form (Mukhopadhyay, 1977: 11). We can say that the discipline is primarily concerned with the complex interplay between the political domain and the social domain, how both affect and shape each other.

1.4.2 Political Sociology is not Sociology of Politics

One thing to keep in mind is that although we do consider political sociology as a sub-discipline of sociology, it is simply not the sociology of politics. Political sociology is much more than just sociology of politics. Differentiating between political sociology and sociology of politics Giovanni Sartori writes : "Political Sociology is only born when the sociological and 'politological' approaches are combined at their point of intersection. If the 'sociology of politics deals with the nonpolitical reasons

why people act the way they do in political life', political sociology should include also the political reasons why people act the way they do. A real political sociology is, then, a cross-disciplinary break-through seeking enlarged models which reintroduce as variables the givens of each component sources" (Lipset, 1972: chapter 4).

Sociology of politics is exclusively concerned with the study of one-way processes of the relationship between society and politics; it considers sociological variables as the explanatory variables of political phenomena which are treated as dependent on and determined by the former (Guru, 2015: 12). It is unconcerned with the study of the impact of politics on society. Sociology of politics is a sociological reduction of politics and hence, its scope of the study is narrow and limited (ibid).

Political sociology, on the other hand, involves the study and analysis of interactions, interrelations, and reciprocal influences between society and politics. It undertakes the study of politics on enquiring into their sociological bases, and simultaneously, it enquires into the impact of politics upon the society as a whole (Guru, 2015: 13). While undertaking the study of politics, both at the micro and macro levels, sociological bases and determinants are necessarily enquired into, distinguished, and the extent of their impact upon micro-politics and macro-politics is examined and measured (ibid). On the whole, political sociology is essentially concerned with the enquiry, examination and analysis of reciprocal influences between society and politics on considering each as the explanatory variable for the other (ibid). To illustrate, while studying caste and politics in India, sociology of politics attempts to analyze Indian politics in terms of its caste ridden society whereas political sociology in addition to this also inquires how the caste system in India has been affected by politics, what is called the process of 'Politicisation of caste' by Rajni Kothari (Mukhopadhyay, 1977: 9).

Thus, in political sociology, the overall performance of the political system is sought to be analysed by examining and enquiring the impact of social structure and culture upon it. The societal structure and culture are considered determinants and variables that can explain political phenomena and the discipline studies these interrelationships (Guru, 2015: 12-13). At the same time, it also involves a study and analysis of the impact of politics on societal structure and culture. It also looks into the role of the political system in the process of modernization of society, development and change (ibid).

1.4.3 Meaning of Political Sociology

Since society and politics are such vast domains, there is no agreement or consensus on the nature and meaning of the discipline. There are four broad ways on how the discipline can be looked at.

1. Political sociology as the study of the state.

A lot of scholars tend to look at political sociology as the science of the state. Here a state may-be a nation-state or a government state. A nation-state means a national society while a government-state designates the rulers and leaders of this national society (Rathore, 1986: 123-124). Therefore this way of looking at the discipline is quite narrow and limited and has little or no relevance in contemporary times (ibid).

2. Political sociology as the interaction between society and politics

Some other scholars tend to view the discipline as the interaction between the domains of society and politics. As you might have observed from a few definitions that were provided above, this is one way, although not the only way of looking at the discipline.

3. Political sociology as the science of power

The third way to look at the discipline is to view it as the science of power, of government, of the authority, and of command in all human societies (including national societies) (Rathore, 1986: 124). Many famous

sociologists, including Max Weber, seem to have viewed the discipline from this angle.

4. Political sociology as integration of sociology and political science

Some scholars view political sociology as some kind of hybrid or rather integration between sociology and political science. Thus, in this case, it might be viewed as an interdisciplinary approach.

It won't be fair to say that any one of the above is correct way of viewing the discipline. Rather, we must understand that over the years the meaning of political sociology has evolved and all these four approaches find their place in the discipline. We can say that all the four notions, taken cumulatively, would broadly indicate the meaning of political sociology (Rathore, 1986: 124).

At this juncture, you might be wondering that since political sociology deals with power and politics how is it different or similar to political science, another discipline that also deals with politics. Let us look at the relationship between these two disciplines.

1.4.4 Political Sociology and Political Science

In the last section, we saw that one way of looking at political sociology is to think of it as an integration of sociology and political science. In fact, there is considerable overlap between the two. In some countries like France, the two terms are almost synonymous (Rathore, 1986: 119). Nevertheless, political sociologists have differentiated between the two on the basis of their scope and nature. As Bendix and Lipset argue that 'political science starts with the state and examines how it affects society, while political sociology starts with society and examines how it affects the state' (Bendix & Lipset 1967: 26). Differentiating between the two, Coser observes: 'While traditional political science was devoted , on the whole, to the maintenance or gradual improvement of the social order and to defence of the *status quo*, political sociology tended, at least in its formative stage, to be more attentive to the overt forces of disruption and conflict in the

polity, and to be more aware of underlying disruptive forces….one can say that political science has tended to concentrate on the visible part of the political iceberg whereas political sociology has paid greater attention to the submerged portions (Coser 1967:4-5).

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Political science studies the institution of the state - the government, judiciary, the bureaucracy, the military, the police and so on (Bhargava and Acharya, 2008: 15). Political science deals mainly with the machinery of government, the mechanisms of public administration, and the formal political realm of elections, public opinion, pressure groups, and political behaviour (Dictionary of Sociology ,1994: 575).

Political sociology, on the other hand, is more concerned with the interrelationships between politics, social structures, ideologies, and culture (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 575). A state is also an important object of study in political sociology but it deals more broadly with the study of the sources and utilization of power, authority and influence in all social contexts, including, for example, the family, friendship groups, clubs and local communities (ibid).

As you might have realized by now, there exist considerable overlaps between the two fields. However, political sociology retains a sociological approach in its study of the interaction between society and politics.

1.4.5 Emergence, Evolution & Scope
When we talk about the emergence and evolution of political sociology, we are more concerned with the emergence of the discipline in the modern sense, i.e. how the discipline took a distinctly modern form in its analysis of society and politics. It was in the nineteenth century that with the works of two great German intellectuals Karl Marx and Max Weber, the field in the modern sense emerged. Even before that starting from classical antiquity, the works of the Greek philosopher Plato, then continuing in the Middle Ages through the Enlightenment period in the works of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and many others, there was a constant

engagement with society and politics. But it is only with the works of Marx and Weber that the foundation was laid for a modern emergence of political sociology. (Guru, 2015: 2).

Marx, of course, did not consider himself a sociologist but his work was crucial for the emergence of this field. Marx focused on economic factors as the exclusive determinants of the nature and structure of the state, and of the processes of politics in the society as well (Guru, 2015: 2). Weber distinguished social factors such as status, culture, and social groups as the vital determinants of the structure of state-authority and the nature of public policy (ibid).

It was Weber who provided a distinction between power and authority. He claimed that when power is legitimate, it is called authority. When power is legitimised it has the approval of those who are dominated, whereas power per se only has to do with domination (Gupta, 1995: 10). The distinction between power and authority, therefore, explicitly or implicitly, framed all scholarship in this sub-discipline (ibid). Therefore, we can say that Weber's distinction between power and authority, at one stroke, provided the key concepts for political sociology, as well as cleared the field for the growth of this specialization (ibid).

Because of the pioneering contributions of Karl Marx and Max Weber, the foundation of scientific political sociology was laid down, and hence, they may be acknowledged as its founding fathers (Guru, 2015: 3).

Over the years, the nature and meaning of political sociology have changed and evolved. In the initial phases, it was mostly confined to the analysis of the nation-state. Historically, it has always been concerned with the relations between state and society. However, the field has also been affected and still does, by the ongoing events across the world. The post-modern turn after the 1970s left its mark on the field. Contemporary political sociology also gives importance to one more crucial factor when it comes to power and politics – culture. This might be called the cultural turn

in the field. Contemporary political sociologists are concerned with how culture and politics are intertwined, they are concerned with cultural politics as well (Nash, 2000: 2).

The scope of political sociology is quite broad and the discipline looks promising. Because power and politics are a recurring theme in all aspects of our lives, be it the government, political parties, policy etc, the field of political sociology has ample scope in the future. Lipset and Bendix suggest following as the key areas of study in political sociology: (i) voting behaviour (ii) concentration of economic power and political decision-making (iii) ideologies of political movements and interest groups (iv) political parties, voluntary associations, the problems of oligarchy and psychological correlates of political behaviour; and (v) government and the problems of bureaucracy (Lipset and Bendix 1967: 10).

Greer and Orleans claim that political sociology has mainly been concerned with: (i) The structure of the state (ii) The nature and conditions of legitimacy (iii) The nature of the monopoly of force and its use by the state and (iv) The nature of the sub-units and their contention with the state (Rathore, 1986: 135). These four concerns can be translated as consensus and legitimacy, participation and representation, and the relationship between economic development and political change (Rathore, 1986: 135). All these three themes can be viewed as the scope, although not limited to it, of political sociology.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define Political Sociology.

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2. How is Political Sociology different from Political Science?

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3. What is the difference between Power and Authority?

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4. What according to Greer and Orleans are the four main concerns of Political Sociology?

1.5 POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

The discipline of political sociology in India is a relatively recent development (Kaviraj, 1997: 4). Political science, however, had an older origin in Indian universities and it emerged as a discipline in the late 1930s. The primary concern of political science in India was mostly constitutional law. Sociology also emerged in a few Indian universities from the 1920s. It was only after the 1960s that there was a collaboration between political science and sociology which helped develop political sociology in India. And over the years, the field has got only stronger with many scholars contributing to its development.

1.6 SUMMIMG UP

In this unit, we have briefly introduced you to the field of political sociology. We first learned about the concept of 'political' which could be looked at multiple ways. Then we learned that since political sociology is a sub-field of sociology, the importance of the collective is paramount in political sociology. We also learned that political sociology is not just

sociology of politics; rather it is concerned with the complex interplay between the political domain and the social domain, how both affect and shape each other. The finally, we learned how the discipline emerged with the pioneering efforts of Marx and Weber and how it has taken a 'cultural' turn in contemporary times.

Glossary
1. Authority – Power that is legitimate.
2. Collective – more than one and related to a group. It is something which is contrasted with the individual.
3. Legitimacy – conforming to the law or to rules.
4. Nation-state – A sovereign state of which most of the citizens or subjects are united also by factors which define a nation, such as language or common descent.
5. Social or societal structure – refers to patterned social relations, those regular and repetitive aspects of the interactions between the members of a given social entity.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. What do you mean by the term 'political'?
2. What is the difference between sociology of politics and political sociology?
3. What is the importance of the collective in political sociology?
4. Critically examine the nature or meaning of political sociology.
5. How did political sociology emerge?

1.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICS

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Objectives

2.3 Approaches to Politics

 2.3.1 Functionalist Perspective

 2.3.2 Marxian Perspective

 2.3.3 Weberian Perspective

 2.3.4 Elite Theory Perspective

 2.3.5 Pluralist Perspective

 2.3.6 Post-modernist Perspective

 2.3.7 Feminist Perspective

2.4 Summing Up

2.5 Questions

2.6 Recommended Readings and References

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, i.e. Unit 1, we learned about the nature and meaning of political sociology and the emergence and scope of the discipline. We learned that political sociology is not just a little bit of political science that sociologists do on the side neither is it simply sociology of politics. It is rather concerned with the analysis of the interaction between politics and society and involves the study of the political behaviour within a sociological perspective or framework. We also learned how the nature of political sociology has changed over the years; previously it was mostly concerned with the state but post-1970s it has taken a 'cultural turn'. In this unit which is titled 'Approaches to the Study of Politics', we will learn about the various perspectives or approaches within sociology that can be used to study politics. Actually, when we say power, politics or authority, these are related terms, although not exactly the same. But since they are related, the approaches to study politics are also the same as power and

authority. Therefore this unit, Unit 2 and the next unit, Unit 3, which is titled 'Approaches to the Study of Power and Authority', are overlapping. In this unit, we will mostly focus on approaches to study politics and the 'political', while in the next unit, we will focus more precisely on analysing power and authority.

For you to comprehend this unit, you must be familiar with the works of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber. If you have a thorough understanding of their works, this unit will be easy to grasp. In case you feel that you need a slight revision of their works, it would be advisable to quickly go through the classical sociology paper that you learned in the first semester.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to the various sociological perspectives to study politics. By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Differentiate between Functionalist, Marxian and Weberian perspectives;
- Explain neo-Marxist perspective of politics;
- Contrast them with Feminist and Post-modern approaches;
- Critically look at politics and the political domain from multiple angles.

2.3 APPROACHES TO POLITICS

Let us look at the multiple sociological approaches that can be used to study politics.

2.3.1 Functionalist Perspective

The functionalist approach is one where the society is viewed as a system of interconnected parts. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole (Haralambos, 1980: 522). The various social institutions like family, religion, or state, etc. are viewed in terms of their functionality to society,

hence the term functionalist. When it comes to the functionalist approach, two famous names that are important are Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Parsons has conceptualized about power in a functional way, which will be elaborated in more detail in the next unit. Durkheim has said not much about power; actually, power is missing from most of his works since his prime concern was social order. However, he did talk about the state.

Durkheim said that the state is an outcome of the division of labour that creates modern societies; and it contributes to the expansion of individual freedom (Nash, 2000: 15-16). Also, it reflects and refines society's collective representations, the social symbols that express beliefs and values in public rituals and ceremonies, and which guide individuals and constrain their behaviour (ibid). The state, thus, for Durkheim is functional. The state fosters solidarity by creating and transforming collective representations into binding decisions in law and policy for the good of all (ibid).

Durkheim, as we know, was concerned with social order and solidarity, he never exclusively focused on conflict. For him, social conflicts are inherently pathological (Nash, 2000: 17). Social conflict, if it exists in a society, is because of a lack of integration. Thus, Durkheim's ideas about society actually have no place for politics at all (ibid). For him, politics is contingent and partial, fundamentally unnecessary to a properly functioning society, and actually inherently immoral (ibid).

2.3.2 Marxian Perspective
The Marxist approach which draws from the works of Karl Marx privileges economic factors over everything else. As such, in this approach, it is viewed that economic relations ultimately determine all social and political life (Nash, 2000: 4). Thus, although the state is a relevant and important entity in Marxist analysis, economic factors remain crucial. Marx had written a lot over the course of his career and his different views on the

state will be discussed in unit 5. In this unit, we will rather focus on one crucial dimension – autonomy of political institutions, including the state.

In contrast to liberal models of studying politics, Marxian approach does not see political system as an autonomous structure rather argues that politics is only a part of superstructure dependent on the base (i.e. economic structure). Political institutions, including the state has no autonomy; it is the economy that ultimately affects the functioning of the state. The state is dependent upon the contradiction within the capitalist mode of production, between wealth and poverty, and hence upon the conflict between the two classes – bourgeoisie and proletariat – which embody these contradictory aspects of society (Bottomore, 1979: 9). The state is thus conceived as a dependent element of a total social process in which the principal moving forces are those arising from a particular mode of production (ibid). Thus, economic is the explanatory variable and political is the dependent.

Marxist scholars explain the relation between the two through the concepts of base and superstructure. Emphasizing the autonomy of the forces of production and dependency of superstructure, Marx wrote in his Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general" (Karl Marx *, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* 1859: Preface).

Thus, according to classical Marxian theory, the mode of production which comprises of the forces of production and relations of production forms the economic base of a society. This base gives rise to a corresponding superstructure which includes culture, ideology, social institutions, and political institutions including the state. The superstructure is dependent on the base and as such changes in the economic base will reflect in the superstructure. For Marx, class conflict is what matters over everything else. Therefore the conflict and contradiction in that class struggle would affect the economic base which in return will impact the political institutions since they are part of the superstructure. So, political institutions, including the state in Marxism have no independent existence.

Marxist theory, therefore, is opposed to those theories which are more exclusively concerned with the independent effects of political institutions (Bottomore, 1979: 12). Thus, the Marxian approach to politics can be summarised by saying that although politics does take place and the venue for this politics is the state, it is ultimately economic factors that will shape the course of events since the political institutions are dependent on economic variables.

The Marxian approach has been quite influential and has inspired other approaches. These approaches, although they are Marxist in their orientation and hence give importance to economic factors, take other factors such as ideology as well. These approaches are called neo-Marxist approaches. Two important thinkers in this tradition are Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser.

Neo-Marxian Perspective
Antonio Gramsci, although a Marxist, theorised the ideological and political superstructures as relatively autonomous of the economic base (Nash, 2000: 6). His main concept is 'hegemony' which simply means domination through consent. For Gramsci, a class does not take state power; it becomes the state. He distinguished between the repressive function of state power on one hand, and the ability of the ruling class to

control society by generating consent on the other (Menon, 2008: 153). Hegemony is gained in the first place in civil society where ideology is embodied in communal forms of life in such a way that it becomes the taken-for-granted common sense of the people (Nash, 2000: 6).

Ideology is an important factor for Gramsci. It is through an ideology that hegemony is maintained. For him, our experience and our relationship to the world are mediated through ideology (Nash, 2000:6). Now, although he does view the ideological superstructures as relatively autonomous, being a Marxist he still conceptualised the ideological struggle as rooted in the class struggle.

Althusser, another scholar who comes under this tradition, also gave importance to ideology just like Gramsci. He also commented on the state and said that the state should be seen as relatively autonomous of the economic base (Nash, 2000: 7). For him, the state not only works through the repressive institutions of the police and the army, but also through ideology embedded in state institutions like education, family, trade unions, and religion. He saw society as a complex of structures, each with its own dynamic, linked into a totality by the ultimate determination of the economy (Nash, 2000: 8). The function of ideology is to make individuals into subjects who fit the positions provided by those structures (ibid).

Thus, the neo-Marxian approach to politics tries to break free from the economic factors and takes into account other important variables such as ideology when it comes to politics. It also argues that politics is not just confined to the state but it takes place in civil society as well.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name two important social thinkers associated with

the functionalist perspective.

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2. Fill up the gaps:

a. For Durkheim, social conflicts are inherently_____.

b. According to the Marxian approach, it is the _____that ultimately affects the functioning of the state.

3. Name two Neo-Marxian thinkers.

2.3.3 Weberian Perspective

In sharp contrast to the Marxian approach, a Weberian perspective views political institutions, including the state as an autonomous entity. Thus, in a Weberian approach to politics, the autonomy of the state is a key feature. By autonomy of the state, we mean that the state is not dependent on a fixed set of variables as in the case of Marxism where it is economic factors. The state is autonomous in a sense that it is not dependent just on socio-economic factors. A lot of factors affect the functioning of the state. Weber was a German nationalist and confined his analysis to the nation-state. For him, the state was the most powerful institution in modern society since it has gained the legitimate monopoly of force over a given territory (Nash, 2000: 9). He viewed politics as the striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state (ibid).

The state gains power in modernity by concentrating the means of administration, expropriating the ownership of the means of administration, in a way similar to that described by Marx in the case of the workers who are deprived of control of the means of production (Nash, 2000: 10). He talked about bureaucracy in this context. For Weber, the bureaucracy has

been and is a powerful instrument of the first order – for the ones who control the bureaucratic apparatus (Haralambos, 1980: 284). He was particularly concerned about the control of the state bureaucratic administration (ibid). Officials in modern, rational bureaucracies have little or no control over what they do since the rules and procedures of bureaucracies take on a life of their own, restricting the activities and decisions of those who work in them to the functions of the offices they fill (Nash, 2000: 10).

Weber's approach to politics can be considered elitist in nature, i.e. he considers the general population as being irrational and ignorant. Although he views democracy in a positive light, for him democracy is less the rule of the people than the rule of an elite group which combines exceptional leader and bureaucratic experts (Nash, 2000: 11).

2.3.4 Elite Theory Perspective

Elite theories emerged as a response to Marxism. It rejects the Marxist argument that political structure is nothing but merely a reflection of economic relations and the economic factor is the sole determinant of power structure of the society and argues that sources of power of elites are many. It, further, disagrees with the Marxist idea of a closed ruling class leading to polarisation of ruling and ruled class and believes in a continual circulation of elite. And finally it discards Marxist claim of future classless society free from uneven distribution of power and argues that hierarchical structure of the society is inevitable (Mukhopadhyay 1977: 43). The central concern of elite theories is why and how a ruling elite always rules over others. The main proponents of the elite theory are Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. The elite theory claims that it is the personal qualities of individuals that separate rulers from the ruled (Haralambos, 1980: 107). They argue that all societies are divided into two main groups, a ruling minority and the ruled. The ruled, which is the majority is viewed as apathetic and unconcerned with the major issues of the day while the ruling elite takes all major decisions that concern society (ibid).

Pareto and Mosca both contributed to the scholarship on elite theory. They are viewed as classical elite theorists. Pareto in his classical work *The Mind and Society*, gave the concept of 'circulation of elites' when one elite replaces the other. While Pareto focused on psychological qualities that are required for the elite rule and believed they were the same, Mosca in his *The Ruling Class*, argued that the qualities varied from society to society (Haralambos, 1980: 109). Mosca also stressed important differences between democracies and other forms of elite rule. The ruling elite in democratic societies is open; there is a greater possibility of an elite and it can be drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds (ibid).

Thus, the classical elite theory approach to politics is that only a ruling elite is capable of doing politics and taking decisions on the behalf of the common people or the ruled. The elite due to superior qualities is able to manipulate and control the common public.

Apart from classical thinkers, other scholars have also contributed significantly to elite approaches. Roberto Michels says that the concentration of power in the hands of an elite is a necessary outcome of complex organizations (Nash, 2000: 12). Joseph Schumpeter views democracy as nothing but competition between political parties whose elite members deal in votes, just as businessmen deal in commodities. It does not mean rule by the people; rather it is a method of arriving at political decisions by means of a competitive struggle for peoples' votes (ibid).

C.W. Mills in his classic work *The Power Elite* has given another version of the elite theory. In his analysis of American society, he explains elite rule in institutional rather than psychological terms. According to his theory, certain institutions occupy key pivotal positions in society and the elite compromise those who hold important posts in these institutions (Haralambos, 1980: 110). In the US, the key institutions are the military, corporations and the federal government. These three combine to form the power elite since they have similar interests (ibid).

On the basis of the above description, it can be said that though all elite theorists do agree on inevitability of elite rule but they differ in their opinion on the question of why and how elites rule over the mass. Elite theories can be broadly classified into following types: (a) organisational theory of elite by Mosca and Michels (b) psychological theory of elite by Pareto (c) economic theory of elite by James Burnham and (d) institutional theory of elite by C.W. Mills (Mukhopadhyay, 1977: 43).

As we can see, elite theories focus more on the elite rule and how the rule is maintained and why it is so. The mass society is viewed as a passive, ignorant, and indifferent; a public that is technically incompetent to fully participate in politics (Nash, 2000: 13).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Name two proponents of the elite theory.

----

2. Fill up the gaps:

a. Weberian perspective views political institutions, including the state as an _____.

b. Weber viewed politics as the striving to share_____.

3. Who wrote *The Power Elite?*

2.3.5 Pluralist Perspective

As the name implies, pluralism means that there are a number of groups, a plurality of groups that are involved in the political processes. In this approach, power is dispersed among a variety of groups in society, unlike

in elite theories or in Marxian theory where power is thought of being concentrated in the hands of a dominant minority (Haralambos, 1980: 114). Also, unlike elite theory, pluralism does tend to see citizens as actively involved in politics. For pluralists, politics is a matter of competing interest groups, none of which can dominate completely over any of the others since all have access to resources of different kinds (Nash, 2000: 13). In this approach, thus, it is thought that each group tries to further its own interests but how successful it is in securing benefits will depend on the resources it possesses and also on the other groups who are competing for the same goals. Thus, it involves a lot of compromise and bargain.

In this approach, the state is viewed as playing an important role as it arbitrates between competing interest groups. The state, therefore, is seen as a set of competing and conflicting institutions, rather than a monolithic entity which exerts its power over the rest of society (Nash, 2000: 14). Therefore, democratic politics involves endless bargaining in order to influence government policy, which is nothing more than a compromise between the different interest groups involved in the political process (ibid).

Pluralism shares some similarities with elite theories in a sense that even in pluralism the common people are not seen to be involved. Most groups that are involved in the political conflict have elites of their own and power is seen to be distributed among a plurality of elites which actively compete with one another to further particular interests (Haralambos, 1980: 114). Therefore sometimes pluralism is called elite pluralism (ibid). However, they differ from elite theories in an important manner that they do not think elites are unified or they are capable of manipulating and deceiving citizens into accepting elite rule (Nash, 2000: 14).

Pluralists are also conservative in their approach to politics in the sense that their political analysis is confined to the state. The state is the arena where social groups are engaged in political conflict; therefore conflicts only at

the level of the state are treated as political (Nash, 2000: 14). There can be no politics outside the state for pluralists (ibid). As you might have realised that such an approach is quite limited in scope as this does not take into account politics that take place in other areas. A radical break from classical theories comes with the post-modern turn that affected academics from the 70s.

2.3.6 Post-Modern Perspective

The post-modern turn started in the 1970s. In this perspective, the universal ideas are challenged; rather reality is considered to be multiple and fragmented. In the context of power and politics, power is now viewed as flowing from multiple sources rather than one. It breaks away from the notion of politics being confined to the state. One important scholar who has contributed to this scholarship is Michel Foucault, although he himself never accepted the term 'post-modernist'.

Foucault's analysis of power will be taken up in the next unit. In this unit, we focus on his contribution to the idea of governmentality. Foucault says that through the mechanism of governmentality, we are produced as subjects of governance (Menon, 2009: 155). By the term governmentality, he refers to the increasing homogenization and organization of society in modern times – through huge bureaucratic machinery that evolves ways of classifying people (ibid). He defines 'government' as the 'the conduct of conduct', the attempt o influence the actions of free subjects. It concerns how we govern ourselves as free subjects, how we govern 'things', and how we are governed (Nash, 2000: 26). The mechanisms of governmentality are not located at the level of the government in a narrow sense but operate through a variety of ways. Governmentality operates through normalization, i.e. the processes through which the individual is made to conform to the dominant norm (Menon, 2009: 155).

In this approach, the role of the state is also important although politics is now not thought of as being just confined to the state. Government through

state institutions is an important aspect of strategies of governmentality (Nash, 2000:27). The modern state is concerned with increasing the productivity of people and things rather than with imposing order and security from above (ibid). However, other mechanisms are just as equally important. A subject is created and subjected to classification and surveillance through all sorts of things – identity cards, passports and so on. Along with these mechanisms, subjects are also produced as subjects by discourses of medicine (healthy/sick), psychiatry (sane/insane), etc (Menon, 2009:155).

2.3.7 Feminist Perspective

Feminism tends to see all phenomena from a female lens. In the context of power and politics, feminism is mostly concerned with the oppression and subjugation of women and the power dynamics that results in these processes. Feminist approaches argue that a category of human beings – women, are systematically dominated, subjugated, and denied equal access to resources through the structural operation of patriarchal ideology. Patriarchy is a key category in feminist analyses of power and refers to an overarching system of male dominance operating at every level – economic, political, and cultural (Menon 2009: 154).

The political processes are conceptualised in terms of patriarchy in feminist approaches. Even the state is considered a patriarchal institution. Feminists believe that power and politics cannot be explained at an individual level; rather it has to be understood in the context of patriarchal structures. It challenges the public/private dichotomy and perceives the private as the political and thus gives a new meaning to political However, there is no one version of feminism and there has been a fusion of feminism with other ideologies. There are radical feminists who hold gender as the primary category of analysis and argue that all later forms of power imitate the original power relationship of men over women (Menon 2009: 154). On the other hand, Marxist feminists take economic factors into account along with gender in their analysis of power and argue that capitalism and

patriarchy support each other. Liberal feminism combines liberal ideas with feminist ideas. Socialist feminism talks about 'complex inequality' while uncovering the structures of exploitation.

Thus, we see that these new approaches to politics like post-modernism, feminism etc. differ in one important way from classical approaches. In these approaches, attention is paid to entities apart from the state and they focus on other ways in which power and politics operate.

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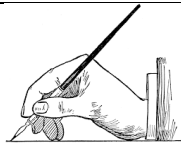
1. Name a post-modernist thinker.

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2. What do you mean by pluralism?

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3. What is the key category in feminist analyses of power?

2.4 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we first learned about the functionalist way of looking at politics. Then we saw how the Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches look at politics, i.e. mainly through economic factors. In these approaches, political processes are thought of as being dependent on socio-economic factors. In contrast to these theories, we also learned about Weberian approaches and elite theory approaches where political processes have an autonomous existence. Finally, we learned about new approaches like post-modernism and feminism that do not confine their analysis of

power and politics just to the state; rather they focus on other entities as well.

Glossary
1. Bourgeoisie – A French term, originating in the 16th century. Literally it refers to middle class, but in Marxist analysis, this term has come to be associated with the capitalist class.

2. Circulation of elites – A term given by Pareto and refers to the endless and continuing process of replacement of one elite group by another.
3. Pathological – It means something which is not healthy (in the context of medicine), which involves or is caused by a physical or mental disease. Durkheim used this term in his work to contrast with 'normal'.
4. Patriarchy – A system of society in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it
5. Proletariat – It refers to working-class people regarded collectively (often used with reference to Marxism).

2.5 QUESTIONS

1. Explain Durkheim's views on politics.
2. What is the difference between Marxian and neo-Marxian approaches when it comes to power and politics?
3. Contrast the Weberian approach to politics with the Marxian one. What is the fundamental difference between these two?
4. What are elite theories to politics?
5. Briefly explain Foucault's governmentality in the context of politics.

2.6 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3: APPROACHES TO STUDY POWER AND AUTHORITY

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Power

    3.3.1 Power as Influence

    3.3.2 Power as Authority

    3.3.3 Power as Exploitation

    3.3.4 Power as Hegemony

    3.3.5 Power as Productive

3.4 Distribution of Power in a Society - Class, Status and Party

3.5 Summing Up

3.6 Questions

3.7 Recommended Readings and References

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we had discussed the various approaches to study and analyse politics and political processes. In this unit, we will focus our attention more precisely on power and the various ways how power can be looked into. Power, authority, politics etc. are related concepts and hence you will see that there is considerable overlap between this unit and the previous one. Both these units studied together will give you a clearer picture of power, politics and political processes. The perspectives to look at power are more or less the same as discussed in the last unit since these are the major sociological approaches that are used to analyse any phenomena. In this unit, however, we will go into the precise definitions of power as given by various scholars. Then, we will also look at another crucial aspect of power – the distribution of power in a society. To

understand the distribution of power, we will focus on Max Weber's classic and most famous essay - 'Class, Status and Party'.

just as the last unit, for you to comprehend this unit too, you must be familiar with the works of Durkheim, Marx, and Weber. If you have a thorough understanding of their works, this unit will be easy to grasp. In case you feel that you need a slight revision of their works, it would be advisable to quickly go through the classical sociology paper that you learned in the first semester.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to the various ways we can study and look at power. By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the functionalist way of looking at power;
- Describe the different ways to look at power like influence, authority, hegemony, etc.;
- Describe the role power plays in producing subjectivities and identities;
- Explain how power is distributed in a society.

3.3 POWER

Power affects all aspects of our lives. It is a common term that we use every day and that shows how pervasive power is. Yet, the commonsensical notions of power may or may not be similar to the technical definitions that are available. There are multiple ways of looking at power and hundreds of definitions are available.

It was the German sociologist, Max Weber whose definition of power has been the most famous till date. He defined power as "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Gerth

and Mills, 1946). This is quite a broad definition and is applicable almost everywhere. However, Weber was particularly concerned with power that was legitimate which he called an authority. Thus, legitimate power equals authority.

Another well-known definition of power, although quite similar to Weber's is that given by Robert Dahl, a renowned political scientist. He said, "A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something which B would not do otherwise" (Menon, 2009: 149).

As you might have noticed, Dahl's definition is basically at an individual (A over B) level while Weber's definition is more at a collective level, since he talks about a communal action. But these views have one thing in common – they imply 'power over' others. However, other views also exist such as 'power to' – power as an enhanced capacity emerging from collective action (Menon, 2008: 149). This view is associated with the German political theorist, Hannah Arendt, who theorised power as enabling. For her, power is an entity that generates when people come together and communicate in a shared activity. Therefore power is the basis which allows humans to act responsibly (ibid).

In contemporary times, this way of looking at power might be and is considered a little naïve. But power was theorised like this by some people, including Talcott Parsons. Parsons regards power as something which is possessed by society as a whole and therefore it is a resource of society (Haralambos, 1980: 99). "It is the capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals" (ibid). He treats power as the analogue of money in economic systems; just like money is useful for possessing economic goods and services, similarly power is useful in securing the performance of political obligations (Menon, 2009: 150). He, thus, views it as something which is possessed by the entire social system and not just individuals and something which has the capacity to get things done (ibid).

As mentioned above, the views of Parsons are considered too simplistic in today's times. There are of course numerous other ways how we can look at power. Let us now look at these ways to look at power.

3.3.1 Power as Influence

Power and influence are related because power is actually a kind of influence. By influence, we mean the ability of an actor to bring about desired changes in the behaviour of another actor or actors on persuading them (Guru, 2015: 40). Robert Dahl has defined influence as the "relation among actors in which one actor induces other actors to act in some way they would not act otherwise" (ibid).

Thus, influence involves two or more actors, where actors may be individuals, groups, societies, and even states, in a relationship where one actor tries to bring about desired changes in behaviour in the other (Guru 2015: 42). For exercising actual influence, three prerequisites are required – (i) resources, (ii) intention and (iii) skill for exploiting the resources in order to bring about the desired changes (ibid). An example of influence between two actors, if we take the actors as nation-states, can be that of the U.S.A influencing Pakistan's foreign policy. On a smaller scale influence could also be seen been two friends or office colleagues.

As we have seen that influence is ability of an actor (the influential) to bring desired change in the behaviour of the other (the influenced), the question is how to know how much influence one is exercising over the other or how to measure influence? There are three dimensions of measuring influence: weight, domain and scope of influence. Lasswell and Kaplan explain these three dimensions: 'The weight of influence is the degree to which policies are affected; the domain of influence, the persons whose policies are affected, the scope of influence, the values implicated in the policies.'(Lasswell and Kaplan, 1961: 73)

Thus, we see that the influence is quite a broad concept and hence finds wide application.

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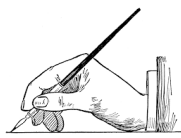
1. Define power.

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2. What is influence? How is it related to power

3.3.2 Power as Authority

Authority is a special kind of power; it is the power that is legitimate. Authority is, therefore, that kind of power which is obeyed on the basis of its legitimacy and which is accepted as just and right (Haralambos 1980: 98). By legitimate here means which conforms to law or to rules. Authority can be understood as recognised right to exercise power irrespective of the ability of power holder to apply sanction. Thus transformation of power into authority helps in perpetuation of power relation because here obedience becomes a voluntary act (Mukhopadhyay, 1977: 61). As Robert Dahl argues 'It is far more economical to rule by means of authority than by means of coercion' (Dahl, 1965: 20).

On the basis of the sources of authority, scholars have classified authority into different types. To begin with, Weber's classification according to whom, there are three kinds of authority – rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority.

(i) Rational-legal authority is the primary feature of the modern industrial bureaucratic state. Here, individuals derive their authority on the basis of impersonal rules and they are obeyed on these rational grounds (Menon, 2009: 152). In this case, legitimacy is due to formal rules and established laws. For example, when you visit a doctor in a hospital and you wait your turn, it is rational-legal authority at work since you obey the authority of the doctor as well as the hospital.

(ii) Traditional authority is the authority that exists due to historical and cultural reasons. Instances of traditional authority are those vested in tribal chiefs and religious leaders (Menon, 2009: 152).

(iii) Charismatic authority is the authority that an individual acquires by virtue of qualities possessed by him/her who may not have either modern official status or traditional authority. Jesus, Mohammed, Gandhi would be examples in this case (Menon, 2009: 152).

It must be kept in mind that the three types of authority mentioned here are ideal types. In actuality, any kind of authority will contain attributes of the other two types.

Apart from Weber's classification, another way to look at authority is the difference between *de facto* and *de jure* authority. *De jure* means 'by right', i.e. it has legal sanction. Therefore, *de jure* authority is that kind of authority that has its authority guaranteed by law. On the other hand, *de facto* refers to 'by fact'; therefore *de facto* authority refers to persons or institutions actually exercising authority (Menon, 2009: 152).

The concept of authority is crucial in political sociology. In fact, one of the central concerns of political sociology is with authority since the field constantly deals with the idea of legitimacy. Power by itself is too broad. Authority helps to zoom in on legitimate aspects of politics and political processes.

3.3.3 Power as Exploitation

While Weber was concerned with a particular form of power – authority, Marx viewed power as a kind of exploitation. Thus, in Marxian approaches, power is seen as exploitative. It is believed that a particular group in society holds power and this comes at the expense of the rest of society. The dominant group or the ruling class uses power for exploiting the ruled class and to further their own interests (Haralambos, 1980: 101). Exploitation is possible only when in a society technological advancements have made possible the production of a surplus, the excess production over and above minimum requirements. When there is surplus production and one group is able to control and appropriate this surplus, then exploitation takes place (Menon, 2009: 151).

Marx, who focused his attention on capitalist societies, elaborated in extensive detail how this surplus is produced in capitalist societies. With his theory of surplus value, he showed that workers work overtime to produce a surplus and their excess labour is transformed into a surplus. The capitalist class pay low wages to the workers and appropriate the surplus, resulting in exploitation. Thus, power in this sense is the ability to appropriate this surplus by the capitalist class since they own the means of production.

Therefore, the source of power in society lies in the economic infrastructure, according to this perspective (Haralambos, 1980: 101). Those who control the means of production can wield power. The ruling class power is used to exploit and oppress the subject class. In the Marxian perspective, "the use of power to exploit others is defined as coercion" (ibid). This power, however, is viewed as illegitimate since it is used to exploit others and since it forces the working class to submit to a situation which is against its interests. Even if the working class accepts the ruling class power as legitimate, it is due to false class consciousness, according to Marxism (ibid).

Notice how the Marxian notion of power as exploitation is viewed as illegitimate power in sharp contrast to Weber's ideas on authority which by definition is legitimate power. However, this so-called illegitimate power does become legitimate since the ruling class secures obedience from the ruled class through coercion and false consciousness.

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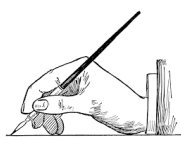
1. What is authority?

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2. What are the three kinds of authority given by Weber?

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3. Why does Marx consider power as a kind of exploitation?

3.3.4 Power as Hegemony

In the previous unit, we had introduced the concept of hegemony as given by Gramsci which means power or domination through consent. Hegemony is the control of society by purely cultural means (Menon, 2009: 153). In this understanding of power, power is exercised by coercion as well as through other means by which consent is generated from the ruled class.

Therefore, consent is the crucial component of the power that is exercised as hegemony (ibid).

Gramsci distinguishes social hegemony from the use of force and says that it is the principal means of maintaining social order in capitalist societies. Here, private or non-state actors play an important role (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 303). As such, there is the manufacturing of consent. Cultural hegemony, which is generally identified as the major dimension of this manipulation, involves the production of ways of thinking and seeing, and of excluding alternative visions and discourses (ibid). To illustrate, Gramsci divides superstructure into two parts: (a) political society that consists of state and governmental organization what he calls '*structure of coercion*' and (b) civil society consisting of family, school and church what he calls '*structures of legitimation*' . He argues that through these institutions of civil society bourgeois society gains legitimacy. Only when these institutions fail in manufacturing consent, the political society needs to use the coercive means through the structures of coercion (Gauba, 2004: 257).

Ideology is an important factor for Gramsci. It is through an ideology that hegemony is maintained. For him, our experience and our relationship to the world are mediated through ideology (Nash, 2000:6). However, ideology does not simply reflect or mirror class interest. A dominant hegemonic ideology provides a coherent systematic worldview that influences the entire population. This legitimises the domination of the ruled class, rendering its values universal (Menon, 2009: 153).

In this approach of power as hegemony, we can see how the power is legitimised through an ideology which generates consent on behalf of the ruled classes.

3.3.5 Power as Productive

This approach to power is a completely different way of looking at the concept and it comes from Foucault's analytics of power. In his analysis of

power which also involves governmentality that we touched upon in the second unit, he provided many ideas about power. Some of the key features of power are:

- Power is not repressive; rather it is productive – By power being productive means that power produces identities and subjectivities. Foucault ideas on power were opposed to classical notions of power where power is seen as possessed by the state, especially the law, and is used to impose order in society. In modern times, power does not operate like that according to him. For him, power is productive – power produces identity and subjectivities (Menon, 2009: 155). It is productive in a way that it produces particular types of bodies and minds in practices (Nash, 2000: 21).

  The most general sense in which power is productive for Foucault is through knowledge. Knowledge, especially of the social sciences, is closely related in the production of docile bodies and subjected minds. He uses the term discourse for these systems of semi-scientific knowledge (Nash, 2000: 22). Knowledge as discourse is not knowledge of the real world as it exists prior to that knowledge. Discourses construct and make real the objects of knowledge they represent. Knowledge is considered to be knowledge of the objective world because it is supported by the practices of power (ibid). He does not simply mean knowledge is power. Rather, he means that knowledge is produced to put to a certain use, in order to achieve power (Menon, 2009: 156).

  Power produces individuals both as objects and subjects (Nash, 2000: 22). Docile bodies are produced by organising individuals in practices of surveillance that classify as normal or abnormal. These practices take place in different ways in different institutions such as the military, factories, schools, hospitals and so on (ibid).

Power also produces subjectivity. Thus, subjects are produced by discourses of medicine (healthy/sick), psychiatry (sane/insane) etc. which results in new kinds of subjectivities (Menon, 2009: 155).

- Power is pluralist in nature, i.e. it does not come from a single source but it is exercised from innumerable points and it is not the possession of an elite (Nash, 2001: 21).
- Power is like a capillary – flowing throughout the system like blood in the capillaries of our body (Menon, 2009: 155).
- Where there is power, there is resistance. In his later work, he gave this idea that where there is power, resistance will definitely be present. Thus, power necessarily works on what he calls free subjects (Nash, 2000: 25).

Apart from these ideas which are summarised here, Foucault also elaborated in detail what he meant by governmentality, which has already been discussed in the previous unit. These ideas, as well as those involving governmentality, will give a clearer picture of Foucault's ideas on power. One thing we must remember, however, is the fact that when we say that power is productive, it does not necessarily mean in a positive sense. Power is productive does not mean that it is productive for society; rather power produces particular kinds of identities. It is the power that categories a person as rich or poor, sane or insane, gay or straight, normal or abnormal and these identities or subjectivities get normalised over the course of time. It is in this sense that power is productive.

3.4 DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN A SOCIETY- CLASS, STATUS AND PARTY

Now that we have a fair understanding of the various approaches to study politics and power, let us look at another crucial dimension of power. One of the crucial questions that come to mind is - how is power distributed in society? Max Weber tackled this problem and the elaborated the

distribution of power in a society in his essay titled 'Class, Status and Party'.

The distribution of power for Weber is a central concern. For him, power is distributed within a community across three axes - classes, status groups and parties. Weber, unlike Marx who narrowed down everything to the economy, including his analysis of power wherein he believed that economic power is simply converted to political power, claimed that the distribution of power is far more complex. Apart from social classes, status groups and political parties are other two entities that are important. He got the ideas about status groups from the Indian caste system on which he had elaborately studied. In the case of caste, some castes are able to monopolize power owing to their superior status. In the case of class as well, certain classes due to their economic strength can monopolize certain goods. Political parties are of course a modern phenomenon and they affect this distribution of power in their own way.

Elaborating on these ideas he says that a person's class situation, which is determined by property or lack of property, creates specific life chances. The mode of distribution of property excludes non-owners from competing for highly valued goods; it favours owners and gives them a monopoly to acquire such goods. It increases their power in price wars with those who being property-less, have nothing to offer but their services. It allows them to monopolize certain kinds of goods.

In the case of status groups, i.e. groups that are valued according to their positive or negative estimation of social honour, stratification by status results in the monopolization of ideal and material goods or opportunities by some groups over others. For example - some groups have the privilege of wearing special costumes, carrying arms, eating special dishes that others might not be allowed etc. Thus, certain status groups are able to wield power, i.e. to realise their will against the will of others, by virtue of their higher estimation of social honour.

The third way of distribution of power is via parties. Weber says that parties live in a house of power. The action is oriented toward the acquisition of social power, i.e. they intend to influence a communal action. Parties deal with the conquest of a community. They are always struggling for domination and hence strictly authoritarian. They may represent class interests or status group interests, both or neither. They may employ different tactics to attain power; it could be violence, canvassing for votes etc (Gerth and Mills, 1946).

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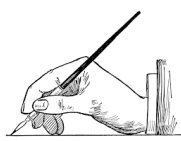
1. What is hegemony?

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2. How is Weber's concept of distribution of power different from that of Marx?

3.5 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we learned about the different ways of looking at power. Mostly power is looked at as power *over* something or someone but we also learned that power can be looked at as a resource, a capacity to do something as visualised by Parsons. We learned about the precise definitions of power from two famous scholars, Max Weber and Robert Dahl. We then saw that there are various forms of power – influence, authority, exploitation and hegemony. Complementing these classical approaches to power, we saw power as productive of identities and subjectivities as described by Foucault. Finally, we discussed Max Weber's

ideas about how power is distributed in society, i.e. through class, status and parties.

Glossary

- Communal action – It refers to that action which is oriented to the feelings of the actors that they belong together.
- De facto – by the fact
- De jure – by right
- Life chances – It refers to the 'chance' to realize an individual's goals in social action. Weber used the term in the context of a class situation

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3.6 QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between influence, power and authority?
2. What is the key term when we speak of authority?
3. What are the different types of authority according to Max Weber?
4. Explain the Marxist conception of power.
5. How can power be looked as hegemony?
6. Power is productive – Explain.
7. Analyse the distribution of power in a society across three axes as given by Max Weber.
8. Differentiate between power as exploitation and power as hegemony.

3.7 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4: BASIC CONCEPTS OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Basic Concepts

      4.3.1 State

      4.3.2 Civil Society

      4.3.3 Bureaucracy

      4.3.4 Elites and Masses

      4.3.5 Political Culture

      4.3.6 Consensus and Conflict

      4.3.7 State and Stateless societies

4.4 Summing Up

4.5 Questions

4.6 Recommended Readings and References

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, i.e. unit 3, we learned about the concept of power and the different ways in which different scholars have looked at the concept. We learned that it is possible to look at the concept or for that matter any concept or idea through multiple angles. The multiplicity of perspectives does not make one approach or perspective more 'correct' than the others. Rather, all approaches are equally valid although some approaches might be able to explain some ideas in a better way than others. In this unit, we will learn about certain basic concepts that are essential to political sociology. Some of these concepts have already been introduced in the previous units and won't be covered here again. We will be focussing on

state, civil society, bureaucracy, elites and masses, political culture, consensus and conflict, state and stateless societies.

For you to comprehend this unit, an understanding of basic ideas of sociology is enough. You must be familiar with the works of particularly Marx and Weber. If you have a thorough understanding of their works, this unit will be easy to grasp. In case you feel that you need a slight revision of their works, it would be advisable to quickly go through the classical sociology paper that you learned in the first semester.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to some of the basic yet fundamental concepts of political sociology. By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Explain what is meant by the term 'state';
- Differentiate between state and civil society;
- Differentiate between the elites and the masses;
- Differentiate between consensus and conflict;
- Explain the difference between state and stateless societies.

4.3 BASIC CONCEPTS

The most important concepts in political sociology are power and authority. We have already discussed in great detail about these two concepts in the last unit. As such, we won't be discussing these again here. Ideas about the state have already been mentioned in the various perspectives on politics. So, you must have some idea about the state by now. But the state is such an important entity and since it affects almost all aspects of political processes, we will cover the state in extensive detail in the next unit, unit 5. In this unit, however, we will discuss a bit on the state, mostly trying to contrast it with civil society.

4.3.1 State

Our commonsensical understanding of the state is that it means the government. For example, when we refer to the Indian state, in common parlance we mean the Indian government. But in technical terms, state and government are different.

By government, we mean a group of people that governs a community or unit. It sets and administers public policy and exercises executive, political and sovereign power through customs, institutions, and laws within a state.[1] It could also mean the system used for controlling a country, city, or group of people.[2]

By state, however, we mean a "distinct set of institutions that have the authority to make the rules which govern a society" (Dictionary of Sociology 1994:723). The state is not a unified entity and includes institutions such as the bureaucracy, armed forces, judiciary, etc. (ibid). It is, therefore, a set of institutions that describes the parameters for political conflicts between various interests over the use of resources and the direction of public policy (ibid).

The legal definition of the state is as follows. "States must possess the following: a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government capable of maintaining effective control over the corresponding territory and of conducting international relations with other states" (Das, 2008: 172).

As mentioned earlier, the state is not a unified entity and it consists of a set of institutions and organizations. It refers to a whole group of different organised institutions that are connected to one another and enjoy some cohesion. (Das, 2008: 172). The three main organs of the modern state are the judiciary, the executive and the legislature. All the three organs are different from each other but they have a certain level of cohesion with

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[1] http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/government.html
[2] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/government

each other and they derive authority on the basis of being part of the state (ibid). The government refers to the administrative organ of the state and is constrained by the constitution of the state (ibid).

The state occupies a central place in political sociology. And by state, we mean the modern state. Sociologists have conceptualised the state in numerous and multiple ways. It was Max Weber who highlighted three important elements of the state – territoriality, legitimacy and the monopoly of the means of physical violence (Das, 2008: 171). Weber said that all modern states have the monopoly over the legitimate use of force within a common territory (ibid). What it means is that although different actors might be capable of indulging in violence, it is only the state that has the authority to use force, that too in a legitimate way. This claim is quite true as it can be seen by analysing any society. Because the state has legitimacy, it has the power to enforce its rules and punish those who disobey its laws (Das, 2008: 172).

Territoriality is another aspect of the modern state. A state has territorial boundaries and its authority is only applicable within that boundary. The territorial boundaries are generally acknowledged by other states; however other states do not possess authority over another state's territory (Das, 2008: 175). And within the territorial boundaries of a state, there is generally a system of governance, which is distinct from others (ibid).

Apart from legitimacy, the monopoly of violence and territoriality, modern states also have one more important characteristic: sovereignty. Sovereignty means that the state is the ultimate source of political authority over the territory under its jurisdiction (Das 2008: 174). There are two aspects of sovereignty – internal and external. By internal sovereignty, it means that within the territorial boundaries, the state has the ultimate authority and there is no higher authority than the state. External sovereignty refers to the autonomy and independence of the state in the international arena (Das, 2008: 175).

Thus, to summarise, basically a state is a set of interrelated institutions, which is sovereign although not a monolithic entity. It has legitimacy, has a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence and is territorial in nature.

This 'state' must also not be confused with individual states that exist in our country, for example, the state of Bihar or Nagaland etc. These are federal units within the country. On the other hand, in technical terms, the 'state' in political theory would mean the Indian state.

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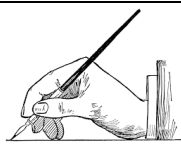
1. Define state.

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2. How is government different from state?

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3. What is sovereignty?

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4. What are the three important elements of the state according to Max Weber?

4.3.2 Civil Society

Civil society is another concept that is often taken for granted or misunderstood. We sometimes confuse it with society. But civil society and

society are not the same. Social life is differentiated into various spheres and civil society is one among them (Singh, 2008: 189). The civil society describes an aspect of social life and not the whole of it. It is one among many spheres of the larger society along with family, economy, politics, etc (ibid).

The difference between society and civil society can be described as follows. Society is much larger in scope. Society, according to Louis Dumont, can be defined as an organization into which we are born, to which we involuntarily belong and from where we get all our ideas and education. Society in this way is an all-purpose organization (Singh, 2008: 189). Civil society, on the other hand, can be understood as a collective entity that springs from society and exists for specific and limited purposes (ibid). Civil society, thus, is a part of the larger society which exists for a definite purpose.

Ernest Gellner defines civil society as 'a set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counter balance the state and while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of the keeper of peace and arbitrator between major interests can nevertheless prevent the state from dominating and atomizing the rest of the society (Gellner, 1995: 32). Nicos Mouzelis sees it as that public sphere which is clearly differentiated from the private sphere and is outside of the sphere of the state. For Mouzelis, 'civil society refers to all social groups or institutions which in conditions of modernity lie between primordial kinship groups or institutions on the one hand and state groups and institutions on the other'(Mouzelis, 1995: 225-26).

There are two important features of civil society:

(i) The domain of civil society is separate and independent from that of the state.
(ii) The domain of civil society is made up of voluntary associations. Involuntary associations and groups such as family, caste, religion

etc. are not part of it. (Singh 2008: 189). Thus, while state represents coercion , civil society is based on voluntary participation (Das, 2008: 175).

The key term as you can see here is 'voluntary'. Civil society requires that there is voluntary participation. An example here might help in clarifying the concept. In the case of Assam and the Assamese society, organizations like All Assam Students Union (AASU) or Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) can be considered as civil society organizations. As you can see, these organizations are not part of the state and they are based on voluntary association.

The concept of civil society is understood a little differently in the West as compared to other parts of the world. The concept originated in the West and is understood as a space for associations, membership to which is based on the criteria of rational interests of the individual citizens (Singh 2008: 203). Associations with membership based on traditional criteria do not have any place in this model of civil society (ibid). In other societies like as in India, where societies operate on a different logic and traditional attributes are so important, new kinds of organizations have crept up, based both on modern individualism as well as those based on purely traditional identities such as religion, language, caste etc (ibid). These associations based on traditional criteria are also sometimes included in civil society by some scholars.

Civil society organizations are quite popular in contemporary times. They are popular because they are related to the democratic struggle against authoritarianism and it also reflects decreasing faith in the capacity of the state to cater to peoples' needs and aspirations (Singh 2008: 200).

1. What is the difference between civil society and society?

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2. Name two civil society organisations in India.

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3. What are the two important features of civil society?

4.3.3 Bureaucracy

A bureaucracy is a particular kind of organization. . Bureaucracy has been seen as the essential part of modern society. The complex structure of modern society 'demands formal rules, a formal authority with designated powers, a precise delimitation of interests and benefits, a clear-cut division of labour in which the function of each unit is specified in relation to the function of all the rest- in a word a carefully worked –out organisational 'blueprint'(MacIver & Page, 1959: 232). A lot of scholars have written about this concept, but the contribution of Max Weber stands out as the most original. We will only be discussing his ideas of bureaucracy here.

Bureaucracy can be understood as an example of rationalization in terms of Weber's theory of social action. According to Weber, society evolves from traditional action (corresponding to traditional authority) to rational action

(corresponding to legal-rational authority). In modern industrial society, it is rational action that operates. He referred to this increasing dominance of rational action as the process of rationalization. Bureaucratisation is the main example of this process, i.e. rationalization (Haralambos, 1980: 280). Bureaucracy, therefore, is rational action in an institutional form (ibid).

Weber defined "bureaucracy as a hierarchical organization designed rationally to coordinate the work of many individuals in the pursuit of large-scale administrative tasks and organization goals" (Haralambos 1980: 282). By constructing an ideal type, he provided the key characteristics of a bureaucracy. The important ones are:

i. **Official duties** – Bureaucracies function by means of official duties. The activities are distributed and assigned to officials and each official has a clearly defined area of official responsibility. Complex tasks are divided into parts (Haralambos 1980: 282).

ii. **Hierarchy** – There is a strict hierarchy that is maintained in a bureaucracy. Each individual has a rank and lower officials are under the supervision of those that are above them. There is a chain of command and each individual is accountable to his immediate superior, both for the conduct of his own official duties and those of everybody below him (Haralambos 1980: 283).

iii. **Abstract rules** – Bureaucracies operate with the help of a system of abstract rules. These rules govern operations and they define the authority and the limitations of authority held by individuals in the hierarchy (ibid).

iv. **Written documentation** – Written documentation is of vital importance when it comes to the management of a bureaucratic organisation. All formal and officials matters are documented. Therefore, there is the presence of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts (Gerth and Mills 1946: 197).

v. **Impersonal manner** – The manner in which official duties are performed is impersonal, it is rational and based on rules, not on the
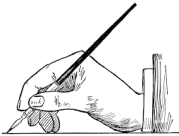
basis of personal considerations such as feelings towards clients, colleagues etc (Haralambos 1980: 283).

vi.   **Technical knowledge** – It is not personal connections, rather technical qualifications that form the basis on which officials are appointed. And once they are appointed, officials become full-time employees and the occupation becomes a career (ibid)

vii. **Separation of private and official income** – In a bureaucracy, there is a strict separation of official income and private income. An official cannot use his position for personal gain (ibid).

To understand these points mentioned above let us take the help of an example. Imagine a large private company with hundreds of employees. This is an example of a private bureaucratic organization. Here all the above points are valid. Every employee is assigned his or her official duty, there is a hierarchy that operates, the office is governed by a set of abstract rules, the management is based on written documentation, employees act in an impersonal manner and they are selected on the basis of their technical knowledge.

In modern times, bureaucratic organizations can be seen everywhere. Hospitals, offices, colleges, universities all operate in a bureaucratic manner. These may not be ideal type bureaucracies but we can see the impersonal rational character in all of them. The reason these types of organizations have become so pervasive is that of the technical advantages offered by such organization.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define bureaucracy.

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2. What is rationalisation?

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3. Write two important characteristics of bureaucracy as given by Weber.

4.3.4 Elites and Masses

We have already touched upon the concepts of elites and masses in our discussion on elite theory approaches to power and politics in unit 2. Elites are understood in contrast to the common people, i.e. the masses. While elites are considered to have superior qualities, the masses are thought of as being disinterested and unconcerned in politics.

Although such a simple distinction between elites and masses allows us to have a broad understanding of the concepts, it must be remembered that there are different ways we can look at elites. Different scholars have looked at different aspects while conceptualising what exactly are elites and what makes them different from the masses.

Vilfredo Pareto claimed that elites are different from masses because they have superior psychological characteristics. He thus focused only on the psychological variables. Drawing from the famous Italian philosopher and writer, Machiavelli, he said that there are two types of governing elite, that he calls 'lions' and 'foxes' (Haralambos, 1980; 108). Lions achieve power because of their ability to take direct action and they tend to rule by force. Military dictatorship is an example of this type of governing elite. By comparison, foxes rule by cunningness, by diplomatic manipulation.

European democracies are an example of this type of elite according to him (ibid).

Pareto claims that elite rule is inevitable and says that one group of elites replaces another group and this cycle continues. This is called the circulation of elites. Thus, major changes occur when elite rule changes. Foxes replace lions, and in turn, get replaced by foxes. Thus, history for Pareto is a never-ending circulation of elites (Haralambos, 1980: 108). Like Pareto, Mosca also believed that the ruling minority is superior to the masses by virtue of qualities that give them certain material, intellectual and even moral superiority (Haralambos 1980: 109). For Mosca as well, the elite rule is inevitable.

Thus, we see that Pareto and Mosca conceptualise elites on the basis of personal qualities. On the other hand, C.W. Mills visualise elites in terms of institutional factors rather than personal qualities. It is the institution that gives power to the elite. In the U.S.A, the key institutions are the military, the corporate and the federal government. Those who occupy important positions in these institutions become the elite. This is in the case of American society.

The masses can be contrasted with elites by their lack of attributes that don't allow them to become elites. If we go by Pareto and Mosca, the masses lack the psychological attributes that prohibit them from becoming elites in society. On the other hand, if we go by the views of C.W. Mills, then the masses since they are not part of the key institutions do not get institutional power to become elites. The masses are generally thought of like those that are disinterested and are indifferent towards political matters. Even Weber held such notions about the masses. As such, we can also call Weber an elitist.

Fill up the gaps:

a. Pareto claimed that elites are different from masses because they have superior _____ characteristics.

b. C.W. Mills visualise elites in terms of _____ factors rather than personal qualities.

c. the two types of governing elite according to Pareto are _____ and _____ .

4.3.5 Political Culture

As we have seen in Unit 1 that political sociology rests on the assumption that the 'political' cannot be understood in separation with the 'social' as the latter shapes the former and also gets shaped by it. In other words, the political system does not work in the vacuum rather it is surrounded by a socio-cultural context which plays a decisive role in shaping its nature. Many a time it can be seen that two political systems may have similar political structures but still, they differ in their nature. One major factor responsible for this difference is their political culture. Political culture is composed of attitudes and orientations of people towards the political system. According to Almond and Verba, political culture 'refers to specifically political orientations towards the political system and its various parts and attitude towards the role of self in the system' (Almond & Verba, 1965: 12)). These attitudes and orientations have three dimensions:

(a) Cognitive: knowledge about the political system

(b) Affective: feeling about the political system(either of attachment or detachment)

(c) Evaluative: judgment on the political system

Thus, peoples' knowledge of, feeling about and judgment on political system compose political culture. On the basis of these three dimensions, Almond and Verba classify political culture into three types:

(a) Parochial Political Culture: where people do not have cognition about the political system and hence no affective and evaluative orientation. In other words, they are confined to family and community ties and do not bother about the political system.

(b) Subject Political Culture: where though people have a cognitive orientation towards political system as a whole and specifically to the output process but the cognitive, affective and evaluative orientation to the input structures and to the self as a political actor are very low.

(c) Participant Political Culture: where cognitive, affective and evaluative orientation towards the political system as a whole, to input and output structures and to the self as a political actor is very high. (Mukhopadhyay 1977: 89-90).

However, Almond and Verba accept that these three are ideal types which cannot be found in its pure form in any political system. In reality, all political systems have mixed political cultures. They classify mixed political culture into the following types:

(a) parochial-subject political culture, (b) subject-participant political culture, (c) parochial-participant political culture, and (d) civic culture.

Thus, the concept of political culture helps us to understand how the 'social' and 'cultural' determine the nature and working of the political system. The political system needs a congenial political culture in order to enjoy legitimacy. However, the political system cannot manufacture political culture like ideology to get legitimacy since ideology is a result of conscious effort whereas political culture has the element of spontaneity.

4.3.6 Consensus and Conflict

Consensus and conflict are opposite terms. In the common parlance, the former refers to an agreement and the latter refers to a serious disagreement. In sociology, however, consensus is associated with the work of Talcott Parsons while when it comes to conflict, a lot of theorising has been done by various scholars, starting from Karl Marx to Ralf Dahrendorf, Lewis Coser and Randall Collins. By now, you must have learnt about consensus and the conflict school of thought in detail in the contemporary theories paper. This section, therefore, will only give you a general overview of these two concepts.

The term consensus refers to a commonly agreed position, conclusion, or a set of values, and is normally used with reference either to group dynamics or broad agreement in public opinion (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 117). It also refers to a set of ideas, norms, and values among the members of a whole society. It is in this sense that it has come to be associated with the work of Talcott Parsons (ibid). Thus, when a group of people share the same values, it is referred to as value consensus.

In contrast to consensus, conflict refers to the absence of shared norms and values. The conflict approach points to the power relations that exist between conflicting interests, both political and economic (ibid). This conflict, however, can be looked at in different ways. There could be class conflict (Marx), or conflict of authority (Dahrendorf) or conflict could also be functional (Coser).

Both consensus and conflict are important for society since social process operates to build consensus out of conflicts.

4.3.7 State and Stateless Societies

In the section on state, we learned how the state must have a definite territory, a permanent population as well as a government. In the present times, the political model that is followed all over the world is that of the

modern state. Therefore, almost all societies in this world are state societies. At present, there are over 190 sovereign states in the world.

Stateless societies, on the other hand, are those that lack a centralised state authority (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 725). Therefore, they are societies that are not governed by a state. They are outside of state control. It could also mean the societies that have no centralised authority, no administrative machinery and no courts of justice. We could think earlier societies such as those in Africa or in Asia that functioned on their own. An example could be that of Naga areas before British rule that came to be known as the Naga Hills since they were not under the jurisdiction of a centralised authority. These were stateless societies at that time. However, at present, there are very few stateless societies in the world.

4.4 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we learned about many basic concepts that are important for our understanding of political sociology. At first, we learned about the state that it is a set of institutions and important features of the state include legitimacy, territoriality and monopoly over legitimate violence as given by Weber. Then we learned about the civil society which is a part of society that is separate from the state and based on voluntary association. We also learned about a prime example of rationalization which is the bureaucracy that functions in an impersonal manner based on a set of abstract rules. Then finally we learned about the differences between elites and masses, consensus and conflict and state and stateless societies.

4.5 QUESTIONS

1. What are three important attributes of the state as given by Weber?
2. Is the state a monolithic entity?
3. What is civil society? Mention two important features of civil society.

4. Bureaucracy is rational action in an institutional form. Explain.

5. Give a few important characteristics of bureaucracy.

6. What separates the elites from the masses?

7. Provide two contrasting ways of looking at elites.

8. Is consensus and conflict the same? If not, elaborate.

9. What are state and stateless societies?

10. What do you mean by political culture? Discuss its types.

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MODULE II: PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 5: PERSPECTIVES ON STATE: LIBERAL, MARXIST, PLURALIST

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first module, you were introduced to the field of political sociology. By now you have a fair understanding of the key issues that political sociologists study. You also are aware of the various perspectives with which we can look at power and politics, political processes and interplay between politics and society. There exist diverse approaches, with each approach offering an original perspective and often these approaches are in conflict with each other. Despite the differences between perspectives, all approaches are useful as they allow us to look at a phenomenon from different directions. We also learned about some of the basic concepts that are essential in political sociology. We covered concepts like power, authority, state, civil society, bureaucracy, elites, masses, consensus, conflict and state and stateless societies. Although we have touched upon the state in the last unit, we will be covering the state in more detail in this unit. The state is considered to be the most important entity when it comes

to politics and as such an entire module is dedicated to it. This unit will concentrate on the state and the various approaches as to how we can view the idea of a state whereas, the next unit will focus on the state and its relationship with class structure.

For you to get the best out of this unit, you must be familiar with the works of particularly Marx, and Weber. If you have a thorough understanding of their works, this unit will be easy to grasp. In case you feel that you need a slight revision of their works, it would be advisable to quickly go through the classical sociology paper that you learned in the first semester.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to the various ways we can study and look at the concept of the state. By the end of the unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the utilitarian model of state;
- Describe what is the liberal state;
- Describe the Marxian way of looking at the state;
- Contrast the Marxist understanding of the state with the neo-Marxist approach;
- Explain what is meant by the pluralist state;
- Explain how feminists look at the state.

5.3 THE STATE

We have already learnt about the concept of the state in the last unit as part of the basic concepts in political sociology. To summarise, a state is a set of institutions that have the authority to make the rules which govern society. It must possess a permanent population, defined territory and a government and most importantly sovereignty which distinguishes it from other institutions. Though scholars differ on the issue of the end of the state which results into different perspectives on the state, there is a consensus

among scholars on the point that state has 'the monopolistic control of legitimate force' (A Dictionary of Political Analysis, 1971). This monopoly of the legitimate use of coercion has been seen by the political sociologist as a key characteristic of the state which distinguishes it from other associations. MacIver and Page point out: 'the state is distinguished from all other associations by its exclusive investment with the final power of coercion' (Gauba, 2004:117). While political philosophy is more concerned with the ends of the state, political sociology attempts to understand state in terms of the means used by the state. As Max Weber remarks:

"Sociologically, the state cannot be defined in terms of its ends…Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force" (Gauba, 2004: 116)

Before we discuss the different perspectives on state which is the main objective of this unit, there is one important thing to remember. When we refer to the term 'state', we mean the state in the modern sense. The modern state with its fixed territorial boundaries evolved in Europe during the 16-18th century and this model was exported all over the world. However, even before modernity, there was the existence of the state. Those are what we call pre-modern states. Say, for example, the ancient kingdom of Kamrup or the Ahom kingdom was a pre-modern state. They were states nevertheless but not in the modern sense. The territorial logic operated a bit differently in these pre-modern states and there are other crucial differences as well.

When we say the modern state, it means that it is characterised by an impersonal standing (Das 2008: 173). It does not belong to anyone in particular. The current holders of power in the government do not constitute the state. The state exists before they came to power and continues to be there after they leave (ibid). The state aims to gain autonomy from the contending parties or groups that come to hold political power. It is for this reason that the state is said to be abstracted from the

power holders. The modern state is a public order distinct from and located above both the ruler and the ruled (ibid). Thus, the modern state is an impersonal entity, it does not belong to anyone and stands above everyone, including both the rulers and the ruled.

One more important feature of the state is that the state is not the same as a nation. The common person on the street might use the terms synonymously, but technically these are two separate terms. A nation could be defined as community feeling among people who recognise that they are distinct from other communities and wish to control their own affairs (Das, 2008: 176). This distinction could be based on their possession of a common language, religion, political values and attitudes, a sense of having done things together in the past, and a desire to do things in the future (ibid). A state, on the other hand, is a territorial entity. As such the nation and state may not coincide and many times they don't. A nation is more of imagination, an imagined political community (Anderson, 1991) while a state is a political entity bounded by boundaries. Now that we know what a modern state is, let us look at the various perspectives on the state.

5.3.1 Utilitarian Model

Utilitarian model of state viewed the state because of its utility, its use. Jeremy Bentham and James Mill are main proponents of the utilitarian view. Utilitarianism has two basic claims: first, human happiness and well-being are important; and second, that we assess an act purely by its consequence (Das, 2008: 178). Utilitarianism aims at bringing about a state of affairs that result in the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Therefore such a view justifies the state on the grounds that it brings about greater and more happiness than an alternative arrangement (ibid). Therefore this view sees the state as an entity that serves the purpose of bringing more happiness to the lives of the people. Thus, it is the utility of the state on which it is justified.

This approach of looking at the state might be considered a little naïve in contemporary times. As such this viewpoint has fallen out of favour among contemporary thinkers and scholars. Most prefer to look at the state from a far more critical perspective.

5.3.2 Liberal Model

The liberal model of the state is based on the philosophy of liberalism. Liberalism is based on the idea of individual freedom and equality. It is a political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics[3]. When it comes to the state, liberals believe that the state is a neutral arbiter between different competing interests and stands to realise what is called the common moral equality of individuals, which could be based on any of the following: their ability to think, feel or make choices (ibid). However, liberal view regarding the end of the state has not been static, it has been kept changing. On the basis of this changing view, liberalism broadly has been classified into three types: classic liberalism, positive liberalism and neo-classic liberalism or libertarianism. Though all the three strands treat individual's liberty and dignity as their prime concern when it comes to the role of the state they go in different, though not in opposite, directions. While classical liberalism and libertarianism or neo-classic liberalism advocate 'laissez-faire state' and 'night watchman state' respectively, positive liberalism believes in the welfare state.

Although the state is viewed as a neutral entity in this model, at the same time liberals also realise that the state can pose a threat to the liberty of the individuals. The central dilemma is that the state must have the power to protect individual liberty and at the same time it must not abuse its power. A state must treat all individuals equally and not as inferior or superior. Citizens are entitled to equal respect and concern from that state because the state is committed to respecting the moral equality of citizens, which means non-discrimination and impartiality at the very first level (Das 2008:

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[3] https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberalism

178). The state is concerned with rules that would enable individuals to pursue their own ideas of what they think is a good life, as long as the freedom of others is not infringed upon (Das 2008: 179).

This, of course, is an ideal type situation of the liberal state. And it is not often realised in practice as individual interests often come in conflict with state interests.

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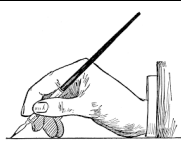
1. What are the two basic claims of utilitarianism?

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2. Explain the liberal model of state.

5.3.3 Marxian Model

Unlike the utilitarian or the liberal model where the state is viewed in a positive light, the Marxian approach is one where the state is viewed with suspicion. The liberal view of the state as a neutral arbiter among the conflicting interests is challenged by the Marxists (Das, 2008: 179).

Marx had written enormously on class struggle and on the functioning of capitalist societies. It is in his writings that we can find traces of his

conceptualisation of the state. He wrote about the state in a response to the writings of Hegel who held a different view of the state.

State, for Hegel, was something that could overcome the problems arising from civil society. Civil society, according to Hegel, is based on the principle of unrestrained individual egoism. Hence, it leads to unknown divisions that need to be overcome (Singh, 2008: 196). For Hegel, the state is that entity that can transcend civil society. The basis of the state lies in individuals' need to live in solidarity with others in the community. The state is a sphere where human beings do not enter in their capacity as private individuals with self-interest, but rather as citizens concerned about the general interests of the whole community (Singh, 2008: 197)

Marx disagreed with Hegel's ideas on the state and refused to accept that the state had a universal character that could harmonise the discordant elements of civil society (Das, 2008: 181). The basic idea of Marx's view is that the state favours the ruling class and is not neutral. As long as the society is divided into classes on the basis of the ownership of the means of production, there would be a dominant class and an exploited class, and the state would conduct its business in a manner conducive to the interests of the dominant class (Das, 2008: 181). Emphasizing class character of state Marx and Engels wrote: 'Political power, properly to call, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another' (*Communist Manifesto*: 1848). Thus, for Marxist scholars state is an instrument of class exploitation 'which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between the classes (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*: 1917).

Actually, in Marx's writings, three kinds of theories on the capitalist state can be found.

i. The instrumental model – Here, the coercive aspect of the state is emphasised; it is seen as repressive of working class resistance for exploitation. "The executive of the modern state is but a committee

for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie" (Nash, 2000: 5). In this model, economic power is quite simply translated into political power, by which the ruling class rules over the subordinate classes through the state (ibid). Thus, in this conception, the state is not at all neutral. It is nothing but an entity that manages the affairs of the ruling class. The state apparatus is thus used by the ruling class to dominate the working class.

ii. The arbiter model – Here, Marx stresses the relative autonomy of the state. In his writings in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", he looks at the state in a slightly different manner and here the relative autonomy of the state from the interests of the bourgeoisie is highlighted. The state is seen as an arena for competing interests and it is a mediator, and it may even act independently to limit the power of the bourgeoisie (Nash 2000: 5). But despite this fact, the state power does not hover mid-air; it is only class interests that are represented at the political level, and ultimately economic power will determine how state power is to be used (ibid). Thus, although there is relative autonomy of the modern state, economic power is translated into political power since it needs the material support of the historically ascendant class, and therefore it works to ensure the economic advantage of the bourgeoisie (ibid).

iii. The functionalist model – Here, the state is super-structural, determined entirely by changes in the economic base of society. Regardless of how directly the bourgeoisie manages state institutions and irrespective of the balance of forces in society, the state apparatus, government, and the legal forms operate in order to optimise the conditions for capital accumulation, (Nash, 2000: 5). In this understanding of the state, political power is irrelevant; the state is an epiphenomenon (a by-product) of the economic logic of the capitalist system which reproduces itself in every social and

political institution to the advantage of the dominant economic class (ibid).

The Marxian perspective thus looks at the state from a very narrow economic lens. Even though in certain cases, the state is thought to have relative autonomy, ultimately it is economic factors that prevail over everything else.

Another important aspect that Marx predicted about the state was that the state would wither away, that is, it will die out once the communist utopia is reached. Commenting on the evolution of societies he said there are four stages in this process: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. However, there is a fifth stage which is called communism and that would come once the working class revolution takes place in capitalist societies. With the overthrow of capitalism, the working class would take over the reins of the state (Das 2008: 181). The working class would actually perform many of the tasks performed by the state. This socialist state would try to create the conditions for the eventual transition to a stateless and classless society (Das 2008: 182). This is the communist utopia where there would be no state, all humans would be equal and there will be no classes. This was his prediction which, of course, has not come true till date.

5.3.4 Neo-Marxian Model
We can look at the neo-Marxian approach of the state by looking at the works of Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. We have already introduced Gramsci and Althusser in unit 2, with their ideas on hegemony. Gramsci, who was a Marxist scholar, claimed that it is not just through coercion that the domination of the ruling class is secured. Ideology and ideological manipulation also play an important role in the process (Das, 2008: 182). He said that the state is force plus consent, or coercion and hegemony, in which civil society provides consent and political society organises force (ibid). Hegemony refers to the ability of the dominant class

to secure the consent of those it dominates. It is a process through which the ruling class maintains its dominant position in society (ibid).

Althusser, another Marxist scholar, developed the idea of the ideological state apparatus. He said that the capitalist state has two distinct but related coercive instruments to secure the stability and the continual reproduction of the capitalist mode of production (Das, 2008: 182). They are the repressive state apparatus – law courts, police, army and other state functionaries, and the ideological state apparatus which includes family, trade unions, media, the church, schools etc. The former relies on violence while the latter functions not by force but by ideology (ibid). Both these two apparatuses work together to maintain the dominance of the ruling class.

The neo-Marxist approach brings to light a very important aspect of the state – what is the boundary of the state? While earlier ways of looking at the state saw the state as a set of institutions with official powers, neo-Marxists like Gramsci and Althusser question the distinction between state and civil society and argue that the state is integrated into many parts of the civil society (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 723). Church, schools, and even trade unions are part of the ideological state apparatus (ibid). Therefore, it is increasingly difficult to identify the boundaries of the state when viewed from this perspective. Many parts of civil society are given access to the state and play a role in the development of public policy (ibid).

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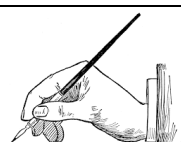
1. How does the Marxian perspective look at state?

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2. What do you mean by ideological state apparatus?

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5.3.5 Pluralist Model

Pluralism, as we know, views society as comprising of a number of groups each with their own interests. Therefore, for pluralism, the state is seen as acting in the interests of groups in societies (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 723). State action, therefore are reactions to group pressures. Unlike Marxian and elitist views, according to pluralist view power is not concentrated in a single group but is dispersed amongst a variety of social groups (Gauba, 2004: 263). The modern state is not an instrument to be used by a single class or group for furthering its interests rather is a framework to reconcile the interests of diverse groups. The government is pictured as a kind of honest broker, mediating and compromising between the demands of the various groups (Haralambos, 1980: 115).

There are three diverging ways pluralists look at the state. For some pluralists, the state provides an arena for pressure group conflicts to take place, state policy being determined by the outcome of these conflicts (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 723). Some other pluralists see some groups or elites and especially corporate elites, as having a greater degree of influence than other groups on government policy (Nash, 2000: 14). However, they do not agree that the elites are unified or they are capable of manipulating and deceiving citizens into accepting elite rule (Nash, 2000: 14). The extreme version of this second approach can also be seen as the state is being captured by a particular pressure group. And the third way is that the state determines what is in the national interest by arbitrating

between the demands of the various interest groups (Dictionary of Sociology, 1994: 723). In this third version, although there are groups competing against each other for power, the state is believed to work in the best interests of the country.

5.3.6 Feminist Model

In sharp contrast to all the above approaches to state, feminism views the state from a gendered lens. For feminist the state is a patriarchal state. However, feminists are not unanimous in their views on state. On the one hand, the radical feminists believe that the power of the state is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of society (Das 2008: 183). They question the idea of the basic neutrality of the state, for they view the state as a reflection of the patriarchal values in society (ibid). The state, therefore, is viewed as an instrument of male power- used for subjugating women. While explaining the concept of patriarchy, Sylvia Walby in her famous work *Theorizing Patriarchy*, talks about six structures of patriarchy which play significant role in strengthening patriarchy. State is identified as one of these six structures of perpetuating patriarchal control over women along with paid work, household production, culture, sexuality, violence. (Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*: 1990).

Liberal feminists, on the other hand, subscribe to a belief in the state's basic neutrality (ibid). Although historically women have been subjugated and oppressed by being denied legal and political equality, the state can rectify them with its interventions (ibid). Therefore, the state is seen as capable of playing a role in promoting equality between men and women (ibid). Thus, it is from this belief of liberal feminists of the basic neutrality of the state and the possibility of appealing to the state to remove legal and political inequality between the sexes that there have been demands such as reservation of seats for women in parliament, the extension of welfare schemes for women etc. (ibid).

5.4 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we covered many approaches that can be used to look at the concept of the state. Continuing from the last unit, we learned that when we look at the state, we look at it in the modern sense which is based on impersonal standing. The state is not anybody's state, and it is located both above the ruler and the ruled. We also learned that the state and nation are not the same. We then learned the various approaches of looking at the state. The utilitarian state looks at the state from a point of utility, an entity that serves the purpose of bringing more happiness to the lives of the people. Similarly, the liberal state is viewed as a neutral entity and it is concerned with rules that would enable individuals to pursue their own ideas of what they think is a good life, as long as the freedom of others is not infringed upon. The Marxian approach looks at the state from a very narrow economic lens and here it is ultimately economic factors that prevail over everything else. The neo-Marxist approach focuses on the repressive state apparatus as well as ideological aspects which are important for maintaining ruling class domination. The pluralist model looks at the state as being an arena for competing interest groups. Finally, the feminist approach looks at the state from a gendered lens.

Glossary

- Communism – In Marxism, a social organization in which all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs. This is the final stage in the evolution of human societies, according to Marx.
- Ideology – A system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy
- Night Watchman State – In libertarian philosophy state's only function is to protect individual from aggression, theft, breach of contract and fraud, this model of minimal state is called night watchman state.

5.5 QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a state and a nation?

2. How do liberals look at the state?

3. Describe the three ways Marxists look at the state

4. Does the state have a boundary? Elaborate using the neo-Marxist framework.

5. What are the two state apparatuses mentioned by Althusser?

6. How do pluralists look at the state?

7. Discuss how liberal and radical feminists view the state.

5.6 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Anderson, B. (1991*). Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London

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UNIT 6: STATE AND THE CLASS STRUCTURE

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Objectives

6.3 State and the Class Structure

    6.3.1 Marxian Class Stratification

    6.3.2 State and Class Structure in Socialist Societies

    6.3.3 Class in Advanced Capitalist Societies

    6.3.4 State and Class Structure in Capitalist Societies

6.4 Summing Up

6.5 Questions

6.6 Recommended Readings and References

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, i.e. unit 5, we learned about the various perspectives through which the state can be looked at. We learned that there are some approaches that view the state as neutral while others view it as serving the interests of a particular group. Contemporary approaches tend to view the state slightly differently. Although contemporary political sociology does take cultural politics into account, even then the importance of the state does not diminish. The state remains of seminal importance to the analysis of any political phenomena. Continuing with the state, in this unit, we will learn about the intricate relationship between the state and the class structure. Beginning with the Marxian framework of class, we will learn how the class structure has changed in capitalist societies over the years with the emergence of new managerial and professional classes and an ever-increasing middle class. We will focus on the changing class structure in advanced capitalist societies. Also, we'll learn about the role that class, state and the power play in socialist societies.

For you to comprehend this unit, you must be familiar with the works of Marx and Weber, particularly Marx. The Marxian class analysis is useful as well as important for this unit. If you have a thorough understanding of his works, this unit will be easy to grasp. You have covered Marxian class analysis in the classical sociology paper and have also covered 'class' in your stratification paper. In case you feel that you need a slight revision, it would be advisable to quickly go through what you learned in the first semester.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to the various ways we can study and look at the concept of the state. By the end of the unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the class structure in socialist societies;
- Explain the class structure in capitalist societies;
- Explain the emergence of new professional and managerial classes;
- Describe how the class structure has changed in capitalist societies;
- Explain the relationship between the class structure and the state.

6.3 STATE AND THE CLASS STRUCTURE

In classical Marxist analysis, the class structure and the class conflict occupies a central place. The state is also an important entity in this approach and is viewed as an executive of the bourgeoisie. Yet societies have undergone a lot of change since Marx wrote about class and class conflict. The nature of classes has changed. No longer do we see societies which comprise just of two classes as Marx said; instead societies have become even more complex and stratified. And unlike what Marx predicted, the middle class has actually expanded and it is becoming increasingly fragmented in most of the capitalist societies. There has been a rise and growth of professional and managerial classes, the nature of property ownership has changed over the years and we see the rise of huge

corporations that have completely altered the dynamics of society. All these developments have a bearing on the state as well as on political processes in general.

This unit will focus on these themes. We will begin by revisiting the classical Marxist class framework, and then we will focus on the class structure and the state in socialist societies. We will then learn how advanced capitalist societies are different from earlier capitalist societies. We will focus on the professional and managerial classes, big corporations and a fragmented middle class in such societies. Then we will learn how these affect the state or rather what is the relationship between the state and the class structure in advanced capitalist societies.

6.3.1 Marxian Class Stratification

Marx wrote in elaborate detail about the nature of class and class conflict. Here we'll only present a brief summary of his ideas. For Marx, the history of all existing society is the history of class struggle. Emphasizing existence of two antagonistic classes as the key feature of society in every age, Marx wrote: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another" (Marx, 1977: 109). It is through class conflict and class struggle that human society evolves and progresses. He talked about four major phases through which human society has evolved. They are primitive communism, ancient society, feudalism and capitalism (Haralambos, 1980:39). Primitive communism was the only kind of society which was a classless society. Thereafter, all societies were divided into two major classes; masters and slaves in ancient society, lords and serfs in feudal society, and capitalists and working class in capitalist societies (ibid).

Marx, who was a materialist, gave importance to material conditions when it came to class relations. In all stratified societies, there are two major classes – a ruling class and a ruled or a subject class (Haralambos 1980:

39). The ruling class controls and owns the forces of production and hence wields power over the ruled class. Thus, it is material conditions that are a deciding factor in the power relations between the two classes. Marx defined the class as a group of people whose members share the same relationship to the forces of production (ibid). Thus, in feudalism, there are two main classes, due to their relationship with the land, the major force of production – the landlords who own the land and the landless serfs who work on that land. Similarly, in capitalism, there are two classes – the capitalist class also known as the bourgeoisie who control and own the forces of production, and the working class or the proletariat.

Marx focused exclusively on capitalist societies and said that the relationship between the two classes is one of mutual dependence and conflict. Both the classes are dependent on each other since both need each other. However, this mutual dependence is not an egalitarian relationship. As "The man who possesses no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men, who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. He can work only with their permission, hence live only with their permission" (Marx, 1977: 228). Thus, it is a relationship between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed (Haralambos, 1980: 40). The bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat and this leads to conflict between the two classes. There is always a conflict of interest between the two groups.

The ruling class, however, since it owns the forces of production derives political power from this ownership and control. Even the state is complicit in this conflict of interest between the two classes. The state would conduct its business in a manner conducive to the interests of the dominant class (Das 2008: 181). As Marx so famously said, "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie" (Nash, 2000: 5). Therefore, we see that in the relationship between the state and class structure in classical Marxist understanding, the state is something which always supports the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Marx also made a series of predictions about the nature of class struggle. These predictions of Marx are important since many of these ideas have not come true; rather the nature of classes has changed over the years. To understand the present relationship between state and class structure these ideas of Marx are useful.

Marx said that the inherent contradictions that exist in the economic system of capitalism would lead to its destruction (Haralambos, 1980: 42). There will be a working-class revolution where the working class will overthrow the ruling class and seize the forces of production. Since it is the ownership of the forces of production that is the source of political power for the ruling class, the capture of these forces of production will lead to their defeat. The privately owned property would be replaced by the communally owned property. All the members of society will now share the same relationship to the forces of production and therefore there will be a classless society (ibid). Also, there is no requirement of the state as it will be a classless society with communal ownership of property. The state, Marx said, will wither away.

Marx believed that the working class revolution is inevitable. It will definitely take place and there is nothing that can stop it. He believed there are a few things that will contribute to this revolution. First is that there will a homogenous working class due to the increasing use of machinery (Haralambos, 1980: 43). Secondly, there will be a process of pauperization which will lead to an increase in the difference of wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (ibid). Thirdly, because capitalism is competitive by nature, the intermediate strata, i.e. those groups lying in between the two main classes, will merge with the proletariat (ibid). Thus, all these three processes will lead to the increasing polarization of the two classes.

Eventually, the increase in polarization between the classes will end in the class revolution which will result in communist utopia with the withering away of the state. This was Marx's prediction.

These ideas of Marx are important because some of his predictions have come true while some have not. The working class revolution did take place in the former Soviet Union but the state did not wither away. Instead, in socialist countries the state became increasingly powerful, even bordering on dictatorship. Similarly, instead of the intermediate strata merging with the proletariat, the middle class has actually expanded in most of the capitalist societies. Bernstein in 1890s observed that predictions made by Marx regarding the disappearance of middle class and peasantry; elimination of small business organization; an overwhelming increase in the size of working class due to the elimination of middle class and shrinking of capitalist class had not come true. He also questioned the argument of necessary inclination of working call towards socialism (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy 1999: 365). As Shklar opined "a hatred of capitalism need not lead to socialism" it may "take other political directions" (ibid)   Moreover, according to Djilas, "the proletarian class no longer exists in its previous stage. Workers have rights in developed countries, they are proprietors"(Mukherjee & Ramaswamy,1999: 365). And since the state still exists as an entity and it has not withered away as Marx had predicted these changes in the class structure has affected the role and functioning of the state. We will learn about these relationships in the following sections. But let us first look at the class structure and the power play in socialist countries.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What according to Marx, are the four major phases through which human society has evolved?

----

2. How does Marx define a class?

6.3.2 State and Class Structure in Socialist Societies

The Russian revolution in 1917 led by Vladimir Lenin and his comrades led to the establishment of a socialist society in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). A lot of other eastern European countries, as well as a few Asian countries like China, Vietnam, etc, followed suit and all of them became socialist states. Socialist states are those states in which the forces of production are not privately owned; rather they are communally owned. Marx believed that such communal and public ownership of forces of production is the first step towards an egalitarian society (Haralambos, 1980: 91). However, socialist societies are far from being egalitarian societies. They have developed their own system of stratification.

Frank Parkin in his work, talks about the stratification of East European communist societies (ibid). There are four main groups according to him. They are (i) White-collar intelligentsia (professional, managerial and administrative positions) (ii) Skilled manual workers (iii) Lower or unqualified white-collar positions (iv) Unskilled manual positions (ibid).

Thus, stratification has not really disappeared from socialist societies. However, the basic source of conflict has been removed as now technically classes have disappeared since by definition a class is a group of people who have a similar relationship to the forces of production. And since everyone in a socialist society has the same relationship to the forces of production, there are no classes or any class contradictions. But nevertheless, power differentials exist as society is now divided into different strata. In socialist societies, therefore, those individuals who occupy positions of authority have the right to give orders while those under them have the duty to obey them.

Some scholars like Milovan Djilas claim that those in power in communist societies use power to further their own interests (Haralambos, 1980: 92). A new ruling class has emerged that is made up of political bureaucrats,

many of whom are members of the Communist Party (ibid). Political bureaucrats thus control the forces of production in practice and they direct and control the economy and monopolise the decisions that are related to income and wealth (ibid). This class, according to Djilas, is more powerful and more exploitative than the bourgeoisie class in Western capitalist societies since their power is unchecked by political parties (Haralambos, 1980: 93). In a single party state like socialist or communist states, political bureaucrats monopolise power.

Thus, we see that in contrast to capitalist societies, in socialist states, an elite group of political bureaucrats monopolise political power and even control the forces of production. Thus, they also control state power since there is no opposition to challenge them. Therefore, we see that in socialist states, the relationship between the state and the class structure plays out differently. A group is able to monopolise power and control the state machinery for its own good. There is some difference of opinion on why this is so. Scholars like Djilas claim that since this elite class controls the forces of production, it holds power. While scholars like Tom Bottomore claims it is actually the reverse. The elite class because it has political power control the means of production (Haralambos, 1980: 93).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What according to Frank Parkin, are the four major groups of East European communist societies?

----

2. Which class according to Djilas, is more powerful and more exploitative than the bourgeoisie class in the Western capitalist societies?

6.3.3 Class in Advanced Capitalist Societies

The class structure in capitalist societies has undergone a lot of change over the years. Anthony Giddens says that in advanced capitalist societies like the United States, Great Britain etc., we can think of three major classes: an upper class that owns the means of production, a middle class that possesses educational qualifications and a lower class that possesses manual labour power (Haralambos, 1980: 47). Here, there are two important developments. First, the working class has become increasingly heterogeneous or dissimilar. They can be divided into unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled manual workers, according to a model given by Ralf Dahrendorf (Haralambos, 1980: 50). Second is that the middle class has expanded and become increasingly fragmented. In advanced industrial societies, the white collar sector has grown. This sector includes clerical, technical, scientific, administrative, professional and managerial occupations. The middle class can be divided into higher professional, administrative and managerial individuals, lower professional, managerial and administrative individuals and routine white-collar individuals (Haralambos, 1980: 48).

Another important development which has affected the advanced industrial societies is the rise of the joint stock company. In such a company, instead of individual ownership, there is joint ownership since a number of people own shares or stocks of the company. This process is sometimes called the separation of ownership and control (Haralambos, 1980:74). Here, it is believed that rather than the owners, it is salaried managers that control the company. Thus, the managers seem to have a lot of power in advanced capitalist societies.

Commenting on the power of managers, James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution,* says that a skilled and technically qualified managerial elite would become increasingly powerful (Haralambos, 1980: 122). He says that if the state nationalised all industrial enterprises which

would end competition between companies, then the power of this managerial elite would be at its peak (ibid).

Managers have come into focus because, in advanced capitalist societies, there has been a growth of huge multinational companies. We see such companies or conglomerates increasing dominating the economies of all countries. Small companies cannot stand up to these big multinationals and this has led to competition amongst a few big players in the field.

Therefore, we see that in sharp contrast to what Marx had predicted, the class structure has changed profoundly. Now, managers and other professionals have a lot of power, big corporations are increasingly more dominant, the working class has become dissimilar and so on. This change in class structure also impacts the state. Let us now look at that relationship.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
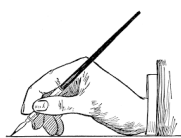
1. Who wrote *The Managerial Revolution*?
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2. How has the class structure undergone changes in the advanced capitalist societies?

6.3.4 State and Class Structure In Capitalist Societies

When we look at the interplay between state and the class structure, we are mostly concerned with who holds and exercises state power. Here, it is important to mention a bit about a few characteristics of advanced capitalist societies apart from the nature of the class structure in such societies which

we have already covered in the above section. Most advanced capitalist societies have a highly integrated and technologically advanced economic base, with agriculture occupying a small space in economic activity (Miliband, 1969: 8). There is also a 'public sector', through which the state administers a wide range of industries and services (ibid). The state plays a crucial role in such economies by means of regulation, control, planning, etc (ibid). Also, giant corporations are a norm in such societies.

Ralph Miliband, a Marxist scholar says that in such societies, despite the fact that there exist a plurality of economic elites who have distinct grouping and interests, they still constitute a dominant economic class with common interests and possess a high degree of cohesion and solidarity (Miliband, 1969: 48). In advanced capitalist societies, this dominant economic class is the business class, whether owners or managers. Businessmen, although they have not assumed a major share of the government, are well represented in the political executive and in the other parts of the state system as well (Miliband, 1969:55). Businessmen, however, claim themselves to be apolitical and not interested in political matters. But as Miliband demonstrates, in the United States, businessmen were, in fact, the largest single occupational group in cabinets from 1889 to 1949 (Miliband 1969:56).

It is not just in the government, where businessmen have a direct say. Such predominance of businessmen is also found in the financial and credit institutions of the state and in the nationalised sector in some capitalist countries (Miliband 1969:58). In the public sector, businessmen have been invited by governments to partake and assume a greater role in the management and control of the sector (ibid). Thus, we see that businessmen are closely associated with government and administration. This closeness increases even more as the state becomes more concerned with economic life and there is state intervention as in the case of the public sector.

Although businessmen are involved and participate in the businesses of the state, they are still a relatively small minority of the state elite as a whole (Miliband 1969: 59). Thus, economic elites in advanced capitalist societies are not a 'governing class' unlike pre-industrial, aristocratic and landowning classes who in many cases were practically the state (ibid). However, we must also remember that businessmen belong to upper and middle classes and it is also from these classes that the members of the state elite are mostly drawn (ibid). This is true for most of the advanced capitalist countries and applies to all kinds of state elites such as the military, judiciary, administrative etc.

It also must be emphasised that in advanced capitalist countries, there also have been instances where people born in the working class or in the lower-middle class have been able to join elite positions inside the state system; some have become members of the cabinet while others have even become presidents and prime ministers ((Miliband 1969: 64). This is a case of bourgeoisification whereby individuals who climb up the ladder become part of the social class to which their position, income and status give access to (ibid). But despite cases of such mobility, the overwhelming majority has belonged to upper and middle classes.

In conclusion, we can say that in the advanced capitalist societies, due to a change in the class structure and the nature of the capitalist economy, corresponding changes have taken place in state functioning. Unlike pre-industrial societies where the aristocratic and landowning classes were practically the state elite, in advanced capitalist societies, the economic elite is not the governing class. But this economic elite shares many interests with other elites of the society and they are mostly drawn from the same class background, namely upper and middle classes. Together all these elites combine to form the state elite and considerably influence state processes. This is of course from a Marxian point of view. Pluralists do not agree to this view and claim that since there are too many elite groups involved, it is not possible for any of them to influence political processes

alone. For pluralists, these elites lack any kind of cohesion which will turn them into a dominant ruling class.

6.4 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we began by learning about the classical Marxist class analysis. We revisited Marx's theory of class and class conflict and we also learned about the many predictions that he had made about the nature of the class, the working class revolution and so on. We then learned about socialist societies, what is the class structure present in such societies and how does that affect the state. We saw that in such societies the political elite is able to monopolise power and their power remains unchecked. Then we learned about how the class structure has changed in advanced capitalist societies. Unlike the classes that Marx talked about, in advanced capitalist societies, there has been a rise in professional and managerial classes. The middle class has also expanded and there has been a separation of ownership and control due to the concept of joint ownership. Then finally, we learned how the changing class structure has affected the functioning of the state in advanced capitalist societies.

6.5 QUESTIONS

1. In classical Marxian theory, what is the source of power for the ruling class?
2. What are the important predictions made by Marx when it comes to nature of classes?
3. Explain the interplay between the state and class structure in socialist countries?
4. Mention a few significant features of advanced capitalist societies?
5. How does the class structure in capitalist societies affect the functioning of the state?

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Programme	Eligibility	Programme Coordinator
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PG Diploma in Renewable Energy and Energy Management	BE/B.Tech or M.Sc in Physics or Chemistry	Dr. S. Mahapatra sadhan@tezu.ernet.in 03712-275306
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