

## Chapter

# 6

## STATE SOVEREIGNTY IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

---

### 6.1 STATE : DEFINITION

Although some sort of political organization has existed since the ancient times in the form of Greek city-states and in the Roman empire yet, the concept of state is relatively modern. The contemporary concept of state owes its origin to Machiavelli (1469-1527), an Italian political thinker who expressed the idea the early sixteenth century ( Prince, 1513) as "the power that has authority over men". This definition described the nature of state catching the attention of many modern political and sociological thinkers.

*Max Weber*, a famous German sociologist sought to define state from a more sociological perspective and defining state. He says, "*A State is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force with in a given territory*".

*R.M. MacIver*, in his famous work, *The Modern State* (1926), has sought to distinguish State from other organisations and associations in that it embraces the whole of people in the specific territory and it has special function of maintaining law and order and it performs its function through its agent, the government.

*Frederick M. Watkins* defines State as "*a geographically delimited segment of human society united by common obedience to a single sovereign*".

*Geoffery K. Roberts* has tried to evolve a more working definition of the State that says that "*State is a well-defined territorial area in which the population is governed by the set of political authorities and which successfully claim the compliance of the citizenry for its laws and is able to secure such compliance by its monopolistic control of legitimate force*".

The two dimensions of sovereignty are internal and external. 'Internal sovereignty is where the sovereign or government exercises absolute authority over a particular society. Externally, there is no absolute authority 'above and beyond the state'. *Held* (1989) advocates that the 'States should determine their own direction and policies'.



## 6.2 ELEMENTS OF STATE

In the light of above definitions, it is imperative to identify the *elements of the state*. These are:

- i) **Population:** A State is a human institution. The population, therefore, is an essential element of the State. However, the population can constitute a State if and only if when it is united by the condition of interdependence, consciousness of common interest and general regard for a set of common rules of behaviour and institutions. The size of the population for constituting the State is not fixed yet it is always better that the population is self-sufficient to meet the needs of life. The size of the population for constituting the State is, however, not fixed and also not necessarily homogeneous in nature.
- ii) **Territory:** Unlike other associations, State possesses a well-defined territory within which it exercises its legitimate authority. A State comes in to existence when population settles in a territory. A well-defined territory or well demarcated physical boundaries gives recognition to the State not for performing national responsibilities alone but also for assuming roles and responsibilities internationally. It is within the territory that the rules of the State are applicable and also within the territory the citizens feel protected and secure and owe their allegiance to the law of the land. Like population, the size of the territory is not fixed and the State may be as big as the United States, Australia, Canada, India etc. and as small as the Maldives, Vatican City, Saint Kitts and Nevis, San Marino, Monaco etc.
- iii) **Government:** This is another essential element of the State. It refers to the agency or the machinery by means of which the common policies for the population residing within the well-defined territory are framed and the common affairs of the State are regulated. The State is an abstract concept while government is its concrete form. The State functions through the government. Laws of the State are made, declared and enforced by the government. The government of the liberal democratic States is constituted by the people and comprises of the people and also discharges its responsibilities in the interest of the common people. An effective government is the one that knows the problems of the citizenry and addresses the issues with all earnestness. The government makes all efforts to deal with internal problems of the State and along side, establishes harmonious and co-operative relations with the other nations of the world.
- iv) **Sovereignty:** It is the supreme or ultimate power of the State to take decisions, establish public goals, set priorities, resolve conflicts and manage its internal and external affairs. Sovereignty also denotes the authority that the State possesses to enforce laws and decisions by the use of legitimate force. It is by the virtue of sovereignty that the State deals independently with the other States and acts uninfluenced by any other internal or external organization/state or institution. The State exists as long as it enjoys sovereignty and authority over its internal and external affairs and is autonomous and independently capable of meeting the various needs of its citizenry including security. Some theorists have increasingly raised their concern over the gradually diminishing sovereignty of nation-states as the dependency and interconnectedness between the nation-states is gradually growing making the governments weaker and less relevant. But has this dependency and interconnectedness really made an impact on the sovereignty and autonomy of the nation-state is a matter of investigation. However, an attempt is made in the text that follows to explain that the phenomenon of globalization has indeed disturbed the authority and cohesiveness maintaining



capacity of the state yet, state continues to be an important actor and there are some effective ways by means of which the state can embrace globalization without the loss of sovereignty. According to Guigo Wang, the notion concept of sovereignty refers to the three-fold capacity of a State, which is the "absolute supremacy over internal affairs within its territory, absolute right to govern its people, and freedom from any external interference in the above matters".

Thus, a State is sovereign as long as it has the ability to make and implement laws within its territory, and can function without any external power and assistance, and doesn't acknowledge any higher authority above itself in the world of independent states. There are divergent opinions concerning the impact of globalization on the sovereignty. One view says that globalization has resulted in the receding independent capacity of the state and are perhaps partly correct in their claim as the below mentioned arguments made against their claims reflect.

Firstly, in this increasingly interdependent world, the problems and issues confronted by nation-state have become transnational in nature and character and so is the solution making the State unable to tackle and resolve its internal and domestic problems independently and effectively, thus, making a detrimental impact on its sovereignty. Problems like atmospheric pollution, terrorism, drug trafficking, the financial ripple effects, and currency crisis and AIDS that are a product of interdependence or new technologies and are transnational rather than national. States cannot provide solutions to these and other issues. Now-a-days, the mentioned non-traditional security threats and many others are a matter of concern for almost all national governments but given the network and involvement of people of across the world, it is almost impossible for a national government to provide relief and security to its population. For instance, there is a significant increase of drug abusers across the globe and the drugs are easily sent from producer countries (Afghanistan/ Nepal/ Myanmar) to various destination (Western /Advanced countries like U.S./ U.K.) with an involvement of transit countries (India) so, in order to demolish this crime network, the assistance of governments of all the mentioned nations becomes crucial and un avoidable. Thus, undermining the second notion of sovereignty, which is absolute supremacy over internal affairs within its territory.

Further, Ronald Axtmann mentions that with the establishment of supra-regional and international bodies there has been a re-organization of the State's capacities "upwards" and "downwards" to urban, regional and local levels and "outwards" as a result of trans-national co-operation. And, all these development have ultimately led to the territorial dispersion of nation- state's activities.

Improved communication and technological links worldwide have facilitated the operations of terrorist networks. People of developing, developed or under-developed nations are constantly under a threat of terrorist strike. There have seen instances where terror groups from various countries have collaborated to carry out an attack in a far away destination. Thus, the States are failing utterly even in carrying out its primary responsibility of protection of its citizens. Its security role is increasingly being transferred to international defense coalitions like NATO.

Secondly, in this era of globalization, there is a direct foreign intervention in domestic decision-making with an establishment of supranational organisations like IMF, World Bank and WTO etc. Organisations such as these set global rules, which the nations are supposed to internalize in their domestic policy making. WTO, for instance, in the name of promoting exchange stability and currency adjustment among trading nations of the world, dictates strictly technical and uniform advice to nations in economic trouble.



Many developing countries, as a condition of loan cut down on public expenditure, elevate its currency and cut back on subsidized welfare programmes etc. They also impose binding multilateral instruments such as the GATT, TRIPS, and TRIMS with their own enforcement mechanism leading to direct foreign intervention in domestic decision-making. Similarly, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the IMF and World Bank imposed, has a detrimental impact on many LDCs. The State is increasingly withdrawing itself from the core sectors of social life and is by and large, serving the interest of the big corporations leaving the marginalized at the mercy of the competitive market. Ulrich Beck has rightly said that the premises of the welfare state, pension system, income support and state expenditure, all are melting under globalization.

The Americanization and McDonaldisation of local cultures has led to the loss of cultural autonomy of many nation-states. The spread of Western consumerist culture is seen as a threat to the preservation of distinct national culture and concerns are raised over the gradual replacement of the distinctive and vibrant national culture with that of the American culture that is characterized to stand for uniformity and homogenization, leaving no scope for diversities. It wants to impose American culture and way of life everywhere. Thomas Friedman one of the prominent critics for globalization, in his book, "The Lexus and the Olive Tree" argues that globalization "has its own dominant culture, which is why it tends to be homogenizing . . . Culturally speaking, globalization is largely, though not entirely, the spread of Americanization — from Big Macs to iMacs to Mickey Mouse — on a global scale. The prevalence of the homogenized global culture is evident from the fact that the life style of a person living in Brazil and that of one living in India is almost the same as that of the person living in California. Today, the folk songs, folk dance and literature are rapidly being replaced by pop music, fusion, Jazz, etc. and the native fairy tales, songs, celebrations and stories of childhood are replaced with computer games produced on a different continent. And with increased connectivity, advanced technology, fast, easy and affordable travel facilities that are encouraging free flow of movement of goods, capital and services state is neither in a position nor can afford to keep its population coming under the impact of global culture.

Globalization has also encouraged greater movement of people across borders. People are migrating to foreign destinations for better education and job prospects. Thus, the state is losing control over its human resources, particularly its skilled labor force. Moreover, within its national borders the state is unable to protect the rights of its people from the atrocities of the MNCs. The MNCs that are the primary driver of globalisation are relocating itself to countries with easy availability of natural and cheap human resource and, thus, they are to a great extent responsible for exploitation and dislocation of people, erosion of the local culture and are causing environmental damage. The State in such situation seems to have surrendered to the capitalist forces.

The State to act as a final authority within its territorial boundaries is under threat with the increase in the new social movements and the transnational NGOs. The issues concerning human rights violations, displacement of the indigenous communities, management of the environmental problems and protecting the rights of prisoners etc. are taken up by the NGOs and, in this age of information technology, dissemination of information and networking has improved remarkably augmenting people's power as a political force outside the state institutions and also strengthening resistance movements world-wide. Thus, making state relatively a less important actor in combating issues and challenges. Moreover, international human rights norms are a direct threat to sovereignty. Individuals can appeal to these