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# UNIT 7 BUREAUCRATIZATION

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit will explain the coming of bureaucratization as an institution in the modern era. It will also attempt to show the way in which our life has been fully encompassed by different forms of bureaucracy, even those, which we think are engaged in fighting against it.

Bureaucratization could be said to encompass the processes both of the centralization and expansion and of the professionalization of all institutions; and this happens as much in government as in the other principal structures of power like political parties, trade unions, corporations, the armed forces, and the educational, religious, legal, and medical and other technical establishments, as also what has come to be known as the non-governmental organizations.

Its principles are well-known. It consists in centralizing decision-making through a tight chain of command, appointing professional “experts” through uniform criteria of examination and certification, demanding impersonal adherence to rules and laws, and attempting a nearly full calculability of action. An official in any one of these hierarchies acts impersonally, on the basis of expertise, and obeys and issues instructions which are “legitimate”, that is, framed in accordance with the law and the rules and regulations that derive from the law. The individual official may be replaced effortlessly, and the system functions like a machine with moveable replaceable parts. It is immensely attractive to all modern rulers, who are always looking for instruments of rule that are effective, politically reliable, impersonal, and professional.

But bureaucracies are only instruments of modern rulers: they are not the rulers themselves. How rulers are chosen is varied; but in most of the world it occurs through some form of election rather than rising to the top of a bureaucracy. The electoral processes are not bureaucratic even if they must submit to rules most often; but the electoral machines like political parties and their supporters are or attempt to be thoroughly bureaucratic organizations. **Thus, those at the top who ultimately rule, reach that position through processes that are not bureaucratic; but they rule through instruments that are bureaucratic.**

These occur alongside what is known as democratization. This appears as a paradox, since it is always assumed that bureaucracy and democracy are opposed in principle. Indeed they are, but they can and do coexist and even reinforce each other. But more, if we understand democracy, not as rule by the people so much as legitimation of rulers by the people through elections, then bureaucracy is fully compatible with it. Further, democracy also implies the active citizen asserting rights in numerous spheres, claiming

new rights, forming organizations to promote them, and participating in the political process. Every one of these actions by the active citizen requires powerful organization and funding; and even the active citizen furthering democracy acts through a bureaucracy. He advocates, promotes, and consolidates democracy through, among other things, more bureaucracy. For example, a non-governmental organization is set up to empower a citizen's group in some sphere of activity. It is set up first of all according to procedures laid down by the law; it must raise funds and function according to the charter permitted by law; its functioning is open to scrutiny; its officials are appointed in a hierarchy for fixed terms for their recognized expertise; and they are answerable to a general body. Not all of this might occur with the rigour that is implied by this bald statement, but this does apply to all large bodies, and it is the orientation of lesser ones. Innumerable small and often ephemeral bodies are formed to fight for the rights of citizens; but they must become bureaucracies, small or big, to do so effectively; and the largest and most famous of all of them are of course the political parties themselves.

The phases and processes through which the expansion of bureaucracy and professionalization has occurred have been necessarily uneven, both across countries and within countries. Usually, the armed forces, police, and civil services have been the first to do so thoroughly, followed by the business corporation and the political parties, and what are known as the "free" professions, those of education, the law, and medicine, with the non-governmental sector coming last. Significantly, in Europe and the Christian world in general, the Churches have been among the earliest to have become regular bureaucracies, perhaps earlier than the state itself. Between countries, Britain and Germany exhibit higher levels of bureaucracy in the first half of the nineteenth century, with France following and Russia coming far down the list; but in the course of the twentieth century, especially after World War I, all of them did so with a vigour and energy that yielded extraordinary results in World War II. It would suffice here to deal with just the bureaucracies of the state, of the party systems, and of trade unions, to suggest the manner in which all structures, including the ones that were most opposed to bureaucracy and professional career, have submitted to that very logic.

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## **7.2 BUREACRATIZATION AND THE STATE**

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It is customary to note the process of formation of bureaucracy from about the fifteenth until the eighteenth century in Europe as royal absolutisms imposed themselves against feudal nobilities. However, this was more a process of centralization of power in the hands of the king, not of its professionalization in the manner of a modern bureaucracy. The king gradually monopolized power and appointed his own officials to collect taxes, administer justice, and run the armed forces, denying such powers to the feudal nobility and other estates. The nobilities and estates could now merely act as employees or agents of the king, no longer in their own right. In terms of professional capacity, the persons employed by the king were no different from those of the great feudal magnates. They were chosen for their loyalty (combined with competence of course, but often that was a limited consideration), and appointments were acts of personal whim and patronage. The king merely commanded a larger area of patronage with greater resources and higher stakes to play for. By this means the modern state, as the monopolist of the exercise of legitimate coercion, or the absolute centre of power in any single territory, was established by the eighteenth century; but its institutions were not the modern professional ones we know today.

That transformation occurred in the nineteenth century in Europe by when the challenge from feudal nobilities and local estates had been overcome, and the modern state accumulated apparently unlimited resources through industrialization. The challenge before the state was to harness and exploit these vast new resources and ever newer

sources, both material and human. Generating and exploiting material resources took the form of industrialization; doing the same with human resources took the form of social mobilization. Entirely new institutions and professions were required for these activities; and the emergence of professional bureaucracies takes place against this background. The first of these were the direct servants of the state, the civil servants and the armed forces.

The direct activities of the state vastly expanded, starting with Britain from the 1830s, and with it, the number of employees of the state. This occurred with interventions by the state in the fields of factory inspection, public health, municipal administration, school education, poor relief, all in a wave of “reform” in the 1830s, topped by the parliamentary reform of 1832 when the franchise was extended. But all these were accompanied by a comparable campaign against “corruption” and in the cause of “efficiency.” By corruption the reformers meant the system of patronage in place since the sixteenth century, by which officials were appointed as personal favours, salaries were distributed for doing little or nothing (sinecures), and worse still, persons could buy their jobs, as happened especially with army officers (purchase of commissions). The sweeping reforms of the thirties and forties did away with many but not all of these practices, and appointments now began to take place against proven professional qualification, especially through the competitive examination. Thus officialdom both vastly expanded and became immensely more professional.

This was when schools became modern centres of high quality education, mutating from the Dootheboy’s Hall caricatured in Charles Dickens’ *Nicholas Nickleby* to Thomas Arnold’s public schools, celebrated in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. Similarly, universities became centres of modern professional education, and academic scholarship itself became a new profession. In the eighteenth century, the education of an aristocrat did not require a university, but it did need the “grand tour” of the courts of Europe, to learn manners and acquire social contacts. In the nineteenth century, the grand tour was discarded, university education became indispensable, and Oxford and Cambridge assumed their formidable reputations and positions of eminence. All these systems were dominated by competitive examinations.

The process was completed in the next wave of reforms in the 1860s and 1870s, during the first government of W. E. Gladstone (1867-1874). In stages from 1870, entry into the civil service was to take place through competitive examination; purchase of commissions in the army was abolished; in 1873 seven courts of law dating from medieval times were merged into one Court of Judicature, and the obviously unprofessional judicial functions of the House of Lords were terminated; and in 1871 the Anglican Church’s monopoly of teaching posts at Oxford and Cambridge was ended. Disraeli’s government in 1874-1880 followed up with welfare measures which furthered the first series of the 1830s: a maximum of 56.5 working hours per week; further restrictions on the legal age for employment; the effective introduction of what has become almost a religious observance in developed countries, the weekend; regulation of working class housing; laying down standards for sewage disposal; controls on the adulteration of food and drugs; restricting the pollution of rivers; establishing safety limits for the loading of ships (the Plimsoll Line), and much else.

As may be gauged from this extraordinary series, each sphere of expansion of government activity demanded the recruitment of a fresh body of professionals, whether to inspect factories, to work out sewage disposal systems, or to control pollution. In each case problems had to be diagnosed, solutions proposed, and standards established, all of which required advanced academic competence gained from the modern university system; they then had to be enforced which required bureaucratic “efficiency”; and

more had to be prepared for as newer areas appeared for intervention with each technological advance or with “progress.” The process was never-ending; government became gargantuan and ever more “bureaucratic”; but the demand for more and more of it was insatiable. The professional took charge everywhere; and education itself became a form of investment for the accumulation of a new kind of capital that yielded the richest dividends.

This process was slower in France, despite the French reputation for absolutist states, royal bureaucracies, and Napoleonic efficiency. These high levels of professionalism and bureaucracy were attained in Paris, but the province remained in the hands of local interests to a degree greater than in Germany or Britain, although less than in the Mediterranean. Napoleon certainly conceived of bureaucracy as a perfect chain of command in which the central authority issued instructions that passed “swift as an electric current” to subordinates, that is the prefects (like the district magistrates in India) governing the 83 departments (districts), sub-prefects in the *arrondissements*, and mayors in the 36,000 communes. The model was of perfect bureaucracy, and the prefect enjoyed ample power of every kind that a government in a modernizing state can possess and hence dispensed patronage as a local potentate. For that very reason local interest groups consisting of landlords, businessmen, the Church, unions when they arose, and peasant lobbies, all competed furiously to gain control of these appointments; in effect these offices became agents of local factions and clans rather than of the state itself. Already, by 1866, 37 percent of the mayors were farmers; after they began to be elected from 1882, that trend was accentuated. By 1913, 46 percent were farmers, and in the smallest communes as many as 78 percent. Thus appointments became arbitrary; transfers were frequent according to local factional struggles, officials were overtly political rather than neutral, they were expected to ensure the election of local politicians, and they were punished or rewarded according to their performance in such matters. It was in everybody’s interest to resist rationalization, and the competitive examination system was introduced only in the 1880s. But thereafter the process gathered momentum, and especially after World War I France became another typically advanced industrial society in these respects. As the above account indicates, there could be considerable differences between different states and images and ideals may be only distantly related to reality.

Russia occupied an extreme position in these respects, both before 1917 and after. In the nineteenth century, this was an undergoverned country despite the extraordinary concentration of power at the top. The towns and the provinces were left to various forms of local self-regulation (but not self-government) by local notables and factions, all in a manner that did not challenge the power of the state. Until the forties officials were astonishingly untrained, with high rates of actual illiteracy. But a new educational system was set in place from the forties, with new universities like Moscow and Kazan, and a new generation of qualified officials took up positions during that decade. In forbidding conditions they relentlessly pursued their goals of professional excellence and “progress”, none of which meant democracy but certainly did mean efficiency; they were especially concerned to eliminate arbitrariness and to establish the rule of law and rational administration. It was thanks to the efforts of this generation that the “great reforms” of the sixties were carried out, that is, the abolition of serfdom, the introduction of elected local government bodies known as the *zemstvo*, the creation of professional advocacy and courts of law that acquired a European reputation for high standards, and increasingly higher standards in the civil services and armed forces. However, a uniform competitive examination system was never introduced and appointments remained acts of patronage. But this patronage was exercised among a widening pool of expert manpower thanks to the education system expanding and improving in quality

at so rapid a rate. The greatest extension of government was perhaps in the zemstvo and the municipalities, in the domains of public health, elementary education, agronomy, collecting statistics, maintaining communications and other aspects of local modernization. These were all jobs carried out by armies of graduates of universities and sundry higher educational institutes, especially medical, technological, or engineering institutes. They were known as the “Third Element”, so called because the first was the nobility and the second was the bureaucracy in local society; but this Third Element was the backbone of the effort because they were the “experts.”

In Soviet times, these processes were carried far, with high levels of professionalism and specialization, as in advanced industrial societies. Owing to the immensely rapid rate of industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and other processes of modernization, the administrative structure was professionalized at a similar rate, not the half century and more that Britain took in the nineteenth century. The greatest stress was placed on technical education to optimize industrialization, and a vast body of competent managers and technical staff poured out of these institutes to run the economy. Just as Western bureaucracies present a public image of training in the humanities, law, and the social sciences, the Soviet image of the administrator was of technocracy; but all were uniformly professionals selected for their expertise, combined with loyalty to the regime in question. However, there were notable variations. All activity was bureaucratized and professionalized, not only the direct activity of the state and of the Party, but even of professions which are in principle utterly inimical to these forms of organization or regimentation, namely writers and artists. Even these were required to form their own organizations to carry out their creative work, like officials, within such structures. The Union of Writers is merely the most well known. This did not in fact prevent works of great significance and originality being produced, but authors were answerable to the state in this fashion. The state provided patronage and support through these institutions, and demanded from them that standards of excellence and expertise be established and enforced. It thus elaborated hierarchies of achievement and patterns of recognition, which, in the West, was substantially the work of the market.

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### 7.3 BUREAUCRACY IN POLITICAL PARTIES

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Political Parties, like all else, tended to become bureaucratic structures as they transformed themselves into large mass organizations from the 1860s and 1870s especially. In the UK, the party used to be a loose association of groups engaged in local politics, with great variations on issues of concern and forms of functioning. But then the following changes occurred: 1) From about 1867, the local party club network expanded enormously, with each party, Liberal and Conservative (or Tory), organizing its own brass band, football clubs, benefit societies, and even building societies in a great wave of mobilization that was apparently non-political, but was designed to foster political loyalties to the party that was promoting this range of action. 2) Each of them organized their own “Constituency Associations” consisting of local voluntary activists, who came to be known as the “caucus.” These associations were centralized in a national party body: for the Liberal Party it was the National Liberal Federation from 1877, and for the Conservatives it was the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations (NUCCA) from as early as 1867 but acquiring momentum in the 1880s. 3) This structure allowed the central party leadership to impose strict discipline on the local party units, especially to decide electoral strategy, candidates for election, electoral alliances, and so on. The typical party bureaucrat, known as the party agent, appointed by the central command, now supervised these associations. His main job was to ensure that party supporters were entered on the voters’ lists, to provide intelligence to the centre on the public mood, and to impose discipline locally.

The results were evident in the nineties for the Conservative Party which was better organized than the Liberals: in the 1850s, governments suffered 10 to 15 defeats in parliamentary votes in a year; from 1900, the average was just one per session. By 1914 the party had become a centralized bureaucratic machine that overrode local, individual variations and preferences and headed toward becoming a mass party with a larger and larger electorate. The local enthusiast, activist, or notable was overtaken by the party official from the centre, in the manner that royal bureaucracies subordinated the remnants of feudal aristocracies all over Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries; and independent members of parliament were increasingly a thing of the past.

This process continued throughout the twentieth century, with the Labour Party following suit when it replaced the Liberals as the alternative to the Conservatives from the twenties. In the Labour Party also, the candidate is formally selected by the constituency body, but this is subject to central control. The sovereign body is the Annual Conference of delegates and members, but its resolutions are never binding on the party whether in government or in opposition despite the many pious and ideological statements to the contrary. The conduct of members in parliament is decided solely by the central party bureaucracy. This party makes loud claims to its being more democratic than others; but it is like any other, a mass organization run by an oligarchy through its paid bureaucracy.

The German party system developed in comparable manner. The Social Democratic Party or the SPD by its German acronym, formed in 1875, and from the 1890s rapidly became a mass party with a large trade union base like the Labour Party. Indeed, the German civil service became something of a model across the ideological spectrum, from the right wing pressure group, the Agrarian League, for corporates like Siemens and Krupp, and even for its bitter antagonist, the SPD. As with the Labour Party, the Party Congress is the sovereign body; but not only does it meet only once in two years after 1914, but the party leadership and the parliamentary party (the group of members of parliament) known as the "fraktion" in the Bundestag (parliament) has the decisive say. The conservative opposition, the Christian Democratic Union or the CDU, differs only by being a trifle looser. It has tended to be more dominated by personalities, especially Konrad Adenauer, the Chancellor (prime minister in Germany) from 1949 to 1963 and party chairman until 1966. However, in fundamentals of organization, it differs little from its principal opponent, the SPD.

The contrast, to some extent, is France and the Mediterranean states. France, despite its fearsome reputation for Napoleonic bureaucracies, in fact possessed parties with weaker organizational structures than the German or British counterparts. The reason is perhaps more to do with the size of parties: the German SPD had 1.7 million members in 1914, the British Conservative Primrose League could boast more than 2 million members, while the French Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO) had only 35-75,000 members and the Action Libérale Populaire only 250,000. In France, local influences and personalities counted for more than national organization. Local bodies of the village and canton decided on candidates, provided the election machine, organized the campaign, and grabbed the benefits in case their candidate won the election. The benefits were the usual patronage of the state, jobs, subsidies, relief, contracts and the like. The national party organization had great difficulty exercising control over deputies (members of parliaments), for, if these deputies kept their local supporters happy, there was little the national body could do. In these senses, French parties reflected the localism and patronage politics of the French bureaucracy also.

These features changed after World War II, especially with the Communist Party (PCF) being such an excellent bureaucracy in typically Stalinist fashion, with its professional training and strict enforcement of the Party line from above, to the extent of its not

allowing even direct communication between party cells at the base. These cells were required to communicate only with their superior levels, that is vertically. This, it should be noted is one of the typical features of the bureaucracy of state, where communications between departments must take place only with the permission of the head of the department and not between lower officials in the hierarchy.

The most obvious cases of party bureaucracies are those of the fascist and socialist states. The fascist bureaucracies formally submitted to the “leader-principle”, that is, a single charismatic leader controlled the entire movement, the party, and where appropriate, the state itself. But in modern times a single leader cannot control personally such vast machines as those of industrial societies; and however charismatic, energetic, or able the leader or dictator, he could not be any more personal in his choice of officials than the American president is: he had to submit to the logic of bureaucratic structure to get things done. These forms of leadership were chosen differently from those of the electoral systems of the democracies, they provided a different ideological direction, and they adopted a distinct style of their own; for the rest they ruled modern industrial or industrializing societies through familiar structures of bureaucracy.

The professionalization and bureaucratization of political parties is arresting for the party having been originally conceived as an agent of democracy against the bureaucracy of the state. A considerable amount of democratic rhetoric is employed by these bodies to mobilize mass support and to further their campaigns to influence the state. But the process of representing mass electorates and securing their support imposes its inexorable logic on these organizations; and they must summon the professional to use all the techniques of management and administration to ensure the required results. In addition, parties aspire to install their own governments or actually do so, in anticipation or furtherance of which they replicate the structures and functioning of the government itself. As a result, multiple bureaucracies of professionals emerge, those of the civil service itself, and those of the respective political parties.

In the case of single party states, there are ostensibly just two such bureaucracies, those of the party and of the state. But in fact there could be many of them, all hierarchies competing for the attention of the Leader and bases for manoeuvring into the top position. Thus, even in Hitler’s Third Reich, the following structures competed with each other, and each one of them could have provided the avenue to the top: the Nazi Party itself or the NSDAP; the SS, headed by Himmler, who thought of himself as the successor; the armed forces, which periodically conspired to overthrow Hitler and eventually provided the actual successor in 1945, Grand Admiral Doenitz; and the security services. This feature was more pronounced in the fascist and conservative dictatorships that spread across Europe in the inter-war years. Such competition however does not and did not take the form of elections, for which reason they are not called democratic. The most extreme and lucid case is that of the Soviet Union in which a single bureaucracy ran the country, that of the Party itself; it provided the sole arena to aspire for power; and all competition to reach the top took place strictly within it. All the other bureaucracies were strictly subordinate to it and never did challenge its monopoly, whether they were the planners, the managers, general administration, the armed forces, or the security services. As such, this single Party was, in itself, like the multiple party system of the liberal democracies, for in each case either the single Party or the multiple parties was the sole avenue to power, not the military, the paramilitaries, the civil services, the religious hierarchies, the corporate structure, the legal establishment, or the academic system. As has been noted earlier, the manner in which leaders and rulers are chosen in modern bureaucratic societies is not bureaucratic, but the instruments with which they rule are uniformly bureaucratic across the ideological divides.

## 7.4 BUREAUCRATIZATION IN TRADE UNIONS

Unions is the other typically democratic institution of modern times, embodying the hopes of the “exploited” to secure a just distribution of power and wealth. They are arguably also the first and most significant of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Their origins and formal procedures are quintessentially democratic: they were and are voluntary associations mostly of persons asserting their rights. Through most of the nineteenth century they were just such bodies, sprouting in factories and workplaces as and when occasion demanded, usually to protect their wages or to demand higher wages and shorter working hours. Factories were small in size, unions were also small, and the negotiations were highly personal, between a few workers and an employer.

But dramatic changes occurred from the eighteen seventies, with a new wave of industrialization, new technologies, and new structures of management. Plant size became larger, technologies diversified and grew in sophistication, and management was separated from ownership, leading to the emergence of professional management. Workers’ protest actions likewise became all the more complex, larger in scope, covering many factories simultaneously, or a full industry or region, and negotiations between unions and management became more professional and less personal. Along with the professional manager there emerged the professional union official. Two new bureaucracies began to face each other, those of corporate management, and those of the unions. Just as managers required academic qualifications, examination procedures for selection, and training programmes, union officials were now selected for their qualifications, subjected to competitive selection examinations, and were thereafter trained on the job. They were no longer just workers representing other workers; they could be anybody chosen for their skills at organizing research, framing plans for action, committee work, and negotiation. Negotiating skills were especially decisive, and among them high competence in mathematics and economics, since union officials were expected to negotiate ceaselessly on costs of production, productivity, profits, wage rates, standards of living, insurances, welfare and the like. But the demand went beyond negotiation. Unions had to prepare their plans on the basis of the state of the economy, not merely of a single factory or industry; their understanding of the economy and their capacity to convince a wider public about the impact of their actions on the economy and on the rest of the population became vital.

This became ever more demanding as union action began to play a role in national elections. Political parties across the ideological spectrum, from left to right, prospected for support among unions; and the social democratic or labour parties with socialist ideologies were especially energetic and commanded the largest following among the working class. As unions supported particular political parties, they needed to plan, advertise themselves, and act in tandem with the political parties and their priorities. The party bureaucrat and the union bureaucrat had to work in unison, both leaving the rank-and-file voter and rank-and-file union member far behind. As socialist ministers entered governments from the beginning of the twentieth century, and as social democratic parties became governments or led coalition governments from the twenties, union, party, and civil service officials had to work together and on an equal footing with comparable levels of competence. For the purposes of national representation, unions built up national organizations to represent them. These were federations of unions, or head organizations, samples of which are the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in France, or the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) in Germany. There could be more than one such federation in a single country, with each ideological orientation forming its own head organization



also. These are merely representative listings. Thus the original union of a single factory had first become a member of a federation of unions within an industry, and these federations then formed the national federation like the TUC. As may be imagined, these enormous bodies could be run only by full-time paid officials, not by workers taking time off work to look after the interests of other workers. These national federations also routinely negotiated and signed agreements with national federations of employers, a typical specimen of which would be the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) representing British capitalists.

How deeply immersed unions are in affairs of state and responsible for governance may be gauged from the examples of Britain and Germany after World War II. British unions emerged from the War with heady plans for 1) public control of core areas of the economy, including nationalization and extensive regulation of the private sector; 2) high levels of employment through demand management; 3) extensive welfare “from cradle to grave”; and 4) planning of investment, including even an ambitious scheme of a “manpower budget” that would make annual estimates of manpower requirements and availability so that investment could be planned to ensure adequate levels of employment. But it was all conceived in the manner that any civil servant might; there was no concession to “democracy” in these plans; and the TUC took the decision-making hierarchy for granted with workers at the bottom, and assumed that professional management, under the surveillance of the government of course, would ensure that the benefits reached workers. Democratic guarantees lay in the presence of the TUC and of the Labour Party, not of workers playing a direct role. Little of all this was achieved in fact, especially since the TUC was not committed to socialism or to planning and was merely anxious that the agony of the Depression years should not be repeated. Therefore it was satisfied with the extensive welfare system established, that about 20 percent of productive capacity was publicly owned, and that demand management kept employment levels high. Even this relatively modest achievement demanded considerable responsibility for governance and professionals to manage the role of the TUCs. They had to be good economists enough to understand that if they pressed their wage demands too far and were too successful, inflationary pressures would build up and real wages would not rise adequately, for which they would eventually have to take the blame. In like manner, they had to be nimble political managers to keep a friendly Labour government in power and to accept the constraints and responsibilities that power brought. All these were functions of professional economists, political managers, and officials, all far removed from the original ideal of a trade unionist fighting for his little union.

This is not a question of centralization of decision-making so much as of its professionalization. Thus, the British union structure is astonishingly, indeed bewilderingly decentralized, and the TUC has little control over the national federations and great industrial unions; deals are struck between unions in an industry and the corresponding employers’ federation, and often lower down the hierarchy; any union could negotiate anything and any agreement could be abrogated; multiple unions flourished in an industry, the bane of British industrial relations according to some; and even on the employers’ side multiple bodies flourished until the co-ordinating top body, the Confederation of British Industry was formed as late as 1965. This could pass for democracy; but it is a democracy run by officials, not workers.

German unions after the War were even more optimistic than the British because they were the only sector in Germany untainted by National Socialism. As codified at the Munich Congress of the DGB in 1949, they expected 1) co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*), that is, to run industry jointly with capitalists by having an equal number of union-appointed directors on boards of companies; 2) comprehensive welfare;

3) socialization of key industries; 4) unions to be non-partisan and organized for each industry; and 5) planning. Little was eventually achieved, chiefly because of the Cold War, the rightward political drift in Germany, and the continuous government by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) all the way until 1963. However, what was attained was 1) advanced levels of centralization and of industrial unionism, eliminating multiple unions that had so plagued the Weimar Republic in the twenties and early thirties; 2) according to the Works Constitution Act of 1952 only one-third of the directors were to be from the unions, not half as originally hoped; 3) advanced welfare. In retrospect, this is considerable, and requires unions to play a major role in governance. In the most important two industries however, coal and steel, parity between labour and other directors had already been achieved by 1947 and was formalized in 1951. German union action is also marked by an advanced degree of “juridification”, that is, any action has to be according to the law in all its detail, union membership is totally voluntary, collective bargaining may take place only between unions and managements, and strikes may be organized only by unions and not during the life of a contract. Violations of these principles attract severe penalties at law and unions must function like any corporation with full legal liability. When the DGB amended its radical Munich Programme at Düsseldorf in 1963, only nationalization was reduced in importance while co-determination retained its pride of place. Thus unions have to function, not merely as pressure groups to extract what they can for their members, but more as partners in industrial governance, and therewith as another kind of management.

However, the trends are not quite so unidirectional as implied by the above account. A constant challenge is mounted from the base, from the rank-and-file, what are known in Britain as the shop stewards and in Germany as works’ councils or *Betriebsräte*. These are elected bodies at the lowest levels of organization; they represent the immediate democracy of workers; they are concerned only with the particular problems of their members; and they have been consistently more radical than the union bureaucracies. In Britain they have repeatedly erupted to challenge union leaderships’ dealings with managements and governments. In Germany however, the highly regulated union system has integrated even these potentially radical and independent bodies. They have been permitted to negotiate agreements in extension of what unions themselves do, for example with respect to bonuses but not wages. Thus dualism, or the co-existence of unions and of works’ councils, has been built into the system.

While the above picture may describe Western and Central Europe, the situation in the Soviet Union and East Europe (after 1945) was different in certain respects. Here also the union, party, management and state bureaucracies engaged with each other, each acting for its own constituency. However unions did not act to assert the rights of workers since they were already in a state which had abolished capitalists and capitalism, and the state itself claimed to be the promoter of the interests of workers. This matter was settled as early as 1921, at the Tenth Party Congress in Russia, when unions were denied the right to agitate on behalf of workers against management, and they had to accept the function of partnership in governance, with its necessary discipline. This was then derided as “statization” and bureaucratization. In effect in the Soviet Union, all four bureaucracies were different forms of state bureaucracies, functionally differentiated from each other like ministries, but all equally subject to the same political imperatives and leadership in a manner that was direct and constitutional. The role of the unions therefore was to ensure that the policies of the Party and of the state with respect to the welfare of workers were carried out and that productivity and discipline were maintained at appropriate levels. While labour policy was determined at the top, unions at the base engaged with management on deciding the worker’s wage category, work quotas, bonuses and the like, which typically the German works’ councils also dealt with. Unions participated in framing plans at the enterprise level, kept a watch on welfare and wage

aspects of the law, monitored disciplinary proceedings, and attended to all welfare matters like housing, recreation, education, and healthcare. Unions had distinct functions in the West and the East, but they belonged to networks of hierarchies of officialdom in symmetrical fashion.

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## 7.5 SUMMARY

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As may be seen now, four major bureaucracies dealt with each other, those of unions, employers, parties, and of the state; they wrangled, negotiated, conflicted, competed, or otherwise worked together from national to local levels in a complex and interlocking system of policy formation, decision-making, administration, and most of all government formation, collectively called governance. They were all professionals dealing with fellow professionals with comparable and compatible levels of qualification, work ethic, and self-interest, but each pursuing the case for its own constituency, somewhat like lawyers appearing on opposed sides in a structured legal system.

As the above account suggests, all spheres of public action have been professionalized and are run through bureaucracies. This is only to be expected of the armed forces, the civil services, and the security services, the principal arms of the state. But the complexity of modern industrial society, even in territorially limited states like Switzerland or Singapore, attains a depth which imperatively demands professional expertise and its corporate organization to be effective. The process therefore penetrates other spheres also. Thus entrepreneurship, with its origins in individual creativity and risk-taking giving rise to the legend and slogan of *laissez-faire*, has been transformed from at least the 1870s into corporate activity run by professional managers, and its origins, like most stories of origin, have entered the realm of myth. The stories of political parties and of trade unions have been told, of both setting out as self-conscious bodies of persons fighting off the pretensions and prestations of bureaucracy and capitalists respectively and themselves becoming parallel bureaucracies and partners in those structures of governance. Churches have always been tight corporate bodies that have demanded high standards of professionalism from especially the eighteenth century and are possessed of a degree of discipline and ideological certainty that would be the envy of the armed forces and communist parties. Even the academic system, while maintaining an image of freewheeling individualism, has become properly professional from the early nineteenth century, with universities and research and other specialized institutes offloading products on to the market like corporate houses, and academics being subjected to the severe test of the market place, as evidenced in the harsh slogan, “publish or perish.” Academic research is increasingly expected to consist of team work led by project investigators who raise funds on the market and organize vast bodies of team research by experts, which then appear on the market in a flood of articles, conference proceedings volumes, and serial monographs. The dogma and ideology of individual free choice and action retain their seductive charm; but it is possible to sustain that subjective conviction only thanks to the pluralism of the modern world which gives us a choice as to which form of bureaucracy and structured profession we may individually submit to, not whether bureaucracy itself is acceptable or not.

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## 7.6 EXERCISES

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- 1) What do we mean by bureaucratization in the Modern World.?
- 2) What are different forms of bureaucracy?
- 3) What are the elements that different type of bureaucracies have in common?

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# UNIT 8 DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

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## Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Democracy: Ancient and Modern
- 8.3 Democracy in the Modern World: Ideas and Institutions
- 8.4 Explaining Democracy and Democratization
- 8.5 Democracy and its Critics
- 8.6 Contemporary Challenges to Democracy
  - 8.6.1 Development
  - 8.6.2 Diversity
  - 8.6.3 Gender
  - 8.6.4 Globalization
- 8.7 Summary
- 8.8 Exercises

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit will make a survey of different forms of democracy historically, theoretically as well as geographically. The attempt will also be to give a range of criticisms which have been offered to the notion of democracy and democratization process. Even as it has become the most dominant principle of modern political system, democracy is still fraught with many new and contemporary challenges. A brief survey of such challenges is made towards the end of this Unit.

Most discussions of the history of democracy tend to begin with an invocation to its origins in ancient Greece. In the next section, we briefly consider the question of whether democracy in the modern world bears any similarity with democracy in ancient Greece.

Democracy has been, and continues to remain, one of the most contested concepts in the political vocabulary of the modern world. It means many different things to different people, but the fact that all manner of political regimes have sought to appropriate the label 'democracy' to legitimise themselves, clearly shows that it carries a positive normative connotation. Rather like justice and freedom, then, democracy is widely perceived to be a good thing, and a desirable attribute for a polity to possess. However, the task of determining which democracies are truly worthy of the name, or of distinguishing between polities in terms of the extent of democracy they have achieved, is a difficult if not impossible one. There are no universal standards to which we can appeal to decide such questions, so that ultimately, any person's judgement or evaluation of particular democracies is necessarily predicated on the way in which s/he understands the democratic ideal.

If judging contemporary democracies is so fraught with difficulty, the task of describing the evolution of democracy in the modern world is no less contentious. Historians disagree about the origins of modern democratic ideas, as also about the emergence of democratic

institutions. Thus, for some, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man was an early statement of democratic principles, while for others it was a manifesto of the bourgeois class which, though opposed to hierarchy based on nobility, was neither egalitarian nor democratic. Similarly, while John Locke is for some the first significant theorist of liberal-democratic ideas, for others he is at best a theorist of constitutional government (and at worst an unabashed advocate of private property rights). On this interpretation, it is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his faith in the direct participation of the citizens in the making of laws, who is the premier philosopher of democracy.

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## 8.2 DEMOCRACY: ANCIENT AND MODERN

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In 1992, 2500 years of democracy were enthusiastically celebrated all over the world. This was an unusual celebration for two reasons. Firstly, while anniversaries of statesmen, revolutions and the founding of nations are quite commonly celebrated, no other political ideal has ever been celebrated in this way. Secondly, democracy in the modern world is quite different from democracy as it was practised in ancient Greece 2500 years ago. The democratic ideas and practices with which we are here concerned are emphatically modern, but it would be useful to briefly note the chief features of democracy in the city-state of Athens (widely considered to be the most stable, enduring and model form of democracy in Greece) in ancient times.

Appropriately, the word democracy itself is of Greek origin. The Greek word *demokratia* is a combination of the words *demos* (meaning the people) and *kratos* (meaning power or rule). Thus, the one common principle underlying democracy in both the ancient and modern worlds is the idea of rule by the people, whether directly - through personal participation - or indirectly, through elected representatives. The important difference, of course, is in the way in which 'the people' were defined. In the ancient Greek polity, the 'demos' was rather restrictively defined, and notably excluded three main categories of persons: the slaves, women, and *metics* (the foreigners who lived and worked in the city-state). This meant that barely a quarter of the total population were members of the citizen body. Nevertheless, it is notable that the direct participation of a 40,000 strong citizen body was no mean achievement. The actual career of Athenian democracy was fairly troubled, as aristocrats, generals and demagogues made periodic attempts to control power. Their contempt for the poor - described as 'the mob' or 'the rabble' - finds echoes in the modern world, where democracy was achieved through struggle, and against considerable odds. Indeed, the struggle for democracy everywhere and throughout history, has been simultaneously a struggle against political inequality based on, and justified by, inequalities of birth and wealth.

At its best, however, Athenian democracy conveys an impressive picture of direct participation by citizens in the assembly which deliberated and took decisions on all policy matters, and met on as many as 300 days in the year. Citizens also participated directly in government, as they were chosen by lot to serve in official administrative and judicial positions.

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## 8.3 DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN WORLD: IDEAS AND INSTITUTIONS

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The story of democracy in the modern world is not merely the story of the evolution of democratic institutions in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An understanding of modern democracy is not possible without an account of the social and political ideas, as well as of the patterns of material development in the economic and productive spheres of the societies in which modern democracy took birth. As one

of the 'characteristic institutions of modernity', democracy was the result of complex and intertwined processes of ideological, social and economic change. In Britain, this change was signalled by the Industrial Revolution that began in the middle of the eighteenth century, while in France and America it was launched by the political revolutions in the last quarter of that same century.

Britain is conventionally regarded as the first modern democracy because, in the aftermath of the Civil War (1640-1649), royal absolutism was brought to an end, and powers were transferred from the crown to the two Houses of Parliament, of which one, the House of Commons, was an elected chamber. Though the franchise continued to be highly restricted - based on ownership of property - control of the executive had effectively passed to a loose coalition of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, such that political conflict was henceforth peacefully conducted between competing elites. It was only in the nineteenth century that the expansion of the suffrage took place, beginning with the enfranchisement of the upper middle classes in the Reform Act of 1832. This was followed by the gradual extension of the franchise to the working classes, largely as a response to the pressure of political struggles by the working-class and radical movements like Chartism. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and three Reform Acts later, about two-thirds of the male population stood enfranchised. It was, however, not until 1929 that women secured the right to vote, and universal adult suffrage was only fully achieved in 1948, when plural voting was abolished in favour of the principle of one-person one-vote.

As in Britain, so also in France, the achievement of universal adult suffrage was not completed until 1946. The rather more radical tradition of democracy in France was inaugurated by the French Revolution of 1789, with its stirring call of Liberty-Equality-Fraternity. The principle of popular sovereignty was crucial to the deliberations of the National Assembly. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen proclaimed the following individual rights as the natural and imprescriptible entitlements not merely of French citizens, but of 'mankind' at large: among others, the rights of personal liberty, freedom of thought and religion, security of property and political equality. Though the Revolution proclaimed an end to both the feudal economy and two centuries of royal absolutist rule, republican democracy in France suffered many reverses. The revolutionary constitution of 1791 established something akin to universal male suffrage (though the philosopher Condorcet and some others advocated the extension of the franchise to women, this was seen as quite contrary to public opinion), and even the property requirement for the right to vote was low enough to exclude only domestic servants, vagrants and beggars. Thus, four million male citizens won the right to vote in 1791, but four years later, more restrictive property requirements were introduced, bringing down the number of voters to just 100,000 prosperous taxpayers. Universal male suffrage was reintroduced only after the revolution of 1848.

In the United States of America, too, the advance of democracy in the aftermath of the Civil War was restricted to white men, and the enfranchisement of women, as also of indigenous and black people was not achieved until the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the Declaration of Independence (1776) was the document that simultaneously effected the legal creation of the United States of America, and that of democracy in that country. Though slavery continued to be practised until the mid-nineteenth century, the American Revolution did give the modern world its first democratic government and society. Hereditary power - of monarchy and aristocracy alike - were overthrown as republican government, in which all citizens were at least notionally equal, was put in place. An important institutional mechanism of the separation of powers between the three branches of government - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary - was also effected, making it difficult for any one branch to exercise arbitrary or untrammelled power.

The ideological importance of these early - albeit limited - victories of democracy cannot be underestimated. It has been argued that the foundations of democratic ideas had been prepared by the implicit egalitarianism of the Reformation. Though the Reformation was often - as in Britain and Germany, for instance - carried through by absolute monarchical power, Protestantism nevertheless had the long-term effect of creating religious minorities, and therefore providing the grounds for doctrines of religious toleration to be articulated. The idea that God spoke directly to individuals, without the mediation of priests, also made possible and legitimate the questioning of political authority. The political ideas of the Levellers, John Locke and Tom Paine, and documents like the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), and the American Declaration of Independence (1776), expressed the important ideas and principles that have underpinned democracy in the modern world.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies, and such is now the necessity which constraints them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having, in direct object, the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States....

(**American Declaration of Independence, 1776.**)

These writings and documents are also often seen as charters of liberalism, and liberalism was indeed an important handmaiden of democracy at this time. This is why it is not surprising that the beginnings of democratic theory are distinguished by a strong emphasis on the concept of liberty, rather than the concept of equality with which it later came to be identified. As their name indicates, the Levellers in seventeenth century England advanced a radical conception of popular sovereignty and civil liberties. Interrogating property ownership as the basis for political rights, they advocated a nearly universal male suffrage, though - echoing ancient Athens - servants and criminals, apart from women, were to be excluded.

John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* (1681) is an important source-book of classical liberal ideas. In this work, Locke presents an account of a hypothetical

state of nature, governed by a Law of Nature, which mandates that no individual ought to harm another in life, health, liberty or possessions. The natural equality of men - stemming not from any equality of endowment in terms of virtue or excellence, but from the fact that they are all equally creatures of God - gives them the equal right to freedom. Though this state of nature is governed by a Law of Nature that endorses these rights, there is no agency to administer and enforce this law. Therefore, to prevent others from invading their rights or to exact retribution for such invasions, men will enforce the law as *they* interpret it. In a state of nature that is largely characterised by peace and mutual assistance, the absence of such an agency contains endless possibilities for conflict, and these are the chief inconveniences of the state of nature, which is therefore transcended through a social contract. This social contract, founded in the consent of every individual, is the basis of legitimate government. Civil law must now conform to the eternal rule that is natural law, and hence the purpose of political society and of government is the preservation of the life, liberty and property of individuals (and Locke accordingly supplements this account with a defence of private property). If the government fails to discharge the purposes for which it was created, the people have the right to resist and replace it. It is this statement of the core principles of classical liberalism - individualism, popular sovereignty and limited government - that provided the foundation for liberal democracy.

These principles were also celebrated in the American Declaration of Independence (1776), which followed Locke in describing as natural and inalienable the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (the last widely interpreted as an euphemism for property). The continued exclusion of slaves and women from the category of those who possessed such rights is only one example of the contradiction between the universalism of liberal principles and the selectivity of liberal practices.

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) reflected the republican spirit of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in idealizing citizenship by presenting individuals as public-spirited members of a community. For Rousseau, however, representative government simply was not good enough, and the only form of free government was direct democracy in which citizens would participate directly. Of course, Rousseau was aware that gross inequalities of wealth as well as large political communities were obstacles to popular sovereignty, while liberty, welfare and public education in the context of a small city-state provided the ideal conditions for democracy.

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## 8.4 EXPLAINING DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

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Though liberal ideas found institutional embodiment in democracy, democracy was not simply the result of a fruitful exchange between political ideas and political institutions, confined to the domain of political action. We cannot understand the birth of democracy in Europe without some reference to the important material transformations that were taking place in these societies. Industrial capitalism created new social classes which questioned the stranglehold of the older elites, whose power was based entirely in the ownership of land, and demanded a share in political power. Gradually, the middle and working classes also became more vocal and assertive in claiming rights of political participation. States also, over prolonged period of time, engaged in military conflict with each other. These wars required higher levels of technology, the deployment of the industrial power generated in the society, and more intensive resource (in terms of extraction of taxes) and social mobilization by the state. All this gave to modern states a greater centrality in the life of their citizens than they had previously enjoyed. This centrality of the state naturally resulted in greater pressures for controlling the state and



sharing in the power and the resources that it commanded. The pressures for democratization were surely facilitated by these developments, as they were by the greater literacy, and new forms of communication and transport that made political organisation possible for groups that had, in the past, been ruled, without actually participating in ruling.

Some historians have suggested that these processes of democratization took place in the course of 'the long nineteenth century', the period from 1760 to 1919, beginning with the Industrial Revolution and ending with the First World War. At the inception of this period, there were no democracies, but by its end most Western states had some form of liberal democracy in operation. In Western societies, capitalist industrialization is widely believed to have been a powerful impetus to democratization. However, outside of the west, social theorists have many different explanations for the varied routes through which democratization occurs, in what sorts of historical circumstances, at what levels of material development, and so on. They have tended to search for such historical patterns to explain the nature and even durability of democracy in specific contexts, as also the past and future relationship between democracy and development.

Some scholars, like Barrington Moore, have sought to explain democratization in terms of long-term processes of historical change, especially the changing structures of power. Why, Moore asked, did England and France move towards liberal-democracy, while Japan and Germany turned to fascism, Russia and China to communism, and India proceeded in an altogether different direction. His answer was that the route to liberal democracy generally lies in a common pattern of changing relationships between peasants, lords, the urban bourgeoisie and the state. The signposts on this journey include the following: the investment of the agricultural surplus in industrial growth; a turn towards commercial agriculture and therefore greater freedom for the peasantry; a balance of power between the state and the landed aristocracy; a dynamic bourgeoisie with its own economic base leading a revolutionary break from the past; and so on.

Other scholars, also searching for a structural explanation for democratization, have argued that processes of democratization are powerfully shaped by *class power*, *state power* and *transnational power*. They emphasise the changing dynamics of class power in relation to the structure and form of state power, and the context of both these in transnational power, taking many diverse forms such as imperialism or economic/military dependence.

Patterns of economic development thus effect significant changes in the nature of class forces and class divisions, and both these interact with the state and political institutions to redefine society and politics. In addition, the nature of civil society, the political culture of a society, and international factors (ranging from aid to war) are also helpful in accounting for patterns of democratization. On the whole, while comparative studies can provide some illumination, it is futile beyond a point to search for a single explanation that can account for the emergence (or not) of democracy in any given country at any point in the history of the last two centuries. There is tremendous variation, across both time and space, in the forms of democracy that have evolved in different parts of the world, and no one explanation - however comprehensive - can explain them all.

This is why, though the evolution of democracy in Europe and the United States through the nineteenth century is generally treated as the exemplar of democratization, the experience of post-colonial democratization in Latin America and Asia, and of post-Communist democratization in Eastern Europe, has raised questions about the conditions under which democratic institutions take root in some countries but not in others. This is also why it is difficult to establish uniform standards for judging or comparing the nature and extent of democracy as found in the different states which claim or have

historically claimed the label of democracy. The 'real world of democracy', as the political theorist C.B. MacPherson famously called it, has been populated by many variants of democracy: from bourgeois democracy to socialist and even communist versions, each of which has insisted that *its* form of democracy is the truest and most genuine. The eagerness with which the title of democracy is claimed points, in fact, to the unparalleled legitimacy that this form of government has come to enjoy in the modern world.

As a corollary, it is important to note that it has now come to be recognized that the link between liberalism and democracy is not a necessary one. Liberal-democracy may be seen as a historically specific form of democracy, based on a culturally specific theory of individuation. It combines liberalism as a theory of the state with democracy as a form of government. As such, for societies which attach greater significance to the community than to the individual, the democratic part of liberal-democracy (such as free elections and freedom of speech) is more universalizable than its liberal component. It has, thus, become possible today to speak not only of different paths to democracy, but also of different ways of being democratic, or even being 'differently democratic'.

Despite these limitations, it is true that the twentieth century saw an unparalleled extension of democracy in terms of both its *inclusiveness* as well as its *spatial expansion*. Beginning with the extension of the suffrage to women in the older western democracies, and ending with the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, democracy in the twentieth century surely became more inclusive. The provenance of democracy also increased in spatial terms, as - following decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s - it was eagerly adopted by most of the new nations of Asia and Africa. Many of these new laboratories of democracy did not manage to sustain it, and in the 1990s the process of democratization met new challenges in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

It is clear, then, that the history of democracy has by no means been an uninterrupted, smooth or even process. It has been marked by successes and reversals within particular democratic societies, but it has also varied across countries and continents. At all times, it is important to keep in mind the interaction between ideas and institutions mentioned earlier. This is also true of the arguments of the critics of democracy.

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## 8.5 DEMOCRACY AND ITS CRITICS

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Democracy has had its fair share of critics and even enemies in the modern world, no less than in ancient Greece. If the Athenians of the ancient world feared democracy as potential monarchy, the 19<sup>th</sup> century English political philosopher John Stuart Mill expressed his fear of the tyranny of the majority, which he equated with ignorance and a lack of education. Mill's anxiety was that democracy would mean the dominance of mediocre public opinion, elbowing out dissent and creative ideas. Nevertheless, Mill significantly improved upon his intellectual inheritance of Utilitarianism by his impassioned defence of liberty and by his insistence on various welfare measures for the working classes. This gives him a special position in the liberal tradition, as the forerunner of social-democracy and the principles of the welfare-state.

The socialist critique of democracy has its origins in the writings of Karl Marx whose attitude to democracy was somewhat ambivalent. Even as he viewed bourgeois democracy as inherently flawed, on account of its class character, Marx nevertheless endorsed the battle for democracy as an important stepping-stone on the journey of the proletariat towards revolutionary change. In the Soviet Union, however, democracy was characterised as a handmaiden of capitalism, which could not be used to realise, through peaceful means, the ascendancy of the working class.

Among the most important critics of democracy were the elite theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, whose ideas struck a sympathetic chord in Mussolini's fascist politics. For Mosca, all talk of democracy was ideological hogwash, because the reality was that, throughout history, society had always been divided between elites - a minority of the population which had taken the major decisions in society- and the mass of the people. The dominant minority, the ruling class, was beyond the control of the majority or the mass, which the elite theorists viewed as atomized, ignorant, politically incompetent and incapable of concerted dynamic political action. In the mid-twentieth century, this argument was taken forward in the 'realist' account of Joseph Schumpeter who said that the classical, eighteenth century definition of democracy (as an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions by making the people decide issues through the election of legislators to carry out their will) was flawed because the people were ignorant, irrational and apathetic, and therefore the principle of popular sovereignty was meaningless. In a democracy, said Schumpeter, there must be recognition of the vital fact of leadership. The role of the people should be restricted to choosing their rulers through competitive elections, and thereafter leaving them to govern. This redefinition changed the purpose and the essence of democracy from that of vesting decision-making power in the electorate, to that of merely selecting representatives. The normative force of the democratic ideal was thus undermined.

Nevertheless, the equalising thrust of democratic institutions appears to have persisted. At least some of the anxieties of nineteenth century observers, that democracy would have an alarming impact in terms of revising social rankings and undercutting the power of hereditary elites, proved to be true. At the same time, however, democracy proved to have a certain power of containment of social divisions, to the extent that it provided peaceful avenues of political competition and prevented social inequalities from acquiring an explosive or violent form.

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## 8.6 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY

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Among the important challenges to democracy at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the following may be identified :

- 1) Development
- 2) Diversity
- 3) Gender
- 4) Globalization

### 8.6.1 Development

Though many scholars have tried to establish a correlation between democracy and development, by exploring the extent to which democracy furthers or inhibits development, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the relationship between these. The slow pace of development in India is sometimes attributed to its adoption of democracy, while the developmental successes of the East Asian economies are attributed to their lack of democracy. However, the comparative studies undertaken by scholars present mixed results and do not conclusively establish either that democracy inhibits development or that it facilitates it. Background historical conditions, the nature of economy and society, significantly affect developmental outcomes. Logically, to the extent that people have the right to make claims upon the state and to insist that the state be responsive to their needs, democracy is potentially a

powerful weapon against poverty and deprivation. If the poor in developing democratic societies have failed to use this weapon effectively, this should be blamed not on democracy per se, but attributed to the concentration of economic and social power that predisposes the state to act in ways that are biased in favour of dominant classes and social forces.

Further, conventional notions of development (equated with economic growth) are today being fundamentally challenged and questioned, most famously in the human development perspective of noted economist Amartya Sen. Sen has drawn attention to the importance of providing people with economic entitlements and social opportunity structures, so that they may enlarge their human capabilities and enhance their ability to determine their own life-plans. So defined, development should make political participation more meaningful, even as democracy provides channels through which people can press their claims for development upon the state.

### **8.6.2 Diversity**

Till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, classical democratic theory was ambivalent on the question of cultural diversity. The first significant challenge of pluralism in a liberal polity was the civil rights movement in the United States. More recently, immigrant populations in Europe, as well as indigenous people in Australia, Canada and the United States, have demanded cultural recognition and community rights. These claims have pointed to an important gap in democratic theory which makes a virtue of its commitment to individual equality, but remains blind to diversity, and so does not sufficiently respect cultural plurality. This can mean that minority groups, defined in terms of their distinctive cultural or racial or ethnic identity, will suffer. Individual members of such groups may be formally entitled to equal rights in the polity, but social prejudice and lack of equal opportunity may render them less than equal. In such circumstances, the neutrality of democratic theory becomes a problem, as it prevents special consideration from being given to those citizens whose formal equality is undermined by the disadvantages and prejudices that they are subject to by virtue of their cultural identity. Hence, the state must move beyond mere tolerance, which is essentially a negative value, to affirm the value of multiculturalism.

This challenge has also been difficult to accommodate because classical democratic theory has envisaged the individual, and the individual alone, as the legitimate bearer or subject of rights. Within such theory, it has been near-impossible to conceive of groups as the bearers of rights. In recent years, the communitarian critics of liberalism have argued that individuals are not the autonomous pre-social creatures that liberal theory makes them out to be. Rather, they are formed and constituted by the traditions and communities in which they are located. Hence, minorities must be given group rights in order that their cultures may be protected from assimilation by the dominant culture.

### **8.6.3 Gender**

It is notable that, even in Europe, the home of liberal-democratic theory, the granting of the suffrage to women has been a slow process. Switzerland gave women the right to vote as recently as 1971. Even today, women in Kuwait do not possess this right. In many countries where they do possess democratic political rights, women continue to lack political and economic power. In 1993, it was estimated that women owned only 1 percent of the world's property and earned 10 percent of world income. Women account for barely 4 percent of the heads of state across the world, and 5 percent of cabinet ministers/national policy-makers. In national legislatures, they accounted for just 10 percent.

Early feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft had invoked essentially liberal notions of equality and universal individual rights to buttress the claim of women to equal rights of citizenship. Today, almost a century after female suffrage was first granted, it is clear that franchise alone had a limited potential to transform women's lives, leading 'second-wave' feminists to question the apparent gender-neutrality of the liberal conception of the individual citizen.

There are two important aspects of the feminist challenge to democracy. Firstly, feminist arguments have pointed to the male-centred character of democratic theory and institutions. The customary division between the private and the public realm, feminists argue, tends to relegate women to the private sphere characterized by subordination to patriarchal power and lack of freedom, while democracy is restricted to the essentially male-oriented public sphere. Despite ostensibly universal and gender-neutral categories of citizenship, women have continued to suffer subordination and exclusion, both within and outside the family. The availability of rights is further severely compromised for those belonging to subordinate social groups (e.g., racial or religious or linguistic minorities or lower castes in India), and especially so for women belonging to these groups. Even in their most minimal and negative conception, rights are frequently not available to large numbers of women. Let alone the right to make meaningful choices about one's life in accordance with one's conception of self-realization, basic civil and political liberties are routinely denied or severely constrained. These include, variously, the free exercise of the right to franchise, freedom of association and movement, the right to be elected, reproductive rights, etc.

This is why feminists have sought, secondly, to 'engender' democracy, by providing for greater participation for women in political processes, if need be by quota-based reservations in political parties or legislatures. The case for quotas is often justified by an appeal to Anne Phillips' argument that a *politics of ideas* (political choice between the policies and programmes of political parties, rather than on the basis of group concerns and interests) does not ensure adequate policy concern for groups which are marginalised or excluded. This suggests the importance of a *politics of presence*, in which women, ethnic minorities and other similarly excluded groups are guaranteed fair representation. In this way, feminists have attempted to rework the theory of democratic representation.

#### 8.6.4 Globalization

The institutions of democracy as we have known it are inextricably linked to the idea of the sovereign and territorially defined modern nation-state. So are its principles and practices, whether these pertain to the nature of citizenship or the idea of self-governance through consent and representation. Thus, a democratic political community is assumed to be one whose borders are coterminous with those of a territorial nation-state. To the extent that it entails transcending national borders, globalization is increasingly changing all this. Globalization, as we know, increases the intensity of transnational flows of trade, finance, capital, technology, information and even culture. In so doing, it makes it difficult for democratic governments - particularly in the countries of the South - to control their own affairs internally and in a self-contained way. The new institutions of global governance, such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Trade Organization, perform regulatory functions but are not themselves organised in ways that are democratic or accountable. On the contrary, they reflect and reinforce the asymmetries of global power relations.

However, even as the forces of global capital and global institutional power place limits on democracy as it is practised within nation-states, globalization and the

information flows made possible by it do have a certain democratising potential too. One of the most striking examples of this is the phenomenon called 'global civil society', a term that describes the organizations, associations and movements which cut across national boundaries, and generate new types of political solidarities around issues of environmental degradation, or women's oppression, or human rights. Of course, these movements and organizations are often criticised because they are themselves unaccountable. Another form of supranational democracy and citizenship is found in the creation of regional organizations like the European Union, which seek to advance models of 'cosmopolitan democracy' beyond the nation-state. Cosmopolitan democrats believe that the era of the sovereign state is coming to an end, and there are transformative possibilities in globalization and regionalization which can lead us towards greater and more substantive democratization. Thus, while many people believe that the nation-state is the most suitable site for the practice of democracy, there are others who argue that since the practice of power in the world is being rapidly transformed, the mechanisms of democracy have also to be revised and possibly redesigned.

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## 8.7 SUMMARY

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As we have seen, the evolution and the practice of democracy in the modern world have varied greatly. Each of the nation-states that today claims to be democratic has arrived at its own distinctive form of democracy by a quite distinctive route. History, society and economy are powerful influences shaping democracy, as are democratic ideas and ideals. It is a mix of the material and the ideological that must explain democracy anywhere. Both, further, are dynamic forces: material conditions change, but so do the ideas and visions of what is a democratic, egalitarian and participatory society, and how it may be brought into existence. In this sense, the struggle for democracy is never concluded; it just constantly assumes new forms.

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## 8.8 EXERCISES

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- 1) Differentiate between the ancient and modern forms of democracy.
- 2) Briefly discuss the historical process of democratization.
- 3) What are the problems with the principles of democracy? Outline different schools' criticisms in this respect.
- 4) What are the contemporary concerns of democratic politics?

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# UNIT 9 MODERN STATE AND WELFARE

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## Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Welfare State
- 9.3 From Charity to Welfare: The English Experience
  - 9.3.1 Elizabethan Poor Laws
  - 9.3.2 Poverty and Charity : Differing Perspectives
  - 9.3.3 Relief to Services: Change to Welfare
- 9.4 Social Legislation for Social Control: Germany under Bismarck
- 9.5 From Benevolence to Community Centred Welfare: The Case of Japan
  - 9.5.1 Taking care of the Urban Poor: Wealthy Merchants and Charity
  - 9.5.2 Confucian Piety and Self-Help: The Ideas of Ninomiya Sontoku
  - 9.5.3 Meiji Welfare Policies: Saving the Samurai or Charity begins at Home
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  - 9.5.5 Influence of Western Ideas on Japan
  - 9.5.6 National Objectives and Welfare: Strengthening State Control
  - 9.5.7 Private Charity: Emperor and Christian Groups
  - 9.5.8 New Ideas about Relief: Public Responsibility of the State
  - 9.5.9 The Ministry of Health and Welfare: Furthering the War Effort
- 9.6 Summary
- 9.7 Exercises

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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Unit 4 of Block 2 (Theories of State) informed you about a new type of state that had emerged in the wake of industrialization. This Unit goes into a discussion of one important feature and function of the modern state: welfare and social responsibilities. The Unit will argue that in the pre-modern time charity and welfare were tasks that were generally performed by the family, community or the religious establishment. In modern times, however, the state looks upon welfare as a part of its responsibility and handles it in an institutionalized manner.

This Unit will discuss the concept of welfare state and then take up three examples of welfare states - England, Germany and Japan. In all the three models, the policy makers faced the same dilemmas on the questions of charity and welfare. For instance, who should be the real recipients of relief and help from the state? Does relief genuinely help the poor or promote indolence and idleness among them? How to ensure that the benefits of relief reach only those who need it? And, how to ensure that it does not create a group of parasites who would soon become a liability on the system? These

questions came up for debate in the context of welfare in the three countries discussed. These questions are relevant even today. This Unit will give you some idea about how these unresolved questions were debated by the thinkers and philosophers and what were the type of welfare measure and institutions, evolved by the three modern state systems.

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## 9.2 THE WELFARE STATE

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One of the defining characteristics of the modern state is seen in the responsibility it takes for the welfare of its citizens. The state regulates social and economic relations to ensure the well being of all its people. This change from a time when charity and relief provided by the family, community or Church to social welfare is seen as the process by which the modern Western European State has progressed and this history is inextricably linked with the creation of a modern sensibility. In the premodern period, it is argued, the individual could only appeal to the Church or religious groups, family or the community when faced with poverty or illness and the causes of poverty were often seen either in fate or in individual failure. Communities or individuals in distress could then appeal to the charity or benevolence of the rulers or that of their family or community. Industrialisation brought with it economic growth but also the growth of urban centres where an increasing class of people lived at subsistence levels. The modern state began to tackle the social problems that arose out of this through measures that grew in coverage both out of a strong sense of humanitarian concern as well as because of a fear of social unrest. This body of legislation developed the welfare state where not just the poor but all citizens were entitled to a variety of social benefits such as a minimum wage, access to public health systems and schemes were established for social insurance such as old age pensions, or unemployment benefits. The state moved from moral exhortation to providing assistance to help the disadvantaged and as it did so it took positive steps to reduce income disparities through taxation and special schemes to benefit those who were economically or socially disadvantaged.

How does this process take place? Is it a natural progression as societies modernise and develop? What underlies this humanitarian concern? Some historians would explain disinterested reform as serving class interests so that the ascendancy of a new class led people to think in terms of social legislation. Is there a convergence so that all societies slowly emulate the experience of the European states? The European experience has become the norm against which to measure the progress of all states but it can be argued that the history and traditions of a country can act as equally important influences on the shape and character of welfare policies and the philosophy that underlies them.

Contemporary debates about entitlements and welfare policies both in the United States and Western Europe as well as in India and other developing countries have been sharp and acrimonious criticising state assistance for removing incentives for work as well as for placing an intolerable burden on the state exchequer. Critics have also seen help to the disadvantaged as a form of ‘reverse discrimination’. These debates highlight the different approach that countries have followed and an examination of the history of social legislation will allow us to understand that there is not one ideal system to which all countries have to aspire to emulate. An examination of English and German social legislation shows the differing approaches and objectives that the two countries had so that even when we talk of the West it is important to bear in mind the diversity that this word often hides. The history of social legislation in Japan shows how a non-Western society that developed within the period of Western dominance was able to develop a welfare system that owed as much to the new doctrines and ideas coming from the West as to its own historical traditions. By considering both Western and non-Western



countries it will be possible to see the complex strands that have contributed to shaping the nature of welfare in the modern world.

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## 9.3 FROM CHARITY TO WELFARE: THE ENGLISH EXPERIENCE

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England was the first European country to come under the spell of industrialisation. As a consequence, it took the lead in modern institutions like democracy and a modern representative state system: England also had a long tradition of charity. These features placed England at the centre of any debate on welfare state. In this section we will look at the English experience of charity and welfare.

### 9.2.1 Elizabethan Poor Laws

The European experience has been heavily influenced by the experience of Britain which has had a long history of public assistance to the poor and private charity. The poor were in earlier times wards of the Church but by Elizabethan period in the sixteenth century laws were enacted to establish a national system of relief that provided legal and compulsory help to the poor. The Poor Laws were codified in 1597-1598 and re-enacted in 1601 and under these laws the parish became the basic unit of administration to manage relief work. A compulsory tax was imposed on each household and this money was used to provide relief to the aged, the infirm but not the 'sturdy beggar'. The able-bodied poor were punished. Social reformers and social legislation was concerned with discouraging dependence on charity that would lead to idleness. They did this through forced work or punishments such as whipping. The principle that the poor laws were based on was 'work for those that will labour, punishment for those that will not, and bread for those who cannot.'

In economic thought the idle poor also represented an intolerable drain on the wealth of the nation and consequently many schemes were devised to put them to work. Reformers wrote about workhouses and labour camps and the condition in the workhouses was designed to be worse than outside. Part of the concern about the drain of wealth was due to the expenditure on relief works which rose to astronomical heights from £665,000 in 1685 to £900,000 in 1701 and by 1711 it was over £2 million and that for a population of 6 million!

It was this background that put England far ahead of the other European states in its concern and policies for the poor. Many travellers were impressed and wrote glowingly of these policies. Benjamin Franklin came to England in 1766 and praised the way England looked after her poor but he also raised the question that was much debated in contemporary England, and which continues to evoke a debate even today. He wrote, "There is no country in the world where so many provisions are established for them [the poor]; hospitals, almshouses, a tax for the support of the poor... In short, you offered a premium for the encouragement of idleness, and you should not now wonder that it has had its effect in the increase of poverty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French scholar visited England in 1833 and wrote a *Memoir on Pauperism* (1835) where he wrote "with indescribable astonishment... [that]... one-sixth of the inhabitants of this flourishing kingdom live at the expense of public charity". He was astonished because he saw England as a developed, prosperous country, the very "Eden of modern civilisation" and noted that other European countries were poorer and the poor in England rich compared to the European poor but English poverty was

of a different type. This poverty amidst plenty had nothing to do with subsistence but for the English “the lack of a multitude of things causes poverty”. This was, he wrote, also accompanied by a commitment to alleviate poverty for ‘society believes itself bound to come to the aid of those who lack them. These changes brought about a more reasoned and systematic form of social action to mitigate poverty’. It transformed what was private charity over out of a moral duty into a legal obligation. Like Franklin before him Tocqueville noted that the guarantee of the means of subsistence removes the incentive to work and will promote idleness. Tocqueville, as a result, came out openly in defence of private charity. Public charity, by marking the recipient as a pauper, he wrote, stigmatises the recipient as well as creates incentives for idleness. The poor had to write their names in poor rolls and Tocqueville found this to be, “a notarized manifestation of misery, of weakness, of misconduct on the part of the recipient.”

### 9.2.2 Poverty and Charity: Differing Perspectives

Economic development as well as social dislocation marked the capitalist transformation of the world between 1750-1850. In this situation ideas about relief and charity also began to change. The reform sentiment that gathered momentum during this period effected a range of social policies but perhaps the movement against slavery was the most dramatic of these. Electoral reforms allowed greater participation and in turn parliament was made more sensitive to popular opinion and became the vehicle for realising social legislation. The reforms of 1834 set up a Central Poor Commission to supervise the administration of poor relief that had become inefficient and corrupt. The able-bodied poor were kept out of relief system through the workhouse test since conditions in the workhouse were always harsher than outside. Yet these reforms did establish a system that carried social legislation further by regulating hours and conditions of work in factories and mines.

Concern for public health had become particularly necessary because of the cholera epidemics of 1831-3 and 1847-8 but the untiring efforts of Edwin Chadwick were equally important for a better organisation of urban life. An Act of 1848 established a central board of health on the lines of the Poor Law Commissioners that had the power to establish local boards. Other Acts enforced regulations governing education, prison conditions, and working conditions for children and women. The New Poor Laws gave rise to intense debates that centre around a distinction between the poor and the pauper. The laws it was argued was ‘pauperising the poor’. This was because the laws gave an allowance to the poor. The funds for this allowance were generated through extra rates levied on tax payers. It was argued that not only did this work as a disincentive to work but it drove wages down, led to a fall in productivity, and was a burden on those who paid the extra rates but did not benefit from it. Because of this burden these people were driven to swell the ranks of unemployed agricultural labour.

The question of who are the poor was central to much of the debates and proposals for social legislation. At the end of the eighteenth century Edmund Burke had objected to the phrase ‘labouring poor’ arguing that there were ‘labouring poor’ who worked for their subsistence and the ‘poor’ who were the sick, infirm, or those orphaned in their infancy or incapacitated by old age. The Church had given alms regardless of whether the recipient laboured or not as did the Elizabethan poor laws. It was John Malthus who introduced an idea of ambiguity. Malthus argued against the idea that an expanding industrial economy would produce sufficient wealth to provide for the ‘happiness and comfort of the lower orders of society’. Industrial growth would lead to a growth in population but agricultural production would not rise leading to a worsening of conditions for those struggling for subsistence. Any relief given to these paupers would increase their population and consequently worsen the situation as there would be a decrease in

food available for the entire poor population. The only way to break out of this vicious cycle was through the exercise of 'moral restraint'.

It was this type of thinking that supported and sustained programmes of social amelioration and created a division among social reformers. It was this thinking and these debates that are reflected in Disraeli's comment that in England now "Poverty is a crime" or in Thomas Carlyle's statement that these laws put a 'bounty on unthrift, idleness, bastardy and beer drinking.' The debates however, also had a positive effect as they shifted concerns from poverty narrowly defined to larger issues of the obligations of state and society, of the causes of social inequality, the basis of law and obligation. Thinkers such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argued that inequities in the system could only be changed through revolutionary change that would give the full value of his labour to the worker, others sought to return to the old community based systems that had disintegrated and some others sought to bring about legal restrictions that would regulate factory work, public health and mitigate the effects of early industrialisation.

As the general condition of the working class began to improve the stigma attached to poverty began to change and disappear. It was now narrowly focussed on the urban vagrant whom Henry Mayhew characterised as the 'peculiar poor' marked by a 'distinctive moral physiognomy'. This differentiation of the poor was taken further by Charles Booth who through careful household surveys, (published as *Life and Labour of the People of London* between 1889-1903 in 14 volumes) made a distinction between the very poor (paupers, street folk) and the comfortable working class. He drew a poverty line and laid the basis for providing social legislation to help this category of deserving poor and they benefited from subsequent legislation such as the Old Age Pensions Act of 1898 or the National Insurance Act of 1911.

### 9.3.3 Relief to Services: Change to Welfare

Poverty and its relief were now transformed into a social problem that required a different approach. It was no longer a matter of providing relief but services and these not just to a particular group of people but to all citizens. Moreover, these were not the bare minimum required but would soon be set at what the 1945 Labour Party manifesto called the 'optimum standard'. Comprehensive social legislation was made a reality with the Liberal party in 1905 under the leadership of the younger generations of liberals, Herbert Asquith, David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill and the pressure of trade unions. They were committed to waging a war against misery and squalor. Under their leadership an impressive array of legislation was enacted: Workers Compensation Act (1906), Old Age Pension Laws (1908), Trade Board Acts (1909) that was empowered to set up special commissions to fix a minimum wage for workers. The National Insurance Act (1911) which was a contributory scheme for all workers was modelled on Bismarck's scheme of 1883-9 and made friendly societies and trade unions 'approved societies' to administer the scheme reflecting the cooperation between state and voluntary bodies. Similarly measures for town planning were influenced by German laws and the Education Act of 1902 was an attempt to catch up with the German and French systems that were far more advanced.

The Liberals also enacted laws to clear slums and build proper houses for the poor in 1909. This aside from improving living conditions also fuelled a construction boom in the coming years. Lloyd George's proposed budget of 1909 which was defeated in the House of Lords was written reflecting this new philosophy of welfare. He provided for an increase in income tax as well as a super tax on the incomes of the rich. He proposed to confiscate 20 per cent from unearned increment of land values as well as levied a heavy tax on undeveloped land. These revenues were to be used for old age pensions as well as other forms of social insurance. They would also go towards changing the

social structure by breaking the monopoly of the rich nobility. There were many big landowners among the nobility, for instance the Duke of Westminster owned over 600 acres in London at this time. Though defeated the Liberals managed to enact many of these measures when they came back to power in 1910.

The post war years influenced by the economic crisis and unemployment before the war and this sense of crisis during the war fuelled the resurgence of left wing movements all over Europe. People increasingly demanded that the state had an obligation to secure the well being of its citizens. In 1942 Sir William Beveridge's Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942) laid out a practical plan for a comprehensive public protection of the individual. It was on the basis of this that the Labour government of 1945 enacted laws that ended the old poor law system and created a social security system that brought together earlier elements as well as allowed for voluntary schemes as well. Education had been reorganised through the Butler Act of 1944 and in 1945 a system of family allowances was started.

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## 9.4 SOCIAL LEGISLATION FOR SOCIAL CONTROL: GERMANY UNDER BISMARCK

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In Europe Germany presents an example where a different philosophy helped to determine the nature of the welfare system. Poor relief had traditionally been left to the communes but in Prussia systematic efforts were made to provide relief for the poor. In the Rhine provinces an unsuccessful attempt had been made in 1824 to restrict working hours of children in factories. They became more concerned when they realised that these provinces were not contributing their full quota of troops because of physical problems in the population. The powers to control industry had been taken away from the guild but after the middle of the century they were given the function of social insurance. A system of state sponsored education was also developed.

Germany under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck was the first country to adopt comprehensive social legislation. Bismarck was motivated by a political vision glorifying the nation and an economic vision that stressed national self-sufficiency and paternalism. He also sought to counter the threat posed by the demands of a socialist movement. In the Reichstag he stated clearly that the purpose of enacting legislation to provide insurance against sickness and old age to workers was so that 'these gentlemen [Social Democrats] will sound their bird call in vain. The workers health was important to the nation because the worker was also the soldier that protected the state. The duty of the State, according to Bismarck was to regulate all aspects of life in the national interest. To make the nation strong it was necessary to help the weaker citizens.

The logic of the Bismarckian view can be traced to the changes brought about during the French Revolution when the levee en masse or universal conscription was introduced in August 1793 and then continued in the Law of Conscription 1798. The state now had the right to call up all its citizens to defend it. Now wars became conflicts between nations so that in democratic societies just as the state could call up all its citizens to defend it, it became the duty of the state to look after the welfare of its people. The scope of the revolutionary government in France reflected this new relationship as it carried out policies to improve and assist its people even abolishing slavery in the colonies. As David Thompson writes, "This connection between the necessities of warfare and the development of welfare was to remain constant throughout subsequent European history."

Bismarck's motives have been debated and it has been noted that he never mentioned social legislation in his memoirs. However, that is not a reliable guide because even as

Minister President of Prussia in 1862-63 he had begun to think of insurance plans for workers so that the subsequent legislation he initiated grew out of this earlier thinking. Certainly Bismarck tried hard to eradicate socialism, just as hard as he tried to control the Catholic Church, as a force in German political life. The anti-Socialist law of 1878 however failed to curb the growth of socialism and was allowed to lapse in 1890.

The German welfare system codified earlier voluntary activities by guilds, parishes and benefit societies through laws passed between 1883 and 1889, sought to provide insurance for urban workers against sickness, accident and problems of old age. These were further extended in 1911 to non-industrial workers such as agricultural workers and domestic servants so that in 1913 around fourteen and a half million people were insured. Laws regulating factories and child labour came in 1914 and unemployment insurance for workers only in 1924. In fact the German welfare system provided the most comprehensive protection to workers in all of Europe and became a model that many copied.

### **State Preserving Policies: Combating Socialism through Legislation**

During 1883-84 Germany enacted social legislation that provided for factory inspection, limited the employment of women and children, fixed minimum hours of work, established public employment agencies and insured workers for their old age. Except for unemployment insurance Germany under Bismarck had adopted all the elements of welfare legislation. These measures were adopted because as the Emperor stated in the Reichstag in February 1879, while introducing the anti-socialist law of 21 October, 1878 that this House would not refuse its cooperation to the remedying of social ills by means of legislation. A remedy cannot alone be sought in the repression of socialist excesses; there must be simultaneously the positive advancement of the welfare of the working class. And here the care of those workpeople who are incapable of earning their livelihood is of the first importance. The statement added to the Accident Insurance Bill, March 1881 explained the motives of the legislation in clear terms that the state: should interest itself to greater degree than hitherto in those of its members who need assistance, is not only a duty of and Christianity - by which state institutions should be permeated - but a duty of state-preserving policy, whose aim should be to cultivate the conception - and that, too, amongst nonpropertied classes, which form at once the most numerous and the least instructed part of the population - that the state is not merely a necessary but a beneficent institution. These classes must, by the evident and direct advantages which are secured to them by legislative measures, be led to regard the state not as an institution contrived for the protection of the better classes of society, but as one serving their own needs and interests.

In Europe other countries also followed this path to cope with the democratisation of politics. France enacted a law to regulate the employment of women and children and it fixed ten hours a day as the maximum for all workers. Working hours were further reduced in 1905. Other laws instituted free medical services, protection to labour unions and compensation for work related injuries from the employers and finally in 1910 an old age pension system. The Italian government also passed similar laws, except it did not provide free medical services though it encouraged co-operative stores and provided nationalised life insurance.

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## **9.5 FROM BENEVOLENCE TO COMMUNITY CENTRED WELFARE: THE CASE OF JAPAN**

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Unlike these policies that were marked by obligatory help on a long term basis in pre-modern Japan ideas of welfare were based on an ideology of benevolent rule where the ruler helped to mitigate the suffering of his people through timely help. To demonstrate

his compassion and re-assert his moral authority the ruler would provide relief. Relief usually followed bad harvests and often vast sums were used to purchase rice that was distributed to the people. By the early nineteenth century such aid was supplemented by construction projects that provided work. The nature of this relief was grounded in a hierarchical relationship between the lord and his people but this was also reinforced by the demands of political stability. Peasants hit by famine posed a threat to social and political stability so benevolence became a vital political instrument.

The rulers saw the political necessity of ameliorating the effects of disaster but their benevolence was not unlimited. The people who could be helped were limited to those who had no one to turn to such as orphans and the destitute. It was not meant for the able-bodied for whom moral exhortations to be diligent and thrifty were the favoured panacea. Relief measures were carried out mostly through the family and the community. Since taxes were paid collectively the richer families were motivated to help the weaker and poorer. However, the authorities, domain or central actively encouraged and helped to set up institutions to provide help in calamitous times. In some domains granaries were set up in villages to provide rice during emergencies and charity was encouraged by official commendation.

### **9.5.1 Taking care of the Urban Poor: Wealthy Merchants and Charity**

Pre-modern Japan had a high proportion of its population living in urban centres. The capital Edo (now called Tokyo) had over a million people at its height and Kyoto and Osaka a population of approximately half a million each and there were over dozen large castle towns. These urban centres attracted people from the countryside and inevitably a class of vagabonds and those with no fixed work grew. The cities mostly administered directly by the Shogunate set up relief shelters in the mid-seventeenth century. These provided temporary help after which the people were sent back to their villages. These gradually became permanent facilities by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth century a type of workhouse was started in Edo where the aim was to help those without a criminal background to learn new skills and become gainfully employed. This was in part a reaction to famine as well as urban riots. The inmates were also given a course of practical ethics to ensure that they were provided the appropriate moral basis to develop their lives.

Along with this a fund was created for providing temporary relief during emergencies as well as on-going help for the aged, children and the ill without relatives. The scale of the help provided can be gauged from the fact that in 1805 about 4 out of 1,000 townspeople in Edo received help. This relief system was sustained by a special tax and managed by wealthy merchants. This was then compared to Shogunal benevolence a more public and sustained relief system than the measures practised in the villages that tended to deal with specific emergencies.

### **9.5.2 Confucian Piety and Self-Help: The Ideas of Ninomiya Sontoku**

The development of such institutions was accompanied by ideas about how to tackle poverty and provide aid to the downtrodden, poor and destitute. Ninomiya Sontoku (1787-1856) was the most famous of the philosophers coming out of a prosperous farming family who advocated self-help. He and other reformers like him preached Confucian ideas of filial piety and diligence but they did not see the social order as static. They argued that even poor peasants by working hard, being thrifty and improving productivity by using new agricultural methods could improve their lot and become wealthy. However, it must be noted that while promoting self-help they did not see the

self as the individual but rather as the community. This led them to be critical of charity as counterproductive and they placed their emphasis on mutual assistance as well as interest free loans. So in 1830 Ninomiya Sontoku wrote, "Grants in money, or release from taxes, will in no way help them in their distress. Indeed, one secret of their salvation lies in withdrawing all monetary help from them. Such help only induces avarice and indolence, and is a fruitful source of dissension among the people."

These were the different strands that together with the new ideas coming from the West that shaped the intellectual and institutional forms that welfare measures would take in the modern period. What does emerge is that certain key elements had been clearly formulated and these underlie much of the contemporary writing on the subject. These elements are that the problem of poverty can only be resolved through the joint efforts of the community and the state, the fear that relief would lead to laziness and dependence on state help and that moral suasion was an important element in resolving the problem of poverty.

### **9.5.3 Meiji Welfare Policies: Saving the Samurai or Charity begins at Home**

The creation of the modern state in Japan began after the restoration of 1868 when the Tokugawa Shogunate was overthrown and the Meiji Government established. The Meiji government instituted a series of measures to set up the institutional structure of a modern state system grounded in the belief that it was the responsibility of the state to create a strong and prosperous country. As in many other areas the idea of welfare was heavily influenced by the earlier notions of giving relief to the needy thus the government responded to disasters and helped those without support. The biggest beneficiaries of state aid by the new Meiji government were the samurai, the erstwhile ruling group that as a class had seen its incomes decline. The government alive to the potential of political disruption instituted a scheme to commute their land rents into government bonds that would enable them to make the transition.

Government practices were also influenced by the examples now available to them from Europe. Thus the Agricultural distress fund Law of 1880 which set up reserve funds to provide grants or loans to those affected by bad harvests was modelled on regulations in effect in Prussia. Under this law during 1881-1886 over three million affected people were helped and another million families received grants. The success of this was praised in German newspapers of the day but this fund was severely curtailed after 1890 when the state withdrew its contributions. Other groups of poor who did not constitute a political threat were not so generously looked after.

### **9.5.4 Relief and the Poor: Dangers of Dependence**

The Meiji government's centralisation policies found in civic institutions alternative centres of power that needed to be curtailed. Thus the fund managed by the wealthy merchants of Edo was abolished in 1872 despite the massive relief work it had done during the turmoil of the Meiji restoration. The basic law that looked after the welfare of the poor was the Relief Regulations of 1874. This law aimed to provide small assistance to the poor but because conditions for giving relief were so stringent that actually very few received it. In 1876 only 2,521 received it and by 1892 it had gone up to only 18,545 and this despite years of recession and distress. The idea that state welfare could debilitate the recipient remained very strong. Thus the Home Ministry wrote that 'if the elderly, sick, poor and decrepit grow accustomed to relief, in the end, will not good people lapse into idleness and lose their spirit of independence and, in particular, become reliant on the government.'

### 9.5.5 Influence of Western Ideas on Japan

Ideas about poverty began to be influenced by western writings where the influence of John Malthus Essay on Population gave rise to a vast literature against public assistance programmes. In books such as Henry Fawcett's *Pauperism: Its causes and remedies* it was argued that poverty was due to individual failing and the answer was in self-improvement rather than government assistance. Similarly, Fukuzawa Yukichi, arguably one of the most influential Meiji thinkers, argued for a national relief law, on the basis of England's New Poor Law of 1834 but only if it served to take people off state assistance. This thinking was reflected, in the reduction of public relief by state bodies. In 1881 the Tokyo Prefectural assembly stopped funds for free medical treatment and the first popularly elected Imperial Diet of 1890 attacked the government's poor relief bill.

English liberalism and ideas of laissez-faire (non-interventionism) helped to buttress government desire to reduce expenditure on poor relief. The government sought to ensure that relief would be managed through the community and the family and in this the Civil Code of 1898 provided explicit support. In other words the state intervened to force family and neighbours to aid the poor. The state worked through private relief efforts in time of emergencies and this policy proved successful because Japan was still largely an agrarian society. The number of farm households declined slowly till WWII and this meant that family, community and mutual assistance networks continued to function effectively.

The mid-1880's witnessed economic recession and social problems so much so that the question of poverty and how to eliminate it became a central focus of discussion and debate. The influence of Bismarck's social policies in Germany provided an alternative route for some of the leading Japanese thinkers and bureaucracy involved in formulating policy. They argued that it was the responsibility of the State to raise productivity and maintain order and for this the health and well being of its population was an integral element. Bureaucrats influenced by these ideas wanted a European style welfare programme in which public assistance and social insurance for workers would be provided. The first attempt to modify the Relief Regulations, along European lines, where central funds would be disbursed through municipalities was defeated.

#### **Redefining Japanese Welfare: The Difference from Europe**

In Japan in 1902 when another attempt to propose a poor relief bill was made critics argued that it would encourage indolence, drain resources and increase the number of poor. A man who represented this new thinking was Inoue Tomoichi, who had made a close study of the welfare systems practised in Europe and written extensively on them. In his various official positions he was to exercise a great influence on policy formation. Now they began to define Japanese policy in terms of its difference from England, Germany and other European countries. Their concern was how to prevent the rise of poverty that seemed to accompany industrialisation and for this they argued that welfare is not a right but an act of mercy by the State and will be given by the central government. The healthy poor will be excluded unlike Europe where there was an on-going relief system for the healthy and able bodied poor.

Here arguments were advanced that Japan was different from the West because in Japan the family was the important unit rather than the individual. This was the reason for a low population of poor and helped to keep relief expenditure by the state down as well. They saw England as the prime example of escalating welfare expenditure. In this they were successful as the number of welfare recipients was brought down so that in 1903 it was only 3 in 10,000 Japanese. There were subsequent cuts in the central budget and the responsibility was shifted to municipalities so that even as the population



rose and inflation grew welfare expenditures fell. Government efforts were directed at preventing poverty through moral instruction.

The idea that poverty could be reduced through a proper moral curriculum and training was in part a product of the influence of the British Fabian socialists Beatrice and Sydney Webb. Beatrice Webb's Minority Report to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law (1905-1909) argued for abolishing the Poor law. Their jointly written book *The Prevention of Destitution*, (1911) suggested that while preventive measures such as minimum wages, education, medical services were important there was also an equally important need to reform the habits of the unemployed. In line with this thinking the Webbs when they visited Japan emphasised to their hosts the need to prevent the poor from developing the idea that relief was a matter of right.

### **9.5.6 National Objectives and Welfare: Strengthening State Control**

The period after the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) saw government policies successfully integrating and linking the individual and the state. Policies were directed at directing individual effort to fulfil national objectives and welfare policies too were drafted within this framework. Rather than poor relief the government focussed in rebuilding the community as with urbanisation and industrialisation community and village bonds had loosened if not withered away. The growth of slums in urban centres reflected the growing numbers of poor workers. In the Local Improvement Campaign (1906-1918) the government used municipalities as well as private organisations to organise community groups such as the local "repaying virtue societies (*hotokusha*)". The government also encouraged local leaders to undertake social work and to that end sponsored seminars at the national and local level to teach them how to go about doing this. It also established in 1908 a central Charity Association to study issues of poverty and carry out relief work.

### **9.5.7 Private Charity: Emperor and Christian Groups**

The government guided private work because as they said unlike the West Japan did not have a long tradition of private charity. Christian groups played a very important part both in setting up orphanages and other charitable institutions and in influencing government policy on moral reform. It was Christians such as Tomeoka Kosuke, a social reformer who were active in introducing the ideas of Ninomiya Sontoku that hard work and thrift would eliminate poverty.

The Imperial household also played a large role in contributing to welfare activities through donations. These were directed through private organisations and often motivated by a desire to curb radical political movements. Thus the largest donations were made in 1910 when twelve socialists were executed for allegedly trying to kill the Emperor. In terms of the amount of money spent private institutions continued to play a major role but the state managed many of the voluntary bodies often forcing people to donate. The thinking behind government policies continued to be that relief was not a matter of right.

### **9.5.8 New Ideas about Relief: Public Responsibility of the State**

The years following WWI saw the emergence of Japan as a major political actor on the international scene. Internally the expansion of the economy also helped to sharpen social problems. Japanese bureaucrats as well as reformers began to now look for welfare models in Britain, Weimar Germany and the United States. Relief work had been supervised by the Bureau of Local Affairs but by 1920 a Bureau of Social Affairs was established which looked after poor relief, veteran's assistance, children's welfare

and unemployment. The bureaucrats in these offices had a different viewpoint. They argued that in these new times it was no longer possible to rely on family or neighbourhood for relief. The state must spend resources on ensuring public assistance. They saw society as the unit at which poverty could be tackled and this view was grounded in social theories emanating from Europe that said the state had a public responsibility. However, even while the state's obligation to relieve poverty now became the key element in social policy earlier ideas were not jettisoned and the family system continued to be stressed. Also the idea that public assistance must not create dependency continued to be a major strain in official documents as well as in the thinking of reformers.

The Bureau managed to institute labour exchanges (1921) workers health insurance (1922) restrictions on work hours for children, women (1923) mandatory retirement age and severance pay (1936) and seaman's insurance (1938). While debates continued about what system to adopt and various commissions studied European practices the district commissioner system developed in Osaka was an innovative contribution. In each school district the government selected a local notable or person of virtue. Each of these unpaid commissioners was responsible for two hundred households. They in turn elected representatives to an Executive Council which met once a month. The commissioners surveyed the poor in their area, provided counsel and helped organise relief funds or medical care and other social services. This system spread so that by 1931 district commissioners were in 43 prefectures and by 1942 there were nearly 74,560 commissioners (4,537 of them women). Nearly all the municipalities had adopted this system by 1942.

The district commissioner system became the cornerstone of social policy because it was cost effective and allowed timely intervention to help families in a variety of ways ranging from advice on better household management to medical care or providing relief. The commissioners could also help to correct household registers as they tracked down relatives who could provide support to destitute relatives. These commissioners came from the middle classes rather than the local notables who had been the earlier focus of relief systems.

### **9.5.9 The Ministry of Health and Welfare: Furthering the War Effort**

The district commissioners system was followed by the Relief and Protection Law (1929) which was not in any way different in its assumptions from the earlier relief regulations but with the war in China the government established the Ministry of Health and Welfare, at the suggestion of the Army Ministry. The military wanted an efficient health policy for not only its soldiers but for the people from whom it drew its soldiers. The revised Military Assistance Law of 1937 provided for assistance with minimal requirements. Moreover, the assistance was not channelled through the family and the recipient did not lose his right to vote. Unlike earlier systems this did not make it difficult for the poor to seek state relief. Through the war all systems including the district commissioners system were directed towards the war effort. This helped in providing welfare facilities for the general population rather than just the poor. For instance, day care centres were provided for all children, as was medical care allowances to fatherless families and finally in 1938 a National Health Insurance Law that covered the whole population was passed. The war years while they did see a broadening of the scope of social legislation did neglect the destitute and infirm because it concentrated on the mobilising the nation for the war effort.

Japan's social legislation did not achieve the levels of Britain, the United States or many countries in Europe till after WWII. The history of its pre-war system shows that indigenous institutions and practices played an important role in shaping social legislation

often incorporating and building on West European and United States policies. Equally Japanese policy makers changed and adapted these ideas to suit their objectives.

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## 9.6 SUMMARY

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Surveying the history of state concern for the welfare of the people shows the varying paths that countries have taken influenced by their histories and traditions. The traditional concerns whether of relief and charity or of benevolence guided the thinking of rulers and ruled in their understanding of how to better the conditions of the poor and infirm. In the eighteenth century the capitalist transformation of the world created a global economy. The expansion of the economies of the European powers not only allowed them to carve the world into colonial enclaves but also created a larger class of people who benefited from this expansion within their own countries. The British Reform Acts of 1867 and 1883, for instance, expanded the electorate from 3 per cent to 29 per cent. This expansion changed the terms of political debate forcing the state to forge new forms of legitimacy.

**Humanitarian concerns became politically important.** Earlier such concerns had been expressed through the family or community, particularly religious organisations, or had been seen as acts of benevolence in times of calamity. Now the state began to see the need to provide social legislation to not only provide relief during disasters but also to improve living conditions and reduce subordination and exploitation and accommodate increased political participation. This did not follow a uniform pattern. In Germany and Japan social legislation became a vital element in the policy of social control. In this welfare legislation was a way of strengthening national power. However, the general democratisation of politics and greater political participation through the electoral process changed the forms of social control and placed greater reliance on internalised moral and cultural mechanisms. Relief and charity expanded and were transformed through social legislation that sought to provide for the needs of all its citizens from 'cradle to grave'. The questions that were raised when these policies were initially formulated still remain, namely, does state support lead to dependence and loss of initiative, are the financial costs placing an unacceptable burden on those who do not benefit from these policies, and do entitlements or reservations create special interest groups. These questions are still with us and are far from resolved, one way or the other. Even though we do not have the answer, we at least know that these questions *are* important even today and will continue to attract attention so long as economic disparities persist in the world.

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## 9.7 EXPERIENCE

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- 1) How was welfare as practised in Britain different from that practised in Germany?
- 2) What were the various ideas that were propagated on the concept of welfare?
- 3) Write an essay on the welfare measures taken in Japan.

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# UNIT 10 NATIONALISM

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## Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 What is a Nation: How are Nations Formed
- 10.3 Nationalism
  - 10.3.1 Defining Nationalism
  - 10.3.2 Emergence of State and Nation
  - 10.3.3 Agrarian Society
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- 10.4 Stages of Nationalism: Types of Nationalism
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  - 10.4.2 Anthony Smith's Typology
- 10.5 Nationalism in South Asia
- 10.6 Summary
- 10.7 Exercises

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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We live in a world that is very nationalist though not in the sense of the world having become one nation. The world today is very nationalist in the sense that nationalism has clearly emerged as the most dominant political force during the course of the last two centuries. There is no individual or a piece of territory that is not a part of some nation-state or the other. It is therefore important to try and understand this phenomenon. This Unit proposes to discuss the following issues:

- What is nation and how were nations formed
- What is nationalism and what is its relationship with nations and nation-states
- The ways in which nationalism has altered the political map of the modern world
- What are the different types of nations that have dotted the modern world

A great paradox of nationalism is that its political power is strangely accompanied by its philosophical poverty. Although the political salience of nationalism is now acknowledged by all, it did not receive much of a scholarly attention that it deserved, until the 1960s. The great nationalist experience of the world remained curiously untheorized until the 1960s. Now that the works on nationalism have poured in, in a big way, we do not as yet have anything like the final word or even a consensus position on it. According to Benedict Anderson, a pioneering scholar on nationalism, the question of nations and nationalism 'finds the authors more often with their backs to one another, staring out at different, obscure horizons, than engaged in orderly hand-to-hand combat.' (Quoted in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, p.1. It is also strange that those scholars, who fully acknowledge the historical legitimacy, reality and political validity of nationalism, refer to it as an 'invented tradition' (Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and*

*Nationalism*), ‘imagined community’ and a ‘cultural artifact’ and sometimes also as a ‘myth’ (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*). The variety of issues that are still hotly debated relates to the antiquity of nations. Have nations been in existence through the centuries of human history or are they the products only of its modern phase. The various positions on it can be broadly divided between what might be called the modernists, who believe nations to be a modern phenomenon, and the primordialists, who tend to trace the history of nations to the pre-modern period.

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## 10.2 WHAT IS A NATION: HOW ARE NATIONS FORMED

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Are nations formed or is humanity inherently blessed with nations? In other words, are nations a contingency or are they an integral part of human condition? Understandably most nationalists (nationalist ideologues, writers, poets or practitioners of nationalist politics) have tended to look upon nations as given and somewhat perennial. These nations, according to nationalist perception, only needed to be aroused from their deep slumber by the agent called nationalism. In the traditional nationalist perception the role of nationalism has been seen as that of an ‘awakener’ who makes nations rise from their deep slumber. In the nationalist discourse nations appear like sleeping beauties waiting for their prince charming! What is missing in this understanding is the *process* through which nations themselves arrive in this world. Nations were not always there; they emerged at some point. It is therefore important not to see nationalism in its own image.

Definitions on nations have been quite scarce. It would be true to say that nations have been *described* much more than they have been *defined*. Perhaps the earliest attempt to define a nation was made in 1882 by Ernest Renan, a French scholar. He defined nation, as a human collectively brought together by will, consciousness and collective memory (and also common forgetfulness, or a collective amnesia). He called the nation as an exercise in everyday plebiscite. The strength of Renan’s definition lay in providing a **voluntaristic** (as against **naturalistic**) component to the understanding of nation. He forcefully rejected the notion that nations were created by natural boundaries like mountains, rivers and oceans. He emphasized the role of human will and memory in the making of a nation. A human collectivity or grouping can *will* itself to form a nation. The process of the creation of a nation is not dependent upon any natural or objective criteria and a nation, in order to be, is not obliged to fulfil any of the objection conditions.

Renan’s understanding of nation, pioneering though it was, could be criticized on three accounts. One, it overlooked the specificity of nations as a unique form of human grouping. Whereas Renan defined a nation well, he defined many non- nations as well, or groups that could not be considered nations - actual or potential. By his definition, any articulate, self-conscious human group with some degree of living together (a club, a band of thieves, residents of a locality, students living in a hostel or a university) could be called a nation. Will and consciousness are elements which can be found in many (indeed most) human groupings. This definition helps to identify a greater number of human groupings but does not go very far in distinguishing nations (actual or potential) from non- nations. It is a definition-net which, when cast into the sea of human groupings, captures the nations but also many obvious non- nations. It successfully lists all the possible human groupings which have the potential of developing into nations, but doesn’t explain precisely which ones actually do. Two, the question about the role of consciousness in the making of nation is a bit tricky and complex. Consciousness must

certainly assume the object that it is conscious of. As Karl Deustch remarked, there has to be *something* to be conscious of (Quoted in Gopal Balakrishnan, *Mapping the Nation*, p.79) . In other words, nations have to first exist, if people have to develop the will and consciousness of belonging to that unit. Consciousness can only follow the making of the nation, not precede it. And if the emergence of the consciousness is of a later date than the making of a nation, then certainly consciousness cannot be seen as having contributed to the making of the nation. Consciousness can at best describe a nation, not define it. This then is the great paradox about the role of will and consciousness in the making of the nation. A human collectivity called the nation cannot exist without 'human will' (As Renan rightly pointed out); yet factors pertaining to will and consciousness cannot be sufficiently invoked to define a nation. The polemical question on their relationship will be: does a national create its own consciousness or does the consciousness create the nation? Three, it was rightly pointed out that coming from France (culturally a fairly homogeneous society that already possessed some of the features of a nation) Renan may have taken the objective factors (like language, territory etc.) that went into the making of a nation, for granted. Renan considered nations to be a specifically Western European attribute. In other words, nations, according to Renan, could only emerge in societies that were already culturally homogenous. That heterogeneous groups could also evolve (or invent, or sometimes even fabricate) homogeneity in their journey towards acquiring nationhood, was something that was not very clear to Renan.

A significant corrective to Renan's understanding was provided by Joseph Stalin in 1912. Stalin offered a much sharper and comprehensive understanding of nations. Nation, according to Stalin, was a human collectivity sharing a common territory, language, economic life and a psychological make-up. His complete definition in his own words: '**A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of the a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.**' Stalinist definition consisted of objective yardsticks as against the subjective factors enumerated by Renan. However, the Stalinist definition was not entirely without problems and he may have over stressed the role of factors like language and territory. Stalin may not have taken into consideration the capacity of many human groups to form nations *without* already being blessed by either a single language or a common territory. Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scattered through Europe and America and completely devoid of a territory they could call their own, nonetheless possessed the necessary prerequisites of a nation, without fulfilling some of Stalin's criteria (though they would fulfil Renan's).

If Renan's definition-net was too wide catching nations as well as many non- nations, Stalin's net tended to be a bit narrow, leaving out significant nations though it eliminated the risk of catching non- nations. It should then be possible to look upon Renan and Stalin as complementing rather than contradicting each other. The question then is: do Renan and Stalin, put together, cover the entire spectrum? Can an assemblage of the two definitions be considered adequate in identifying *all* the nations (actual and potential) of the world? Perhaps not.

The problem with both sets of definitions is that they are both completely rooted in Western European experience and thus leave out of their orbit a significant number of national formations which may not have shared a common territory or even language (e.g. Jews in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian Muslims in the 1940s, Poles in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century etc.). The western European experience of nation is linked directly to state and territory. Therefore drawing upon this experience, these definitions have tended to see nations in precisely these terms. But there is no reason for us to take such a restricted view of nations. The trajectories of national formations is a varied one and this variety

needs to be grasped and retained: some nations inherit empires and slice pieces of nation-states for themselves; some nations inherit states and turn them into nation-states; some nations inherit nothing - no state, no empire, no territory, no single language - and fight (not always successfully) for the creation of a nation-state. It is important to acknowledge the possibility of nations existing without a pre-existing state and fighting precisely to create a state *of their own*. These have often been referred to as ethnic nations as against territorial nations. This distinction (between ethnic nations and territorial nations) may or may not be valid, but there is no reason for us to privilege one variety of nations over the other.

The range that is covered by the two definitions mentioned above is immense but by no means complete. Stalin and Renan certainly represent two ends of the spectrum. Whereas it is true that both 'will' and 'culture' should constitute important components in any definition of nation, neither or even both can be treated as adequate. 'Will' creates too large a package of nations and non-nations; language and territory tend to leave out significant nations. The former is too inclusive, the latter too exclusive. In fact both the components put together are not able to accommodate all nations. What then is the crucial element missing? It is here that Ernest Gellner provides the answer. In the ultimate analysis, nations are best understood *in the spirit of nationalism*. Contrary to popular belief it is not nations that lead to nationalism, but that nations are created by nationalism. Nations are not the product of some antiquity or the working of some distant historical forces (not always anyway) but they are the creation of nationalism, *in alliance with certain other factors*. Human grouping may possess the characteristics enumerated by Renan and Stalin, but they acquire nationhood only when they are imbued with the spirit of nationalism. So nations are created by the objective naturalist factors like common language, territory, history economic life; along with voluntaristic factors like will, consciousness and memory; *and nationalism*. A particular nation is created by its nationalism. The relationship between the two is somewhat like the proverbial egg and the chicken. It is difficult to determine what came first but easy to predict that they constantly reproduce each other.

The three components - will (Renan), culture (Stalin) and ideology (Gellner) - thus complete our definition of nation. The writings of the three scholars mentioned above (Ernest Renan, Joseph Stalin and Ernest Gellner) are stretched over a period of 100 years. Renan wrote his piece in 1882 and Gellner provided his definition in 1983. We can thus say that a comprehensive definition of nation that is available with us today, took over a century to evolve and is the result of a combination of many intellectual contributions.

### **Nation and Their Navels**

On the question – how old are the nations? – there is an interesting debate between Anthony Smith and Ernest Gellner, two scholars on nationalism. Gellner belonged to the modernist lobby that firmly believed that nations were a modern creation i.e. they were the product of the modern industrial world. Pre-modern world may have occasionally thrown up nation-like formations (Kurds, Somalis or even Marathas and Rajputs in medieval India) but they were rare and did not always fulfil all the conditions. Modern world, on the other hand, is bound to (or condemned to) be divided between nations. Smith's argument was that this modernist position was somewhat insensitive to the roots, pre-history, cultural traditions, historical memories and heritages that have coalesced over generations which too have gone into the making of nations. For instance, 19<sup>th</sup> century Greek nationalism was shaped as much by the heritage of Byzantine imperial authority as by the classical democratic antiquity. Smith's argument was that nations may not have been produced entirely by the pre-existing ethnic ties, but these ties shaped the nature of nations

as much as the modern conditions characterized by industrialism, mass literacy, social mobility etc. Smith's critique of the modernist position was not that it was wrong but that it told only half the story, leaving out the other – equally important – half.

Gellner's classic response to this was to invoke the 19<sup>th</sup> century debate between the creationists and evolutionists on the origins of mankind after Charles Darwin had made his famous theory on the evolution of mankind. The crux of the debate, according to Gellner, was whether Adam had a navel or not. If Adam *was* created, as Biblical wisdom would have us believe, he need not have a navel. In other words, the absence of a navel would prove the creationist theory, because, apart from indicating the process through which we arrive in this world, navel serves no other purpose and it is possible for man to live navel-less. In order to live, man needs, not a navel, but a digestive and a respiratory system. It is the same story with nations. Do nations have genuine pre-existing navels (cultural traditions, ethnic ties, historical memories etc.) or do they invent them? Gellner's conclusion was that some nations may possess genuine navels, but most don't and they actually invent navels. Moreover it is possible for some nations to exist and flourish without any navels (Albania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Thus the absence of a navel is no great disadvantage just like its presence does not necessarily mean any great advantage. Nations can live navel-lessly without encountering any serious problems in their lives. So, whereas on the origin of mankind, the evolutionists got it right, on the origin of nations, the creationists (in other words modernists) got it right. If the modernist position told only half the story, Gellner concluded, that was the half that was important and the rest (like Adam's navel) did not matter.

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## 10.3 NATIONALISM

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Since our definition of nations has become so crucially dependent on nationalism, we need to answer the question: what is nationalism? In this section we would attempt to provide a definition of nationalism. We will then discuss the emergence of state and nation as constitutive elements in our understanding of nationalism and nation-state.

### 10.3.1 Defining Nationalism

Strangely enough, a lack of consensus on the question of nation does not quite extend to the question of nationalism. For a global definition of nationalism, it is best to again depend on Ernest Gellner: '**Nationalism is political principle that holds that national and political units should be congruent.**' Among the scholars who have grappled with the problem of nation and nationalism, he really stands out for a variety of reasons. Most of them have begun their enquiry by first trying to define nation, and from there they have gone on to define nationalism as the articulation of the nation (the desire for **autonomy, unity, identity** of the unit called nation, already defined). Gellner is probably the only one who has begun his enquiry by first defining nationalism and then having moved on to nation. His definition of nationalism covers, at one stroke, national sentiment, thinking, consciousness, ideology and movement. The definition is simple and profound. If the two concepts employed in it - **political unit** and **national unit** - are dejargonized to mean state and nation, respectively, it becomes even simpler. We, living in modern times, tend to take nation and state for granted and moreover, tend to taken them to be more or less the same thing. We do so because they appear to us as very nearly the same things. But there is no reason for us to believe that the two may have always been the same thing, or to use Gellner's words, they may have always been congruent. After all, their congruence is not a condition given to us; it is the insistence of the agent called



nationalism. For this coming together of state and nation, there are clearly three pre-conditions - there should be a state; there should be a nation; and finally, they should be nationalism to tell the other two that they are meant for each other and cannot live without each other. In other words, the present day congruence of nation and state (emergence of nation-state) is a product of three specific development in human history. When did the three happen in human history? Let us now focus on the emergence of state and nation as preconditions to the development of nation-state. As mentioned earlier we look upon nationalism as a modern phenomenon and understand it to be rooted in the transformation of the world from agrarian to industrial. We need to therefore answer two questions: Why did nationalism not emerge during the agrarian period? What was it about the industrial society that necessitated the emergence of nationalism? In this section we will also try and answer these questions by pointing out some salient features of the agrarian society and of the industrial society.

### 10.3.2 Emergence of State and Nation

State, as the centralized, power wielding agency, did not arrive in this world for a very long time; it may sound improbable but is true that mankind, for most of its life - about 99 percent, lived happily without a state. Human society, in its pre-agrarian stage, was a stateless society. Societies were small; forms of organization were simple; division of labour was elementary. The nature of exchange, wherever it existed, was such as could be managed easily by people themselves without having to resort to any central authority. People did not need a state and, as a result, did not have one. The pre-condition for the arrival of the state, and therefore nationalism, simply did not exist.

The first agrarian revolution - indeed the first revolution known to mankind-initiated the first major transformation in human life. It liberated a section of the population from having to fend for themselves; it could now be done by others. Those who were freed from the need to procure food for themselves were obliged to do other things. A division of labour came into being. With the passage of time this division become more complex. The availability of large surplus, segregated people from each other. Groups of people were separated and stratified. A state came into being to maintain law and order, collect surplus, resolve disputes when the need arose, and, of course, to regulate the exchange mechanism. Of course, not all agrarian societies had a state; only those with an elaborate division of labour did. Simple agrarian societies resembling their pre-agrarian ancestors, could still manage without one. State, at this stage of human history, was an option, and as an option, was crucially dependent upon the existing division of labour. A hypothetical anti-state citizen of the medieval world could still hope that under conditions of a stable division of labour, state might be dispensed with. Our medieval anti-state protagonist would certainly have been disappointed, if he had lived long enough, by the arrival of the industrial era which increased this division of labour manifold thereby ensuring a long life for the state. State, under conditions of industrial economy, was no longer an option; it became a necessity. As of today, the state is still with us, strong as ever, and the vision of a stateless society in some distant future is there only to test human credulity.

So the state has arrived and shows no signs of disappearing. What about nation, the other pre-conditions? We certainly did not hear of a nation in the medieval times, though we did hear of cultural groups and units. It is possible that nations may have grown out of these cultural units, under conditions favourable for their growth. Cultural units that existed in the medieval world were either very small (based on tribe, caste, clan or village) or very large (based on the religious civilizations of Islam and Christianity). This range was also available to political units. They were either very small (city-states or small kingdoms) or very large (Empires - Holy Roman, Ottoman, Mughal, Russian).

So the cultural units existed in the medieval world and so did the political units. They often cut across each other. Large empires contained many cultural units within their territory. Large cultural units could easily accommodate themselves under many political units. They felt no great need for any major re-allocation of boundaries to suit nationalist imperative. Nobody told them that they were violating the nationalist principle. None - either the political or the cultural unit - was greatly attracted to one-culture-one polity formula. Indeed it was not possible to implement such a formula even if the impulse had existed (which it did not). Why was it that the passion for nationalism, so characteristic of our times, was missing both from the human mind and the human heart during the agrarian times? In order to address this question, we need to focus on some of the features of the agrarian society.

### 10.3.3 Agrarian Society

So far our contention in this Unit has been that whereas some preconditions (emergence of state, presence of distinct cultural communities) for the development of nation-states had materialized in the agrarian period, some others (transformation of cultural communities into national communities, the emergence of the ideology of nationalism) had not. The question is: Why didn't we see the emergence of state as representative of cultural communities during the agrarian period? Why was the ideology of nationalism absent from the world during their same period? What was it about the agrarian society which inhibited the growth of these preconditions to the development of a nation-state system? Some of these questions can be satisfactorily answered if we could draw a cultural map of the world. Ernest Gellner has actually drawn such a map. We reproduce it below for you.

The map consists of three major dividing lines. Line 1, the greatest social divide known to mankind, has the horizontally stratified groups of political, military and religious elite on top of the line and the numerous communities of food producers, artisans and common people below the line. Line 2 divides the three (or possibly four) types of medieval elite - political, military and religious and those who possessed knowledge through a mastery over written world. In some cases a commercial elite also joined the apex. Their method of recruitment and reproduction varied from society to society. It could be open or closed, hereditary or non-hereditary. Their relationship with each other also varied from territory to territory. The religious elite (Ulema, Clergy, Brahmin) could dominate the political elite or vice-versa. Culturally they formed different groups, but they were all united by their great distance from common people. A China-Wall stood between them and the simple peasant would dare not cross it. Indeed it was impossible for him to do so. To join the exclusive high culture, he would need at least one of the attributes like special pedigree, chosen heredity, privileged status, divine sanction and access to literacy and written word. None of it was available to him.

The third dividing line stood vertically creating laterally insulated communities of common people. They lived for centuries in stable cultural formations, not particularly informed about the presence of other groups across the vertical lines. Written word was rarely available to them. They lived their culture without ever articulating it. They could not write and to understand what was written, they relied upon the clergy or the Ulema or Brahmin. They paid their ruler what was demanded from them. In the absence of literacy they evolved their own system of communication which was context based and would be unintelligible outside the context or the community. This communication would not cut across the vertical line; indeed there was no need for it, for across the line the other cultural group would use its own evolved communication. The use of literacy for them seldom extended beyond the need to communicate. Education among these groups was like a cottage industry. People learnt their skills not in a University but in their own local environment. Only scholars, from the apex went to the Universities to learn Latin, Greek, Sanskrit or Persian. The skills acquired from the cottage industry were handed over from generation to generation. The result: the citizens of the agrarian world lived in laterally insulated cultural groupings. They did not need literacy; they used their own evolved form of communication valid only in their culture. They lived in stable cultural formations. Horizontal mobility did not exist. Vertical mobility was out of the question. They viewed (or did not view) the exclusive high-culture at the apex with an aloof distance and felt no need to relate to it. Both the ruler and the ruled felt no great need for any kind of identification with each other. Man was (and still is) a loyal animal and his loyalty was rightfully claimed by his village, kinship, caste, religious or any other form of ethnic ties. Indeed he was a product of these ties. The exclusive high-culture generally did not attempt to claim his loyalty, for to do so would be risky: it might weaken or even erode the China-Wall. In other words, it might convert the China-Wall into a German-Wall. The common peasant being so distant, felt no compulsion to express solidarity with the exclusive high-culture. There were enough loyalty evoking units available to them. No cultural bonding existed, or could possibly exist, between the ruler and the ruled. The ruler was neither chosen by the people, nor was he representative of them. The people in turn felt no need to identify with their ruler. This was the scenario in which man lived in pre-modern times.

The continuity and stability of the pre-modern world, described above, terminated with the arrival of the industrial economy and society. It is our argument that this transformation - from the agrarian to the industrial - created conditions for the rise of nations and nationalism. In the next section let us look at some of the features of the industrial society.

### 10.3.4 Industrial Society

The medieval man might have gone on living like this happily ever after, had an accident of tremendous consequence not occurred. The tranquility and the stability of the medieval world was shaken with a jerk by the strong tidal wave or a huge hurricane of industrialization hitting the world, though not all of it at the same time. Nothing like this had ever happened to mankind. This single event transformed the cultural map of the world profoundly and irreversibly. The industrial society, when it was finally established in *some* pockets of the world, was found to be just the opposite of the agrarian society in very fundamental ways. Five crucial features of the industrial society separated it from the agrarian world and had implications for the emergence of the nationalism.

One, it was a society based on perpetual growth - both **economic** and **cognitive**, the two being **interrelated**. Cognitive growth in the realm of technology, though not confined to it, directly fed into economic growth and the latter, in turn facilitated investments for technological updating. Changes had occurred in the agrarian world, but it was never a rule. The industrial society showed a tremendous commitment to continuous change and growth. The idea of progress was born for the first time. Technology and economy got linked to each other in a manner in which they were not in the pre-modern times. A constantly growing society would not allow any stable barriers of rank, status and caste. The two are indeed incompatible. Social structures, which had taken their permanence for granted in the agrarian world, would find it impossible to resist the hurricane of industrialism.

Two, it was literate society. Literacy in the agrarian world was confined to the exclusive high-culture, in other words to the king, priest and the scholar. The common man did not need literacy and did not have it or had it at a very elementary level which could easily be imparted by his family or the community. Industrial society, on the other hand, cannot survive without universal literacy. Why should full (or very nearly so) literacy be a precondition for the smooth functioning, indeed the very survival, of the industrial society and economy? There are in fact many reasons why it has to be so. One, industrial economy requires greater participation in the running of the economy by a much larger section of the population. These participants, drawn from very different cultural backgrounds and involved in very different tasks assigned to them, must be able to communicate with each other in order to ensure the running of the economy and the system. Drawn as they are from different cultural settings, they cannot communicate in their old idioms. They have to communicate in some standardized idiom in which all of them have to be trained. This is an enormous task and can no longer be performed by the traditional agencies (family, guild, community etc). Traditional agencies, rooted in their own cultural contexts, cannot, in any case, impart context-free education. Such training can only be imparted uniformly to all citizens by an agency as large as the State. In other words, **education which was a cottage industry in the agrarian world, must now become full-fledged, impersonal and organized modern industry to turn out neat, uniform human product out of the raw material of an uprooted anonymous mass population.** As a result, people start resembling each other culturally and share the same language in which they have all been taught. The language at school may initially be different from the language at home, but gradually, in about a generation's time, the language at school also becomes the language at home. The Hungarian peasant only initially speaks two languages - the local dialect at home and its refined and comprehensive version at school. Gradually, within a generation or so, the latter replaces the dialect at home also. This process helps in the creation of a seamless, culturally uniform, internally standardized society and thus fulfils a major precondition for nationalism. Two, the new system also demands that these trained men should be able to perform diverse tasks suited to the requirements of a constantly growing economy.

They should therefore be ready to shift occupationally. Only a generic educational training, imparted by a large centralized agency, can ensure that men are competent and qualified to undertake newer tasks. The paradox of the industrial age is that it is a system based on specialism but the specialism in the industrial age is very general. Every man is a specialist. Every man is *trained* to be a specialist. One half of this training is generic (based on language, cognition and a common conceptual currency); the other half is specific and must be different for different tasks (like doctors, managers, engineers, computer personnel etc.) Now anyone required to shift occupationally can be trained *specifically* for that task because he has already received the generic training. This enables people to move occupationally across generations and sometimes within the span of a single generation. This provides the industrial society a certain mobility, which also facilitates the nationalist project. Three, **an industrial society is one in which work is not manual but semantic**. It does not any longer (certainly in mature industrial societies) consist of ploughing, reaping, threshing, but rather of handling machines and pushing buttons. In the pre-modern world work consisted of the application of the human muscle over matter with the help of elementary technology based on wind and water. All this changes with the arrival of modern technology. A qualified worker in an industrial economy is one who must know which button to press, how to operate the machines, and if possible, to fix minor errors. In other words modern workers have to manipulate not things but meanings and messages. All these qualifications require literacy imparted in a standardized medium. The image of a worker, just uprooted from his village and pushed straight into industry is rapidly becoming archaic. A worker is not inherently suited to the tasks of the modern economy; he needs to be trained (which implies literacy) to perform his tasks suitably and satisfactorily. **Modern economy does not just need a worker; it needs a skilled worker**. A part of the skill is also the ability to perform different tasks, as and when the need arises. As stated earlier, imparting standardized context free education to such a vast number is a monumental task and cannot be performed by the agencies which had been doing it for centuries namely kin, local unit, county, guild. It can only be provided by a modern national education system, 'a pyramid at whose base are primarily schools, staffed by teachers trained at secondary schools, staffed by University trained teachers, led by the products of advanced graduate schools.' (Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.34). Only the state can maintain and look after such a huge structure or delegate it to one of its agencies. The implications of such a literate society are various; emergence of nationalism is only one of them. It creates internally standardized and homogeneous cultural communities. This is just what nationalism needs.

The third, fourth and fifth features of the industrial society are actually an extension of the first and the second (i.e. literate society, committed to perpetual growth). It is mobile society; it is an egalitarian society; and it is a society with a shared high-culture and not exclusive as it was in the agrarian world. Let us briefly look at all three.

The agrarian world was a stable order devoid of any great transformations. The conditions making for any kind of mobility simply did not exist. The industrial society by contrast, is essentially unstable and constantly changing. The changes include the strategic location of the social personnel within it. Positions are changing and people therefore cannot take their current social status for granted; they might lose it and make way for others across generation. The factors that restricted mobility (or fostered stability whichever way you look at it) are no longer operative in an industrial economy. The area and scope of a man's employability gets enlarged thanks to literacy imparted in a standardized medium. His cultural nests have been eroded and his status is threatened by the arrival of new social and economic roles. The industrial society acquires the features of systematic randomness (something like the children's game of snakes and ladders) in which men cannot take their present position for granted. The mobility

(physical, spatial, occupational, social) engendered by the industrial economy is exceptionally deep and sometimes unfathomable. A mobile society has to inevitably be an egalitarian society. Roles and positions are not fixed and are certainly not determined by social status. A peasant's son need not be a peasant; what occupational position he occupies will depend, not on his heredity or community's status, but on his own competence and training. The role of social status does not completely diminish in the industrial society, but it loses the eminence that it enjoyed in the agrarian world. The description of the industrial society as egalitarian does not match with the brutally inhuman and inequalitarian conditions that prevailed in the initial years of the industrial economy. But they were soon overcome, paving way for a more mobile and egalitarian order.

All the four features put together (a society based on perpetual growth, literate society, mobile society and also egalitarian) would ensure the fifth one also. The agrarian world was characterized by deep and stable barriers - both vertical and horizontal. The biggest barrier was that of status and high culture. The high culture(s) of the king, priest and the scholar was/were sustained by access to literacy and the privileged status. Both these features disappear in the industrial society. Everybody gains access to literacy and a growing, mobile society just does not allow any barriers to settle down for long. To quote Gellner again, 'Men can tolerate terrible inequalities, if they are stable and hallowed by custom. But in a hectically mobile society, custom has no time to hollow anything. A rolling stone gathers no aura, and a mobile population does not allow any aura to attach to its stratification.' (Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.25). The implication of all this is that the high culture loses its exclusiveness and becomes shared. All this has serious implications for the emergence of nationalism.

The result of the above-mentioned developments was that mankind was shaken out of its neatly nested cultural zones and liberated from the various identities which had claimed its loyalty for centuries. Man ceased to belong to his local ties; indeed they were getting increasingly difficult to recognize. He has now, either already or aspired to be, a member of the shared high-culture. The guidelines for the membership of this shared high-culture were provided to him by the uniform educational system. Man continued to be a loyal animal even in the industrial society, but the units demanding or claiming his loyalty had either disappeared or were in a process of disappearing. Who, or what, should claim his loyalty now? The prestige of the modern man depends not upon his membership of primordial ties but upon his membership of the new shared high-culture transmitted by a uniform education system provided by the state. He is now a product of the shared high-culture and has a vested interest in its preservation and protection. And he knows his culture can be protected only by the state, *its* own state. In other words **a marriage of culture and polity is the only precondition to his dignified survival in a world of dissolving identities**. His national identity is important to him and only a state representative of his nation can ensure the preservation of this identity. *This* is nationalism. And this is why modern man is nationalist.

The large culturally homogenous national units cannot be preserved and protected by the unit itself. They need a political roof of their own. This explains the nationalist man. But it does not explain why the state should be keen on protecting this national unit? Why can't it just be happy ruling over the territory, and bothering about little else, like the medieval state did? Why must the modern state insist on the unmediated membership and loyalty of its citizens? It has to because the modern state, under conditions of modern economy, cannot function without an active participation of its citizens. Didn't it train them to be literate and occupationally mobile? **Modern state needs not only trained men but also committed and loyal men. They must follow the instructions of the state in which they live, and of no other subdivision within the territory. Only nationalism can ensure this.**

To sum up the argument, modern industrial economy has transformed the world culturally and economically. It requires everybody to be literate. This literacy has to be imparted in a uniform standardized manner to facilitate the running of the economy. This process displaces people out of their secure cultural nests and destroys their loyalty inducing local identities. Gradually it rehabilitates them as a member of a new homogenous cultural unit, held together by literacy. The China-Wall breaks down allowing people entry into the high-culture (or rather the high-culture extending to people) which ceases to be exclusive. Rules of the new membership are easy (literacy) and conditions favourable. These new national units owe a great deal to the political unit that educated them. Modern economy had displaced them; the state rehabilitated them as members of a new national community. The two tasks were of course complementary. The new national community (nation, if you like) would be keenly desirous of preserving its identity, autonomy and unity (nationalism, if you like). It has nowhere to go, no past to look back to except romantically. It looks up to the state for its protection; or rather it wants a state of its own for guaranteed preservation and protection. To return to the definition; nationalism insists that nation and state be congruent. We now know why.

One question still remains. Since the bulldozer of the modern economy flattened out all the existing cultural-ethnic differences and also the traditional units of the society, how did it create new national units and loyalties? Bulldozers are not known to create solidarities. In other words, since all the medieval cultural nests were destroyed by modern economy, why didn't the world become one cultural unit requiring one single political roof? Why was the world divided among many nations requiring many nation-states? To put it simply, why did we have many nationalisms instead of one world nationalism called internationalism? Indeed it was predicted by 19<sup>th</sup> century Marxism and liberalism alike. It simply did not happen. Why?

Part of the answer to the question must reckon with the tidal wave nature of industrialization which did not hit the entire world at the same time and in the same manner. There were clearly at least three waves (possibly more) - the early wave to hit Western Europe and North America; a slightly later wave to hit the rest of Europe and Japan and a third wave that hit the remaining part of the globe that later came to be known as the third world. The recipients of the third wave did not achieve the economic and cultural transformation with which the early industrial wave had blessed Europe and North America. They only underwent political domination by the early industrial countries. The different timing of the waves may have been an accident or may have been because some parts of the medieval world were better prepared for a development of this kind than other parts. But a different timing of the arrival of the industrial wave effectively divided the globe into different zones. Secondly, modern economy did not just expect people to be literate; it expected them to be literate in a particular language (English, French, German). It couldn't be the classical language of the high-culture like Latin (it would be difficult to train simple peasants in the classical language) or the folk language of the people (the dialect may not be suitable for a large-scale transmission). The literacy would therefore have to be imparted in new modern languages resembling both the folk and the classical. People, after receiving generic training in a particular language, were obliged to look upon themselves as members of the shared high-culture fostered by *that* particular language. Moreover, the language (and the shared high-culture) also determined the boundary of man's mobility. If he travelled beyond the boundary line of that language and the shared high-culture he was trained in, he would not be useful in the new territory (unless he was smart enough to equip himself with the new cognitive set up). It is for this reason that modern man does not simply think; he thinks as French or German. To extend the argument, modern man does not simply

exist; he exists as French or German. And he can exist with dignity only under a French or German political roof.

The story so far resembles West European brand of nationalism. Would it be applicable to societies where nationalism took the form of protest? Can it, for instance, be applied to the Indian sub-continent? Indian people acquired a modern state in the form of British imperialist state for the entire territory, but refused to live under it. The essence of western European nationalism was that the Modern English or French man could live only under a state that was English or French, respectively. In other words, the essence of western European nationalism was loyalty to the state. Essence of Indian nationalism, on the other hand, was rebellion against the state. However in spite of basic differences, certain commonness can be found between the European and the Indian nationalism. The arrival of the modern economy, however tentative, indirect and incomplete, did create conditions for transformation, albeit incomplete, of herds of cultural communities into a national unit of Indian people. These people insisted on having *their* own political unit. This insistence (nationalism, if you like) gradually created and fostered an Indian nation. This Indian nation was different from its European counterpart in that it was not being sustained by a uniform educational system imparted in a single language (although English did help in uniting the intelligentsia). It was being created not by the uniform condition of economic development, but the uniform condition of economic exploitation by the alien state. This exploitation was modern in that it was systematic, orderly and efficient unlike medieval forms of loot and plunder. Indian nationalism was based on this cognition and on the desire that the national unit of Indian people should have its own political roof.

The bulldozer of industrialization was not operative in India. The pre-existing socio religious identities were therefore not flattened out: some were politically overcome by Indian nationalism; some made their peace with it; some others challenged it; and some actually became successful in obtaining their own political roof for their perceived national unit. The diversity and cultural plurality of Indian nation (The 19<sup>th</sup> century Indian nationalists rightly called it a nation-in-making) created the space for the possibility of rival or breakaway nationalisms. Thus came into being Pakistan in 1947 based on the notion of all Indian Muslims being a nation. But the territorial spread of Pakistan (with an east and a west wing on either side of India separated by well over 900 miles) created a further space of yet another breakaway nationalism on territorial grounds. Thus came into being Bangladesh as an independent nation-state in 1971.

One scholar, perhaps articulating the extent of scholarly incomprehension on nationalism, likened nationalism to a genie that had somehow been released from the bottle of history some two hundred years ago and since then had been stalking diverse lands and people without anyone being able to control it. Nationalism may not be as unexplainable as a genie but it has certainly pervaded the entire universe including its people and territories. And it shows no signs of disappearing. The neat and nearly complete division of the globe into roughly 200 more or less stable nation-states is no guaranty against a resurgence of nationalism. But nationalism cannot continue to perform old roles. For nearly 150 years between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the end of the Second World War in 1945, nationalism was the lone promoter of nation-states. Now that this task seems to be over nationalism must now turn into a destroyer of the existing nation-states through the resurgence of breakaway nationalisms seeking to create new nation-states. This means that societies with cultural, religious or linguistic plurality and an uncertain economic development may still go through all the violence, hatred and brutality that have come to be associated with a surcharged nationalism.



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## 10.4 STAGES OF NATIONALISM: TYPES OF NATIONALISM

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The above explanation for the emergence of nationalism must make allowance for two factors. One, nationalism could not have emerged in a day but that its emergence was spread over stages which need to be located at various points in the transformation of the world from the agrarian to the industrial. The section above constructed two ideal types of human societies, the agrarian that was largely nationalism resistant and the industrial that appeared destined to be nationalism prone. The two formations must certainly not have existed in their pure form in most cases. But most agrarian societies would have shown resemblance to the model constructed above. Likewise, the advanced industrial societies should possess the traits listed in our description of the industrial society. The timing, pace and trajectory of the transformation from one to the other would inevitably vary from territory to territory. The basic point is that the different stages in the arrival of nationalism are related to this transformation. Since the very nature of this transformation was different for different societies (and probably nowhere was it so neat and complete), the stages of nationalism also varied. It is, therefore, not possible to construct stages uniformly applicable to all parts of the world. It is still important to keep in mind that nationalism, like other global phenomena (capitalism and colonialism) arrived in this world through stages and not in one single transition.

Two, nationalism arrived in stages, but nowhere did it duplicate itself in shape and form. Although the entire world changed dramatically in the last 200 years from being nationalism free to being completely dominated by nationalism, the nature of nationalism differed dramatically from area to area. So profound is the change that some scholars have begun doubting the very existing of the generic category called nationalism. No two nationalisms are found to be similar, yet all nationalisms do share certain basic traits in common. This indeed is the great paradox of nationalism. To put it differently, **nationalism changes its form in different societies yet retains its essence in all of them.** Nationalism led to the transformation of nations into nation-states, but the process of this transformation varied. The various nation-states of the modern world were created through multiple routes, characterized by different *kinds* of nationalisms. A common myth has been to look at the arrival of nation-states through only two routes - the market and the protest, i.e., nationalism engendered by the market forces or by national movements. In fact the range of nationalist experience is much more varied than that. Two prominent scholars on nationalism, Ernest Gellner and Anthony Smith have created their own typologies of nationalism. Let us briefly look at both at them.

### 10.4.1 Gellner's Typology

Gellner, writing exclusively about Europe, divided Europe into four zones travelling from west to east and formulated four different types of nationalisms applicable to each zone. These can be seen on the map of Europe given here. Gellner understood nationalism in terms of a marriage between the states and a pervasive high-culture and saw four different patterns of this marriage in the four European zones. Zone 1, located on the western belt consisting of England, France, Portugal and Spain witnessed a rather smooth and easy marriage of the two, because both the ingredients (state and high-culture for the defined territory) were present prior to the arrival of nationalism. In Gellner's metaphor, the couple were already living together in a kind of customary marriage and the strong dynastic states more or less corresponded to cultural linguistic zones anyway, even before the decree of nationalism ordered them to do so. In other words, these



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societies fulfilled the nationalist principle before the arrival of nationalism. Only the minor cultural differences *within* these societies needed to be homogenized; peasants and workers had to be educated and transformed into Englishmen, Frenchmen etc. Needless to say this process was smooth and conflict-free and therefore did not require any violence for the fulfilment of the nationalist principle.

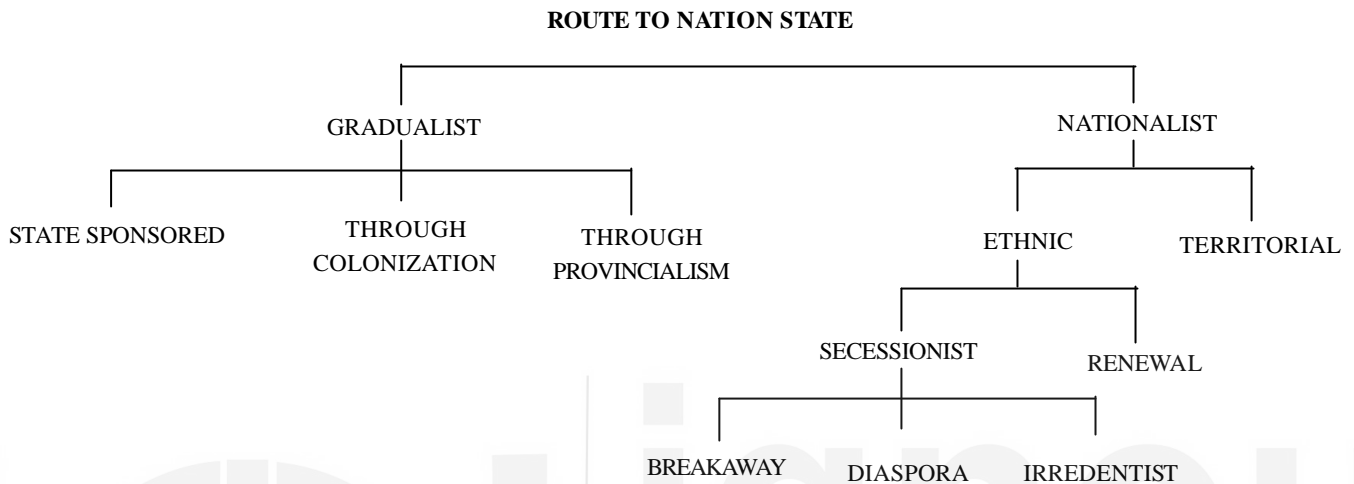
Zone II (present day Italy and Germany), situated on the territory of the erstwhile Holy Roman Empire, was different from zone 1 in the sense that, metaphorically speaking, the bride (high culture for the territory) was ready (among the Italians from the days of early Renaissance and among the Germans since the days of Luther) but there was no groom (state for the exclusive territory). Whereas strong dynastic states had crystallized in zone 1 along the Atlantic coast, this zone was marked by political fragmentation. The age of nationalism, which had found both the elements (state and high culture for the territory) present in zone 1, found only one (high culture) in zone II. So, although no 'cultural engineering' or ethnic cleansing was required here, a state-protector corresponding to the area had to be found or created. It was for this reason the nationalist project here had to be concerned with 'unification'. Here also, as in zone I, nationalism was benign, soft and conflict-free. There were no claims and counter-claims for the territory. Culturally homogeneous territories did not have to be carved out; they already existed. The high-culture also existed; it only needed to reach out to peasants and workers.

It is in zone III (territories east of Germany and west of Russian Empire, areas of present day Poland, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, Balkans etc.) that nationalism ceased to be benign and liberal and had to necessarily be nasty, violent and brutal. The horrors, generally associated with nationalism, were inevitable here as neither of the two preconditions (state and high-culture) existed in a neat congruent fashion. Both a national state and a national culture had to be carved out. This process required violence, ethnic cleansing, forced transfer of population in an area marked by a complex pathwork of linguistic and cultural differences. The cultures living at the margins of the two empires (Ottoman and Russian) did not correspond either with a territory or language or state. Here, in order to meet and fulfil the nationalist imperative (passion for nationalism was quite strong in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe), plenty of brutal earth-shifting had to be done in order to carve out areas of homogeneous cultures requiring their state. Culturally uniform nation-states could only be produced by violence and ethnic cleansing. To quote Gellner, 'In such areas, either people must be persuaded to forego the implementation of the nationalist ideal, or ethnic cleansing must take place. There is no third way.' (*Gellner, Nationalism*, p.56).

Zone IV is the area of Russian Empire on the farthest east in Europe. This zone was unique in some ways. The First World War relegated the empires of the world (Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian) to the dustbin of history. Yet the Russian Empire survived under a new dispensation and the socialist ideology. The marriage of state and culture did not take place here, or at any rate not for a very long time. The nationalist imperative was kept ruthlessly under check by the Tsarist Empire, and was, contained creatively by the supra-nationalist ideology of socialism, by the soviet Empire. In fact many of the national cultures flourished under the USSR; some were even nurtured by the state. There is no evidence that the collapse of the Soviet Russia in 1991 was brought by nationalism, but nationalism certainly benefited by the dismantling of the empire. In other words, the marriage of state and culture *followed* the disintegration without causing it in any way. A high culture in different cultural zones had been in a way nurtured by the socialist state, and the other element (the state) simply arrived upon the collapse of the Soviet Empire

## 10.4.2 Anthony Smith's Typology

So much for Europe. Is it possible to create a similar typology for the entire world? Though a neat zonal division of the world (along European lines) is not possible and the pattern would be much more complex, Anthony Smith has attempted some kind of a division of a world into different types of routes that nationalism takes in its journey towards creation of nation-states. It can best be understood through the table given below.



His basic division is simple. The creation of nation-states has taken two routes - **gradualist** and **nationalist**. The gradualist route is generally conflict free and contest free and is one where the initiative was taken by the state to create conditions for the spread of nationalism. Nation-states were thus formed either by direct **state sponsored patriotism** (like zone I of Gellner) or were the result of **colonization** (Australia and Canada: they did not have to fight for independence) or **provincialism** where cultures/states just ceded from the imperial power, were granted independence and were on their way towards becoming nation-states. One feature of the gradualist route is that it was marked by the absence of conflict, violence, contesting claims over nationhood or any national movement. The other, nationalist route is characterized by rupture, conflict, violence and earth-moving. Smith divides this rupture-ridden route into two sub-routes - those of **ethnic nationalism** and **territorial nationalism**. These terms are self-evident and their meanings clear. The ethnic sub-route is divided into two lanes - based on **renewal** and **secession**. Renewal is based on the renewal or the revival of a declining ethnic identity like Persia in the 1890s. The secessionist lane could be further divided into three by-lanes of **breakaway**, **diaspora** and **irredentist** nationalism. The breakaway group (either from empires or multi-national states) sought to sever a bond through cessation like Italians and Czechs from the Habsburg Empire; Arabs, Armenians and Serbs from the Ottoman Empire; and Poles and Ukrainians from the Tsarist Russian Empire. Bangladesh that broke away from Pakistan in 1991 could also come in the same category. The diaspora nationalism is best represented by the Jews. Completely devoid of a state, territory of their own, or even a high-culture till the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Jews lived for nearly two centuries like perpetual minorities on other people's lands. They were eventually constituted into a nation-state through struggle, other powers' diplomacy, ethnic cleansing (done to them by others), earth moving and also by statistical probability of being on the right side in the great world war. Had the war gone the other way, we can be sure that Israel would not have been formed into a nation-state in 1950. The irredentist nationalism normally followed a successful national movement. If the new state did not include all the members of the ethnic group (this mildly violates the nationalist principle) who lived on the adjacent land under a different polity, they would

have to be redeemed and the land on which they lived, annexed. This happened in Balkan nationalism among Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians and in Germany of Somalia today.

**Territorial nationalism** occurred when a heterogeneous population was coercively united by a colonial power. The boundary of the territory and the centralized administration of the colonial power formed the focus of the nation to be. On taking over power (invariably through a national movement) the nationalists try to integrate the culturally heterogeneous population (tribes, various other cultural groups and people living on the margin), who had neither shared history nor common origin except colonial subjugation. This happened for instance in Tanzania and Argentina. In certain instances (Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kenya, Nigeria) there were national movements that defined their aims in terms of wider territorial units, yet were clearly spearheaded by members of one dominant ethnic group. Later their domination was challenged by other smaller groups, creating space for a breakaway nationalism.

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## 10.5 NATIONALISM IN SOUTH ASIA

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The picture sketched above is a somewhat simplified version of the various routes, lanes and bye-lanes which nationalism took in order to change and rearrange the political boundaries inside the world. The range of nationalists' experience is vast. There might still be pockets that are left uncovered. What about India? Where does the sub-continent fit? It is often not realized that although the sub-continent experienced one major nationalism, it was not the only one. India experienced four different kinds of nationalisms, and it is just as well to briefly get acquainted with it. The major Indian nationalism was territorial, anti-colonial and led to the creation of a nation-state through a national movement. Its territorial boundaries were defined partly by the colonial conquest and administration and partly by the strong dynastic states that ruled the territory from time to time (Maurya, Gupta and Mughal Empires). It acquired not only one but three distinct high-cultures during the colonial period. There was an Islamic high-culture inherited from the Mughal times and sustained by Urdu that flourished in the pockets of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. There was of course a high Brahmanic culture that had thrived in the past sometimes with official protection and sometimes despite it. Along with these a new high-culture, engendered by English language and sustained by modern education, also developed initially in the three Presidencies (Madras, Bengal and Bombay), and later in the provinces of U.P. and Punjab. Although the dividing lines along these cultures were always fuzzy and never very sharp, the national movement that developed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards had a difficult time trying to reconcile them. It was partly for these constraints that Indian National movement remained, throughout its life, linguistically and culturally remarkably plural. Since cultural unity is the hallmark of all nationalist projects, Indian national movement evolved the unique slogan of 'unity in diversity' and remained committed to both. Paradoxically the plural and non-coercive elements of the Indian national movement became its greatest strength and weakness at the same time. The focus on cultural and linguistic plurality enabled the movement to maximize mobilization, but it also rendered Indian nationalism somewhat handicapped when confronted with a rival nationalism. So, Indian nationalism inherited an administrative unity from the alien rulers, strove to create a political unity and generally refrained from imposing a cultural and linguistic unity. When the new nation-state took over after the successful culmination of the national movement in 1947, it went about its task of creating cultural compositeness and economic integration.

The second major nationalism was a rival to Indian nationalism. This led to the creation of Pakistan. Pakistani nationalism was based on the famous two-nation theory, which implied that Indian Muslims were not a part of an Indian nation but were a nation in

themselves. The claim that Muslims in India were a nation was nothing short of an invented tradition. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of this nationalism, declared that Indian Muslims *always* existed as a nation, but they did not realize this till the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century! He launched a movement that led to the creation of an independent nation-state of Pakistan. This nationalism, compared to its Indian counterpart, suffered from two disadvantages and enjoyed two distinct advantages. The disadvantages were that there was no given territory and no state for that territory. A territory had to be carved out and a state had to be fought for. Some of the nastiness of this nationalism was thus inherent in this situation. The advantages that it enjoyed vis-à-vis its Indian counterpart were that it was based on a religious identity and that it did not have to fight the state. Religious unity proved easier to achieve and in a short span of time (the actual time taken between the demand for a state and creation of a state was seven years from 1940 to 1947!) The need for fighting the alien state through a national movement was dispensed with, given the fact that Indian nationalism was busy doing just that. All Pakistani nationalism had to do was to ask for its share when the battle for Indian independence intensified.

Pakistani nationalism was strangely based on religious unity and territorial disunity. The east and the west wing of the new nation-state were separated from each other by over 900 miles. The new state took religious unity for granted and imposed linguistic and cultural unity without being able to achieve economic parity. The result was the emergence of a breakaway nationalism in 1971 that was territorial even though religion united rather than divided the two sides. The struggle for the creation of yet another nation-state was brief. The new state of Bangladesh fulfilled the nationalist principle but remained vulnerable to irredentist possibilities because of the neighbouring area (West Bengal, now a part of India and originally part of a full province along with the new nation-state of Bangladesh). The two areas, West Bengal and Bangladesh have shared history and other similarities. Though irredentism has not occurred here, there has been a transfer of population from Bangladesh to India at an alarmingly high rate.

The fourth category is that of aspirant nationalism - forces for Khalistan in Punjab, Azad Kashmir in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Tamil demand for a separate state in Sri Lanka. These and probably more may be called potential nationalisms. If successful in some distant future, and that is yet to be seen, these would be called breakaway nationalisms. The experience of potential nationalisms (or nationalisms which are not likely to ever culminate in the formation of new nation-states) is not specific to India but is a world phenomenon. The world today is replete with potential nationalisms to such an extent that by one estimate, for every single actual nation, there are at least ten potential ones. These stories have generally not been told. It may be generally difficult to anticipate a potential nationalism. It would be interesting to narrate the story of failed or abortive or embryonic nationalisms; in other words the story of dogs that did not bark, to use the famous phrase of Sherlock Holmes.

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## 10.6 SUMMARY

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In this unit you have seen how nations and nationalisms have evolved through a complex historical process in modern times. While there has been a large consensus among historians about their recent origins (despite objections from the primordialists), there is considerable confusion over different stages and types of nationalism. In this sense the dominant models of European nationalism have met with a challenge from the likes of colonial nationalism as in the case of India. It is in this sense that we talk of not just one nationalism, but, many nationalisms. At the same time, it is a phenomenon which is part of an ongoing process and which will continue to define our day to day lives for years to come.

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## 10.7 EXERCISES

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- 1) What is a nation? Discuss with an overview of different definitions.
- 2) Is nationalism the ultimate product of modernization? Discuss with reference to Gellner and Smith debate.
- 3) Discuss different models of nationalism.



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## SUGGESTED READINGS FOR THIS BLOCK

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Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread  
of Nationalism*, London, 1983.

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