Concept

Neo-Marxism

Neo-Marxism (sometimes termed modern Marxism) refers to attempts to revise or recast the classical ideas of Marx while remaining faithful to certain Marxist principles or aspects of Marxist methodology. Neo-Marxists typically refuse to accept that Marxism enjoys a monopoly of the truth, and have thus looked to Hegelian philosophy, anarchism, liberalism, feminism, and even rational-choice theory. Two central themes can nevertheless be identified. First, neo-Marxists have tried to provide an alternative to the mechanistic and deterministic ideas of orthodox Marxism, refusing to accept the primacy of economics, or assign the proletariat a privileged role. Second, they have been concerned to explain the failure of Marx's predictions, looking, in particular, to the analysis of ideology and state power.

the degree to which the domination of the ruling class is achieved by ideological manipulation, rather than just open coercion. In this view, bourgeois domination is maintained largely through 'hegemony' (see p. 201): that is, intellectual leadership or cultural control, with the state playing an important role in the process. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Marxist theorizing about the state was dominated by the rival positions adopted by Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas (1936-79). Although this debate moved through a number of phases as each author revised his position, at the heart of it lay contrasting instrumentalist and structuralist views of the state.

In *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) Miliband portrayed the state as an agent or *instrument* of the ruling class, stressing the extent to which the state elite is disproportionately drawn from the ranks of the privileged and propertied. The bias of the state in favour of capitalism is therefore derived from the overlap of social backgrounds between, on the one hand, civil servants and other public officials, and, on the other, bankers, business leaders and captains of industry. Both groups, in other words, tend to be representatives of the capitalist class. Poulantzas, in *Political Power and Social Classes* (1968), dismissed this sociological approach, and emphasized instead the degree to which the *structure* of economic and social power exerts a constraint upon state autonomy. This view suggests that the state cannot but act to perpetuate the social system in which it operates. In the case of the capitalist state, its role is to serve the long-term interests of capitalism, even though these actions may be resisted by sections of the capitalist class itself. Examples of this are the extension of democratic rights and welfare reforms, both of which are concessions to the working class that nevertheless bind them to the capitalist system.

Developments within modern Marxism have brought about a significant convergence between pluralist and Marxist theories. Just as pluralists have increasingly recognized the importance of corporate power, neo-Marxists have been forced to abandon the idea that the state is merely a reflection of the class system. For one thing, neo-Marxists have recognized that, in modern circumstances, the classical two-class model (based on the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) is simplistic and often unhelpful. Following Poulantzas, neo-Marxists usually recognize that there are significant divisions within the ruling class (between financial and manufacturing capital, for instance) and that the emergence of electoral democracy has empowered interests and groups outside the ruling class. In addition, they have increasingly seen the state as the terrain upon which the struggle amongst interests, groups and classes is conducted. This is particularly clear in the case of Bob Jessop's (1982) 'strategic relational approach' to the state. Jessop saw the state not so much as a means of perpetuating capitalism through the dilution of class tensions, but as 'the crystallization of political strategies': that is, as an assemblage of institutions through which competing groups and interests struggle for domination or hegemony. In this view, the state is therefore not an 'instrument' wielded by a dominant group or ruling class. Rather, it is a dynamic entity that reflects the balance of power within society at any given time, and thus reflects the outcome of an ongoing hegemonic struggle.

The leviathan state

The image of the state as a 'leviathan' (in effect, a self-serving monster intent on expansion and aggrandizement) is one associated in modern politics with the New Right. Such a view is rooted in early or classical liberalism and, in particular, a commitment to a radical form of individualism (see p. 190). The New Right, or at least

its neoliberal wing, is distinguished by a strong antipathy towards state intervention in economic and social life, born out of the belief that the state is a parasitic growth that threatens both individual liberty and economic security. In this view, the state, instead of being, as pluralists suggest, an impartial umpire or arbiter, is an overbearing 'nanny', desperate to interfere or meddle in every aspect of human existence. The central feature of this view is that the state pursues interests that are separate from those of society (setting it apart from Marxism), and that those interests demand an unrelenting growth in the role or responsibilities of the state itself. New Right thinkers therefore argue that the twentieth-century tendency towards state intervention reflected not popular pressure for economic and social security, or the need to stabilize capitalism by ameliorating class tensions, but rather the internal dynamics of the state.

New Right theorists explain the expansionist dynamics of state power by reference to both demand-side and supply-side pressures. Demand-side pressures are ones that emanate from society itself, usually through the mechanism of electoral democracy. As discussed in Chapter 4, the New Right argue that electoral competition encourages politicians to 'outbid' one another by making promises of increased spending and more generous government programmes, regardless of the long-term damage that such policies inflict on the economy in the form of increased taxes, higher inflation and the 'crowding out' of investment. Supply-side pressures, on the other hand, are ones that are internal to the state. These can therefore be explained in terms of the institutions and personnel of the state apparatus. In its most influential form, this argument is known as the government oversupply thesis.

The oversupply thesis has usually been associated with public-choice theorists (see p. 276), who examine how public decisions are made on the assumption that the individuals involved act in a rationally self-interested fashion. William Niskanen (1971), for example, argued that, as budgetary control in legislatures such as the US Congress is typically weak, the task of budget-making is shaped largely by the interests of government agencies and senior bureaucrats. Insofar as this implies that government is dominated by the state (the state elite being able to shape the thinking of elected politicians), there are parallels between the public-choice model and the Marxist view discussed above. Where these two views diverge, however, is in relation to the interests that the state apparatus serves. While Marxists argue that the state reflects broader class and other social interests, the New Right portrays the state as an independent or autonomous entity that pursues its own interests. In this view, bureaucratic self-interest invariably supports 'big' government and state intervention, because this leads to an enlargement of the bureaucracy itself, which helps to ensure job security, improve pay, open up promotion prospects, and enhance the status of public officials. This image of self-seeking bureaucrats is plainly at odds with the pluralist notion of a state machine imbued with an ethic of public service and firmly subject to political control.

The patriarchal state

Modern thinking about the patriarchal state must, finally, take account of the implications of feminist theory. However, this is not to say that there is a systematic feminist theory of the state. As emphasized in Chapter 3, feminist theory encompasses a range of traditions and perspectives, and has thus generated a range of very different attitudes towards state power. Moreover, feminists have usually not

Concept

Patriarchy

Patriarchy literally means 'rule by the father', the domination of the husband–father within the family, and the subordination of his wife and his children. However, the term is usually used in the more general sense of 'rule by men', drawing attention to the totality of oppression and exploitation to which women are subject. The use of the term patriarchy thus implies that the system of male power in society at large both reflects and stems from the dominance of the father in the family. Patriarchy is a key concept in radical feminist analysis, in that it emphasizes that gender inequality is systematic, institutionalized and pervasive. Socialist feminists, in contrast, highlight links between gender inequality and private property, seeing patriarchy and capitalism as parallel systems of domination.

regarded the nature of state power as a central political issue, preferring instead to concentrate on the deeper structure of male power centred upon institutions such as the family and the economic system. Some feminists, indeed, may question conventional definitions of the state, arguing, for instance, that the idea that the state exercises a monopoly of legitimate violence is compromised by the routine use of violence and intimidation in family and domestic life. Nevertheless, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, feminists have helped to enrich the state debate by developing novel and challenging perspectives on state power.

Liberal feminists, who believe that sexual or gender (see p. 195) equality can be brought about through incremental reform, have tended to accept an essentially pluralist view of the state. They recognize that, if women are denied legal and political equality, and especially the right to vote, the state is biased in favour of men. However, their faith in the state's basic neutrality is reflected in the belief that any such bias can, and will, be overcome by a process of reform. In this sense, liberal feminists believe that all groups (including women) have potentially equal access to state power, and that this can be used impartially to promote justice and the common good. Liberal feminists have therefore usually viewed the state in positive terms, seeing state intervention as a means of redressing gender inequality and enhancing the role of women. This can be seen in campaigns for equal-pay legislation, the legalization of abortion, the provision of child-care facilities, the extension of welfare benefits, and so on. Nevertheless, a more critical and negative view of the state has been developed by **radical feminists,** who argue that state power reflects a deeper structure of oppression in the form of patriarchy.

There are a number of similarities between Marxist and radical-feminist views of state power. Both groups, for example, deny that the state is an autonomous entity bent upon the pursuit of its own interests. Instead, the state is understood, and its biases are explained, by reference to a 'deep structure' of power in society at large. Whereas Marxists place the state in an economic context, radical feminists place it in a context of gender inequality, and insist that it is essentially an institution of male power. In common with Marxism, distinctive instrumentalist and structuralist versions of this feminist position have been developed. The *instrumentalist* argument views the state as little more than an 'agent' or 'tool' used by men to defend their own interests and uphold the structures of patriarchy. This line of argument draws on the core feminist belief that patriarchy is upheld by the division of society into distinct 'public' and 'private' spheres of life. The subordination of women has traditionally been accomplished through their confinement to a 'private' sphere of family and domestic responsibilities, turning them into housewives and mothers, and through their exclusion from a 'public' realm centred upon politics and the economy. Quite simply, in this view, the state is run *by* men, and it is run *for* men.

Whereas instrumentalist arguments focus upon the personnel of the state, and particularly the state elite, *structuralist* arguments tend to emphasize the degree to which state institutions are embedded in a wider patriarchal system. Modern radical feminists have paid particular attention to the emergence of the welfare state, seeing it as the expression of a new kind of patriarchal power. Welfare (see p. 413) may uphold patriarchy by bringing about a transition from private dependence (in which women as 'home makers' are dependent on men as 'breadwinners') to a system of public dependence in which women are increasingly controlled by the institutions of the extended state. For instance, women have become increasingly dependent on the

Radical feminism: A form of feminism that holds gender divisions to be the most politically significant of social cleavages, and believes that they are rooted in the structure of domestic life.

state as clients or customers of state services (such as child-care institutions, nursery education and social work) and as employees, particularly in the so-called 'caring' professions (such as nursing, social work and education). Further, the extension of state responsibilities into traditionally female realms such as child rearing and caring has often merely created new forms of subordination. In particular, it has tended to reinforce the role of women as a **reserve army of labour,** with employers increasingly looking to women to provide a flexible, low-paid and usually submissive workforce.

The role of the state

Contrasting interpretations of state power have clear implications for the desirable role or responsibilities of the state. What should states do? What functions or responsibilities should the state fulfil, and which ones should be left in the hands of private individuals? In many respects, these are the questions around which electoral politics and party competition revolve. With the exception of anarchists, who dismiss the state as fundamentally evil and unnecessary, all political thinkers have regarded the state as, in some sense, worthwhile. Even revolutionary socialists, inspired by the Leninist slogan 'smash the state', have accepted the need for a temporary proletarian state to preside over the transition from capitalism to communism, in the form of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Nevertheless, there is profound disagreement about the exact role the state should play, and therefore about the proper balance between the state and civil society. Among the different state forms that have developed are the following:

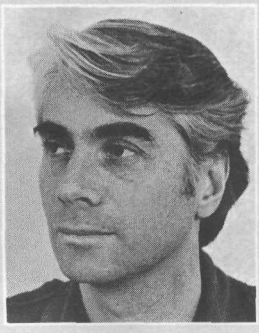
- the minimal state
- the developmental state
- the social-democratic state
- the collectivized state
- the totalitarian state.

Minimal states

The minimal state is the ideal of classical liberals, whose aim is to ensure that individuals enjoy the widest possible realm of freedom. This view is rooted in social-contract theory, but it nevertheless advances an essentially 'negative' view of the state. From this perspective, the value of the state is that it has the capacity to constrain human behaviour and thus to prevent individuals encroaching upon the **rights** and liberties of others. The state is merely a protective body, its core function being to provide a framework of peace and social order within which citizens can conduct their lives as they think best. In Locke's famous simile, the state acts as a night-watchman, whose services are called upon only when orderly existence is threatened. This nevertheless leaves the 'minimal' or 'nightwatchman' state with three core functions. First and foremost, the state exists to maintain domestic order. Second, it ensures that contracts or voluntary agreements made between private citizens are enforced, and third it provides protection against external attack. The institutional apparatus of a minimal state is thus limited to a police force, a court system and a military of some kind. Economic, social, cultural, moral and other responsibilities belong to the individual, and are therefore firmly part of civil society.

Reserve army of labour: An available supply of labour easily shed in times of recession; the 'army' enjoys no security and exercises little market power.

Rights: Legal or moral entitlements to act or be treated in a particular way; civil rights differ from human rights.



Robert Nozick (1938–2002)

US academic and political philosopher. Nozick's major work *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) is widely seen as one of the most important contemporary works of political philosophy, and it has had a profound influence upon New Right theories and beliefs. He developed a form of libertarianism that was close to Locke's and clearly influenced by nineteenth-century US individualists such as Spooner (1808–87) and Tucker (1854–1939). He argued that property rights should be strictly upheld, provided that wealth has been justly acquired in the first place or has been justly transferred from one person to another. This position means support for minimal government and minimal taxation, and undermines the case for welfare and redistribution. Nozick's rights-based theory of justice was developed in response to the ideas of John Rawls (see p. 58). In later life, Nozick modified his extreme libertarianism.

The cause of the minimal state has been taken up in modern political debate by the New Right. Drawing on early liberal ideas, and particularly on free-market or classical economic theories, the New Right has proclaimed the need to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'. In the writings of Robert Nozick this amounts to a restatement of Lockean liberalism based on a defence of individual rights, especially property rights. In the case of free-market economists such as Friedrich von Hayek (see p. 50) and Milton Friedman (see p. 185) state intervention is seen as a 'dead hand' that reduces competition, efficiency and productivity. From the New Right perspective, the state's economic role should be confined to two functions: the maintenance of a stable means of exchange or 'sound money' (low or zero inflation), and the promotion of competition through controls on monopoly power, price fixing and so on. Many portray Asian states such as Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia as modern-day examples of minimal states. However, this ignores the degree to which these states engage in economic management through guiding investment and emphasizing education and training.

Developmental states

The best historical examples of minimal states were those in countries such as the UK and the USA during the period of early industrialization in the nineteenth century. As a general rule, however, the later a country industrializes, the more extensive will be its state's economic role. In Japan and Germany, for instance, the state assumed a more active 'developmental' role from the outset. A developmental state is one that intervenes in economic life with the specific purpose of promoting industrial growth and economic development. This does not amount to an attempt to replace the market with a 'socialist' system of planning (see p. 186) and control, but rather to an attempt to construct a partnership between the state and major economic interests, often underpinned by conservative and nationalist priorities.

The classic example of a developmental state is Japan. During the Meiji Period in 1868-1912 the Japanese state forged a close relationship with the *zaibutsu*, the great family-run business empires that dominated the Japanese economy up to the Second World War. Since 1945 the developmental role of the Japanese state has been assumed by the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), which, together with the Bank of Japan, helps to shape private investment decisions and steer the Japanese economy towards international competitiveness. A similar

model of developmental intervention has existed in France, where governments of both left and right have tended to recognize the need for economic planning, and the state bureaucracy has seen itself as the custodian of the national interest. In countries such as Austria and, to some extent, Germany, economic development has been achieved through the construction of a 'partnership state', in which an emphasis is placed on the maintenance of a close relationship between the state and major economic interests, notably big business and organized labour. More recently, economic globalization (see p. 138) has fostered the emergence of 'competition states', examples of which are found amongst the **tiger economies** of East Asia. Their role is to develop strategies for national prosperity in a context of intensifying transnational competition.

Social-democratic states

Whereas developmental states practise interventionism in order to stimulate economic progress, social-democratic states intervene with a view to bringing about broader social restructuring, usually in accordance with principles such as fairness, equality (see p. 414) and **social justice.** In countries such as Austria and Sweden, state intervention has been guided by both developmental and social-democratic priorities. Nevertheless, developmentalism and social democracy do not always go hand in hand. As David Marquand (1988) pointed out, although the UK state was significantly extended in the period immediately after the Second World War along social-democratic lines, it failed to evolve into a developmental state. The key to understanding the social-democratic state is that there is a shift from a 'negative' view of the state, which sees it as little more than a necessary evil, to a 'positive' view of the state, in which it is seen as a means of enlarging liberty and promoting justice. The social-democratic state is thus the ideal of both modern liberals and democratic socialists.

Rather than merely laying down the conditions of orderly existence, the social-democratic state is an active participant, helping in particular to rectify the imbalances and injustices of a market economy. It therefore tends to focus less upon the generation of wealth and more upon what is seen as the equitable or just distribution of wealth. In practice, this boils down to an attempt to eradicate poverty and reduce social inequality. The twin features of a social-democratic state are therefore Keynesianism and social welfare. The aim of Keynesian economic policies is to 'manage' or 'regulate' capitalism with a view to promoting growth and maintaining full employment. Although this may entail an element of planning, the classic Keynesian strategy involves 'demand management' through adjustments in fiscal policy: that is, in the levels of public spending and taxation. The adoption of welfare policies has led to the emergence of so-called welfare states, whose responsibilities have extended to the promotion of social well-being amongst their citizens. In this sense, the social-democratic state is an 'enabling state', dedicated to the principle of individual empowerment.

Tiger economies: Fast-growing and export-orientated economies modelled on Japan: for example, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.

Social justice: A morally justifiable distribution of material rewards; social justice is often seen to imply a bias in favour of equality.

Collectivized states

While developmental and social-democratic states intervene in economic life with a view to guiding or supporting a largely private economy, collectivized states bring the entirety of economic life under state control. The best examples of such states

Concept

Statism

Statism (or, in French, *étatisme*) is the belief that state intervention is the most appropriate means of resolving political problems or bringing about economic and social development. This view is underpinned by a deep and perhaps unquestioning faith in the state as a mechanism through which collective action can be organized and common goals can be achieved. The state is thus seen as an ethical ideal (Hegel), or as serving the 'general will' or public interest. Statism is most clearly reflected in government policies that regulate and control economic life. These range from selective nationalization and economic management (sometimes called *dirigisme*, from the French *diriger*, to direct) to corporatism (see p. 275) (in both liberal and fascist forms), and Soviet-style state collectivization.

were in orthodox communist countries such as the USSR and throughout eastern Europe. These sought to abolish private enterprise altogether, and set up centrally planned economies administered by a network of economic ministries and planning committees. So-called 'command economies' were therefore established that were organized through a system of 'directive' planning that was ultimately controlled by the highest organs of the communist party. The justification for state **collectivization** stems from a fundamental socialist preference for common ownership over private property. However, the use of the state to attain this goal suggests a more positive attitude to state power than that outlined in the classical writings of Marx and Engels (1820-95).

Marx and Engels by no means ruled out nationalization, and Engels in particular recognized that, during the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', state control would be extended to include factories, the banks, transportation and so on. Nevertheless, they envisaged that the proletarian state would be strictly temporary, and that it would 'wither away' as class antagonisms abated. In contrast, the collectivized state in the USSR became permanent and increasingly powerful and bureaucratic. Under Stalin (see p. 55), socialism was effectively equated with Statism, the advance of socialism being reflected in the widening responsibilities and powers of the state apparatus. Indeed, after Khrushchev announced in 1962 that the dictatorship of the proletariat had ended, the state was formally identified with the interests of 'the whole Soviet peoples'.

Totalitarian states

The most extreme and extensive form of interventionism is found in totalitarian states. The essence of totalitarianism (see p. 29) is the construction of an all-embracing state, the influence of which penetrates every aspect of human existence. The state brings not only the economy but education, culture, religion, family life and so on under direct state control. The best examples of totalitarian states are Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR, although modern regimes such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq arguably have similar characteristics. The central pillars of such regimes are a comprehensive process of surveillance and terroristic policing, and a pervasive system of ideological manipulation and control. In this sense, totalitarian states effectively extinguish civil society and abolish the 'private' sphere of life altogether. This is a goal that only fascists, who wish to dissolve individual identity within the social whole, are prepared openly to endorse. It is sometimes argued that Mussolini's notion of a totalitarian state was derived from Hegel's belief in the state as an 'ethical community' reflecting the altruism and mutual sympathy of its members. From this perspective, the advance of human civilization can clearly be linked to the aggrandisement of the state and the widening of its responsibilities.

A 'hollow' state?

Although the state has traditionally been regarded as the central feature of political life, its role and significance are threatened by developments that became increasingly pronounced in the late twentieth century. This has occurred most dramatically in certain postcommunist countries and in parts of the developing world, where fractured or disintegrating state apparatuses confronted ethnic unrest or the growing

Collectivization: The abolition of private property in favour of a system of common or public ownership.

menace of organized crime. The result of this was the emergence of stateless nations, tribes and clans, notable examples being the Chechens in the Russian Federation, the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, the Kurds, the Tamils and the Ibos in Nigeria. Elsewhere, state decline has been less striking but still significant. It has consisted of what Jessop (1990) called 'hollowing out', an insidious process through which functions that once belonged to the state have gradually been transferred to other institutions and bodies. This is a process that has been brought about by three distinct but interrelated developments: globalization, 'rolling back' and restructuring, and the growth of Substate government.

Globalization

Perhaps the most significant threat to the state, or at least to the nation-state, is the process of globalization (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7). Globalization is, broadly, the process through which events and decisions in one part of the world have come to affect people in quite another part of the world. One manifestation of this is the emergence of a global economy, in which it has become increasingly difficult, and perhaps impossible, for any country to regulate the international flow of capital. The implications of this development for states are dramatic. For example, it means that the capacity of individual states to manage economic life and deliver general prosperity is limited, because 'national' economic strategies such as Keynesianism are virtually unworkable in a global context. Similarly, it has led to a general retreat from state welfarism, as intensified competition creates pressure for decreased taxes and lower labour costs. Another manifestation of this is that states have found it increasingly difficult to regulate multinational companies that can more easily relocate production and investment. Political globalization has had no less an impact, as reflected in the growing importance of international and supranational bodies such as the United Nations, the European Union (EU), NATO and the World Trade Organization. It is clear, for instance, that membership of the EU threatens state power, because a growing range of decisions (for example, on monetary policy, agricultural and fisheries policies, defence and foreign affairs) are made by European institutions rather than by member states.

Some argue that globalizing trends have effectively brought out the reconstruction of the state as it has been traditionally understood. Certainly, sovereignly, the defining feature of the state, is at an end, at least insofar as it implies supreme and exclusive rule. States now operate in post-sovereign conditions, in a context of interdependence and permeability. However, this may lead not so much to the twilight of the state as to the emergence of a different kind of state. Social-democratic states, like collectivized states, may have been consigned to the dustbin of history, but in their place have emerged 'competition' states that are better adjusted to the requirements of a globalized economy. The concerns of such states include, for instance, the need to strengthen education and training as the principal way of guaranteeing economic success in the new technology-dependent economy, the desire to increase market responsiveness by promoting entrepreneurialism and labour flexibility, and the need to combat social exclusion and bolster the moral foundations of society. Political globalization may also open up opportunities for the state as well as diminish them. This is expressed in the idea of 'pooled' sovereignty: the notion that states that would be weak and ineffective acting independently can acquire greater influence by working together with other states through the vehicle of international or regional

institutions. This can, for example, be seen in the fact that the EU Council of Ministers, the most powerful policy-making body in the Union, is very much a creature of its member states and provides a forum that allows national politicians to make decisions on a regional level.

Restructuring the state

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed, particularly in the USA and the UK, a determined assault on the state by governments inspired by New Right priorities and beliefs. This led to a 'rolling back' of the state through policies such as deregulation, **privatization** and the introduction of market reforms in the public services. Similar policies, however, were adopted elsewhere, perhaps most enthusiastically by the postcommunist regimes of central and eastern Europe in an attempt to dismantle their collectivized state machines. Although state contraction was hastened where a pro-market and anti-state philosophy of 'private, good; public, bad' was influential, it was also dictated by broader and more irresistible forces. Among these are the pressures generated by increased global competition and the need to develop more efficient and responsive means of developing public policy and delivering public services, linked to the shift from government to 'governance' (see p. 6). This latter idea reflects the fact that, as society has become more complex and fluid, new methods of governing have had to be devised that rely less on hierarchical state institutions, thus blurring the distinction between the state and society. The 'governance turn' in politics has been evident in a variety of tendencies. These include the growing trend to finance public programmes through private investment, the 'reinvention' of government through a move away from direct service provision to an 'enabling' or 'regulating' role, the increased use of quasi-governmental and private organizations to deliver public services, and the advent of the 'new public management', which has seen private-sector management techniques more widely adopted within government.

Substate governance

The final challenge to the state comes from the pressure for decentralization, the tendency to transfer responsibilities from national or central bodies to a local or community level. This process is by no means universal, but, in many parts of the world, the growing importance of community and ethnic politics has led to demands for the strengthening of local and regional bodies. For example, the creation of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly in 1999 brought the UK into line with other European states, such as Spain, France and Italy, in having a significant tier of devolved government. In the case of Scotland, this involves a considerable measure of elected self-government, and, arguably, amounts to 'quasi-federalism'. Moreover, centrifugal forces within the EU have led to the idea of a 'Europe of the regions', meaning that regional institutions and groups have increasingly sought direct access to EU bodies, thereby bypassing national governments. This has created patterns of **multi-level governance** within the EU, involving Substate, state and suprastate bodies, which are difficult to reconcile with the traditional notion of statehood. In its most dramatic form, however, centrifugal pressures have led to the reconstitution of state power or the overthrow of the state itself. Rising ethnic nationalism thus led in 1993 to the breakup of the Czechoslovakian state and the creation of separate Czech

Privatization: The transfer of state assets from the public to the private sector, reflecting a contraction of the state's responsibilities.

Multi-level governance: A complex policy process involving Subnational, national and supranational levels and governmental and non-governmental actors.

and Slovak ones, and in the early 1990s the Yugoslav state was torn apart by a civil war fuelled by a mixture of nationalist ambition and ethnic rivalry. Such forces are examined in greater depth in Chapter 8.

Summary

• The state is a political association that exercises sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders. In contrast to government, which is merely one of its parts, the state encompasses all public bodies and exercises impersonal authority on the basis of the assumption that it represents the permanent interests of society rather than the partisan sympathies of any group of politicians.

• There are a number of rival theories of the state. Pluralists hold that the state is a neutral body that arbitrates between the competing interests of society. Marxists argue that the state maintains the class system by either oppressing subordinate classes or ameliorating class conflict. The New Right portrays the state as a self-serving monster that is intent on expansion and aggrandisement. Radical feminists point to patriarchal biases within the state that support a system of male power.

• Those who support the state see it either as a means of defending the individual from the encroachments of fellow citizens or as a mechanism through which collective action can be organized. Critics, however, tend to suggest that the state reflects either the interests of dominant social groups, or interests that are separate from, and antithetical to, society.

• States have fulfilled very different roles. Minimal states merely lay down the conditions for orderly existence. Developmental states attempt to promote growth and economic development. Social-democratic states aim to rectify the imbalances and injustices of a market economy. Collectivized states exert control over the entirety of economic life. Totalitarian states bring about all-encompassing politicization and, in effect, extinguish civil society.

• The modern state is confronted by a variety of threats. Chief amongst these are: globalization in the form of economic interdependence and the emergence of supranational bodies; the 'rolling back' or 'hollowing out' of the state as responsibilities are transferred to private institutions; and decentralization through the transfer of responsibilities from state institutions to regional, provincial or local bodies.

Questions for discussion

- Would life in a state of nature really be 'nasty, brutish and short'?
- Does government control the state, or does the state control government?
- Can the state be viewed as a neutral body in relation to competing social interests?
- Does the nature and background of the state elite inevitably breed bias?
- What is the proper relationship between the state and civil society?
- How far can the state be 'hollowed out' before it ceases to be a state altogether?
- Does globalization mean that the state has become irrelevant?