

ELEMENTS OF THE STATE

In the light of the various definitions of the state, it is customary to identify the

state by its constituent elements which include: population, territory, government and sovereignty.

Population

The state is a human institution. The population is, therefore, an essential element

of the state. However, the population can constitute a state only when it is united by the condition of interdependence, consciousness of common interest, and

general regard for a set of common rules of behaviour and institutions.

The size of population for constituting a state cannot be fixed, yet it is always

better that such population is self-sufficient to meet all the needs of life. If it is

required to procure any goods or services from other states, it should usually be

able to pay for them, although the possibility of foreign aid, as a temporary measure, cannot be ruled out. In any case, economic self-sufficiency is essential

for the stability of a state.

The population of a state need not belong to a single race, religion, language or

culture. A homogeneous population is no longer considered an essential feature

of the modern state. The modern state claims to reconcile the interests of various

groups of its citizens.

Territory

Territory is another essential element of a state. Other associations either exist

within the state or they extend their sphere to several states; they do not need

separate territory. But the state must possess a territory where its authority is accepted without dispute or challenge.

A state comes into existence only when its population is settled in a fixed territory. Friedrich Engels, in his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the*

State (1884), notes that the formation of the state is accompanied by a division of

population according to territory. In the pre-state society when people live as

nomadic tribes, moving from one place to another in search of food, the members

of the tribe are held together by the ties of kinship. With the formation of the state, citizens are allowed to exercise their rights and duties wherever they settle,

irrespective of gens and tribes. The organization of citizens according to locality

is the common feature of all states.

Some writers, like John Seeley (1834-95), hold that a fixed territory is not an

essential aspect of a state. The nomadic tribes, who do not possess fixed territory,

do constitute a state. This view is, however, no longer held valid. The nomadic

tribes do have the institution of authority, or even government with custom-based law, but not a state. Political sociologists concede the existence of a 'political

system' in such communities, but their organization still does not qualify to be a

state. Moreover, the modern state is not a matter of internal organization; it needs

international recognition as well, so as to enjoy its rights and perform its duties as

a member of the comity of nations. International law regards possession of a

fixed territory as the essential attribute of the state. Demarcation of physical boundaries is, therefore, essential for establishing the real identity of a state.

The territory of a state includes the land, water and air-space within its boundary.

It also extends usually to a distance of three miles into the sea from its coast, and

is known as territorial waters, which may be sought to be extended further in

times of war.