CHAPTER I

THE FRAMEWORK
The problematic of the institution of 'State' is one of the most important, if not, the central concern of Marxist social theory. Marx and Engels studied the origin of the State, analysed its nature and character and examined its functions in different social formations. Besides their anatomical and physiological scanning of the state, their attention was seized by its another important aspect, i.e., its role in the transitional (Socialist) society and its eventual withering away. Their understanding of this problematic was developed through their different works and in different periods. After Marx and Engels, V.I. Lenin made the most notable contribution to the Marxist theory of state before and after the October Revolution. On the question of strategy and tactics to be adopted by the proletariat, Lenin entered into polemics not only with anarchists - like the one between Marx-Engels and the Bakuninists during the period of the First International - but also with Mensheviks before the revolution.

That is to say the organizational principles of the working class party were not the only issue of quarrel between
Lenin and the Mensheviks andrevisionists. On the contrary, the main foci of the whole controversy revolved around the following questions: (a) How to prosecute the working class struggle for a socialist revolution; (b) how to organize and exercise the political power of the working class after the revolution; (c) what will be the nature and role of the state during the transitional period; and (d) what would be the dialectics of withering away of the state. In the aftermath of the October Revolution and founding of the Soviet state, the last of the three above raised questions greatly preoccupied Lenin's thinking on the problem of the state.

The laying down of foundations of socialism in the USSR by 1936, socialist reconstruction after the Second World War and the building of what was described as "developed socialist society" introduced new elements in the Marxist theory of the state in general and the Soviet state in particular. The dialectics of transition of a socialist society have raised over a period of time important questions such as (a) dynamics of the evolution of the state in a socialist society, (b) its nature and role, and (c) the nature of the process of the withering away of the State in a transitional society. We, therefore, notice that the issues regarding the state in Marxist theory in general and the theory of the Soviet State in particular have been discussed and debated again and again. This is precisely due to different
circumstances which raised and reraised questions about the state in theory because they raised them in practice.

The problematic of the state in the Marxist theory can be understood only by isolating and then unifying all the elements of Marx's, Engels's and Lenin's thinking on state. And then to discover in this unity a determinate content which makes it possible both to conceive the meaning of the elements of the concept 'State' and then to relate this problematic to the actualization of the reality. Therefore, we intend to identify the various elements of state as analysed by Marx and Engels and supplemented by Lenin to have a holistic view of the Marxist theory of state.

ELEMENTS OF MARXIST THEORY OF STATE

The elements that constitute the core of the thinking of Marx -Engels and Lenin on state can be identified at the epistemological and ontological levels which may be listed as follows - nature of the State (epistemology); origin and functions of the State (ontology); and the withering away of the State.

(1) **Nature of the State (Epistemology)**

Though Marx never endeavoured to build a comprehensive and systematic theory of the state, the crucial
importance of the state in his scheme of analysis is well vindicated by his constantly recurring references to it in almost all of his works. In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels defined the nature of the state and its relationship to the bourgeois society. They wrote: "By the mere fact that it is a class and no longer an estate, the bourgeoisie is forced to organise itself no longer locally, but nationally and to give a general form to its average interests."¹ This "general form" to them is the state further defined as: "Nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeoisie are compelled to adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interests."² Elaborating further the nature of the state, they wrote:

> Since the state is the form in which the individuals of a ruling class assert their common interests and in which the whole civil society of an epoch is epitomised, it follows that all common institutions are set up with the help of the state and are given a political form. ³

Hence, the state is the reflection of the common interests of the ruling classes in their political form.

The state is also an expression of antagonism in civil society. These antagonisms are products of the conflicting

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
interests between the rulers and the ruled. This aspect of the nature of the state is brought into sharp focus by Marx in The Poverty of Philosophy:

The working class, in the course of its development will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism and there will be no more political power properly so called since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society. 4

Here Marx substitutes political power for 'state'.

The further treatment of nature of state, rather the entire thinking of Marx and Engels on this subject is most explicitly formulated in The Communist Manifesto: "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." 5

Amplifying the idea further in the same work they proclaimed that the "political power properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another". 6

Twenty years later the Paris Commune reraised the question of nature of state in theory because it raised it at the practical level. In the light of most practical revolutionary


6 Ibid., p. 127.
experiences, it was logical for Marx to reconsider the question of the nature and role of the proletarian state in its totality and elaborate his ideas more concretely in his book - The Civil War in France. Much later in 1891 Engels endorsed Marx's views in a new introduction to this book wherein he wrote: "In reality, however, the state is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another". Engels' monumental work Origin of the Family Private Property and State provided the most succinct exposition of the Marxist idea of state. He wrote:

Because the State arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which through the medium of the State, becomes also the politically dominant class and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed classes. 8

(ii) Origin and Functions of the State (Ontology)

According to the Marxist theory, the state has not existed from time immemorial. It came into being at a particular stage of the development of society. Engels in

his most notable work remarked:

The state, then, has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development which was necessarily bound up with the split of the society into classes, the state becomes a necessity owing to this split. 9

Since the state did not exist from the beginning of the society, it follows logically that it is not a permanent phenomenon and, therefore, it will not exist till eternity. The form of the state keeps on changing with the changes in the material conditions (modes and relations of production). Contradictions between various classes give rise to class struggle. And class struggle unleashes the process of changes in material and political conditions of the society. Hence, at a particular stage of the social development, as Engels forecasts, the process of the withering away of the state also sets in. Engels elaborates this idea:

We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes not will have ceased to be a necessity, but will become a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they arose at an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. Society, which will reorganise production on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers will put the whole machinery of state where it will then belong: into the museum of antiquities, by the side of the spinning wheel and the bronze axe. 10

9 Ibid., p.170.
10 Ibid.
The existence of the state, therefore, is linked with the existence of classes in society. The state will disappear with the disappearance of classes from the society. The state, therefore, has a transitory character.

(iii) The Withering away of the State

As the origins and nature of the state preoccupied the thinking of Marx and Engels, they were likewise equally concerned about constructing the theory of a workers' state, i.e., the conquest of political power by the working class as the first stage of the proletarian revolution. Interestingly this theory was developed as much in conflict with anarchism as with bourgeois-democratic reformism. Marx's The Poverty of Philosophy ends with the following note:

Does this mean that after the fall of the old society there will be a new class domination culminating in a new political power? No.

The condition for the emancipation of working class is the abolition of all classes, just as the condition for the emancipation of the third estate, of the bourgeois order was the abolition of all estates and all orders. The working class, in the course of its development will substitute for the old civil society an association which will exclude classes and their antagonism, and there will be no more political power properly so called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society. 11

11 K. Marx, n. 4, p. 161.
Marx here envisages a working class revolution and, through the revolution, he implies the emancipation of the oppressed class and necessarily the creation of a new society.

**Marx's and Engels's Anti-Statism and Withering Away of the State**

The Communist Manifesto refers to the replacement of the old state by the new proletarian state, though not directly. The following passage comes right after the Manifesto's ten-point programme discussing how the proletariat will use its political supremacy:

When, in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing the another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. 12

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This passage simultaneously emphasizes the need for the replacement of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class by the working class and the transitional character of the state after the seizure of political power by the proletariat. The words "in the course of development" are remarks on the transitional nature of political power. The idea about the transitional character of the state finds further elaboration in Marx's letter to J. Weydemeyer: He wrote:

And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did, that was new, was to prove: (1) that the existence of the classes is only bound up with particular historical phase in the development of production, (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, (3) that this dictatorship only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society. 13

The contents of this letter are a clear formulation of materialist dialectical view of the transitory nature of the society. In the course of its struggle against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie the proletariat establishes its own dictatorship (the dictatorship of the working class has historical origins in the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie).

13 K. Marx, "Letter to J. Weydemeyer in New York, March 5, 1852", in Selected Works, n. 5, p. 528.
But the dictatorship of the proletariat is established not only to do away with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie but also to create conditions for its own disappearance. Therefore, it is only transitory in nature. The dictatorship of the proletariat is essentially its organized political power. The transitory character of political power of the working class—organized as the dictatorship of the proletariat—means only the denaturing of the political power of the bourgeoisie and its state and not the complete abolition of all powers or all forms of State.

The Paris Commune Model and the Withering Away of the State

As stated earlier, the Paris Commune reraised the questions about the theory of state because these questions were raised by the actualization of theory. Analysing the experiences of the Paris Commune Marx concluded: "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes."\(^\text{14}\) It is quite interesting to note here that Marx does not exhort the working class to abolish completely the machinery of the state immediately through the revolution, but to give it a new form because it cannot use the old state machinery for its own purposes,

i.e. to fight out the bourgeoisie and to completely do away with all types of state.

The events of the Paris Commune coincided with a fierce controversy both within and outside the First International - The International Working Men's Association founded in 1864 - between the Marxists and Anarchists (led by Michael Bakunin) regarding the abolition of the institution of the state.

In spite of the major differences between Marxists and Anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state both shared the commonality of the goal, i.e., a self-regulating classless society bereft of government and law. This means that both the schools of thought deny the permanence of state. Yet, they clashed on the question of tactics to be applied to achieve that goal. The theoretical questions about the state in theory which were raised by the Marxists and Anarchists can be formulated as follows:

- The manner in which the struggle for socialist revolution ought to be prosecuted (proponents of working class action vs. political indifferentists).

- Immediate abolition or a temporary worker's state? (Role of state in the transition period) First act of the revolution or ultimate end.

Anarchism was hostile to the idea of the proletariat organizing itself into a political party or vanguard party for
itself. And Bakunin, the Chief protagonist of Anarchism, differentiated the anarchists from the communists in his Paris Commune and the Idea of State. He wrote:

The Communists imagine they can attain their goal by development and organisation of the political power of the working classes, and chiefly of the proletariat of the cities, aided by bourgeois radicalism. The revolutionary socialists (Anarchists), on the other hand, believe they can succeed only through the development and organisation of the non-political or antipolitical social power of the working classes in city and country, including all men of goodwill from the upper-classes who break with their past and wish openly to join them and accept their revolutionary programme in full.

This divergence leads to a difference in tactics. The communists believe it necessary to organise the workers' forces in order to seize the political power of the state. The revolutionary socialists organise for the purpose of destroying - or to put it more politely - liquidating the state.

Bakunin was thus advocating political indifferentism on the part of the working class and some kind of conspiratorial activity for the overthrow and abolition of the state. Marx clearly insisting on the 'Political action of the working class', and a resolution to this effect was passed by the London Conference of the International which subsequently led to the split of the organization itself. Through this resolution Marx and Engels argued for working class's political action...
In the following manner:

In the presence of an unbridled reaction which violently crushes every effort at emancipation on the part of the working men, and pretends to maintain by brute force the distinction of classes and the political domination of the propertied classes from it;

Considering that against this political power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes;

That this constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end - the abolition of classes...

That in militant state of the working class, its economical movement and its political action are indissolubly united. 16

Despite Bakunin's attack on the General Council's (of the International Working Men's Association) "authoritarianism" and his hostility to the concept of working class party, he recognized, as clearly as did Marx, the need for revolutionary leadership. But the differences again emerged on the question of the 'nature of leadership'. Bakunin's insistence that the working class organize itself not as an 'authoritarian' party but as an embryonic new society, was his construction of a hidden leadership, immune to democratic control, to carry out the insurrectionary overthrow of the state.

Relation Between State and Authority

Anarchism was not only hostile to the working class political action and its organizing itself into a political party, but it also rejected theoretically any authority both before and after the revolution. Rejection of the state was, after all, the most vital aspect of the anarchists' total rejection of any type of authority. This rejection extends also - even especially - to the most genuinely democratic authority, that can be conceived. In his *Statism and Anarchy*, Bakunin rejected all forms of authority in the following words:

 Every state power, every government, by its very nature places itself outside and over the people and inevitably subordinates them to an organisation and to aims which are foreign to and opposed to the real needs and aspirations of the people. We declare ourselves the enemies of every government and every state power, and of governmental organisation in general. We think that the people can be free and happy only when organised from the bottom up in completely free and independent associations, without governmental paternalism though not without the influence of a variety of free individuals and parties. 17

In spite of its scheme of control from "bottom up" anarchism is as hostile on principle to the authority of a government which is democratically controlled from below, however ideally, as it is to a despotic government. So the

17 Dolgoff, n. 15, p. 328.
main question for Bakuninists was not anti-statism but authority. Therefore, Marx and Engels had to consider the same distinction for the theoretical demolition of the anarchist position on authority. Engels demolished it in a letter:

In this society (the Bakuninist ideal future society) there will be above all no authority for authority = state = absolute evil. (How these people propose to run a factory, operate a railway or steer a ship without a will that decides in the last resort, without single management, they of course do not tell us). The authority of the majority over the minority also ceases. Every individual and every community is autonomous; but as to how a society of even only two people is possible unless each gives up some of his autonomy, Bakunin again maintains silence. 18

Therefore, there is no dialectical thinking in the anarchist rejection of all authority. And its rejection of all 'authority' not only makes society unviable but democracy impossible.

The anarchist conception of 'authority' received the final blow from Engels in 1872. He disposed off the question in his article "On Authority" in the following words:

Why do the anti-authoritarians not confine themselves to crying out against political authority, the state? All socialists are agreed that the political state and with it political authority, will disappear as a result of the coming social revolution, that is, the public functions will lose their political character and be transformed

into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of the society. But the anti-authoritarians demand that the authoritarian political state be abolished at one stroke, even before the social conditions that gave birth to it have been destroyed. They demand that the first act of the social revolution shall be the abolition of authority. Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon - authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough? 19

Immediate Abolition of the State or a Proletarian State? (Role of the State in the Transition Period)

Another important aspect of the theory of the state that became the focus of Marx's and Engels' analysis and also the one which generated a great deal of debate between the Marxists and the Anarchists, was the question: whether the state should be immediately abolished after the seizure of the power by the working class or not, and whether it is the first act of the proletarian revolution or its ultimate end.

In September 1870, on the fall of Napoleon III, a genuine popular uprising had taken place in Lyons (France), a working class stronghold. Thereupon, Bakunin rushed over to take the personal command of his small group in the city. The day he arrived, a new city council was being elected under the auspices of the "Committee of Public Safety", but no one really knew what to do with their control of the City Hall. Immediately on his arrival Bakunin issued the decree on the abolition of the state, thereby insisting that the abolition of the state had to be the first act of revolution. This was an undialectical and unhistorical view of the relationship between the state and the social order as explained by Engels in a letter to T. Cuno:

Bakunin has a peculiar theory of his own, a medley of Proudhonism and Communism. The chief point concerning the former is that he does not regard capital, i.e., the class antagonism between capitalists and wage workers which has arisen through social development, but the state as the main evil to be abolished. While the great mass of the Social-Democratic workers hold our view that state power is nothing more than the organisation which the ruling classes - landowners and capitalists - have provided for themselves in order to protect their social privileges, Bakunin maintains that it is the state which has created capital, that the capitalist has his capital only by the grace of the state. As, therefore, the state is the chief evil, it is above all the state which must be done away with and then capitalism will go to blazes of itself. We, on the contrary, say: Do away with capital, the concentration of all means of production in the hands of the few, and the state will fall of itself. The difference is an essential one: without a previous social revolution the abolition of the state is
nonsense; the abolition of the capital is precisely the social revolution and involves a change in the whole mode of production. Now then, inasmuch as to Bakunin the state is the main evil, nothing must be done which can keep the state - that is, any state, whether it be a republic, a monarchy or anything else - alive. Hence complete abstention from all politics. To commit a political act, especially to take part in an election would be a betrayal of principle. 20

Therefore, the first act of the proletariat in a revolution is, according to Marx and Engels, to organize itself as a ruling class and through its dictatorship to change the social conditions which gave birth to the state. The revolution begins to denature the state through the organization of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The bourgeois state is replaced by a worker's state and immediately sets in motion the process of abolition of capital and the whole mode of production. This dialectical interaction between the workers' state and changing material conditions initiates the process of withering away of the state. So what happens immediately after the revolution is not the anarchist type of abolition of the state but the qualitative changes in the type of the state. Engels reiterated his earlier position against the Anarchists on the question of the abolition of the state summarily, in a later letter written in English to an American correspondent:

20 Ibid., pp. 424-5.
Marx and I, ever since 1845, have held the view that one of the final results of the future proletarian revolution will be the gradual dissolution and ultimate disappearance of that political organisation called the state; an organisation, the main object of which had ever been to secure, by armed force, the economic subjection of the working majority to the wealthy minority. With the disappearance of the wealthy minority the necessity for an armed repressive state-force disappears also. The proletariat must first take state power itself. Yet the anarchists reverse the matter. They say, that the proletarian revolution has to begin by abolishing the political organisation of the state. 21

The issue regarding the rule of the working class during the transition period also came under sharp attack from the anarchists. Bakunin launched a systematic attack on the Marxist concept of dictatorship of the proletariat (rule of proletariat). He expressed his aversion to the Marxist theory of the state in the following words:

We have already expressed several times our deep aversion to the theory of Lassalle and Marx, which recommends to the workers, if not as a final ideal, at least, as the next immediate goal, the founding of a people's state, which according to their interpretation will be nothing but the proletariat elevated to the status of the governing class.

Let us ask, if the proletariat is to be the ruling class, over whom is it to rule? In

short, there will remain another proletariat which will be subdued to this new rule, to this new state. 22

Marx explained the reasons for the necessity of the working class rule - and its dictatorship - in his "Conspectus of Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy". He commented:

It means that so long as other classes, especially the capitalist class, still exists, so long as the Proletariat struggles with it (for when it attains government power, its enemies and the old organisation of the society have not yet vanished), it must employ forcible means, hence governmental means. It is itself still a class and the economic conditions from which the class struggle and the existence of classes derive have still not disappeared and must forcibly be either removed out of the way or transformed, this transformation process being forcibly hastened. 23

Bakunin treats the institution of state as domination and slavery - even the transitional state of the working class - irrespective of its class character. According to him -

If there is a state, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the state without slavery is unthinkable and this is why we are the enemies of the state.

What does it mean, the proletariat organised as a ruling class. 24

22 Dolgoff, n. 15, p. 330.
And Marx clarifies:

It means that the proletariat instead of struggling sectionally against the economically privileged class, has attained a sufficient strength and organisation to employ general means of coercion in this struggle. It can, however, only use such economic means as abolish its own character as salariat, hence as class. With its complete victory its own rule thus also ends, as its class character has disappeared. 25

Bakunin points out the contradictions in the Marxist theory and demands the immediate abolition of the state:

They say that the only care and objective, will be to educate and elevate the people economically and politically to such a degree that such a government will soon become unnecessary and the state after losing its political or coercive character, will automatically develop into a completely free organisation of economic interests and communes.

There is a flagrant contradiction in this theory. If their state would be really of the people, why eliminate it? And if the state is needed to emancipate the workers, then the workers are not free, so why call it a people's state? 26

Marx reiterates the need for the retention of the proletarian state during the transition period for ultimate abolition of the state. According to him:

25 K. Marx, n. 23, p. 335.
26 Dolgoff, n. 15, p. 331.
Aside from the harping of Leibknecht's Volksstaat (People's State) which is nonsense, counter to the Communist Manifesto, etc., it only means that as the proletariat still acts, during the period of struggle for the overthrow of the old society, on the basis of that old society and hence also still moves within political forms which more or less belong to it, it has not yet, during this period of struggle, attained its final constitution, and employs means for its liberation, which after this liberation fall aside. Mr Bakunin concludes from this that it is better to do nothing at all...just wait for the day of the general liquidation - the last judgement. 27

The Process of Withering Away of the State

Engels in his essay "On Authority", written in 1872, cryptically remarked that as the state disappeared, "Public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of the society". 28 This idea was repeated by Marx and Engels in another work of the same year:

Anarchy, then, is the great war-horse of their master Bakunin, who has taken nothing from the socialist systems except a set of slogans. All socialists see anarchy as the following programme: once the aim of the proletarian movement i.e., abolition of classes, is attained, the power of the state, which serves to keep the great majority of producers in bondage to a very small exploiter minority, disappears, and the functions of government become simple administrative functions. The Alliance (Bakuninist) draws an

27 Marx, n. 23, p. 338.

entirely different picture. It proclaims anarchy in proletarian ranks as the most infallible means of breaking the powerful concentration of social and political forces in the hands of the exploiters. 29

During the process of withering away the state would lose its political character - repressive and coercive character - i.e., repression and coercion of erstwhile exploiting classes (eliminated through the change in the mode of production and the ensuing class struggle). Yet, there would still be public and administrative functions to be organized as stated above. In his "Critique of the Gotha Programme", Marx poses two questions as follows:

The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in Communist Society? In other words, what social functions will remain in existence there, that are analogous to present state functions. 30

Marx leaves the questions unanswered and straightaway refers to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore, he is not referring to the fully developed or a very advanced stage of communist society but to a workers state that replaces the capitalist state. This is a state, which is in the course of gradual dissolution. The nature of the


process of withering away of the state is gradual and spontaneous, though gradualness does not exclude jumps.

**The State which is No Longer a State**

The transitional state - the workers' power - is a new type of state. This state creates the social conditions whereby the governmental functions (political character) are becoming purely administrative or public functions. And it is a state which is in the process of becoming a non-state. This dialectical proposition finds its formulation in one of Engels's letters in which he carried somewhat further Marx's ideas of the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. In this letter Engels polemized against the Lassallean formula of the free state. He argued:

The free people's state is transformed into the free state. Taken in its grammatical sense, a free state is one where the state is free in relation to its citizens, hence a state with a despotic government. The whole talk about the state should be dropped, especially since the commune, which was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word. The people's state has been thrown in our faces by Anarchists to the point of disgust, although already Marx's book against Proudhon (*The Poverty of Philosophy*) and later the Communist Manifesto directly declare that with the introduction of the socialist order of society, the state will dissolve of itself and disappear. As, therefore, the state is only a transitional institution which is used in the struggle, in the revolution to hold down ones adversaries by force, it is pure non-sense to talk of free people's state; so long as the proletariat still uses the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries, and
as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist. We should, therefore, propose to replace state everywhere by Gemeinwesen a good old German word which can very well convey the meaning of the French word 'Commune'. 31

Engels is here spelling out the idea which is implicitly contained that the commune state, i.e., any worker's state is not merely a state with a different class rule but a new type of state altogether. In "Anti-Duhring" Engels settled two most important questions of the theory of proletarian state; what is that "abolishes the state as state? The relevant passage on the subject is the continuation of the 1875 discussion. It begins with the statement that the proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production in the first instance into state property. It also begins and ends with the abolition of the state. The passage runs as follows:

The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production in the first instance into state property.

But, in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonism, had need of the state, that is, of an organisation of the particular class, which

was pro-tempore the exploiting class, for the maintenance of its external conditions of production and, therefore, especially for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression. Corresponding with the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage labour), the state was the official representative of society as a whole; the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only, in so far, as it was the state of the class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole in ancient times the state of the slave owning citizens, in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of the society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be oppressed and a special repressive force, a State is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and by the conduct of the process of production. The state is not "abolished". It dies out. This gives the measure of the value of the phrase "a free state", both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists for the abolition of the state out of hand. 32

Engels while revising this section of the Anti-Duhring as 'Socialism Utopian and Scientific' added the following:

Socialised production upon a pre-determined plan becomes, henceforth, possible. The development of production makes the existence of different classes of society thenceforth an anchronism. In proportion as anarchy in social production vanishes, the political authority of the state dies out. Man, at last the master of his own form of social organisation, becomes at the same time the lord over nature, his own master - free.

This act of man becoming free - act of universal liberation - is the demise of the state.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, the ideas of Marx and Engels on the theory of the transitional socialist state, can be summarized as follows:

(i) That the proletariat first seizes political power (state power) and uses this power (dictatorship of the proletariat) to turn the means of reproduction in the first instance into state property;

(ii) This act on the part of the working class is the abolition of the bourgeois state - denaturing of the state - and weilding the new state and its apparatus for its own purposes;

(iii) Between the capitalist and communist societies lies the revolutionary transition period (dictatorship of the proletariat);

(iv) During the transition period production is socialized (abolition of the private ownership of the means of production) and re-determined planned production leads to the abolition of all class distinctions;

(v) With the disappearance of classes from society, the political authority of the state also vanishes (dies out) - the state withers away but something is still left of the state after its political authority is gone. The political functions give away to the administration of things; and

(vi) The worker's state is a new type of state. It is a state which is in the process of becoming a non-state. The state is not abolished, it withers away.

**Marxist Theory of State: Lenin's Formulations**

Following Marx and Engels, Lenin also concentrated and spent a great deal of his energy on an exhaustive study of Marx and Engels on the question of the state with a view to defining and outlining the long-term strategic objectives of the global socialist revolution.
Lenin's most celebrated work *The State and Revolution* was an exercise in building a coherent theory of the state. Lenin picks up threads from the writings of Marx and Engels on the question of state and reconstructs the proper Marxist attitude towards the state.

**Reconstruction of the Marxist Theory of State**

Lenin begins his reconstruction of the proper Marxist attitude towards the state with the conventional Marxian hypothesis - "The state is a product of and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms".\(^{34}\) It is pre-eminently a coercive agency comprising "special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc. at their command",\(^{35}\) which are used to defend the interests of a specific class. According to Engels' account, there had been a time when the functions of policing and defending society had been assumed by the entire population organized as an armed force. With the division of society into classes, this arrangement was replaced and the state arrogated these functions to itself and progressively absorbed all the public functions of the society. And to Lenin, "This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into

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The state is made of special bodies of armed men, acting separately from the people in arms under the control of a specific class. Lenin wrote: "It is a special force for the suppression of the oppressed classes."

The state is the product and reflection of class antagonisms within the society. The more acute and irreconcilable these antagonisms become, the more the power of the state has to be augmented to hold them in check. Marx's description of Louis Bonapart's regime was further elaborated by Lenin in his analysis of the historical evolution of the state to its perfected form as the imperialist state.

**Metamorphosis of the Imperialist State**

Lenin's most singular contribution to the Marxist theory of state is his analysis and emphasis upon the changed character of the bourgeois state in the epoch of imperialism. Describing the metamorphosis, Lenin wrote:

The imperialist war has immensely accelerated and intensified the process of transformation of monopoly capitalism into state monopoly capitalism. The monstrous oppression of the working people by the state, which is merging more and more with the all-powerful capitalist associations, is becoming increasingly

36 Ibid., p. 393.

37 Ibid., p. 403.
monstrous. The advanced countries - we mean their hinterland - are becoming military convict prisons for the workers. 38

Therefore, according to Lenin, the state, in its imperialist form, had become a monster threatening to swallow up social life in its entirety. He elaborates it further:

The turn towards imperialism - meaning the complete domination of the trusts, the omnipotence of the big banks, a grand scale colonial policy, and so forth, has brought the swallowing of all the forces of society by the rapacious state power close to complete catastrophe. 39

While analysing the monopoly stage of capitalism, Lenin was convinced that imperialism had given rise to an historically specific form of the bourgeois state, its final perfected form, in which the bureaucracy of the state capitalist trust, bolstered by the swollen military apparatus it had created, exercised untramelled power. The survival of the brutal and oppressive state in its imperialist form threatened war upon war and threatened, too, to absorb or vanquish the working class movement itself. The imperative to revolt, to rouse the masses to heroic action to smash the state, was directly derived from this analysis of imperialism

38 Ibid., p. 387.
39 Ibid., p. 396.
and its state form. The tasks of the proletarian revolution was the destruction of the imperialist state machine. And Lenin saw clearly the movement of world history in this direction when he wrote:

Imperialism - the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state - monopoly - capitalism has clearly shown an extraordinary strengthening of the 'state machine' and an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in monarchical and in the freest, republican countries.

World history is now undoubtedly leading, on an incomparably larger scale than in 1852, to the 'concentration of all the forces' of the proletarian revolution on the destruction of the state machine. 40

The Leninist Alternative

The alternative to the bourgeois state, according to Lenin, was the proletarian state. In the midst of the revolutionary situation in October 1917, he emphasized the need of a proletarian state - a new state. He wrote:

We need a state, but not the kind the bourgeoisie needs, with organs of government in the shape of police force, an army and a bureaucracy (officialdom) separate from and opposed to the people. All bourgeois revolutions merely perfected this state machine, merely transferred it from the hands of the one party to those of another.

40 Ibid., p. 415.
The proletariat, on the other hand, if it wants to uphold the gains of the present revolution and proceed further, to win peace, bread and freedom, must "smash", to use Marx's expression, this "ready made" state machine and substitute a new one for it by merging the police force, the army and the bureaucracy with the entire armed people. 41

Lenin, therefore, defines the objective of the Marxists, which was to smash the state. This objective is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the state and the principal lessons of Marxism. Lenin, therefore, defines the task of the proletariat vis-a-vis the bourgeois state in crystal clear terms: "The words to smash the bureaucratic-military machine briefly express the principal lessons of Marxism regarding the tasks of the proletariat during the revolution in relation to the state." 42

The Nature of the Transitional State

The content of the alternative social organization which was to replace the state was, of course, the Commune or the Soviet form. Lenin before committing to a revolutionary assault against the existing state, successfully demonstrated:

41 Ibid., vol. 23, p. 325.
42 Ibid., vol. 25, p. 420.
(i) That the general outlines of the forms of socialist organization had been established by Marx in his account of the Paris Commune;

(ii) That the concrete organizational forms which Marx had outlined were mirrored in the Soviets; and

(iii) That not only were the organizational foci for the reintegration of public functions with the whole of society were at hand in Russia, the feasibility of such a reintegration was assured by the simplified economic/administrative mechanisms which imperialism itself had produced.

By April 1917, in his famous thesis on "The Task of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution", Lenin had grasped Marx's model of the Paris Commune and he drew a parallel between the features of the Commune and the Soviets. He very emphatically insisted that a return to parliamentary republic would be the most retrograde step that the proletariat must press instead for a republic of Soviets and for - "the abolition of the police, the army and the bureaucracy. The salaries of all officials, all of whom are elective and dispensable at any time, not to exceed the average wage of a competent worker." 43

43 Ibid., vol. 24, p. 23.
In his "Notes in Defence of the April Theses", Lenin for the first time makes explicit his identification of the Commune with the Soviets: "We must ably, carefully, clear people's minds and lead the proletariat and poor peasants forward, away from 'dual power' towards the full power of the Soviets of worker's deputies, and this is the commune in Marx's sense in the sense of the experience of 1871." 44

In the summer of 1917, when Lenin was writing The State and Revolution, he insisted in almost all of his articles written during that period that only a state of the Commune type could possibly deliver Russia from economic catastrophe and only a state of this type could provide the basis for the socialist transformation of the country. These objectives could, however, only be realized if the Soviets brought the situation of dual power to an immediate end. Only if the Soviets took over all power in the state, could they hope to encourage, direct and train the initiative and spontaneous creativity of the popular masses. Every effort, according to Lenin, must be directed for stimulating the chief symptom of every proletarian revolution: "On the unusually rapid, sudden and abrupt increase in the number of ordinary citizens who begin to participate actively, independently and effectively, in political life and in the organisation

44 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
of the state." 45

For Lenin, destruction of the standing army and the police and the reintegration of their functions with society at large was pre-eminently practical objective of the utmost importance. It was Lenin's chief aim that the coercive military power of the Provisional Government should be comprehensively eroded, for only in this way it was possible to prevent the slide from reaction to restoration. The whole object of the commune was to take power, coercive, administrative and economic functions out of the hands of the state and place it in the hands of the armed people:

It is quite easy (as history proper) to revert from a parliamentary bourgeois republic to a monarchy, for all the machinery of oppression - the army, the police, and the bureaucracy is left intact. The Commune and the Soviets smash that machinery and do away with it.

The parliamentary republic hampers and stifles the independent political life of the masses, their direct participation in the democratic organisation of the life of the state from the bottom up. The opposite is the case with the Soviets.

The latter reproduce the type of state which was being evolved by the Paris Commune and which Marx described as 'the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour'. 46

46 Ibid., p. 69.
The heart and soul of the Commune is the people's militia. The militia becomes, according to Lenin, the coercive, executive and organizing arms of the Soviet/Commune state. In and through it, the public functions arrogated by the state become the property of the people in arms. Lenin exhorts the people in this effort:

Democracy must be built at once, from below through the initiative of the masses themselves, through their effective participation in all fields of state activity without 'supervision' from above, without the bureaucracy.

Replacement of police, the bureaucracy, and the standing army by the universal arming of the whole people, by a universal militia of the entire people, women included, is a practical job that can and should be tackled immediately. The more initiative, variety, daring and creativeness, the masses contribute the better.

Our proposals are:
- not to allow the restoration of the Police
- not to allow the restoration of the absolute powers of officials who in effect are undisplaceable and who belong to the landowner or the capitalist class.
- not to allow the restoration of the standing army separate from the people, for such an army is the surest guarantee that attempts of all kinds will be made to stamp out freedom and restore the monarchy.
- to teach the people, down to the very bottom, the art of government not only in theory but in practice, by beginning to make immediate use everywhere of the experience of the masses.
Democracy from below, democracy without an officialdom without a police without a standing army; voluntary social duty guaranteed by a militia formed from a universally armed people—this is a guarantee of freedom which no Tsars, no swash-buckling generals and no capitalists can take away. 47

This was Lenin's view of the essential function of the transitory state—of which the Soviets were considered the proto-type—which was precisely to train the mass of the people themselves to undertake all the coercive and administrative functions hitherto alienated to the state.

The Commune State and Imperialism

Lenin time and again worked upon the theme of mass participation in the government through the Soviets and through the militia. In Lenin's opinion the enormous simplifications of the productive and distributive mechanisms, the simplification of the entire business of administration, which capitalism in its imperialist phase had produced, had at last made feasible, the ideal of popular self-administration.

Lenin's argument was that the whole technological and administrative structure of socialism had been laid and fully developed during the epoch of finance capital. It was there ready-made and available for the Soviets to take over and direct in the interests of the mass of the people.

Finance capital had produced the monopolistic trust, which eliminated duplication of effort and resources, concentrated production in huge rationalized units and planned production according to carefully calculated projections of the likely market. Finance capital had enormously simplified the problem of the transfer of the productive forces from private to public control. It had, moreover, created simplified administrative structures through which popular control over the whole business of production and distribution could at last be realized. Lenin wrote:

We, the workers, shall organise large scale production on the basis of what capitalism has already created, relying on our own experience as workers, establishing strict iron discipline backed by the state power of the armed workers. We shall reduce the role of the State officials to that of simply carrying out our instructions as responsible, revocable, modestly paid 'foremen and accountants'....This is our proletarian task, this is what we can and must start with in accomplishing the proletarian revolution. Such a beginning on the basis of large scale production, will itself lead to the gradual 'withering away of all bureaucracy, to the gradual creation of an order...bearing no similarity to wage slavery - an order under which the functions of control and accounting, becoming more and more simple, will be performed by each in turn, will then become a habit and will finally die out as the special functions of a special section of the population. 48

Lenin's projections were intensely dialectical. Throughout his writings, on the eve of revolution, he maintains

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48 Lenin, n. 34, p. 431.
the central theme that capitalism in its imperialist phase not only carried the parasitism of the state machine to its highest possible extent, it also simultaneously created the conditions for the transcendence of the state as such. It was a dialectical process that within imperialism were locked the very structures through which capitalism and the state were also transcended. Capitalism was its own grave digger not only in the sense that it necessarily produced the class which was to destroy it but in the additional sense that it found itself obliged to perfect the very mechanisms of administrative and economic control which the proletariat could take over as readymade instruments for the building of socialism:

A witty German Social Democrat of the seventies of the last century called the postal service an example of socialist economic system. This is very true. At present the postal service is a business organised on the lines of a state-capitalist monopoly. Imperialism is gradually transforming all trusts into organisations of a similar type, in which, standing over the 'common' people, who are over-worked and starved, one has the same bourgeois bureaucracy. But the mechanism of social management is here already at hand. Once we have overthrown the capitalists, crushed the resistance of these exploiters with the iron hand of the workers and smashed the bureaucratic machine of the modern state we shall have a splendidly equipped mechanism, freed from the parasite a mechanism which can very well be set going by the united workers themselves who will hire technicians and accountants, and pay them all, as indeed all 'state' officials in general, workmen's wages....

To organise the whole economy on the lines of the postal service...this is our immediate aim. This is the state and this is the economic need. 49

49 Ibid., pp. 431-2.
The concrete historical situation which Lenin subjected to rigorous analysis and the situation that he was aspiring was more or less immediately realizable and the situation which he envisaged was the transcendence of not only the state as a separate body of armed men, but of the state as an institution of men endowed with rights to decide upon and to see to the implementation of public policy. Lenin believed that the alienation of decision-making and controlling functions within the entire economic substructure of society could now be overcome by a thorough going democratization of the administrative mechanisms which bourgeois society in its imperialist phase had finally produced. He wrote: "Power to the Soviets means the complete transfer of the country's administration and economic control into the hands of the workers and peasants." 50

This kind of transition represented a qualitative transformation or transcendence of democracy and even in some respects of the state itself.

The dialectical relationship between politics and economics - the socialist state and its relationship to the structures of state monopoly capitalism - was demonstrated by Lenin in his article "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power" written just a month before the Bolshevik Revolution. In his analysis he spelt out at length the type of state that would be appropriate for the transition to socialism. Lenin

50 Ibid., p. 377.
emphasizes the role of big banks in the socialist construction because, the banks, according to him, constituted nine-tenths of the state apparatus. The socialist state will put this apparatus immediately in motion instead of smashing it for socialist construction:

Capitalism has created an accounting apparatus in the shape of the banks, syndicates, postal service, consumers societies and office employees' unions. Without big banks socialism would be impossible.

The big banks are the "state apparatus" which we need to bring about socialism, which we take ready-made from capitalism. Our task is to merely lop off what capitalistically mutilates this excellent apparatus, to make it even bigger, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality. A single State Bank, the biggest of the Big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of socialist apparatus. This will be the country wide book keeping, the country wide accounting of the production and distribution of goods, this will be so to speak, something in the nature of socialist society.

We can "lay hold of" and "set in motion" this state apparatus (which is not fully a state apparatus under capitalism, but which will be so with us under socialism) at one stroke, by a single decree, because the actual work of book keeping, control, registering, accounting and counting is performed by employees, the majority of whom themselves lead a proletarian or semi-proletarian existence. 51

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that Lenin combined Marx's account of the Commune with the practice of

51 Ibid., vol. 26, p. 106.
the Russian Soviets and showed this model to be viable by pointing to the simplified mechanisms of accountancy and control which the imperialist state itself had created. The re-integrating of all the functions of the state with the self acting groups of the armed population, Lenin believed, were not only viable but was to be immediately accomplished. Lenin's views on the Commune State were not abstract projections but the only way, as he repeatedly insisted, to train the people for socialism, the only organizational forms appropriate to the transitional period of building up a socialist society.

The Problematic of the Withering Away of the Transitional State

The problematic of the withering away of the state after the seizure of power by the proletariat was a matter of central concern for Lenin as it was for Marx and Engels. As discussed earlier in details, the question of the abolition of the state was the foci of the controversy between the Marxists and the Anarchists. The Anarchists conception of the abolition of the state was an exercise in petty bourgeois idealism, adventurism and mysticism, and an unhistorical view of the state. While Marx's and Engels view of the state was historical and dialectical. Later on Lenin reconstructed the Marxist theory of state by applying the dialectical method and further treated in details the question of the nature and
character of the state after the working class seized power and the status of the state during the transition period.

Lenin picked up Marx's central theme on state and quoted him as under: "All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it." 52

According to Lenin this is the chief and fundamental point in the Marxist theory of the state. The objective of the Marxists, therefore, is to smash the bureaucratic military machine of the state. The proletariat after seizing political power replaces the old state apparatus with its own organs, as was demonstrated by the Paris Commune and thereby abolishes the state. Lenin quotes Engels' argument in Anti-Duhring in this regard:

The proletariat seizes state power and turns the means of production into state property to begin with. But thereby it abolishes itself as the proletariat abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms and abolishes also the state as state....The first act by which the State really comes forward as the representative of the whole society - the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society - it is also its last independent act as state. State interference in social relations becomes in one domain after another, superfluous and then dies down of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and by the

conduct of the process of production. The state is not abolished, it withers away. 53

According to Lenin:

As a matter of fact, Engels speaks here of the proletarian revolution "abolishing" the bourgeois state. While the words about the withering away refer to the remarks of the proletarian state after the socialist revolution. According to Engels, the bourgeois state does not "wither away" but it is "abolished" by the proletariat in the course of the revolution. What withers away after this revolution is the proletarian state or semi-state. 54

The abolition of bourgeois state, according to Lenin, is:

(i) The special coercive state of the bourgeoisie must be replaced by the special coercive force for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (dictatorship of the proletariat). This is precisely what is meant by the "abolition of the state as state....And it is self evident that such a replacement of one (bourgeois) "special force" by another (proletarian) "special force" cannot possibly take place in the form of withering away; and

(ii) The period after "the state has taken possession of the means of production in the name of the whole of society", that is after the socialist revolution. We all know that the political form of the "state" at that time is the most complete democracy....Revolution alone can "abolish" the bourgeois state. The state in general, i.e., the most complete democracy, can only wither away. 55

53 Lenin, n. 34, pp. 400-01.
54 Ibid., pp. 401-2.
55 Ibid., pp. 401-2.
The Social Organs for the Replacement of the State

The content of the alternative social organization which were to replace the state, according to Lenin, was of course, the Commune or the Soviet. To both Marx and Lenin, the central feature of this organizational form was that it proceeded immediately to eliminate the standing army and the police. The coercive policing functions of society were absorbed by the people in arms and all officials reduced to responsible, recallable executors of the popular will. Lenin conceded that this form of organization cannot qualify as a "state" form, since the state, as we have seen, consists of special bodies of armed men standing over the mass of the people.

Characterizing about the Commune and its replacement of the old state apparatus, Lenin wrote:

The Commune, therefore, appears to have replaced the smashed state machine only by fuller democracy; abolition of standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall. But as a matter of fact this 'only' signifies a gigantic replacement of certain institutions of a fundamentally different type. This is exactly a case of quantity being transformed into quality: democracy, introduced as fully and consistently as is at all conceivable, is transformed from bourgeois into proletarian democracy; from the state (a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer the state proper. 56

56 Ibid., p. 424.
This kind of a characterization of the Commune "which is no longer a state proper" must not lead to any confusion. It is not a "state proper" in the proper sense of the word; that is domination of the people by contingents of armed men divorced from the people. Nonetheless, Lenin insisted that the proletariat still needed a 'state' of some sort:

Our emergent, new state is also a state, for we too need contingents of armed men, we too need the strictest order, and must ruthlessly crush by force all attempts at either a Tsarist or a Guchkov-bourgeois counter-revolution.

But our emergent state is no longer a state in the proper sense of the term, for in some parts of Russia these contingents of armed men are the masses, themselves, the entire people, and not certain privileged persons placed over the people, and divorced from the people, and for all practical purposes undisplaceable. 57

The most appropriate form of political organization which was to replace the old state organs were to be the Soviets. Lenin advanced most convincing arguments about the superiority of these organs of the "transient state" in an article written on the eve of the Bolshevik seizure of power:

The Soviets are a new state apparatus which, in the first place, provides an armed force of workers and peasants; and this force is not divorced from the people....Secondly,

57 Lenin, n. 34, vol. 24, p. 85.
this apparatus provides a bond with the people, with the majority of the people, so intimate so indisoluble, so easily verifiable and renewable, that nothing even remotely like it existed in the previous state apparatus. Thirdly, this apparatus by virtue of the fact that its personnel is elected and subject to recall at the people's will without any bureaucratic formalities, is far more democratic than any previous apparatus. Fifthly, it provides an organisational form for the vanguard i.e., for the most class-conscious most energetic and most-progressive section of the oppressed classes, the workers and peasants, and so constitutes an apparatus by means of which the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, train, educate, and lead the entire vast mass of these classes, which has upto now stood completely outside the political life and history. Sixthly, it makes it possible to combine the advantages of parliamentary system with those of immediate and direct democracy i.e., to vest in the people's elected representatives both the legislative and executive functions. Compared with the bourgeois parliamentary system this is an advance in democracy's development which is of world-wide historical significance. 58

The political organs of the transition period were not only the antithesis of the replaced political order but also vehicles of transformation of a class society into non-class social order through class struggle and the ultimate disappearance of all types of states. But this had to be a dialectical and protracted process as envisaged by Lenin. The constant interaction of politics and economics (super-

58 Ibid., vol. 26, pp. 103-04.
structure and base) was crucial to Lenin for the ultimate withering away of the proletarian state.

**Dialectics of Transition: Interactional Relationship Between Politics and Economics**

As already stated, the question of relationship between politics and economics during the transition period (withering away of state) was of central importance to Lenin. To him, "these questions were: The transformation of public functions from political into simple functions of administration and the "political state". 59

Marx in his *Critique of Gotha Programme* had visualized a transitional stage between capitalism and communism:

Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into another. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. 60

Lenin elaborated the tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat in more details:

Furthermore, during the transition from capitalism to communism suppression is still necessary, but it is now the suppression of the exploiting minority by the exploited majority. A special apparatus, a special

59 Ibid., vol. 25, p. 443.
machine, for suppression the 'state' is still necessary, but it is now a transitional state. It is no longer a state in the proper sense of the word, for the suppression of the minority of exploiters by the majority of the wage slaves of yesterday is comparatively so easy, simple and natural a task that will entail for less bloodshed than the suppression of the risings of slaves, serfs or wage labourers, and it will cost mankind far less. And it is compatible with the extension of democracy to such an overwhelming majority of the population that the need for a special machine of suppression will begin to disappear. Naturally, the exploiters are unable to suppress the people without a highly complex machine for performing this task, but the people can suppress the exploiters even with a very simple "machine", almost without a machine, without a special apparatus by the simple organisation of the armed people (such as the Soviets of Worker's and Soldier's Deputies, we would remark, running ahead). 61

The working class organized in the Soviets (dictatorship of proletariat) will do away with all excesses and suppression by removing want and poverty of the people – the chief cause of violence – will make the apparatus of the state redundant. With the withering away of the social cause of excesses the state will also wither away. The dictatorship of the proletariat therefore, creates the social and economic conditions which in turn make the former wither away.

61 Lenin, n. 34, p. 468.
The economic basis for the withering away of the state is described by Marx in critique of Gotha programme in two phases: the lower and the higher phase. During the "first phase of the Communist Society" as Lenin puts it, he elaborated and described Marx's ideas about the economic conditions:

The means of production are no longer the private property of individuals. The means of production belong to the whole of society. Every member of society, performing a certain part of the socially necessary work, receives a certificate from the society, to the effect that he has done a certain amount of work. And with the certificate he receives from the public store of consumer goods a corresponding quantity of products. After a deduction is made of the amount of labour, which goes to the public fund, every worker, therefore, receives from society as much as he has given to it.

'Equality' apparently reigns supreme. 62

The equal right, therefore, still conforms to the bourgeois law. This happens because the abolition of capitalism does not immediately create the economic conditions for the fully developed communist society. Therefore, the state will be required for -

(i) safeguarding the common ownership of the means of production, and

(ii) safeguarding the equality in labour and in the distribution of products.

62 Ibid., p. 470.
The state withers away, insofar as there are no longer any capitalists, any classes and consequently no class can be suppressed.

But the state has not yet completely withered away, since there still remains the safeguarding of "bourgeois law", which sanctifies actual inequality. For the state to wither away completely, according to Lenin, "complete communism is necessary".63

During the first phase of communism some of the political functions (coercive) will be done away with and the socio-economic conditions will gradually make the state redundant in the higher phase of the communist society.

During the higher phase when the productive forces have developed to a tremendous extent and the antithesis between mental and manual labour disappears, which is the principal source of social inequality. The social ownership of the means of production does not remove immediately the antithesis between mental and manual labour. This is a protracted process and can be removed with the development of productive forces only.

The economic pre-conditions, according to Lenin, for the complete withering away of the state in the first phase of the communist society are -

63 Ibid., p. 472.
(i) Universal literacy;

(ii) Training and disciplining of millions of workers by the huge, complex, socialized apparatus of the postal service, railways, big factories, large scale commerce, banking etc., and

(iii) Accounting and control - that is mainly needed for the "smooth working of" for the proper functioning, of the first phase of communist society. All citizens are transformed into the hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers. All citizens become employees and workers of single country wide syndicate. 64

The prerequisites stated above by Lenin will make the people administer the affairs of the state themselves. And the changed economic base will make redundant a government of any kind. When all types of contradictions - economic, social and political - have been resolved, there will be more and more perfection of democracy and slowly and gradually this perfection of democracy will make it unnecessary.

Lenin sums up:

The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary. The

64 Ibid., p. 478.
more democratic the "state" which consists of armed workers, and which is "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word", the more rapidly every form of state begins to wither away.

For when all have learned to administer and actually do independently administer social production, independently keep accounts and exercise control over the parasites, ...that the necessity of observing the simple fundamental rules of the community will very soon become a habit.

Then the door will be thrown wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state. 65

We have discussed the Marxist theory of state at three levels:
(1) Epistemological,
(2) Ontological, and
(3) the problematic of withering away of state.

The ideas of Marx-Engels and Lenin on the origins, development and nature and functions of the institution of state as analysed in this chapter to construct a theoretical framework can be summarized in nutshell as follows:

That the institution of state emerges as a class institution and performs its political, economic and social
role as a class institution. After a workers' revolution the first task of the working class is to smash the old state apparatus and not to use the institution of the bourgeois state for its own purposes. The state is not abolished, but withers away.

By far the major pre-occupation of the Marxist-Leninist theory had been the withering away of the state. From this point of view the socialist state, although treated as a necessity, symbolises socialist society as a goal oriented society, the goal being the attainment of the communist society in which the state finally withers away.

With this theoretical understanding in mind Lenin and leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution proceeded to formulate the party programme in 1919 in which the role, nature and functions of the post-revolutionary state are defined. Not only the Bolshevik programme of 1919, but also the programmes of the CPSU adopted by the 22nd and 27th Congresses of the Party in 1961 and 1986 (revised programme) respectively defined the nature of the Soviet socialist state as well as the main directions of its development. The 28th Congress held in July 1990 adopted a policy statement with the objective to humanize and democratize socialism, and to correct the distortions that had crept in, in the Soviet society. The
CPSU Central Committee adopted a draft programme in August 1991, to be adopted by a proposed special Congress of the party. The special Congress, however, could not be held because of the August 1991 coup and, later on, the ban on CPSU and the disintegration of the USSR in December 1991.

The theoretical framework in this chapter has been designed as a frame of reference to guide this study in the analysis of the process of evolution of the Soviet state in the light of the various party programmes.