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1. What is a 'soft state'? Is it correct to regard India as a soft state?

- The term 'soft state' has been introduced by Gunnar Myrdal in 1968 in his work of Asian Drama: An inquiry into the Poverty of Nations. This distinction is based on the classification of states into either empirical or juridical ones.
- The empirical state is determined by a classical state system where institutions like those of courts, police and armed forces are well developed-Western Europe, North America and Middle East.
- On the other hand, the juridical state or the 'soft state' was not the result of organic development as in the empirical states, but was a result of struggles against by their former colonial masters. They are characterised by:
 - ✓ The attitude of disobedience to any authority which was central to the nationalist politics resistance persisted after independence .
 - ✓ There is prevalence of societal indiscipline with its citizens often flouting or ignoring rules set by the state's legal machinery.
 - ✓ They consist of widespread corruption in its institutions and a by and large failure of the development policies.
- Shyam Saran regards the Indian state as soft state not because it lacks instruments of power, but because it is not yet effective and well-governed.
- Social security and infrastructure has not been geared up to completely meet the demand of its citizens. The recent Covid-19 crisis has brought this aspect of India more in focus than ever before.
- Atul Kohli in his analysis shows how societal pressures in India can often lead to 'crisis of governability' as was witnessed with holding of religious and social events even in the wake of Covid pandemic.
- It can be further observed how at times rule of law does not enjoy popular legitimacy and credibility, be it the dilution of section 377 or inter-religious/ caste marriages.
- However, scholars like Leftwich have pointed out that the erstwhile soft states have become developmental states whose politics have concentrated sufficient power, autonomy and capacity at the centre to shape, pursue and encourage the achievement of explicit developmental goals.
- The demonetisation decision, financial re-structuring and the implementation of Goods and Services Tax across the nation has been viewed as difficult decisions that a soft state would not take.
- In addition, India's actions of raising the Balochistan issue, the Balakot air strikes, removal of Article 370, its diplomatic manoeuvres in SAARC, Vaccine Diplomacy, Lockdown decisions have diluted the reputation of India as a soft state.