



THE MEANING & SCOPE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE & POLITICAL THEORY

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HISTORY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE


- The idea of politics as a subject of science is as old as Aristotle's Politics, but, as British political theorist Bernard Crick stressed, political science, as a distinct academic discipline and branch of social science, is uniquely American invention.
- What we read and learnt resembled the political philosophy and theory.

WHAT IS MEANT BY POLITICAL THEORY?

- Political theory, sometimes also called “normative political theory”, is a subfield of philosophy and political science that addresses conceptual, normative, and evaluative questions concerning politics and society.
- It asks questions and attempts to answers like what is justice? Do women have equal claims to political rights? Should State give unfettered liberty to individuals?, etc.


SCOPE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE


- We can say that scope of Political Science as a discipline is very comprehensive and expanding .
- Political scientists are seldom agreed about its scope.
- An attempt was made by the International Political Science Association in Paris in 1948 to delineate the scope of political science.
- It demarcated the scope into four zones, viz., Political Theory, Political Institution (Constitution, National Government, Regional and Local Government, and Comparative Political Institution), Political Dynamics (Parties, Groups and Public Opinion), and International Relations.

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- To demarcate the scope of political theory, we may distinguish between its most closely related neighbouring fields: political science, moral philosophy, political philosophy etc.
 - Political theory can easily be distinguished from (positive) political science.

POLITICAL SCIENCE ADDRESSES

- Empirical and positive questions concerning politics and society
- Describes and explains actual political phenomena, such as elections and electoral systems, voter behaviour, political opinion formation, legislative and governmental behaviour, the interaction between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the state, and the stability or instability of different forms of government.
- Political theory, by contrast, addresses conceptual, normative, and evaluative questions, such as what a democracy is, how we ought to organize our political systems, and how to evaluate the desirability of policies.(see Good in 2009).

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- Political theory and political science can complement each other. Normative recommendations and evaluations of policies or institutional arrangements often rest on empirical premises. It is hard to arrive at a blueprint for a just society, for example, without understanding how society actually works, since normative recommendations may have to respect feasibility constraints (e.g., Gilabert and Lawford-Smith 2012).
 - Thus, political theory requires political science. When political scientists investigate, for instance, whether democracy promotes economic development or whether free societies are more politically stable and less corrupt than unfree ones, they need to know what counts as a democracy or how to define freedom.

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- A long-standing concern in political theory is the analysis of political concepts: freedom, equality, justice, authority, legitimacy, democracy, welfare, and so on. Each of these interpreted and defined in numerous ways, and political theory can help us clarify the advantages and disadvantages of different interpretations and definitions.
 - The early 1970s saw a broad revival of political theory in the English speaking world. One indicator of this phenomenon is that (journals) *Political Theory* and *Philosophy and Public Affairs* were both founded then
 - Before this period, there was no journal in English that focused specifically on political theory or political philosophy.
 - The term “revival” is especially appropriate, because the field had been famously pronounced “dead” by Peter Laslett in the 1950s

POLITICAL THEORY AND POLITICS

- Politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live.
- Politics is thus inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation.
- The heart of politics is often portrayed as a process of conflict resolution, in which rival views or competing interests are reconciled with one another.
- However, broadly politics science is considered as search for conflict resolution ,though, not all conflicts are, or can be, resolved. Nevertheless, the inescapable presence of diversity and scarcity demand that politics remains an unavoidable feature of the human condition



Politics is defined in such different ways:

- As the exercise of power, the science of government,
- The making of collective decisions,
- The allocation of scarce resources,
- The practice of deception and
- Manipulation, and so on.

WHAT IS POLITICS

	Politics as an arena	Politics as a process
Definitions of politics	The art of government Public affairs	Compromise and consensus Power and the distribution of resources
Approaches to the study of politics	Behaviouralism Rational-choice theory Institutionalism	Feminism Marxism Post-positivist approaches

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE IN POLITICS

Public	Private
The state: apparatus of government	Civil society: autonomous bodies – businesses, trade unions, clubs, families, and so on
Public	Private
Public realm: politics, commerce, work, art, culture and so on	Personal realm: family and domestic life

THE SCIENCE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

◦ The Political Science is closely related with politics as we have seen earlier but Political Science differs from Politics and Political Theory both, since it emphasizes the aspect of science.

Why the study of politics is considered a science ?

- Political science seeks to classify and understand phenomena
- Political science assumes that phenomena can be understood through collecting and analyzing data (empirical research)
- Political science follows the scientific method

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD


- Forming a hypothesis,
 - an arguable proposition.
- Operationalizing the concepts in that hypothesis
- Identifying independent and dependent variables
- Choosing a method
- Collecting and analyzing data
- Evaluating what the findings mean


ARTS OR SCIENCE OR SOCIAL SCIENCE


- Aristotle, the father of Political Science, called 'Politics' the 'master' or 'supreme' science. Other modern writers like Hobbes, Vico, Hume, Frederick Pollock, John Seeley, Lord Bryce, Sidgwick and Bluntschli consider it as a science.
- On the other hand, scholars like Mosca, Buckle, Comte and Maitland question its claim as a science since it has failed to act up to the standard of science.
- This debate was revived by Behaviouralist school again in 1950's and -60's specially in USA , refuted later but today we consider it a Social Science – a discipline with social realities and concern but prioritizing to be scientific, objective and analytical to the extent possible ,agreeing to respect values but not blown by them

POLITICAL ANALYSIS USES SCIENTIFIC METHODS

- When political analysis uses scientific methods of enquiry it draws a clear distinction between facts and values; seeking to disclose objective and reliable knowledge, it tends to turn away from normative theorizing.
- While political theory involves the analytical study of ideas and concepts, both normative and descriptive, political philosophy attempts to refine our understanding of such ideas and concepts in the hope of advancing political wisdom
- Political theory confronted a number of problems and challenges as it enters the twenty-first century. Threatened in the mid twentieth century by positivism, which suggested that the entire tradition of normative political thought is meaningless, political theory revived after the 1960s. However, it has subsequently become increasingly diffuse and fragmented, as the status of liberalism has been challenged by the emergence of rival schools . More radically anti-foundationists have attacked Enlightenment rationalism.


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- The predominantly German scholars who emigrated to the United States beginning in the 1930s were in many respects a philosophically and ideologically diverse group that included Hans Morgenthau (Scientific Man and Power Politics, 1946), Eric Voegelin (The New Science of Politics, 1951) Leo Strauss (Natural Right and History 1953), Hannah Arendt (The Human Condition, 1958), and members of the neo-Marxist Frankfurt school such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Otto Kirchheimer, and Max Horkheimer.
 - They shared a suspicion of liberalism, which they believed was philosophically flawed as a political theory and an inherently pathological political form that represented political institutions.
 - These theorists rejected scientism and were wedded to images of the decline political theory based on commitments to empiricism, relativism, liberalism, and historical progress - characteristic of American political science for half a century .
 - By the end of the 1950s, the work of these foreign scholars largely began to define the subfield of political theory, which heretofore was an integral dimension of mainstream American political science and the principal vehicle of its vision of democracy.


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- In the 1870s, 'political science' courses were introduced in the universities of Oxford, Paris and Columbia, and by 1906 the American Political Science Review was being published. However, enthusiasm for a science of politics peaked in the 1950s and 1960s with the emergence, most strongly in the USA, of a form of political analysis that drew heavily on behaviouralism.
 - Even as the discipline of political science was expanding in the United States after World War II, it was proliferating abroad. In 1949, the International Political Science Association formed in Paris, which brought together national associations from numerous countries in Europe and elsewhere.
 - David Easton's *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (1953) set the agenda for the next decade by defining political science as the study of the "authoritative allocation of values" and making the case for moving beyond mere factual research and historical and traditional institutional forms by advancing empirical theory and adopting the methods of natural science.

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- The behavioral “revolution,” transformed the practice of political science and increased the substantive and methodological contributions on a variety of subjects, including survey research and voting behavior. Easton was the principal spokesman of The behavioral “revolution,”.
 - The behavioural approach emphasizes the application of scientific methods and techniques in politics:
 - It’s structure, processes and behaviour.
 - Behaviour of individuals and groups rather than their formally prescribed roles and activities.
 - The acts, attitudes, preferences and expectations of man in political contexts.
 - Behaviour of individuals whose interactions constitute group actions
 - Emphasize the "functional" aspects of politics, scientific outlook and objectivity with the rigour, the systematic study and the regularities in their research giving supreme importance to the tools and techniques

FROM SCIENCE TO SOCIAL SCIENCE

- By the 1950s, the academic image of liberalism had become increasingly dominant as such individuals as Daniel Boorstin (*The Genius of American Politics*, 1953) and Louis Hartz (*The Liberal Tradition in America*, 1955)
- By the 1950s, the academic image of liberalism had become increasingly dominant as such individuals as Daniel Boorstin (*The Genius of American Politics*, 1953) and Louis Hartz (*The Liberal Tradition in America*, 1955) set out to demonstrate that although there might not be an American public, there was a historically rooted **liberal value consensus** and **tradition** that gave credence to the concept of *e pluribus unum* (out of many, one). This notion of a liberal consensus that transcended and reconciled group differences became an essential element of the revived group theory of politics.
- Behaviouralism, was reeling growing pressure from the 1960s onwards.

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- Behaviouralism significantly constrained the scope of political analysis, preventing it from going beyond what was directly observable.
 - There existed a narrow obsession with quantifiable data threatening to reduce the discipline of politics.
 - Made a generation of political scientists to turn their backs on the entire tradition of normative political thought such as 'liberty', 'equality', 'justice' and 'rights' discarded as being meaningless because they were not empirically verifiable entities.
 - Dissatisfaction with behaviouralism grew as interest in normative questions revived in the 1970s, as reflected in the writings of theorists such as John Rawls and Robert Nozick.

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- Scientific credentials of behaviouralism started to be called into question. The basis of the assertion that behaviouralism is objective and reliable is the claim that it is 'value-free': that is, that it is not contaminated by ethical or normative beliefs. However, if the focus of analysis is observable behaviour, it is difficult to do much more than describe the existing political arrangements, which implicitly means that the status quo is legitimized.
 - This conservative value bias was demonstrated by the fact that 'democracy' was, in effect, redefined in terms of observable behaviour. Thus, instead of meaning 'popular self-government' (literally, government by the people), democracy came to stand for a struggle between competing elites to win power through the mechanism of popular election. In other words, democracy came to mean what goes on in the so-called democratic political systems of the developed West.

WHAT IS PRESENT CONDITION ?

- Today Political Science has got rid of simply being a synonym of science of politics
- It survives as a vibrant discipline, though.
- In this discipline, across the globe, usually there is a good mix of normative and empirical and scientific flavors as the content, methods and mechanisms.

Thank
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