

THE BEHAVIORAL REVOLUTION IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

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The Behavioral Revolution in Contemporary Political Science

- ❖ The behavioral revolution of the 1950s and early 1960s is made the discipline in order to be modern as per the needs of science discard its traditional roots by becoming a modern social science.
- ❖ It was influenced by scientific developments in psychology regarding human behavior.
- ❖ Arthur Bentley and Graham Wall as before 1920s helped political science to come at terms with scientific methods of study and understanding.

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- ❖ The revolution got an impetus with the establishment of the journal *Experimental Study of Politics* in 1970's.
 - ❖ It focused on political behaviour which refers to acts, attitudes, preferences and expectations of individual in political context.
 - ❖ Robert Dahl and others felt that the conventional way of analyzing political science was quite inadequate to meet the requirement of the new age.
 - ❖ Behavioralism is based on the observable behavior of individuals deemed to be political actors.

- ❖ Behaviouralism developed as a school of psychology (known as behaviourism) which, as the name implies, studies only the observable and measurable behaviour of human beings.
- ❖ This encouraged political analysts such as David Easton to believe that political science could adopt the methodology of the natural sciences, leading to a proliferation of studies in areas like voting behaviour where systematic and quantifiable data were readily available.
- ❖ The aim of behavioralism 'is' (factual condition) and not 'ought to be' (what it should preach and politics should try to attain).
- ❖ It stresses pragmatic and empirical and normative approaches, methods and procedures .

Characteristics of Behavioralism

- ❖ The main characteristics of behavioral revolution are:
- ❖ Rejection of political institutions as the basic unit for research instead focused on the behavior of individuals in political situations as the basic unit of analysis –
- ❖ social sciences are deemed to be behavioral sciences and political science being one share strong relations with other social sciences,
- ❖ Emphasizes use of techniques of observing, classifying and measuring in respect of data
- ❖ advocates the use of statistical or quantitative formulation
- ❖ Stressed on the development of a systematic, empirical approach.

- ❖ The 'behavioral revolution' was one of the chief legacies of positivism, discarded the entire tradition of normative political thought.
- ❖ Words such as 'democracy' was reduced to a conception of 'a measurable political behavior', only.
- ❖ David Truman's *The Governmental Process* (1951) and Earl Latham's *The Group Basis of Politics* (1952) revived the relevance of Arthur Bentley's work, and Robert Dahl's *Preface to Democratic Theory* (1955) established the genre of empirical theory, which was devoted to vouchsafing the image of pluralist democracy. The latter work was in one respect less a "preface" than an "epilogue" and codification of ideas that, during the 1930s, had become an essential part of the identity of political science.
- ❖ A number of political scientists like Gabriel Almond, Robert Dahl, David Easton, Harold Lasswell, Karl Deutsch etc. developed several theoretical frameworks and research designs to study political behaviour.

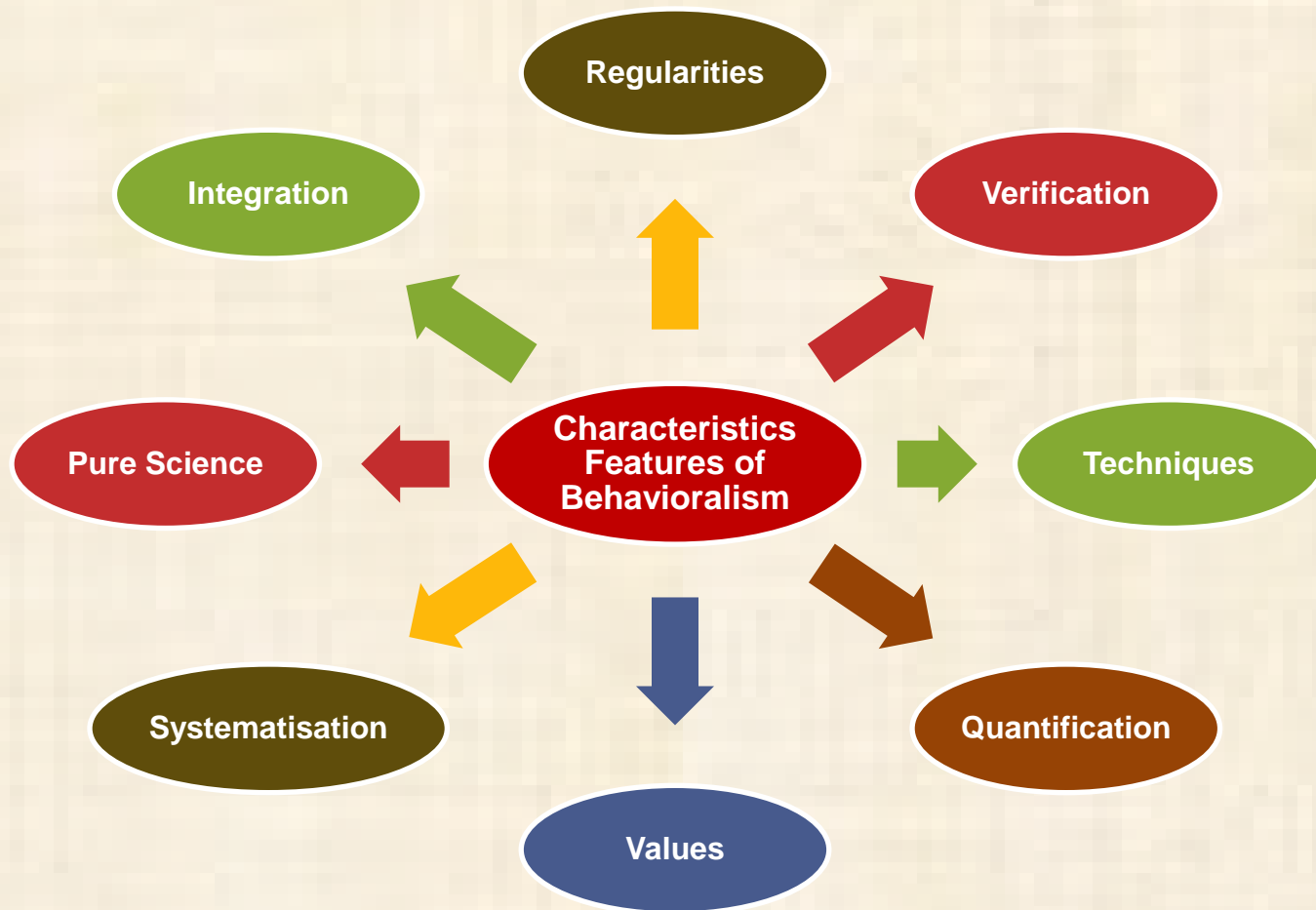
Basic Elements of Political Behavior

- ❖ Behavioralists believe that political institutions are behaviour systems of actions which have no existence apart from individuals.
- ❖ The basic elements of political behavior are :
 - ✓ Leadership
 - ✓ Political Groupings
 - ✓ Public Opinion
 - ✓ Representation
 - ✓ Party Organization
 - ✓ Use of Economic and Psychological Coercive Pressures

- ❖ Sometimes there is some confusion felt by students between behaviourism and behaviorism. Behaviorism implies, “a school of psychology that takes the objective observation of behavior as measured by responses to stimuli”. The response to stimuli constitutes the foundation of study of behaviorism - the subject of psychology.
- ❖ On the other hand, behavioralism is a sub-field of political science and studies the political behavior of individuals. Behavioralism in politics does not reject historical knowledge.


Characteristics Features of Behavioralism

The eight characteristics features of behaviouralism as given by David Easton :-



- ❖ **Regularities:** Human behaviour, despite its differences, demonstrates uniformities in political behaviour, liable to be generalised and formulated in a systematic theory. The generalisations reached in Pol. Science can predict political phenomena.
- ❖ **Verifications:** It says anything that cannot be verified or tested lacks scientific character.
- ❖ **Techniques:** Use of objective techniques for acquiring and interpreting the scientific data and suggest the use of sophisticated tools-like the multivariate analysis, sample, surveys, mathematical methods, simulation etc.
- ❖ **Quantification:** “Precision in the recording of data and the statement of their findings requires tables, graphs and curves are drawn in behavioral research.”

- ❖ **Values:** Behavioralists and the traditionalists over the question of value neutrality. This value is, therefore empirical in character. Consequently, the behaviouralists reject only the ethical values and not empirical values. According to them, Political Science is a scientific study of politics in its functional aspect, carried through empirical methods and has nothing to do with moral or ethical questions. On the other hand the traditionalists hold the opinion that significant political issues invariably involve moral and ethical values and Political Science cannot refuse to show concern with questions of right and wrong, even if it might not be possible to resolve them 'scientifically.'
- ❖ **Systematization:** Behavioralism believes that research in Political Science must be systematic i.e. "theory oriented and theory-directed", alternatively put "closely interrelated parts of a coherent and orderly body of knowledge" based on empirical research.
- ❖ **Pure Science:** The knowledge thus obtained could be applied in solving the problems of mankind
- ❖ **Integration:** political phenomena cannot be studied in isolation rather should be understood as a fusion of social, economic, political, cultural and other activities occurring in the wider context of the entire social life of the individual.

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- ❖ No behavioralists says the approach and objective of behavioralism in politics are quite distinct from those of other disciplines.
 - ❖ The moot point is that behavioralism borrows techniques from others and admits its relation with them.
 - ❖ Behavioralism however, had to loose its extremist fervour and its prophet David Easton himself admitted its limitations and for need of normative and philosophical questions in Political Science.
 - ❖ It was followed by Post-behavioralism and today we even don't talk of Post-behavioralism of any more as an age.



Thank you