



# **EDO UNIVERSITY IYAMHO**

**Department of Political Science and Public Administration**

**POL 214: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

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Lectures: Thursday, 8am – 10am, LC 7, phone: (+234) 8039430181

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**Course Aim:** The major purpose of this course is to provide a broad overview of the nature of inquiry and explanation in political science. The course is basically a study of the concept, assumptions, objectives and issues in political analysis; ways of acquiring knowledge; approaches and models of political analysis; theories of political analysis; the emergence of behaviouralism as an approach to the study of politics including its origin; the scientific method; the nature of politics; Political Systems and the structure of government; political representation e.g. direct democracy, theory of mandate, representative institutions of different regimes and regime types; Political communication; violence, political alienation; citizen participation and political culture, etc.

## **Learner profile**

This is an introductory course designed for second year (200 level) students in the department of Political science and Public Administration who had completed one academic session in Edo University.

## **Expected Outcome**

On completion of this course students should be able to:

- I. Explain the nature of politics
- II. Identify the approaches of political analysis
- III. Explain the nature of the political science discipline as an intellectual enterprise
- IV. Identify main activities and issues of a political system
- V. Evaluate the goals, methods, and problems of government and politics, and become critically alert to bias and to simplified panaceas.
- VI. Identify political systems and structure of government
- VII. Describe some of the key processes and activities in a political system.
- VIII. Acquire competence and skills in analysing various political systems and structure, and functions of modern government
- IX. Identify the range of analytic procedures or approaches that can be employed in the search for knowledge about politics.

## **Course Assessment Scheme**

Assessment	Marks
In class test	5 marks
Individual assignment	5 marks

Term paper group assignment (written)	5 marks
Term paper presentation	5 marks
Mid semester test	10 marks
End of semester examination	70 marks
Total	100%

**Attendance:** Attendance is compulsory, 70% class attendance to enable candidate seat for exams

**Test/ Assignment Submission date:** The mid-semester test will be conducted in the seventh week of the semester. Date for in-class test, submission of assignment and group presentation will be discussed in class with students.

**Reading List:** The recommended textbook for this class are as stated:

Czada, R. and Windhoff-Héretier, A. (1991) (Eds). *Political Choice: Institutions, Rules, and the Limits of Rationality*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Charlesworth, J. (1968) (ed) *Contemporary political Analysis*, New York, free Press.

Dahl, R. (1991). *Modern Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Dansiger, J. N. (2000). *Understanding the Political World*. New York: Longman.

Davies, R. & Lewis, A. (1971). *Modules of Political System*. London: Macmillan.

Deutsch, K.W. (1970). *Politics and Government: How People Decide their Fate*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Easton, D. (1965). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: Wiley.

Easton, D. (1965). *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Easton, D. (1971). *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. (2nd ed.). New York: Knopf.

Goodwin, B. (2007). *Using Political Ideas*. (5th ed.). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Hay, C. (2002). *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Kuhn, T. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lasswell, H. (1951). *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How*. Free Press: Glencoe, III.

Leftwich, A. (1984). *What is Politics? The Activity and its Study*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Levine, H. (1993). *Political Issues Debated: An Introduction to Politics*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall

Lipson, L. (1993). *The Great Issues of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science* (9th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Marsh, D. and Stoker, G (1995) (Eds). *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. London: Macmillan Press.

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.

Paki, F. & Inokoba, P. (2006). *An Invitation to Political Science*. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications.

- Rosenau J. (1990). *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kings, G Keohance, R.O, and verbal, S. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sabine, G. & Thorson, T. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. Hinsdale: Dryden Press.
- Salmon, G. (2002). *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- White, L.G. (1994). *Political Analysis: Technique and Practice*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- Zuckerman, A. (1991). *Doing Political Science*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

## **LECTURE ONE**

### **TOPIC: CONCEPTION OF POLITICS**

#### **Expected outcome**

At the end of the topic, students should be able to explain the various conceptions of politics as;

1. The art of government
2. Public affairs;
3. Operation of the state;
4. Power;
5. Collective decision and action;
6. Determination and execution of public policy
7. Peaceful resolution of societal struggles;
8. Relations and conflicts among classes.

Politics is an essentially contested concept because the term has a number of acceptable meanings and definitions. It has been defined in such different ways as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, the practice of deception and manipulation amongst others (Heywood 2004:4).

Conception of politics means the process of forming an idea of what politics is all about. There are different conceptions of politics because scholars tend to define politics based on their perceptions or field of study.

#### **How politics has been conceptualized and understood by different scholars and traditions**

## **Politics as the art of government**

Politics has been conceptualized as the art of government. Chancellor Bismarck is reputed to have conceived politics as the art of government, the exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decision. According to Heywood (2004:5) this is a classical definition of politics, developed from the original meaning of the term in Ancient Greece. This is the traditional view of the discipline which focuses on the personnel and machinery of government. This conception of politics offers a highly restricted view of politics. It centered on the machinery of government and engaged in by limited and specific groups of people.

## **Politics as Public affairs**

The earliest conception of politics belonged to the Greeks, who viewed politics as matters in the public realm as against the private realm. This conception moves beyond the narrow realm of government to what is thought of as public affairs. In other words the distinction between an essentially public and private sphere of life. The public realm was viewed as morally superior to the private realm. Their primary interest was in the moral purposes that decision makers ought to pursue to realize the public or common good of all members of the state i.e. the conformity of ideas and actions with perfect goodness. This view of politics is often traced back to the work of Aristotle. According to Aristotle man by nature is a political animal by which he meant that, it is only within a political community that human beings can live the good life (Heywood 2004:8). Therefore what the statesman is most anxious to produce as a moral character in his fellow citizens is a disposition of virtue and performance of virtuous attributes. The institutions of the states are regarded as public in the sense that they are responsible for the collective organization of community life. While civil society which consists of the institutions such as the family, church, private business, trade unions amongst others are private in the sense that they are set up and funded by individual citizens to satisfy their own interest rather than those of the larger society (Heywood 2004:8).

## **Criticism**

Politics cannot be restricted to only the public realm. Decisions that occur in the private realm largely affect the public realm. Politics as public affairs has been portrayed as a form of unwanted interference.

## **Politics as the operation of the state**

Weber defined politics as the operation of the state. This conception is concerned with politics being associated with the activities of the state because traditionally, the state has been the centre of political analysis. Weber argued that the modern state can only be defined in terms of the means peculiar to it, namely the use of physical

force. A human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory. Weber posited that politics should be equated with activities of the state because it is an administrative structure which use force to compel obedience and the monopoly of force is embodied in the military and police force to the extent that the state exercise sovereignty over its territory

### **Politics as power**

This conception is rather than confining politics to a particular sphere, view politics at work in all social activities. This conception was summed up in Harold Laswell book “Politics” when he defined politics as who get what, when and how. From this perspective, politics is about diversity and conflict, but the essential ingredient is the existence of scarcity. Politics can therefore been seen as the means through which struggle is conducted.

### **Politics as collective decision and action**

This conception of politics viewed politics as a matter of reaching collective decisions and taking collective actions. Miller (2002) defined politics as the process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interest are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally, regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy. Assumptions from this conception is that all societies must contain diversity and scarcity is also inevitable characteristics of all societies.

### **Politics as the determination and execution of public policy**

David Easton and Laswell are the proponent of this conception of politics. Politics can be seen as struggle among varied interest or people and decision makers decide the allocation of values among the people and also decide who gets what and how. Emphasis is on how decisions are made and carried out for the society rather than on the state structures as the sole center of political life. Proponents of this conception are also concerned with the implementation of public policies once they are made because a policy not implemented or cannot be implemented is a non policy. The assumption of this conception are; Political decision affect the vast number of members of the society; Politics deals with acceptable decisions which do not require force. And Political activities take place outside state structures

### **Politics as relation and conflict among different classes in the society**

According to Marx, every society is interlocked in a struggle between two broad classes in the society. These classes are differentiated in terms of their relations to mode of production in society. Those who own and control the means of production constitute the class of oppressors (Bourgeoisies) and the “have not” belonged to the class of the oppressed. Political activity centers on the struggle between these two

classes for supremacy. Marx believed the oppressed class will be victorious and will establish a socialist society where all men will be equal.

### Criticism

Marx's predictions has not materialized. Socialist state such as USSR collapsed because it could not sustain itself. China has also opened its window to the market economy.

### **Politics as compromise and consensus**

This conception view politics as a particular means finding and resolving conflict through compromise, negotiation, conciliation and building of consensus rather than through force. However, if this fails and military conflict or any kind of violence erupts as a consequence, then politics can be said to have been rejected or failed. Bernard Crick (2002:21) is an advocate of this position. He defined politics as the only possible solution to the problem of order. This conception of politics limits politics to a particular kind of politics, rather than politics per se. if we talk about politics when agreements are reached and compromise made then it would seem to be very limited activity.

### **Readings/References**

Cricks, B (2000) *In Defenece of Politics*. Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin.

Heywood, A. (2004) *Politics*. New York: Palgrave Foundations.

Miller, D. (1987). "Politics." In: *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Miller, D. (Ed.). Oxford: Blackwell. 430-431.

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.



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### **LECTURE TWO**

### **TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

Topic outline;

1. What is political analysis
2. Historical development of political analysis
3. Traditional political analysis
4. Modern political analysis.

### **Expected outcome**

At the end of the topic, students should be able to;

1. Define political analysis;
2. Explain the development of political analysis;
3. Explain traditional method of political analysis and their short comings and;
4. Explain modern political analysis and identify its strength and challenges.

Readings:

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.

Charlesworth, J. (1968) (ed) *Contemporary political Analysis*, New York, free Press.

### **What is Political Analysis?**

Political analysis can be defined as the various methods, theories, concept and approaches employed by a political scientist to summarise and explain various themes, political experience, events, political issues and phenomena.

Political analysis entails the process of investigating issues or events, decisions and challenges by systematically organizing this information into categories and then establishing a relationship between these data for the basic objective of explanation and subsequently prediction (Osaghae,1988).

In political science, the state is the main focus of analysis because it is the highest form of human organization and the center of power.it is from the state that citizens and non-citizens derive their political and social existence.

### **Development of political analysis**

The dating of political analysis can be traced back to the works of Greeks and other western philosophers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, political analysis relied on the historical, descriptive and philosophical narrations. The work of Aristotle also revealed primitive empirical analysis especially his classification of authority. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century new development emerged such as (1) the emergence of several new states especially those resulting from the fall of empires and kingdoms as well as the

independence of new states in Asia and Africa. (2) The spread of social sciences outside the western hemisphere. Therefore, the available tools of analysis could no longer explain the problem confronting societies. It for this reason that the behaviouralist mounted attack on the old traditional way of analysis based on the following critique.

1. Traditional method of analysis were static and non-explanatory
2. Traditional analysis was conservative and concerned with how to maintain loyalty to the rulers.
3. Traditional analysis were culture bound
4. The need to shift emphasis from government institution to man as the object of political power.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern political analysis dominated the mode of political analysis. It places emphasis on man /human behavior. Modern political analysis embodies the behavioural school. Behaviouralism sees man as a social being. It analyses political behavior using the canons of science by observing patterns and regularities in human behavior with a view to predict them. Behaviouralism as an approach has a number of strength;

1. It is able to shift emphasis away from institution of government to man
2. It is able to place emphasis on human behavior
3. It is able to develop medium and long range theories
4. It enhances some degree of predictability.

The behavioural school in spite of the above strength has also have challenges

1. It is accused of ahistorical
2. There is the absence of generally acceptable laws, theories and concept
3. Lack accurate measurement tools
4. Replication is difficult to achieve.

#### Refernces

Charlesworth, J. (1968) (ed) *Contemporary political Analysis*. New York: Free Press.

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.



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### **LECTURE THREE**

#### **IMPOTANCE AND FORMS OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

Topic outline;

5. Importance of political analysis
6. Types or forms of political analysis
7. Relationship between the types of political analysis.

#### **Expected outcome**

At the end of the topic, students should be able to;

5. Explain the importance of studying political analysis;
6. Identify the types of political analysis and;
7. Determine the relationship between the types of political analysis.

Readings:

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.

Charlesworth, J. (1968) (ed) *Contemporary political Analysis*, New York, free Press.

Apter, D. (1977) *Introduction to political analysis*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.

#### **Importance of political analysis in the study of political science**

According to Osaghae (1988) political analysis has three main goals;

1. To know what is important in politics
2. To know what is valuable
3. To know what is real or true by systematically subjecting our guesses, impressions, popular belief, even rumors to verification.

#### **Types of political analysis**

There are four forms of political analysis. These are;

1. Normative
2. Semantic
3. Empirical and
4. Policy analysis

### **Normative analysis**

The normative analysis deals with the application of reason to human ends (Apter, 1977: 50). The normative type of political analysis ask questions of values and Seeks to identify what is good or better with a view of recommends what we ought to value.

Criteria for evaluating normative analysis

According to Osaghae (1988), the viewpoints which provide the criteria for evaluating the quality of normative analysis are;

1. Naturalism
2. Intuition and
3. Subjectivism

### **Empirical analysis**

Empirical analysis seeks to identify observable phenomena in the real world with a view to establishing what is rather than what ought to be. The key element of empirical approach to the study of politics is comparative analysis.

Types of empirical analysis

1. Deductive reasoning: theories are first deduced from principles before being tested.
2. Inductive approach starts with empirical observation from which explanatory generalization are generated.

### **Semantic analysis**

Semantic analysis is also called conceptual analysis. It is concerned with clarifying the meaning of concepts.

Ways of carrying out semantic analysis

First, appealing to an authority whose definitions is widely accepted. This is called nominal definition.

Second, in the case of concepts coloured by ideological consideration, one can devise certain indices according to which it can be defined. This is called operationalisation of concept

### **Policy analysis**

Policy analysis involves the search for policies or course of action which will take us from the present state to that which will bring desired and satisfactory results.

### **Relationship among the four types of political analysis**

The four forms of political analysis are not used independently of each other. Normative claims are based on empirical knowledge. Conversely, a great deal of empirical analysis presupposes some normative assumptions. Policy analysis makes use of both normative and empirical analysis. Underlying all analysis is semantic analysis.

### **Summary**

One basic responsibilities of political scientists is to be able to analyse events as they occur in polity. Political analysis help us to know what is important, valuable, and real or true in politics. Types of political analysis are; Normative, empirical, semantic and policy analysis. The four types of political analysis are not used independently of each other.

### **References**

Osaghae, E. (1988). *Political Analysis*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme.

Charlesworth, J. (1968) (ed) *Contemporary political Analysis*, New York, free Press.

Apter, D. (1977) *Introduction to political analysis*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.



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### **LECTURE FOUR**

## **TOPIC: THE LANGUAGE OF INQUIRY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **Expected outcome**

At the end of the topic, students should be able to explain the following concept necessary in political analysis;

Generalization, Hypotheses, Variables, Theories, Scientific laws, Classification, Verifiability, Models, Methods, positivism, Research design, Explanations, Prediction, Falsification, Induction, Deduction, Techniques and paradigms.

### **Understanding concept in political science**

Concepts are generally accepted ideas, meaning or characteristics associated with certain events, processes, conditions, behaviour, action and situation. In political science, there is the lack of agreement among scholars on the basic concepts of political science. Political scientist operationalise key concepts that are important to their analysis.

Concepts necessary in political analysis

1. **Generalisation:** these are statements which describes general conditions or properties of the things we are interested in. Generalisation in natural sciences is usually stated in law like terms. In social sciences, it is stated as probability rather than law like because human behaviour, societies and events differ in their essentials across time and place.
2. **Hypotheses:** hypotheses is a statement of the relationships between two or more variables when at least one is independent and one is dependent. These are tentative explanations, statement or assertions that are formulated to be tested and when tested and confirmed, takes on the views of the world (Apter, 1977:39).
3. **Variables:** a variable is a property that takes on different values or assumes different characteristics. Types of variables; the first is the dependent variable, which is what is to be explained by another variable. Second, there is the independent variable which explains the dependent variable. Third intervening variables which link the independent to dependent variable. Parameters represent the conditions within which the independent variable operate (Apter, 1977:31).
4. **Theories:** theories are generalized statements summarizing the actions of one set of variables. These are explanations of uniformities that involve two or more variables, i.e. those whose action the theory seeks to explain and the causal or operating variable which effect changes in others; but which, even

though widely held, require empirical validation for confirmation. The role of theory in political analysis is to give direction to political inquiry (Apter, 1977:31).

5. Scientific laws: these are statements of universal uniformity used as explanatory characters and as predictive statements.
6. Methods: methods are ways of organizing theories for application to data. Some types of method are comparative, configurational, historical, and simulatic (Apter, 1977:31).
7. Classification: is considered as the activity of grouping objects with perceived similarities or attributes into two or more named classes.
8. Techniques: techniques link methods to the relevant data. They represent various modes of observation and ways of recording empirical information (Apter, 1977:31).
9. Verifiability: a proposition is said to be verified when it has been checked or tested by many specialist in the relevant field of study.
10. Systematic: knowledge is said to be systematic when it is organized into intelligible pattern, or structure with significant relationships made clear.
11. Models: are simplified ways of describing relationships. Model can be constructed from a paradigm, a theory, a method, or a technique (Apter, 1977:32).
12. Positivism: this refers to an approach that seeks to apply the scientific method of the natural science to social phenomena.
13. Explanations: is the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar. In other words, we explain an event by deducing from one or more statement.
14. Prediction: prediction basically has the same logical form as explanation but, unlike explanation, it involves inferring future unknown occurrence from particular facts and laws that are already known.
15. Research design: a research design convert strategy into an operational plan for fieldwork or an experiment. It is a prospectus or outline from which a research is carried forward (Apter, 1977:32).
16. Falsification: this is a doctrine of science that claims that there is no way we can know what is true among competing explanations of the world. Rather we can know what is false. The process of science therefore is the progressive elimination of what is false.

17. Induction: this is the practice of inferring from generalisation from past occurrences which then shape expectations for the future. Induction starts with empirical observation from which explanatory generalisation are generated.
18. Deduction: starts with deducing theory first from principles before being tested.
19. Paradigm: a paradigm is a framework of ideas that establishes the general context of analysis. It is a concept for understanding the framing and structuring of knowledge production in the natural sciences. It combines a mixture of philosophical assumptions and criteria of valid knowledge.

#### References

Apter, D. (1977) *Introduction to Political Analysis*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.



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#### **LECTURE FIVE**

#### **TOPIC: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

##### Topic outline

1. The traditional approach to the study of political analysis
2. The behavioural approach to the study of political analysis

##### **Expected outcome**

At the end of the topic, students should be able to;

1. Identify and explain the traditional approach to the study of political analysis
2. State the criticism of the traditional approaches.
3. Explain the behavioural approach
4. State the features of the behavioural approach

## 5. Explain criticisms of the behavioural approach

### **Approaches to the study of politics**

Political scientist has adopted several approaches to the study of politics. Approaches to the study of politics can be classified into the traditional and behavioural approach

#### **Traditional approach**

Traditional approach encompasses the normative and institutional approach. Normative political approach is concerned with the discovery and application of moral notions in the sphere of political relations and practice. This was the main emphasis of political science for a long time. The emphasis of the normative approach was on purposes, moral ends and intentions. This involved a preoccupation with essentially ethical, prescriptive or normative questions, reflecting a concern with what should, ought or must be brought about, rather than with what is (Heywood, 2004:13). It deals with the problems of man and the society. It is an attempt to know both the nature of political phenomenon and the right, or the good political conduct through critical and coherent analysis. It ask questions of values and Seeks to identify what is good or better with a view of recommends what we ought to value. These are ideas that are as old Plato and Aristotle. As the Greeks used the precepts of the normative approach to solve the problem of justice or equity under the law (Apter 1977:8). The subject matter of the normative approach is the state, its evolution, organisation and purpose.

#### **Institutional approach**

The institutional approach to the study of political process is concerned with the rules, procedures and formal organisation of the political system and their impact on political practice. Institutions realize normative purposes in governmental practices. Institutions order social life by political means. In doing so they affect the character of political ends (Apter 1977:8). Historically, the strength of the institutional approach in political science reflects the influence of law, philosophy and historical studies in its development.

#### **Features of the traditional approach**

1. Descriptive-inductive
2. Normative
3. Formal-legal
4. Historical-comparative

## 5. Political value

### Varieties of institutionalism

There are two varieties of institutionalism

1. Constitutional studies and
2. Public administration

### **Criticism of the traditional approach**

1. Static and over simplified
2. Weakness of its method
3. Parochial in the sense that there was an ethno-centric concentration of studies on western political systems.
4. Formalisation-focusing on rules and procedures to the neglect of the actual political behaviour.

### **The behavioural approach**

Behavioural approach is regarded as the movement in political science, which was founded on the belief that political phenomena could be better studied by scientific method of observation, quantitative analysis and verification. Taking the individual as political man is the basic unit of concern. Behaviouralism shifts the emphasis away from institutions to the study of how people behave and what motivates their behavior (Ikelegbe A. 2005) .

### Features of the behavioural approach

1. The objective is to make the study of political science scientific thus capable of explanations and predictions.
2. Research was aimed at development of theories, models and hypothesis which could provide acceptable explanation for political behavior.
3. Behaviouralist employed statistical techniques such as surveys, mathematical models and simulation to understand human behavior.
4. The use of quantitative method is encouraged since it would assist in accurate measurement of data
5. Adoption of the inter-disciplinary approach to political science.
6. Research was aimed at providing solutions to immediate social problems.

### Criticism of the behavioural approach to the study of political science

1. Political phenomena by their nature are not amenable to rigorous scientific enquiry.
2. Behaviouralist neglect and ignore vital areas of political science.
3. The value-fact dichotomy is untenable
4. Behaviouralist are limited in their ability to generalisation

### Post behaviouralism

The post behaviouralist complained that most of the discipline scholarship was removed from the imperative of political life. The post behaviouralist emphasis is on substance rather than techniques, core realities rather than abstraction, social and political problem orientation and social and policy relevance.

Heywood, A. (2004) *Politics*. New York: Palgrave Foundations.

Apter, D. (1977) *Introduction to political analysis*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc.

Ikelegbe A. 2005 (ed) *Introduction to Politics*. Lagos: Imprints Services



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### **LECTURE SIX**

#### **TOPIC: APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL SYSTEM**

Expected outcome: at the end of this topic, you should be able to;

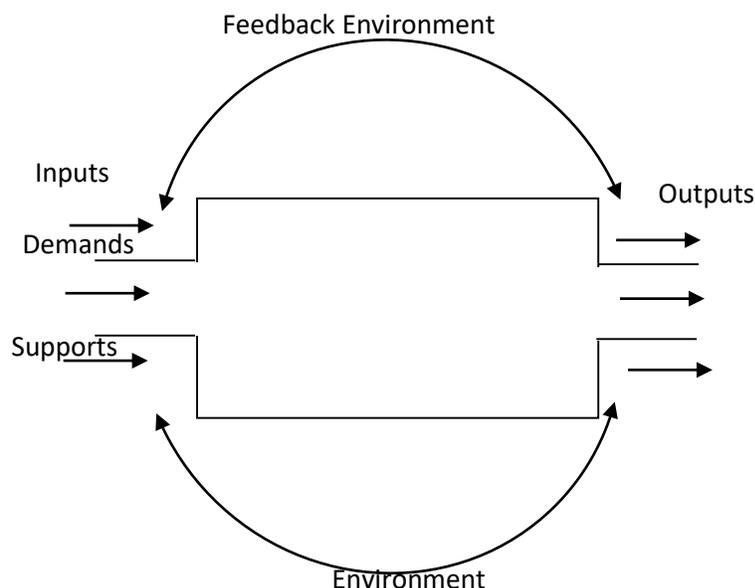
1. Define and describe the systems approach
2. State the merits and criticisms of the systems approach
3. Define and describe the Structural Functionalist Approach (SFA)
4. State the merits and criticisms of the structural functionalist approach

### **Systems approach**

System theory borrowed from biological sciences, its emphasis is on the working mechanism of a set-up for goals attainment. A system is an autonomous unit of complex elements which interacts and capable of adapting within itself. System theory aids in determining a political system capacity for maintaining its equilibrium (Akpotor 2004:45).

In the field of political science, political system theory is almost synonymous with the name of David Easton, who published his theoretic works on political models in three volumes - "The Political System" (1964), "A Framework for Political Analysis" (1965) and most importantly "A Systems Analysis of Political Life" (1979). At the centre of his work was the question as to how political systems manage to remain firm in a world full of stability and change. To answer this question, Easton believes that it is necessary to scrutinize the way in which the political system interacts with the environment within society and outside of society. It is to this that Easton defines political system as existing with other systems as physical, biological, social, psychology etc. which affect it and in turn affected by the political system, through continuous transaction and exchanges (Akpotor 2004:45). According to this concept, demands, expectations and support approach the political system, before being processed within the political system during the so-called conversion process and made into binding decisions for all members of society in the form of laws and provisions. These laws and provisions, in turn, create reactions within society and feedback and, again, to demands and/or support.

The context of a political system functioning can be schematically represented as follows:



Adapted from Lawrence C.M. (1972) cited in Efanodor, 2005.

According to Talcott Parson, if system equilibrium are to be maintained four functional pre-requisites must be performed

1. Adaptation to the environment and to changes in the environment.
2. Goal attainment
3. Pattern maintenance .i.e. the ability of a system to insure the reproduction of its own basic patterns, its values and norms
4. Integration of the different functions and subsystems into a cohesive coordinated whole (Akpotor, 2004:48).

### **Merits of the System Theory**

1. It provides a framework that helped to move political science away from an exclusive concern with the nation state to the study of all groups and institutions.
2. It provides a standardized set of concepts such as inputs and outputs to describe activities which take place in all political system.
3. It is a useful approach for analysing the international system
4. It enables us to identify the interrelationships of political phenomena.

### **Criticisms of the System Approach**

1. Easton reduced the state to nothing more than a black box that simply receives and shuns out inputs differently.
2. The approach is conservative and ideologically oriented towards retaining the status quo.

### **Structural Functionalist Theory**

Structural functionalist theory examines how social structures function to meet social needs. It is a sociological theory that attempts to explain why society functions the way it does by focusing on relationship between various social institutions. The framework ask question such as; what structures exist, and are they functioning properly. In political science the structural functional approach was pioneered by Gabriel Almond. The political system is made up of institutions such as interest groups, political parties, the executives, legislature and Judiciary etc.

Almond postulates that political systems have universal characteristics.

1. Political system has political structures.
2. The same functions are performed in all political system.
3. All political structures are multi-functional and;

4. All political systems are mixed in the cultural sense.
5. While borrowing from Easton input and output model, Almond states that input functions are political socialization, interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication.
6. Output functions are rule making, rule application and, rule adjudication.
7. These functions are performed in order to ensure the equilibrium of the system.

### **Criticism of the structural functionalist approach**

1. The framework ignores inequalities of social class, race and gender, which cause tension and conflict.
2. The framework focuses on stability and unity at the expense of conflict.
3. The framework is conservative.

### **References**

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