

Chapter 1: Politics and Political Science

1. Opening: What is Politics?

- When most people hear “politics,” they think of elections, campaigns, or corruption.
- But as scholars, we must think more broadly: politics exists wherever decisions are made that affect a group of people.
- Harold Lasswell defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how.” → short, powerful, and captures the essence of distribution of resources and power.
- David Easton went further, calling politics “the authoritative allocation of values for a society.” → values, not just material resources, are distributed.
- Transition: So, politics is not confined to parliaments or governments. It happens in universities, families, even workplaces — anywhere decisions are made collectively.

2. Power, Authority, and Legitimacy

- **Power:** at its simplest, the ability to make others do what they otherwise would not.
 - Example: a government imposing taxes, a teacher enforcing a deadline.
 - Joseph Nye distinguished between hard power (coercion, force, money) and soft power (persuasion, cultural attraction).
- **Authority:** when power is seen as legitimate and rightful.
Weber gave us three types:
 1. *Traditional* — rooted in custom (monarchies, dynasties).
 2. *Charismatic* — rooted in personality (Gandhi, Mandela, or even Hitler).
 3. *Legal-rational* — based on rules, laws, and bureaucracy (modern democracies).
- **Legitimacy:** crucial. Without it, governments must rely on force, which is costly and unstable.
- Transition: This leads us to the state — the primary arena where authority and legitimacy operate.

3. The State

- A **state** is not just “government.” It is a permanent political-legal entity with:
 - Population
 - Territory
 - Government
 - Sovereignty (both internal and recognition by other states).
- Important distinction: Nation vs. State.
 - Nation: a community with shared culture, history, or identity (e.g., the Kurds, Palestinians).
 - State: the political structure exercising sovereignty.
 - Some nations have no state (Kurds). Some states contain multiple nations (India, UK).
- Transition: Now, how do we study the state and politics scientifically? That brings us to political science as a discipline.

4. Political Science as a Discipline

- Originally, political science focused on institutions: constitutions, parliaments, courts.
- Post-WWII, scholars wanted a more scientific approach → behavioral revolution.
 - Focus shifted to political behavior: voting, protest, opinion surveys.
- Today, political science spans:
 - Political theory and philosophy (what justice and democracy ought to be).
 - Comparative politics (how systems differ).
 - International relations (war, diplomacy, globalization).
 - Public policy and administration.
- Transition: But how do we approach political science? Do we focus on values, on facts, or both?

5. Approaches in Political Science

- **Normative:** “what ought to be” (justice, rights, ideal government).
- **Empirical:** “what is” (measuring voting behavior, party systems).
- **Behavioralism** (1950s–60s): adopted psychology and statistics; emphasized observable behavior.
- **Post-behavioralism** (1970s): reacted to behavioralism’s cold empiricism, demanding research be relevant to human problems.
- Transition: Once we understand these approaches, we can explore *theories* that structure our understanding.

Chapter 2: Theories

1. Why Do We Need Theory?

- Without theory, political science would be a list of events: who won which election, who passed what law.
- Theory helps us:
 - Connect events.
 - Predict behavior.
 - Ask deeper questions about cause and effect.
- Example: Instead of simply noting that some countries are democracies and others are authoritarian, theory asks: Why? What conditions make democracy possible?

2. Systems Theory (Easton)

- Politics as a living system: inputs, conversion, outputs.
- Inputs: demands and support from citizens.
- Conversion: political institutions filter and process these.
- Outputs: policies, decisions.
- Feedback loop: society reacts, influencing the next cycle.
- Example: protests about rising tuition → government policy on subsidies → student reaction → new demands.
- Limitation: Very abstract, sometimes hard to apply.
- Transition: Another perspective is to focus on functions rather than systems.

3. Structural-Functionalism

- Every political system performs certain functions to survive:
 - Rule-making (legislature).
 - Rule-application (executive).
 - Rule-adjudication (courts).
- Advantage: allows cross-country comparison. Even tribal councils and parliaments perform similar roles.
- Limitation: can be too rigid, ignores conflict and change.
- Transition: But politics is not only about institutions — it is also about choices.

4. Rational Choice Theory

- Assumes individuals are rational, self-interested actors.
- Useful in explaining:
 - Why people vote (Anthony Downs: they calculate costs vs. benefits).
 - Why politicians form coalitions (Riker: minimum winning size).
- Criticism: Too narrow; ignores culture, emotions, ideology.
- Transition: To balance this, other theories emphasize values and culture.

5. Political Culture

- *Almond & Verba (1963): The Civic Culture.*
- Types of political culture:
 - *Parochial*: little awareness of politics.
 - *Subject*: aware but passive.
 - *Participant*: active citizens in democracy.
- Example: U.S. high participation vs. traditional monarchies where people are passive.
- Transition: Another set of theories links politics to economic development.

6. Modernization Theory

- Argument: as societies industrialize, literacy rises, urbanization increases, middle classes demand democracy.
- Example: South Korea, Taiwan democratized as they developed economically.
- Criticism: assumes Western path is universal; ignores cases like China.
- Transition: Marxists argue instead that economics drives politics in a very different way.

7. Marxist and Critical Theories

- Marx: politics is a superstructure reflecting the economic base.
- The state = an instrument of class domination.
- Later Marxists (Gramsci): stressed ideology and “hegemony” — ruling ideas dominate consent.
- Critical theory (Habermas, Frankfurt School): asks how rationality and institutions can serve liberation, not domination.
- Transition: Theories help us analyze politics, but ideologies motivate people to act.

Chapter 3: Political Ideologies

1. What is an Ideology?

- An ideology is like a roadmap:
 - Explains how society works.
 - Identifies what is wrong.
 - Offers a prescription for change.
- Example: Environmentalism identifies climate change as the problem and prescribes sustainability.

2. Liberalism

- Core belief: individual liberty.
- Classical liberalism (Locke, Smith): small state, free markets, property rights.
- Modern liberalism (Rawls, Keynes): welfare state, redistribution, social rights.
- Example: U.S. New Deal, UK's NHS.

3. Conservatism

- Values: tradition, order, continuity.
- Burke: society is an organism; change must be slow and cautious.
- Modern conservatism: free market economics + traditional family/religious values.
- Example: Reagan, Thatcher.

4. Socialism

- Goal: equality and social justice.
- Democratic socialism: welfare states in Scandinavia.
- Communism: abolition of private property (Marx, Engels).
- Criticism: can stifle innovation, risk authoritarianism.

5. Nationalism

- Deep emotional attachment to nation.
- Civic nationalism: shared values, citizenship.
- Ethnic nationalism: blood, language, ethnicity.
- Example: Gandhi's Indian nationalism (civic), Nazi Germany (ethnic).

6. Fascism

- Ultra-nationalist, militaristic, anti-democratic.
- Leader cult, rejection of liberalism.
- Example: Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany.

7. Environmentalism / Green Politics

- Core concern: climate, sustainability.
- Critiques growth-driven capitalism.
- Now institutionalized in Green parties worldwide.

8. Feminism

- Liberal feminism: equal rights, equal pay.
- Radical feminism: patriarchy as structural oppression.
- Intersectional feminism: multiple oppressions (gender + race + class).

9. Contemporary Trends

- Blurring of left and right (“Third Way” under Tony Blair).
- Rise of populism — both left-wing (Latin America) and right-wing (Trump, Modi, Orbán).
- Identity politics increasingly driving mobilization.