
UNIT 2 COMPARATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS: SYSTEM, STRUCTURAL, PUBLIC POLICY

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Political and social thinkers have **often** proclaimed a certain conception of system to explain the phenomena of politics. Marx classified societies into systems on the basis of **their** mode of production as feudal, bourgeois and proletarian; Weber divided societies into systems of authority: traditional, Charismatic and rational – legal. Unlike Marx, who thought that system change was dialectical, Weber believed that it was evolutionary.

Classical writers viewed monarchies, aristocracies and democracies as political **systems**. Almond classified political systems into primitive, traditional, transitional and modern. Coleman spoke of competitive, semi-competitive and authoritarian systems and later divided them into dictatorial, oligarchical and representational systems.

Eisenstadt suggested a long list of primitive, patrimonial, feudal, bureaucratic, democratic, autocratic, totalitarian and underdeveloped systems. Edward Shils classifies **modern** systems into political democracies, titular democracies, modernising oligarchies, totalitarian oligarchies and traditional oligarchies.

Classifications of systems reveal a variety of interpretations. The emergence of many new nations, the amassing of new data and technological advances has increased the complexity of **this** subject. Many social scientists now use system as the basic concept of **their** political analysis.

System thus is an abstraction of the real society. Any social phenomena can be viewed as a system. These phenomena are inter-related. However, boundaries are employed to discuss

different systems, such as political, economic, social, and cultural-psychological. The analyst abstracts from the whole society some elements which are more coherent and call them a system. Conceptually measurable amounts are called variables, constant elements are termed parameters. The variables of a political system may consist of structures, functions, roles, **actors**, values, norms, goals, inputs, outputs, response and feedback. These terms will be explained below as we analyse the concept of political system.

2.2 GENESIS AND ORIENTATIONS OF THE SYSTEMS' APPROACH

The genesis of the Systems approach can be traced to several, different sciences. Lilienfeld has mentioned in this connection the fields of biology, **cybernetics** and operations research. This approach is also indebted to anthropology, economics and sociology. Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and others founded the Society for General Systems Research and also a **journal**, Behavioural Science. They said that the goal of the Systems theory was the integration of "the various sciences, natural and social". Norbert Wiener believed that his concept of cybernetic control through feedback could be a model for legitimising governmental operations in a political system. Operations Research applied the Systems approach to the use of radar installations during the Second World War. It was used to forecast military outcomes on the basis of strategy, tactics and the design of weapons. Later, in times of peace, operations research becomes synonymous with systems analysis in natural and social sciences.

Among the social sciences, economics was first to make contributions to systems theory. Economic techniques and computer simulation were used along with input-output analysis to analyse relation among various segments of an economic system. Input-output analysis is generally static in nature. In Political Science, it is generally used in qualitative assessments of a system.

Game theory has been used in political analysis of electoral strategies and external relations of political systems. Political scientists have used it in the testing and **implementation** of the rational choice theory. This theory assumes that individuals tend to use actions that bring them the best results.

Sociology also alludes to "ways of guiding human thinking in systematic fashion." We often refer to the "Planning–Programming–Budgeting System" used by the American government. David Singer distinguished between two different orientations consisting of (i) systems analysis and (ii) general systems. In his view, systems analysis suffers from abstraction and lacks a dynamic and historical perspective. He opted for the phrase, general systems, which should study regularities in various systems. P.G. Casanova suggested a **somewhat** similar distinction. The first type was represented by Talcott Parsons and is rooted in 19th century positivist theories. The second type is called systems analysis, which stresses on the decision-making and has benefited **from** mathematical applications and operations research. Casanova studied the history of changes in modern systems. His emphasis on history and policy-oriented research enabled him to put forward a radical reinterpretation of both systems – analysis and functionalism.

Ronald Chilcote has identified three principal trends in the literature of Systems Theory: One trend, sometimes called Grand Theory, is non-historical in orientation. It grew **from** the natural sciences. It culminated in the writings of David Easton. The **impact** of Easton was wide-ranging

and had a profound impact on both comparative and international politics; Karl Deutsch, Morton Kaplan, and Herbert Spiro were deeply influenced by him.

Another trend, known as structural–functionalism, tries to be holistic but **drifts** towards a non-historical and middle – range analysis. It has grown from two academic traditions. In the first tradition, we can place the works of Malinowski, Radcliffe – Brown, and Talcott Parsons. In the second traditions, we can refer to the works of Arthur **Bentley** and David Truman. Both these traditions have converged in the contributions of Gabriel Almond, whose structural – functional approach made great impact on comparative politics.

A third trend is a radical and Marxist critique and reinterpretation of Systems Theory. It raises substantive issues of public policy and argues that the study of political system must investigate them in order to make our knowledge socially relevant and meaningful. In addition, "the radical re-interpretation recasts system in terms of state and looks to the theories of the capitalist state."

2.3 DAVID EASTON: GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Karl Mannheim offered "systematic sociology" in his study of society. Following him, Charles Merriam wrote about "systematic politics". This search for a systematic interpretation of society and polity ~~was~~ continued by David Easton in his application of general Systems Theory to the study of political systems. The following discussion will include, first, a statement of Easton's conceptual framework; **second**, influences shaping Easton's approach; third, application of his ideas; and lastly, a critique of Easton's methodology.

2.3.1 Easton's Conceptual Framework

Easton's conceptual framework evolved in three phases. The first phase is represented by *The Political System* published in 1953. The second and third phases are represented by A Framework of Political Analysis and A Systems Analysis of Political Life, both published in 1965, one after another.

His conceptual framework was based on four assumptions:

- i) The empirical search for knowledge requires the construction of systematic theory **i.e.** the highest order of generalisation.
- ii) Political scientists must view the political system as a whole rather than concentrate on solutions for particular problems. They must combine factual knowledge and empirical data.
- iii) Research on the political system draws from psychological data and situational data **i.e.** both by personalities and motivations of the participants and the influences emanating from the natural and social environment.
- iv) Political life is generally in a condition of disequilibrium, a counter-tendency to equilibrium, which is never realised in practice.

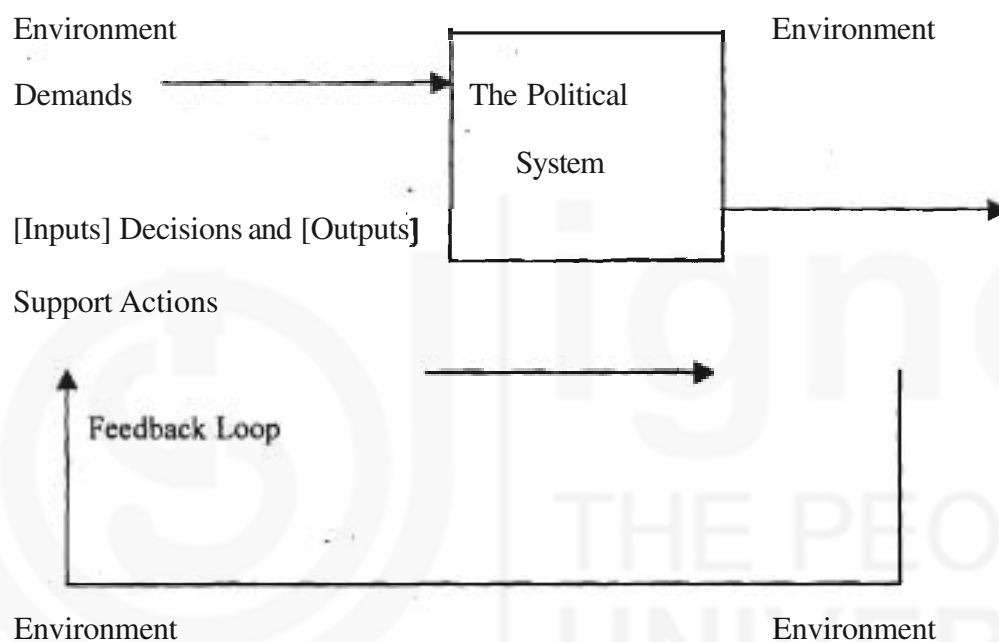
Easton rejected the concept of the state by referring to confusion and variety of its meanings. He regarded power as a significant concept which shapes and carries out authoritative politics in society. It rests on the ability to **influence** actions of **others**. A policy, therefore,

"consists of a web of decisions and actions that allocate values."

The concepts of power, authority, decision-making and policy are important in **Easton's** concept of political life as the authoritative allocations of values for a society. He identified the following attributes of political system:

- 1) Units and boundaries
- 2) Inputs and outputs
- 3) Differentiations within a system and
- 4) Integration within a system.

Easton's Diagram of a Political System



The diagram points out that for the purpose of analysis, the use of system permits the separation of political life from the rest of society. The units of the political system are 'political actions'. **Inputs** in the form of demands and supports feed the political system. Demands come from the environment or arise within the system itself. Demands become issues which are dealt through the recognised channels in the system. Supports are actions or orientations prompting or resisting the political system.

Outputs emerge from the political system in the form of binding decisions and policy actions. These decisions and actions are fed back into the environment by satisfying the demands of some members of the system. They in turn, generate support for the system. Dissatisfaction may have negative results in the form of new demands on the system.

In his second phase, Easton elaborated his earlier framework and argued that *the political system is "a set of interactions abstracted from the totality of social behaviour, through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society."* He discussed the persistence and dynamics of

systems. Political systems persist in times of change. They can face pressure and stress. They **have the capacity to survive conflict.**

In his third phase, **Easton** attempted the construction of a general theory and explained why the systems persist in the face of frequent and constant crises. In this, he studied responses to the stresses placed on the system, and discussed outputs as regulators of specific support. He thus hoped to provide a foundation for empirical investigation.

Easton claims that his political analysis is dynamic rather than static and his concept of system persistence permits gradual structural changes unless they head towards a complete disintegration of the rule-making mechanisms. System Theory cannot explain revolutionary changes.

2.3.2 Influences Shaping Easton's Approach

According to Mackenzie, **Easton** was caught up in a movement which he did not originate and there is no Eastonian theory as such. He was indebted to a tradition of forty years which began with Charles Merriam, George Catlin, Harold **Laswell** and others. Like them, he believed that attention to legal institutions, parties and pressure groups was outmoded and political science should theorise about the political system as a whole.

Easton also looked to Talcott Parsons, who had derived from Weber an action frame of reference which could be applied to macro theory in the social science. Talcott Parsons formulated generalisations about the social system, but according to David **Easton**, he questioned the validity of political theory. This meant that his influence on **Easton's** approach was limited. There are occasional references in **Easton's** work to the anthropologists Malinowski and **Radcliffe** Brown as well as to the sociologists **Merton** and **Levy**. But **Easton** also argued that 'structural analysis, so-called, is not a theory but a concept intrinsic to all scientific research. Indeed, it is fundamentally devoid of theoretical content.'

The works on social psychology influenced **Easton** as decision – making is an element in his conceptual framework for political analysis. **Easton's** approach was also influenced by macro-economic conceptions. William Mitchell said that **Easton's** concept of allocation resembled "theories of distribution and the allocation of resources in economics, and particularly neo-classical theory." From economics David **Easton** borrowed such notions as "scarcity, allocation, competition, maximisation, homeostatic equilibrium, functional interdependence, self-regulation, goal-seeking and feedback." **Easton's** systems approach was also derived from physical and life sciences. Thus he joined the inter-disciplinary tradition of seeking an understanding of the "whole" system. Ervin **Larzel** concluded:

The most consistent as well as most general paradigm available today to the inquiring mind is the systems paradigm. The systems philosophical paradigm takes man as one species of concrete and actual system, embedded in encompassing natural hierarchies of likewise concrete and actual physical, biological and social systems.

Easton has been influenced by the new "communications sciences" and his input-output framework is closer to the communications model of Karl Deutsch. Both believe that the political system has feedback mechanisms which are capable of transmitting information of a positive or negative kind to the system. Thus a particular state of equilibrium may change without disturbing the political identity of the system as a whole.

2.3.3 Applications of Systems' Analysis

Laszlo, Levine and Milsum expressed their anxiety about seeking solutions to the problems, faced by the post-industrial societies. Following Easton, their goal was "to plan for and to control the system so as to perform in a socially good way." Meleod wanted to use the systems analysis and simulation as he thinks that simulation is a good technique for exploring the future, for understanding the impacts of proposed action and for permitting us to solve many problems facing mankind. Many writers such as Abramson and Inglehast, Teuno and Ostrowski analysed national political systems by measuring relevant empirical data.

Other significant applications of systems approach are found in the works of Herbert Spiro, Karl Deutsch and Morton Kaplan. They either follow Easton's conceptual scheme or a parallel framework. Spiro's work directly relates to Comparative Politics. Kaplan's focus is on international politics. Karl Deutsch is equally concerned with both fields.

Spiro defined a political system as a community that processes issues. These issues relate to problems, needs and goals about which consensus or dissension may exist. Karl Deutsch viewed politics as the "steering or manipulation of human behaviour." He evolved a system based on the study of communications and control, points of decision, feedback and flow paths.

2.4 SOME CRITICISMS OF EASTON'S METHODOLOGY

Criticisms of Easton's methodology tend to emphasize three areas (1) Conceptual Inadequacy (2) Operational Difficulties (3) Ideological Orientations.

1. Conceptual Inadequacy

Many critics have attacked Easton's work on the grounds of inadequate conceptualisation. In his work, there is an excessive pre-occupation with persistence and stability in the face of changes and conflict in actual political life. There is too much attention paid to the central orienting conception of the allocation of values and the use of authority.

Thorson argued that the persistence of the system is central not only to Easton's theory but to his exposition as well. Everything brings on the system persisting. Real situations in several European, Asian and other countries could not be explained by the notion of persistence. Miller, Reading and Leslie also found fault with his notion of equilibrium and persistence as inapplicable to changing political realities.

William Mitchell criticised Easton's concept of politics as the allocation of values, as leading to misleading assumptions in theorising politics. It may mean that the political system has a single function of allocation only. Moreover, the polity does not allocate all values of a society. The economy distributes income and resources. The question of power may be obscured by too much attention to the demands of interest groups, while in fact the demands of government and ruling classes upon people may be more important.

Easton's pre-occupation with boundary was also criticised. It was pointed out that political system cannot be isolated from economic, social and cultural-psychological systems. David Singer argued that we must cross back and forth over the **misty** boundaries between and among these systems and must therefore try to cope with several overlapping and elusive systems of action at the same time. It has yet to be done successfully. Evans concluded that **Easton** failed to define the 'political' and distinguish it from the 'non-political', making his notion of the boundary vague.

The above problems arose due to **Easton's** avoidance of the human element. **Easton**, Almond and Parsons belonged to the "system of an action school" which ignored both individuals and aggregations of people as active participants in politics.

2. Operational Difficulties

Easton's conceptual framework has not yet yielded testable hypotheses. His methodology has made an impact on the study of politics "but there has been little empirical consequence for comparative politics." This is because the method is difficult to operate.

The problem with his framework is that it is both mechanistic and artistic at the same time – like a machine which is also alive. Despite the vital origins of his thought, **Easton** used the vocabulary of cause and effect. His framework, therefore, lacks operational possibilities.

Thorson argues that he creates a general theory of politics, which is *reduction ad absurdum*, and it is an illusion to apply this for the study of any concrete, historically existing political system in the real world. It will be a futile enterprise. **Kress** spoke of **Easton's** "empty vision of politics" in his critical summary of the theory's lack of substance, the artificial nature of system and member.

3. Ideological Orientations

Easton's approach has certain ideological orientations. It seems to **justify** the status quo. It is essentially a static system of analysis. There is no denying the fact that the nature of **Easton's** methodology makes it relatively easy for it to creep into conservative patterns. A conservative bias is an **inbuilt** feature of functionalism from which the systems analysis has been adopted in political science. *The main object of the systems approach, like other behavioural paradigms, is to validate the assumptions of the dominant ideology of a liberal capitalist society.*

Eugene Miller says that **Easton** was concerned with an intellectual crisis and the imminent washing of democratic liberalism. He blamed historicism for the impoverishment of political theory. In the name of scientific and causal theory, he presented a status **quo-oriented** general theory of political system. For him, value theory lost its importance as he opted for the dogma of empiricism.

Systems analysis assumed stable conditions, cohesion and equilibrium. **Easton** refused to take cognizance of political conflict, catastrophic change, class antagonism and resolution. He himself admitted in 1969, "There can be little doubt that political science as an enterprise has failed to anticipate the crises that are upon us." This applied equally to **Easton's** own work on political science during the previous two decades. His methodology had a conservative bias that prevented an exploration of socially relevant issues.

2.5 EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Structural Functional approach is a form of systemic analysis which looks at political system as a coherent whole which influences and is in turn influenced by their environments. A political system is held together by the presence of legitimate force throughout the system. It has three characteristics: comprehensiveness, independence and existence of boundaries. The interactions that take place within a system are not between individuals but between the roles which these individuals adopt. Lastly, the political system is an open system and is involved in communications with systems beyond its boundaries.

2.5.1 Gabriel Almond's Conceptual Framework

Gabriel Almond's conceptual framework evolved through three phases. He wrote an article in 1956 in which he said that *system is an "inclusive concept which covers all of the patterned actions relevant to the making of political decisions."* For him, system was more important than process because system implied totality, interactions among units within the totality and stability in these interactions, which he described as "changing equilibrium".

Almond relied upon Max Weber and Talcott Parsons in **conceptualising** the political system's actions and turned to concepts like structure and role replacing the legal vocabulary of institution, group or organisation. Lastly, he introduced the concept of political culture which is embedded in a particular pattern of orientations to political action. These patterns generally extend beyond the boundaries of the political system.

In 1958 and 1959, Almond and his colleagues at Princeton University focused on the politics of developing countries. They applied their concepts of structures and functions to changes taking place in these developing countries avoiding the examination of their constitutions and formal government institutions. Later Almond and Coleman edited and published a book entitled *Politics of Developing Areas* on this subject.

Almond and his collaborators introduced new concepts of comparative politics. *The concept of political system replaced the state and its legal apparatus. Structure replaced institution, role took the place of office and function substituted for power.* Almond suggested that all political systems have four characteristics:

- i) All political systems have structures.
- ii) The same political functions **are performed** in all political systems.
- iii) All political structures are multifunctional.
- iv) All political systems are mixed in the cultural sense..

Almond then outlined his own **functional** categories **classifying them into** inputs and outputs:

Input functions:

- Political **socialisation** and recruitment
- **Interest articulation**

- Interest aggregation
- Political communication

Output Functions

- Rulemaking
- Rule application
- Rule adjudication

The outputs are **government** functions and correspond to the traditional legislative, executive and judicial functions. They show a bias towards American and European conceptions of government showing traditional orientation of comparative politics. Almond, however, argued that input functions are crucial in characterising the political systems of developing countries.

These input functions constitute the ingredients of the system: who recognises, deliberates and resolves problems and issues. Spiro called this a process of “**policy flow**” and Easton interpreted it as consisting of demands and supports for action. Almond says that political socialisation takes place through the family, school, church, trade union, party and even government agencies. It also involves recruitment of people from different social groups into political parties, civil service etc.

Interest articulation is the expression of political interests and demands for action. Interest aggregation is the combining of those interests and demands which are articulated by interest groups and political parties. Political communication helps all these political functions. Political socialisation, recruitment, articulation and aggregation occur through communication.

Gabriel Almond says that political culture is dualistic, not monistic. Political systems may be represented as modern and traditional, developed and underdeveloped, industrial and agrarian. Political systems have evolved through stages of development. Structures become more differentiated as **political** systems reach higher stages of growth. Almond divided them into primitive, traditional, transitional and modern systems.

Less developed systems display 'traditional' styles of diffuseness, particularism, and ascriptiveness. The more developed systems display 'rational' styles of specificity, universalism, achievement and affective neutrality. Yet this process of modernisation is never complete. Almond called his theory as “**probabilistic**” theory suggesting “that political systems may be compared in terms of the probabilities in performance of specified functions by the specified **structures**.”

Almond's framework was further elaborated in the third phase when he, in collaboration with Powell, published ***Comparative Politics – A Developmental Approach*** in 1966. He now put forward the concept of conversion processes, which allow for the transformation of the demands and supports that flow into the political system. Out of that system flows extraction, regulation and distribution into society.

He argued that his conception of political system deals with interdependence which does not mean harmony. He claimed that his theory was dynamic as it conceived of “developmental patterns”. He connected his framework of system with his concept of political development.

groups" and these systems therefore have "a higher responsive capability." Totalitarian systems are less responsive to demands, regulate behaviour through coercion, and extract maximum resources from their people. Symbolic capability relates to the symbol flow from a particular system into the informational environment i.e its image in the community of nations.

A third level of functions is related to maintenance and adaptation of political system. They include political **socialisation** and recruitment. According to Almond, a theory of the political system can be based on understanding the relations among these three levels and the relations of the functions at each level.

In 1969, Almond reviewed his conceptual framework and proposed a research design "intended to draw us a little closer to a systematic exploitation of historical experience using a causal scheme which combines system-functional analysis, aggregate quantitative analysis and rational choice analysis at appropriate points in the explanation of developmental episodes." This approach retained his structural – functional formulation but combined it with other approaches to make it empirically more fruitful.

2.5.2 Influences Shaping Almond's Approach

The influences that shaped Almond's approach are similar to those which influenced Easton's System analysis. His perspectives also emanated from the works of Radcliffe – Brown and Malinowski and the writings of Parsons and Easton. Because of Almond's concern with the whole system, it can be called a pattern of macro-structural **functionalism**. Another influence on Almond's thought relates to the traditions of pluralism and liberalism exemplified by the works of Arthur Bentley, David Truman and Robert Dahl. Because of its concern with a plurality of interests within the system, it may be called a pattern of micro-structural functionalism.

Although Almond restated Parsonian concept of functionalism, two aspects of Parsons' scheme have influenced Almond's own formulation. Those are the theories of action and social system. Besides, like Parsons, Almond was also interested in the topics of personality and culture. Almond used the concept of "pattern variables" proposed by Parsons. These were (1) Affectivity vs. **Affective Neutrality**, (2) Self-orientation vs. collectivity orientation, (3) Universalism vs. Particularism, (4) Achievement vs. Ascription, (5) Specificity vs. **Diffuseness**. Almond used them to relate political culture to political system.

The idea of interaction and equilibrium was inherent in the middle-range theory of Almond's structural functionalism; the association of a pluralistic process and equilibrium was proposed early in Arthur Bentley's Process of Government and restated in David Truman's work in the Governmental Process. Almond assimilated pluralist theory into an explicitly functionalist **framework**. This **reduced** Almond's approach to the status of partisan apologists, an **ideological** interpretation of Western liberal political system.

2.6 CRITICISM OF ALMOND'S METHODOLOGY AND THEORY

Almond's structural functionalism has been criticised on three grounds: (1) Conservative Ideology; (2) Conceptual Confusion; and (3) Operational Limitations.

1. Conservative Ideology

Critics have found that structural functionalism is based on a deterministic, conservative and restrictive ideology. Don Martindale pointed out four defects of functionalism: the conservative

ideological bias and preference for status quo; a lack of methodological clarity; an overemphasis on the role of closed systems in social life, and failure to deal with social change.

C. Wright Mills criticised the conservative bias in the writings of the advocates of **functionalism**, which was a grand theory that neither related to facts nor reached a level of theory. Barrington Moore, Alf **Dahrendorf** and Andrew Hacker also criticised its conservative bias. **Spiro** considered Almond's work as ethnocentric and **Lijphart** considered its emphasis on stability as reflecting Anglo-American liberal, capitalist norms. Sanford made a similar charge against Almond.

Other critics accuse functionalists of "a liberal bias" who believe that any interference with freedom of the market-place leads to **inefficiency** and limits on the system's natural benefits. Charles Powell saw in Almond's methodology a reflection of "American cultural mythology". His interest group approach was based on "classless view of a society stratified by religious and ethnic distinctions ... the state withers away as a nonpartisan reference... into a framework of functionalist conflict resolution." He concluded that Almond's structural functionalism is "establishmentarian, non-operational, formally inadequate ... As a vehicle for research it goes nowhere, and as a language of discourse it leads to obfuscation..... the pluralistic neutralism of structural-functionalism..... renders it useless as a theory."

2. Conceptual Confusion

I.C. **Jarvie** argued that "functionalism is limited by its lack of explanatory power, its satisfactoriness in explanation and the constricting effect of its assumptions, about the nature and working of social systems." Groth's criticism of Almond's theory had three points against it: ambiguity in terminology, difficulties in determining political relationships, and confusion in the use of facts and values. **Melanson** and Kind also criticised his obsession with empirical detail detached from theory and obscurity of his languages.

Mackenzie thought structural functionalism as a mere **jargon** which mystified truth. He said, "Almond's terms are in one sense no better than the old terms because they offer no better definitions." S.E. **Finer** said about the vocabulary of Almond's political system: "What Almond has to say could have been said without using this system approach and it would have been said more clearly." **Finer** hated the use of "modish" concepts. He thought that Almond's conception of "political" was misconceived and that his notion of system, with its inputs and outputs was "otiose and confusing".

Hempel argued that functionalism is illogical, **Sherman Roy Krupp** thought that it has tendency to exaggerate the cohesiveness of systems and to obscure goals resulting in vague description and lack of analysis.

3. Operational Limitations

Structural functionalism has a methodology where ideal situations are often confused with the observed situations of systems. Terry N. Clark complained about the structural functional overemphasis of institutionalised political **behaviour**. Other critics said that "structural functionalists have not taken the enormously **difficult** step of refining, **operationalising** and testing hypotheses." They attributed these failings to the limitations of the writers, early stage in the evolution of the theory and the deficiencies of functionalism itself.

According to Holt and Turner, Almond viewed the modern system as structurally **differentiated** and **secular** but they found limitations with this formulation. They said; "It is difficult to apply on a broad basis to include both historical and contemporary cases. The formulation also tends

in effect to equate the modern political system with modern Anglo-American democratic system...**Its** definitions employ too many dimensions, and it neglects the problem of variation in the societal functions of government."

They gave an example. According to Almond, there was no modern system in the Soviet Union. Its structure lacked differentiation and autonomy. Thus it was, in Almond's view, traditional. Holt and **Turner** refuted this description by referring to the variety of interests that were expressed, particularly during the ~~post-Stalin~~ period. Almond's categories become too rigid and specific cases do not relate to his conceptual scheme. Other critics, however, suggest that functional theory, if handled with care, could produce empirically testable hypotheses and prove **useful** in research.

2.7 PUBLIC POLICY: SOME PERSPECTIVES

To find out how a political system can realise its goal, David **Easton** would seek answers to these questions: "What are the actual authoritative policies adopted by a society? How are they determined and how are they put into effect?" Thus all activities involved in the formulation and execution of social policy **i.e.** the policy – making process would constitute the political system.

Policy is not just a decision of legislature or government because its implementation will depend on an administrator, who can reformulate or even destroy it. *The study of policy includes an examination of the functioning and determinants of both the legal and the actual policy practices.* **Easton** says: "If the law directs that all prices shall be subject to a specified form of control, but black markets take root and the appropriate **officials** and the society as a whole accept their existence the actual policy is not one of price control alone. It also includes the acceptance of black markets."

Almond discussed public policy in terms of the capabilities of a political system. The novelty in the capabilities approach is that it explains public policy in empirical **terms**. It is incorrect to say that democratic system follows a particular course of domestic and foreign policy. We know that some democracies have followed social welfare and economic nationalisation policies, while others have been committed to the policy of non-intervention in economic and social life **more** rigidly. The United States before the depression **followed** a policy of limited intervention, which was changed by President Roosevelt into a "New Deal" welfare policy.

The extractive capability of a political system refers to the range of policies and system performance in drawing material and human resources from the domestic and international **environments**.

The regulative capability refers to the political system's **policies** for controlling the behaviour of individuals and groups. In the United States, the political system now regulates many sectors of economic life, it protects consumers from monopoly pricing, trade unions from suppression or businessmen from unfair practices.

The distributive capability refers to the policies regarding the allocation of goods, services, honours, statuses and opportunities of various kinds to groups and individuals in the political system.

Marxist theory has argued that the class structure of a society determines the structure and process of the political system and also its policies and performance in society and in the international **environment**. Marxist theorists believed that the capitalist form of society produced

a political system dominated by the bourgeoisie, acting in its own interest and following a policy of international aggression in order to maximise market and profits.

Ralph Miliband speaks of the state system within the political system. Implemented at six different levels of the state system: (1) the government (2) the administration (3) the military and police (4) the judicial apparatus (5) the units of sub-central government and (6) parliamentary assemblies. *The state elite, represented by presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, top military men, judges of the higher courts, high civil servants, a few parliamentary leaders, control the policy – making process in the political system.*

Of course, the state system is not synonymous with the political system, which includes parties and pressure groups, even giant corporations, other capitalist firms, Churches, the mass media, etc. Both Ralph Miliband and C. Wright Mills have asserted that power elite consisting of (a) top capitalists (b) top military leaders and (c) top political leaders control the policy-making process and wield real decision – making power in all political systems of advanced capitalist countries.

Analysing the relationship of the political system of advanced capitalism to the economically dominant class, Ralph Miliband concludes, "It may well be found that the relationship is very close indeed and the holders of state power are, for many different reasons, the agents of private economic power – that those who wield that power are also, therefore, and without unduly stretching the meaning of words, an authentic 'ruling class'."

While David Easton and Gabriel Almond regard the formulation and execution of policies as a liberal, pluralistic process based on demands and supports of interest groups engaged in competition, C. Wright Mills and Ralph Miliband believe that policies in the political system of advanced capitalist countries are dictated by the leading members of a power elite drawn from three segments: corporate capital, top military generals and senior political leaders working as close allies.

2.8 SUMMARY

Political philosophers have, since long, considered some conception of system as their tool to explain the meaning of politics. System analysis, however, acquired a new significance after the rise of behaviouralism in American political science, particularly after the Second World War.

The search for a systematic study of society was carried on by David Easton in his application of General Systems Theory to politics. *Easton set forth four assumptions: (1) this theory requires the construction of a paradigm with the highest order of generalisation (2) political system should be viewed as a whole (3) research on political system is based on both psychological and situational data and (4) political life may be described as in disequilibrium.*

The units of political system are political actions inputs in the form of demands and supports and outputs in the form of decisions and policies. Interest groups contribute to demands and supports and decisions and policies are governmental functions.

Easton focused his attention on System analysis ignoring legal and formal institutions. He said that political science should theorise about the political system and its processes rather than about the state and its institutions. He sought a grand theory of politics.

Critics attacked **Easton** for his inadequate conceptualisation, his preoccupation with stability and persistence in the face of change and conflict, his avoidance of the human element, lack of testable hypotheses in his research, operational **difficulties** within his framework, vagueness in his notion of the system's boundary and his conservative ideological orientations. Very few applied **Easton's** System analysis for their research in Comparative Politics.

Almond drew the notion of system from **Easton**. He regarded system as an "inclusive concept which covers all of the patterned actions relevant to the making of political decisions. ***For Almond, system was more important than process. Almond relied heavily upon Max Weber and Talcott Parsons in his consideration of political system of action.*** He also introduced the concept of political culture.

According to Almond's theory of structural functionalism, all political systems have political structures, which are multi-functional, and all systems perform similar functions and all of them have a mixed political culture. Political systems are classified into (i) primitive (ii) traditional (iii) transitional and (iv) modern on the basis of the **pattern** of their political culture and the stage of their political development.

Almond **categorised** four input functions as (i) political socialisation and recruitment (ii) interest articulation (iii) interest aggregation and (iv) political communication; and three output functions as (i) rule making (ii) rule application and (iii) rule adjudication.

Another level of functions was described as the capabilities of the political system: (i) regulation (ii) extraction (iii) distribution and (iv) symbolic response. A third level of functions was described by **Almond** as maintenance and adaptation activities of the political system. Political socialisation and political culture helped the system in the performance of the above functions.

The critique of Almond's Structural Functionalism included the following points: his theory was deterministic and ideological; it had a conservative ideological bias; it lacked methodological clarity; it was unable to deal with problems of social change; it had serious operational **limitations** and it was full of jargon.

Both David **Easton** and Gabriel Almond have presented a liberal pluralistic conception of public policy, which is the outcome of competitive demands and supports, articulated by various interest groups and decisions and actions of the government in response to them. C. Wright Mills and Ralph **Miliband** believe that a power elite, consisting of top capitalists, top military generals and top political leaders, really determines public policy in the political systems of all advanced capitalist countries.

2.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Discuss the origins and orientation of the Systems Approach.
- 2) Critically examine the main assumption of **Easton's** General Systems theory.
- 3) Critically **examine** the main tenets of **Structural** Functionalism with reference to Almond's ideals.
- 4) Write short notes on (a) Perspective on Public Policy (b) Inputs and Outputs.