

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Introduction

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OUTLINE

- Evolution.
- Definition.
- Scope of Political Science.
- Is Political science a science?
- Cross-disciplinary Connections of Political Science.
- Subfields of Political Science.

Plato

Socrates

Aristotle

Alexander The Great



ETYMOLOGY

- ‘*Polis*’ – Greek word , means city state, sovereign state.
- ‘*Scire*’ – Latin word – to know, to study.
- Political Science starts with the “understanding of the Greek city state”.

POLITICAL SCIENCE – FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN *EVOLUTION*

- (1) **Ancient Greek** political science (ideal state {Plato, Aristotle}, moral obligation,)
- (2) **Traditional political** science (until 19th century, focus – state government, political institutions)
- (3) **Modern political science** (In the beginning of 20th century, Max Weber, Robert Michels, Lord Bryce, Woodrow Wilson. Focus: **Political institution, Which govt. better** German or British, what is **best electoral system**, role of political parties)
- (4) **Behavioral Political science** (faith in power of political of institution changed by fall of democracy and shifted to citizen opinion and behavior, opinion poll)
- (5) **Contemporary political science** (more study tools, empirical)

(See Hix & White, P 12-14)

DEFINITION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Traditional Definitions

Or Traditional Political Science (until 19th Century)

- The subject matter is – **state, government and political institutions**
- The traditional thinkers neglected the scientific method normally. Their approach is subjective and they adopted the deductive method.
- Theory and practice of politics.
- Analysis of political system.

DEFINITION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Traditional Definitions

Or Traditional Political Science (until 19th Century)

- “Political Science is the part of social science which analyses the foundation of the state and the principle of the state” – Paul Janet.
- “Political Science as a study of the state in the past, present and future and of political institutions and political theories” – Gettell.

DEFINITION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Modern Political Concept or Analysis

- Modern political writers (like Almond, Powell, Bingham) stress that the political theorists in the past concentrated mainly on the state, government and institutions and their legal norms and regulations or on political ideas and ideologies. They (early pol. Sci.) did no concern with the **performance of the institutions, their interaction and political behaviour of man.**

DEFINITION BY LASWELL AND DHAL

- Harold Laswell defines– “Political Science as an empirical discipline, as the study of shaping and shaping of power”.

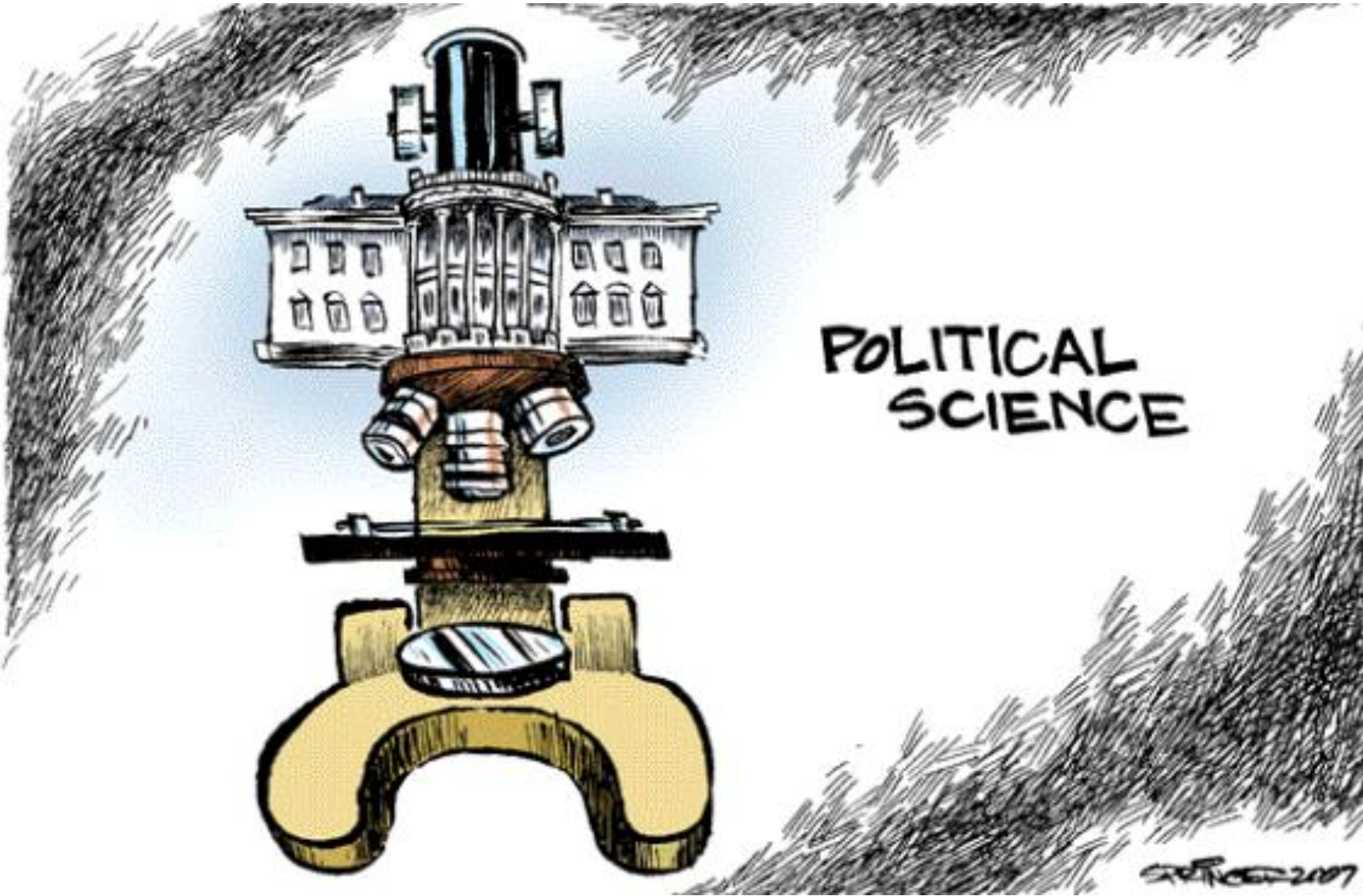
Laswell's definition covers dynamic nature of political science and call attention to the fact that the forces **controlling the form and behaviour of state** and similar to those that operate in other institutions.

Clearly, everything Aristotle and Weber would call political, Laswell would too. But beyond that, **Laswell would consider business firm or a trade union might have 'political' aspects.**

Contemporary students of politics do in fact study the **political aspect of business firms, labour unions and other private association like the American medical association.**

DEFINITION BY LASWELL AND DAHL

- Robert A. Dahl, further observes, this definition of political science is very broad. Indeed it means that many associations we do ordinarily regards as “political” possess political system: private clubs, business firms, labour unions, religious organizations, civic groups, primitive tribes, clans.



SCOPE

SCOPE: TRADITIONAL POINT OF VIEW

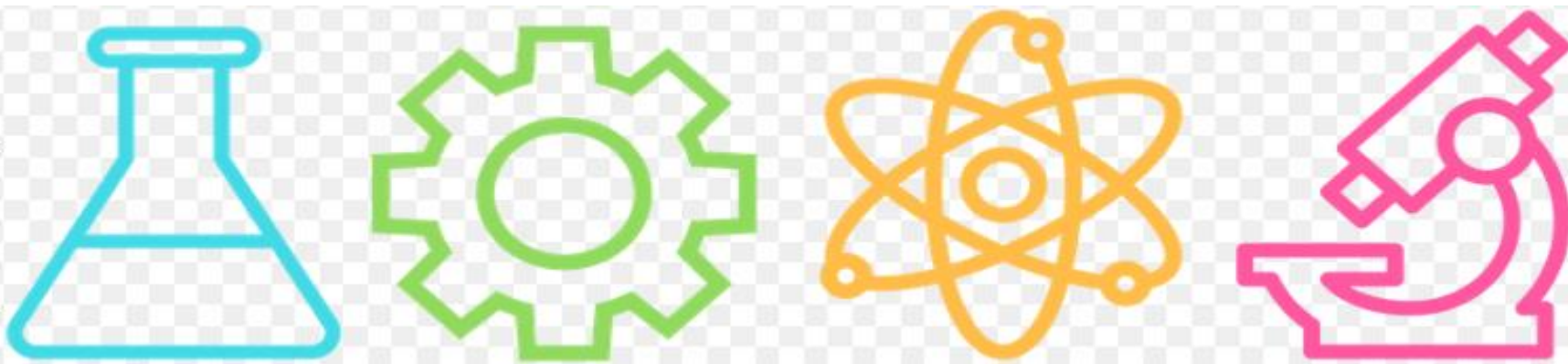
- Study of state
- Study of the past, present and future of the State
- Study of the government
- Study of the international relation and organization
- Study of the man as political being
- Study of the political ideology
- Study of political parties
- Study of pressure groups
- Study of rights and duties
- Study of the electoral system
- Study of law

SCOPE: MODERN POINT OF VIEW

- Study of political system
- Study of power
- Study of influence
- Study of leadership
- Study of the authority
- Study of authoritative allocation of values
- Study of problems and conflict

SCOPE: MODERN POINT OF VIEW

- Study of who gets what, when and how
- Study of decision making
- Study of political behaviour of an individual
- Study of political culture
- Study of political socialization
- Study of comparative government and politics



IS POLITICAL SCIENCE A SCIENCE?

A big debate



WHETHER POL. SCI. IS REALLY A SCIENCE?

There is a great diversity of opinion about the scientific character of this science:

- Some scholars consider it a science
- While others against of it...

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

- Auguste Comte, Buckle, F.W. Maitland – they denied the claim of science.

Reasons:

1. There is no consensus of opinion among experts as to its **method, principles and conclusion**. There is no **uniformity in the principle of political science**.

For example: **democracy** is the best form of government. Some scholars (like Sir Henry Maine, Oswald Spanglar) outrightly condemned democracy. It is also impossible to predict democracy will work for every country.

2. Political science does not strictly observe the relation of **cause and effect**.

Same condition and circumstance may not bring the same result in different countries at same or different times. For example: Late Nepalese King Mahindra abolished democratic form. If it had in Britain, there would be a revolution.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

3. Lacks of elements which constitutes precision. Scientific method of observation and experimentation are not possibly applicable to political science.

Hydrogen and oxygen always produce water in chemistry lab. This experiment is not possible in political science.

4. In political science, we do not find that exactness and absoluteness which we find in Physics and Chemistry.

For example: it is always true that if anything throw high, it will fall on ground (gravity). Political science fails to frame such laws.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

- Aristotle, Bodin, Hobbes, Montesquie, Cornwall Lewis, Sidwick, Lord Bryce, Bluntschli and Jellinck are **not satisfied with the arguments given against the scientism of political science.**
 - Part of the problem here is the definition of science. The original meaning of science, from the French, is simply “knowledge.”
 - Science is a knowledge relating to a particular subject acquire by a systematic observation, experience or study which have been coordinated, systemized and classified.
1. In similar manner, political science is a systemized knowledge because its conclusion drawn after observation and experimentation. History is a lab for pol. sci. When govt. make new law, it become a new experiment.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

2. Undoubtedly, Political Science does not have the absolute and universal laws of natural science, yet such conclusions are possible in Political Science as often prove true.

Ex: There is no denying fact that democratic government is the best form of government. It is more permanent than other forms. Monarchy, dictatorship, aristocracy, oligarchy, and other forms – were introduced and experimented in different parts of the world in different time, but none of them proved successful.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE SCIENCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

3. Another objection was there is no consensus of opinion among experts as to its method, principles and conclusion. The fact is that political science is a dynamic study of a living subject-matter. It deals with man and its institutions. Unlike natural science, it does not deal with static subject-matter.
4. Political science does not strictly observe cause and effect – another complain.

But every political incidence has its own cause and effect. For example: poverty, corruption, too much exploitation lead to outbreak of revolution.

WHETHER POL. SCI. IS REALLY A SCIENCE?

- Political science is an **empirical** discipline that accumulates both quantified and qualitative data.
- With such data, we can find persistent patterns, much like in biology.
- Gradually, we begin to generalize.
- When the generalizations become firmer, we call them theories.
- In a few cases, the theories become so firm that we may call them laws.
- In this way, the study of politics accumulates knowledge—the original meaning of science.

WHETHER POL. SCI. IS REALLY A SCIENCE?

Professor Gilchrist says:

“While we may agree that **the exactness** of natural science is impossible of attainment in social sciences, nevertheless social problem can be treated with the same scientific methods as Chemistry and Physics. These result indeed may not be so accurate or so easily tested but as we shall see, the various subjects, with which we deal, present a **systemized** mass of materials which is capable of being treated by ordinary scientific methods. We shall see that general law can be deduced from the given material and these laws are useful in actual problem of the government”



Cross-disciplinary Connections

Cross-disciplinary connections

Political science mainly emphasis 'government' and 'power'. The study of government and power is not confined to political science - it permeates into other social sciences - Economic, Sociology, History, Psychology

- **Economics:** Economics and politics are closely related. The actions of political institutions influence economic activity. Some government favors free-market economy while some may prefer market regulations. On the other hand, the economic condition can directly influence political institutions. Many elections outcome relied on the country's economic situation.
- **Sociology:** Political scientists also study the social bases of politics such as political activities of different social classes, races, ethnicities, and religions? How do political values, attitudes, and beliefs come about? How do social movements outside of the formal institutions of political power affect politics? For example, the civil rights and women's suffrage movements helped to reshape not only public policy but public opinion as well.

Cross-disciplinary connections

- **History:** History without Political Science has no fruit, Political Science without History has no root. Political institutions are products of history, and to understand them, it is necessary to know how they evolve and how they have become what they are now. History provides materials for comparison and induction.
- A political scientist's primary concern is to study the evolution of the political institutions and the facts that bear, directly or indirectly, on the State and government and its socio-economic problems.

Psychology: The State and its political institutions are the products of human mind.

Theories about political conduct are grounded in psychology.

Besides. Political Science got connections with Geography, Statistics, Law...

SUBFIELDS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SUBFIELDS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

[1]

Comparative Politics

Politics within other nations, trying to establish generalizations about institutions and political culture and theories of democracy, stability, and policy. It may be focuses on various regions, as in “South Asian politics” or Latin American politics.”

International Relations

International Relations is the study of political relations between nation-states. It includes the study of diplomacy, military conflict, and conflict resolution, as well as the international political economy, international organizations, and other processes that operate across the boundaries of nation-states.

SUBFIELDS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

[2]

Public Policy

Public Policy is a very broad field of study that explores substantive policy areas as well as the procedures of policy making.

Public Administration

Studies how bureaucracies work and how they can be improved.

Political Theory

Deals with normative and theoretical questions.

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