

## Politics as the art of government

"Politics is not a science..... but an art", Chancellor Bismarck is reputed to have told the German Reichstag. The art Bismarck had in mind was the art of government, the exercise of control within society through the making and enforcement of collective decisions. The word 'Politics' is derived from 'polis', meaning literally city-state. Ancient Greek society was divided into a collection of independent city-states, each of which possessed its own system of government. Athens, often portrayed as the cradle of democratic government. In this light, politics can be understood to refer to the affairs of the polis - in effect, 'what concerns the polis'.

The notion that politics accounts to 'what concerns the state' is the traditional view of the discipline, reflected in the tendency for academic study to focus upon the personnel and machinery of government. This view is advanced in writings of David Easton who defined politics as the "authoritative allocation of values."