

New Approaches to the Study of Government and Politics

The discussion about the nature of behavioural political analysis and its departure from the traditional approach would enable the students to understand the major paradigms, such as:

Nature

Goals and methods

Conceptual frameworks

Contending approaches and models

The main aim of this study will be to assess their significance for the study of comparative government and politics at a time when a debate between the empirical and normative theories is still continuing.

General Systems Theory

The most well-known among these are a number of systematic approaches, which stem

from the general systems theory. The systems theory had its origins in natural sciences,

but on the whole, the theory originated in movements aimed at amalgamation of science

and scientific analysis. The advocates of the theory wanted to find a unifying element,

which would offer a broader perspective for creative analysis. In the period after World

War II, this resolved itself around the concept of systems, which Von Bertalanffy, the

German biologist, defined as a set of 'elements standing in interaction'. This concept is

based on the idea that objects or elements within a group are in some way related to one

another and in turn, interact with one another on the basis of certain identifiable

processes.

The term 'system' is useful for organizing one's knowledge about many social objects. The use of the 'systems' approach to politics allows one to see the subject in a way that 'each part of the political canvas does not stand alone but is related to other parts'. The operation of the one part cannot be fully understood without referring to the way in which the whole system operates.

David Easton, one of the first political scientists to propose the utility of systems analysis for the study of politics, defines a political system as that 'behaviour or set of interactions through which authoritative allocations (or binding decisions) are made and implemented for society'. A system is marked by separation and integration.

The chief

function of a political system is making authoritative decisions that allot advantages and

disadvantages for an entire society. At the core of this concept lies decision-making,

which is the essence of the political system. The proponents of the systems theory

identify three primary constituents of every political system, namely the political community,

the regime and the political authorities. The political community comprises all those

persons bound together by a political division of labour. The regime makes up the

constitutional legal structures, political processes, institutional norms, as well as basic

values. The political authorities are those individuals who exercise power as agents of