

and creates new dimensions for investigating political processes. Time and again, this

theory facilitates the communication of insights and ways of looking at things from other

disciplines. It provides excellent channels for maximizing the flow of interchanges with

disciplines that are far removed from political science in substantive terms. It contains a

number of extremely clear and accurate ways of formulating concepts that can be

reduced to operational forms. It may be regarded as one of the more motivated attempts

to construct a theoretical framework from within political science.

The general systems theory has been criticized for failing to sufficiently provide

for concepts such as political power and influence or to handle mass behavioural aspects

such as voting. It is of limited utility in studies of political policy-making. Critics also refer

to the problems of empirical operation, when applied to social sciences. It is also pointed

out that the entire approach is ingrained in conservatism and reaction. No fully developed

attempt has yet been made to apply the theory of political analysis.

Offshoots of the Systems Theory

The behaviourists adapted the essential framework and terminology of the general systems

theory; it was adopted to fit the needs of political science and then continued to develop

new techniques of political analysis. One of the most important challenges in political

science, to develop a broadly applicable theory of the political system, was made by

David Easton. His 'input-output' model stressed the behaviour of the political system,

vis-à-vis its environment, in terms of analysing inputs (demands and support) and outputs

(authoritative allocation of values or policy decisions and actions).

Another significant systematic approach is structural functionalism, which is one

of the most widely known offshoots or derivatives of systems analysis and a matter of

considerable controversy. One important school of systematic theory stresses models of

decision-making by entire political systems or parts thereof. Another kind of systems

theory uses the communications theory and models of communication systems. It is

used to conceptualize the process of political integration among the several countries or

ethnic communities that make a new system.