

## **Input– Output Analysis**

David Easton has developed an original and unique systemic approach for purposes of political analysis, which was not borrowed from other social sciences. In 1965, his book,

*A System Analysis of Political Life*, engaged the interest of social scientists for providing

an explanation of political phenomena in a new way. Easton has criticized the structural–

functional approach, mainly on the grounds that it does not provide the concepts to deal

sufficiently with all kinds of systems. Its main concept of function cannot be taken as a

basis of a theory and it cannot be experimentally applied because it lacks precision.

The empirical theory that Easton has pronounced is called the ‘ general theory of

politics’ . It is general for two particular reasons. First, he rejects the idea of constructing

different kinds of theories to deal with national politics and international politics.

He is

keen on building a ‘ unified theory of politics’ for explaining the behaviour of national and

international political systems and also for comparing them. Second, he states that the

primary task of political science is to analyse the general problems that are common to

all political systems, i.e., analysis of the conditions under which a political system survives

as a system over a long period. Further, Easton rejects the type of political analysis

which is concerned with power-relations between elements of a political system. He is

of the opinion that the benefits provided by political and governmental processes cannot be decided by the amount of power an individual power-holder exercises. Easton's fundamental concept is that of a political system as one of the subsystems of a society, which then operates within an environment. Easton describes the political system as 'that system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented'. A political system has certain features. First, it is a system because it has a regularly frequent pattern of relationships among actors, i.e., the individuals and institutions involved; second, it is the system for a particular society because it is universally accepted and unquestioningly authoritative; third, it is political because it is concerned with the satisfaction of those needs of society that are beyond the scope of non-governmental capabilities. Input-output analysis takes for granted that every political system is open and adaptive. Another prominent feature of the political system is the nature of exchanges and transactions between the political system and its environment. It brings into the limelight various concepts concerning systematic boundaries and boundary conditions. It emphasizes the fact that the political system works in processing and converting a variety of inputs into outputs. The inputs include demands and support. Demands are statements of authoritative allocation that should or should

not be made by those responsible and authorized for doing so. Support consists of actions,

statements or attitudes that are favourable to a person, group, institution, goal or idea.

Demands may be generated by the environment or may originate within the political

system itself. Demands pass through conversion or weeding out procedure to reach the

output stage. Only a small number of demands, in the long run, reach the output stage,

leaving the rest to be eliminated in the conversion process. If the demands call for

authoritative action, there is a problem of overloading. Overloading may take place due

to too many demands (volume stress) or due to the qualitative elements in the nature of

the demands (content stress).

Support makes both selection and processing of demands possible. Easton makes

an imperative distinction between overt and covert support. An overt support is any

open and direct action that an interest group would take to advance its demands. Covert

support means simply an attitude or a sentiment that is not hostile or even unfavourable.

Both kinds of support flow concurrently and both are vital for functioning of the political