

## **Input– Output Analysis**

community, the regime and the government. It is for the authorities to process inputs from environments into outputs.

The outputs of a political system are authoritative decisions and actions of the political authorities for the distribution and division of values. According to Oran Young,

these decisions and actions play a crucial role in generating specific support for a political

system because of the existence of the feedback loops that complete the cycle of a

political system and makes it dynamic. This is the process through which information

about the performance of a system is communicated in a way to affect the subsequent

behaviour of the system.

Easton's formulation pivots on two core variables, namely, a strong underlying concern for systematic persistence, sources of stress and process of regulating stress

and a sequence of concepts that Easton calls 'summary variables'. The central point in

the input– output analysis is concerned with the developments that may drive the essential

variables of a political system beyond critical ranges, coupled with various regulatory

responses to these developments. The bulk of the approach deals with the sequence of

concepts.

According to this analysis, the stability of a political system, i.e., its ability to retain

the basic qualities despite the impact of disturbing factors or developments, depends on

the existence of structural mechanisms like political parties, pressure groups,

news media

and legislatures. These articulate and regulate the flow of demands; cultural mechanisms

like customs, mores, etc., which establish criteria for the suitability of demands.

Procedural

mechanisms convert general demands into specific issues for political processing and

channels of communication that effectively transmit the demands to the centre of decision-

making. You have also seen that the stability of a system is further augmented by sustained

and extensive support to the three main components of all political systems, namely the

political community, the regime and the political authorities.

It should be remembered that a political system is not just a set of processes that

converts inputs and outputs as a routine matter. It is a complex cyclical operation, with

dynamism of its own. It has a programmed goal towards which it tries to move, though

at every stage it may have to face problems of stress and maintenance and go through

regulatory processes. Input– output analysis is certainly an outstanding technique for

comparative analysis since it focuses on an overview of all political systems and has an

inclusive set of concepts and categories that facilitate comparison. Oran Young has

described this analysis as ‘ undoubtedly the most inclusive systemic approach that has so

far been constructed specifically for political analysis by a political scientist’ .

According to Eugene Meehan, a famous lawyer, Easton has produced one of the few comprehensive attempts to lay the foundation for systems analysis in

political science

and to provide a 'general' functional theory of politics. An even stronger feature of

input-output analysis is its dynamic approach to the problem of pattern maintenance. It

also deals with its awareness of the importance of the problems of stress, disturbance,

regulation and planned reorientation of system goals. Easton claims that his method is

definitely oriented towards exploring change as well as stability. There is a continuous

exchange going on between the political system and its environment and the system is

constantly engaged in a conversion process by producing outputs and altering the

environment. The analysis suffers from some weaknesses. First, its basic presupposition

that concerns system-persistence is the most important and inclusive subjects for political

analysis may not always be acceptable. Second, such a focus may be productive, but

does not result in a general theory of politics. Third, it is for the most part limited in scope in terms of the interaction among different political systems. Fourth, its focus on the

politically active and relevant members of society tends to give it an elitist orientation.

Fifth, in its emphasis on functional rather than revolutionary processes of change, the

approach is believed to be oriented towards status quo and this is not an entirely reasonable

criticism. Finally, the input-output analysis is the cause of some confusion for its

practitioners.