

Behaviouralism

To understand political behaviour, behaviouralism uses the following methods:

sampling, interviewing, scoring and scaling, and statistical analysis.

According to David Easton, behaviouralism sought to be 'analytic not substantive, general rather than particular, and explanatory rather than ethical'. In

this, the theory seeks to evaluate political behaviour without 'introducing any ethical evaluations'. Rodger Beehler cites this as 'their insistence on distinguishing between facts and values'.

Behaviouralism is the belief that social theory should be constructed only on

the basis of observable behaviour. The behavioural approach to political analysis

developed out of positivism, adopting its assertion that scientific knowledge can be

developed only on the basis of explanatory theories that are verifiable and falsifiable.

Behavioural analysis typically involves the collection of quantifiable data through

research surveys, statistical analysis and the construction of empirical theory that

have predictive capacity.

Behaviouralism is an approach to the analysis and explanation of political phenomena. It is particularly associated with the works of American political scientists

after the Second World War (1939–45). David Easton, in his book *Political System*:

An Enquiry into the State of Political Science (1953), appealed for building up a

behavioural political science. It has to be closer to other social sciences and would

take part in the decision-making process. However, the origins of the behaviouralist

approach can be stressed back to the works of Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley

who wrote two famous books Human Nature in Politics and The Process of Government, respectively, which was published as early as 1908. In their works,

they laid great emphasis on the informal process of politics and less on political

institutions alone.

Graham Wallas in his book Human Nature in Politics tried to introduce a new realism in political studies in the light of the new findings of contemporary

psychology. He was influenced by the new psychology teachings which revealed

that man was not a rational creature following his self-interest and his political actions

were not totally guided by self-interest as stated by classical economists and laissez-

faire theorists. It is very difficult to explain the human nature in utilitarian perspective.

Graham Wallas, to overcome this problem, insisted on exploring facts and evidence

for understanding human nature and its manifestations in human behaviour. The gist

of his argument was that the political process could be understood only by analysing

as to how people actually behaved in a political situation and not merely by speculating

on how they should or would behave. On the other hand, Arthur Bentley who is

pioneer of 'group approach' to politics, says that only the description of political

activity is not enough. He sought to provide for new tools of investigation.

He laid

emphasis on the study of informal groups. He almost completely ignored the formal

political institution. Unlike Graham Wallas who is influenced by psychology, Arthur

Bentley was inspired by sociology. In his study, the roles of pressure groups, political parties, elections and public opinion in the political process are highlighted.