

**SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE I**  
**COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER I**  
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**MODULE: MODULE II, APPROACHES TO POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Structure:**

- Modern Approach

**MODERN APPROACH**

The modern approach is fact based and lays emphasis on the factual study of political phenomenon to arrive at scientific and definite conclusions. The modern approaches include sociological approach, economic approach, psychological approach, quantitative approach, simulation approach, system approach, behavioural approach, Marxian approach etc.

Broadly speaking, modern or contemporary approaches to the study of politics signify a departure from traditional approaches in two respects: (a) they attempt to establish a separate identity of political science by focusing on the real character of politics; and (b) they try to understand politics in totality, transcending its formal aspects and looking for those aspects of social life which influence and are influenced by it.

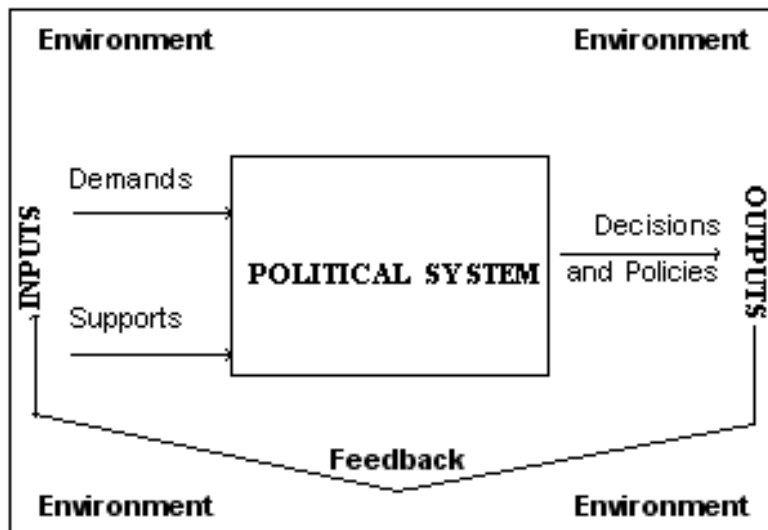
Normative methods generally refer to the traditional methods of inquiry to the phenomena of politics and are not merely concerned with “what is” but “what ought to be” issues in politics. Its focus is on the analysis of institution as the basic unit of study. However with the advent of industrialisation and behavioural revolution in the field of political science, emphasis shifted from the study “what ought to” to “what is”. Today political scientists are more interested in analysing how people behave in matters related to the state and government.

A new movement was ushered in by a group of political scientists in America who were not satisfied with the traditional approach to the analysis of government and state as they felt that tremendous exploration had occurred in other social sciences like sociology, psychology anthropology etc. which when applied to the political issues could render new insights. They now collect data relating to actual political happenings. Statistical information coupled with the actual behaviours of men, individually and collectively, may help the political scientists in arriving at definite conclusions and predicting things correctly in political matters. The quantitative or statistical method, the systems approach or simulation approach in political science base their inquiry on scientific data and as such are known as modern or empirical method.

## (i) System Approach

This approach belongs to the category of modern approach. This approach makes an attempt to explain the relationship of political life with other aspects of social life. The idea of a system was originally borrowed from biology by **Talcott Parsons** who first popularized the concept of social system. Later on **David Easton** further developed the concept of a political system. According to this approach, a political system operates within the social environment. Accordingly, it is not possible to analyze political events in isolation from other aspects of the society. In other words, influences from the society, be it economic, religious or otherwise, do shape the political process.

The systems approach as developed by **David Easton** can be analyzed with the help of a diagram as follows:



The political system operates within an environment. The environment generates demands from different sections of the society such as demand for reservation in the matter of employment for certain groups, demand for better working conditions or minimum wages, demand for better transportation facilities, demand for better health facilities, etc.. Different demands have different levels of support. Both 'demands' and 'supports' constitute what Easton calls 'inputs.' The political system receives these inputs from the environment. After taking various factors into consideration, the government decides to take action on some of these demands while others are not acted upon. Through the conversion process, the inputs are converted into 'outputs' by the decision makers in the form of policies, decisions, rules, regulations and laws. The 'outputs' flow back into the environment through a 'feedback' mechanism, giving rise to fresh 'demands.' Accordingly, it is a cyclical process.

## **(ii) Structural Functional Approach**

This approach treats the society as a single inter-related system where each part of the system has a definite and distinct role to play. The structural-functional approach may be regarded as an offshoot of the system analysis. These approaches emphasize the structures and functions. **Gabriel Almond** is a supporter of this approach. He defines political systems as a special system of interaction that exists in all societies performing certain functions. According to him, the main characteristics of a political system are comprehensiveness, inter-dependence and existence of boundaries. Like Easton, Almond also believes that all political systems perform input and output functions. The Input functions of political systems are political socialisation and recruitment, interest-articulation, interest-aggression and political communication. Again, Almond makes three-fold classifications of governmental output functions relating to policy making and implementation. These output functions are-rule making, rule application and rule adjudication. Thus, Almond believes that a stable and efficient political system converts inputs into outputs.

## **(iii) Communication Theory Approach**

This approach tries to investigate how one segment of a system affects another by sending messages or information. It was **Robert Weiner** who first spoke about this approach. Later on **Karl Deutsch** developed it and applied it in Political Science. Deutsch believes that the political system is a network of communication channels and it is self regulative. He further believes that the government is responsible for administering different communication channels. This approach treats the government as the decision making system. According to Deutsch, the four factors of analysis in communication theory are – lead, lag, gain and load.

## **(iv) Decision Making Approach**

This approach tries to find out the characteristics of decision makers as well as the type of influence the individuals have on the decision makers. Scholars like **Richard Synder** and **Charles Lindblom** have developed this approach. A political decision which is taken by a few actors influences a larger society and such a decision is generally shaped by a specific situation. Therefore, it takes into account psychological and social aspects of decision makers also.

## **REFERENCES:**

- Gauba, O.P. (2010), *An Introduction to Political Theory*, Macmillan Publishers, Delhi
- [http://www.kkhsou.in/main/polscience/approaches\\_polscience.html](http://www.kkhsou.in/main/polscience/approaches_polscience.html)