

# Cognitive Thought on Political Science

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**Abstract**—This Paper concerns itself with the understanding of the basic concepts like society, state, government, political science, etc. After going through this unit, you should be able to: → To understand the meaning and definition of Political Science; → To know the nature and scope of Political Science; and → To learn the importance of Political Science.

**Index Terms**—political science structure.

## I. INTRODUCTION

When the scientists classified man as Homosapiens, says R.M. MacIver “man the knowing one, the specific adjective was a kind of ornamental flourish”. It is said darkly in the book of genesis that our first parents broke the rules and ate of the tree of knowledge. Later man has outdistanced all other animals and made himself lord of creation. This is necessary because of his consciousness of himself which produced tools, agriculture and even civilization. Thus the great Greek political thinker, Aristotle said centuries ago that man is by nature and necessity a social and political animal. To Aristotle he who is unable to live in society or who has no need for it, because he is sufficient for himself must be either a beast or God. This Aristotelian statement leads us to the conclusion that man can live nowhere else except in society. As a social animal, Man’s numerous social activities are studied by different Social Sciences. Political Science is, one of them and studies the political aspects of human actions and activities. According to Robert A. Dahl, Politics is a universal activity. Whether an individual likes it or not everyone in a society is tossed into the arena of politics. To him “a citizen encounters politics in the government of a country, town, school, church, business firm, trade union, club, political party, and a host of organizations. Politics is one of the unavoidable facts of human existence.

Everyone is involved in some fashion at sometime in some kind of political system”.

**Society:** - It may be defined as “the complex of organised association and institution within a community”. It is unorganised or organised, it is wider or narrow groups of human beings living together in a particular area. The social instinct of man compels him to live in society. According to Laski, by society, “I mean a group of human beings living together for the satisfaction of their mutual wants”.

**State:** - societies are politically organised under a common law within a prescribe boundaries. It stands for the protection to life, liberty and property to individuals and it tries to promote human welfare and good life.

**Government:** - It is the institutionalised power of state or authority. It is the agent through which the will of the state is formulated, expressed and realised. It consists of institutions responsible for making collective decisions for society.

**Politics:** - is the study of state and activity of person involved with the state i.e government. It refers to the current problems of state and government, the actual process of co-operation, conflict and competition for power in society.

**Science:** - is the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation, evidence and experiment.

**Political Science:** - is the branch of knowledge that deals with the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the state and political institutions through scientific analysis. It is an academic discipline concerned with man's official institutions and activities, such as the state, government, citizenship, public affairs etc. In other words, it is a social science concerned with the theory, description, analysis and prediction of political behavior, political activities, and the political system as a whole.

## II. MEANING

The term 'Political Science' consists of two words, viz, political and science. The word 'politics' is derived from the Greek word 'Polis' which means the city-state. In ancient Greece, the basic unit of political organization was the city-state. It was the Greeks who first embarked upon the study of state as distinct from the church. The foundations of political thinking were laid by the great Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Plato was the author of the book "The Republic". Aristotle the father of political science firstly used the term 'politics' and converted the subject into an academic discipline. He published his book 'Politics' as a first systematic study of politics.

Politics refers to the subject matter of our study, science denotes the methodology or the way of studying the process of politics. The first term seeks to answer the question "what is studied" and the second term refers to "how is it studied". Therefore, the political phenomenon which should be studied in accordance with a definite plan or system is called political science.

From a liberal perspective, Politics is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. In this sense politics is inextricably linked to the phenomena of conflict and cooperation. The crux of politics is often portrayed as a process of conflict resolution in which rival views or competing interests are reconciled with one another. Bernard Crick, presenting the liberal view of Politics says: "Politics then, can be simply defined as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community and to complete the formal definition, a political system is that type of government where politics proves successful in ensuring reasonable stability and order". In other words, from the practical point of view politics is sometimes defined as the technique of compromise. That is why Bismarck defined politics as the 'art of the possible'. Rajeev Bhargava points out that the word 'political' refers to decision making within and about the community. However, virtually every known community comprises of individuals and groups with different and conflicting interests and

values. Thus Michael Curtis aptly remarked that 'Politics is organized dispute about power and its use involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands'. Fundamental decisions cannot be reached without conflict and struggle. The political is the arena of this fundamental conflict over which group and which conception of 'good' would prevail in the community. In this fundamental struggle, some groups will discover something in common with one another and deep differences with other groups. Friends and enemies are found and forged in this struggle. This is why politics frequently involves, as Carl Schmitt famously pointed out, friends and enemies. In politics no one can escape taking sides.

Generally conflicts occur in society in deciding the share of each human being out of everything human society as a whole owns, produces and possesses – both in terms of the material and the moral – relates to the realm of the political. If that is so, then should such sharing be based on authoritative allocation by public decisions or through self-regulating private initiative? To decide this, we must understand the principle of distribution of resources: what should belong to each, and how this share should be organized. This, in turn, calls for an engagement with the principles of justice, rights, political and public obligations, and the arrangements that ensure decision making towards this end. This leads us to treat the political as encompassing the realms of both intellectual enquiry and practical activity. While in the first sense it means exploring the principles, values and objectives upon which a society can be organized, in the second it means analyzing the processes of political activity and the arrangement of power and authority. In short, the former explores the ideal and the latter involves the practical. Various approaches to political enquiry highlight one or the other meaning. However, it may also be the case that the ideal and the practical are not always treated separately. The dichotomy between what it is and what it should be is not maintained and a holistic political enquiry is envisaged.

In its classical form Political Science had its origin in the ancient Greek city-states. The oriental people had speculated on the state and its problems even before the Greeks. But they did not develop Political Science in a pure and systematic form. Thus, historically the term 'Politics' itself was derived from

the Greek words 'Polis' or city-state. 'Polity' or government and 'Politeia' or constitution. As such Politics in the original Greek sense is a study of the city-state and its administration. To the Greeks, Politics is everything that touches the life of the state. Thus Aristotle called Politics as the 'master science'. For the Greek, 'Political' then pertains to whatever is done within or by the State.

### III. DEFINITION

It is difficult to give a precise definition to political science, because of its varying scope in different situations. Let us examine some of those definitions. Paul Janet - "Political science is that part of science which treats of the foundations of state and the principles of government". H.J Laski- "The study of politics concerns itself with the life of man in relation to organized states".

Lasswell- "political science is the study of shaping and sharing of power". David Easton-"Political science is the study of the authoritative allocation of values for a society". "Political Science begins and ends with the state" - Garner "Political Science deals with the government only" - Leacock Science of polis - Aristotle Science of state - Gettle Politics deals with government - Lecock General problem of state and government - Glichrist Politics is shaping and sharing of power - Dhal Authoritative allocation of values - Easton Politics is the struggle for and use of power - Morgenthau

From the above definitions we may conclude that the 'state' is the central theme of Political Science. It is the study about the state, its origin, its nature, its structure, its functions and so on. Modern political scientists have also emphasised the element of power in the study of the subject. Abraham Kaplan, Harold. D. Lasswell defined politics as the "study of shaping and sharing of power". It suggests that struggle for power is the subject matter of the study of politics. Since this struggle takes place at all levels-domestic, local, regional, national and international - politics becomes a universal activity. Robert A Dahl uses the term 'political system' instead of 'politics' and he defined it as any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves to a significant extent, control, influence power or authority. So the study of political science or politics include not only state and government but also an enquiry into the struggles for

power that takes place at all levels beginning from the household to the world at large. Hence a comprehensive view of the subject of political science involves everything connected with the life of man in the process of making himself.

### IV. NATURE

Political science is still a growing and developing subject. So there is no uniformity among political thinkers regarding the nature of political science, whether it should be treated as a science or not. Aristotle, the father of political science, considered it as the master science. Political philosophers like Bodin, Hobbes, Bluntschli, Bryce also held the view that political science is a science.

But some other political scientists reject the scientific nature of political science. It is said that in political science there is no uniform principles on laws that are universally valid. Human behaviour is unpredictable. It, therefore, does not supply sufficient materials for scientific study. The essence of the scientific method is that it will not accept generalizations unless they are based on facts that can be verified. Political scientists like Buckle and Comte deny the claim of political science as a science.

The reality is that social science is different from natural science or physical science. Science is the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation, evidence and experiment. It is the body of true knowledge acquired through a scientific process. But in social science, we cannot expect so much accuracy and precision as we see in science subjects. A hundred percentage predictions is not possible in social science because it deals with the behaviour of man and his political institutions. There is only a remote chance for verification and prediction in this subject. While in the study of political phenomena, we can apply scientific methods and tools.

### V. SCOPE

Now a day, it is very difficult to determine the precise and definite boundaries of political science. It is a wide and comprehensive subject and there is no uniformity among political and with the problems of international life. Yet some of the important subjects in the scope of political scientists about its scope. It is

the study of organizations and activities of the state, both at national and international levels. It also deals with the distribution of governing power among several agencies by which the actions of the state are determined, expressed, and exercised science are given below:-

Political Science is the Study of State and Government. In political science, we study about the theoretical, structural and behavioural aspects of organisation and forms of state and government. Bluntschli says "political science is a science which is concerned with the state, endeavours to understand and comprehend the state in its essential nature, various forms, manifestations and development." According to Robson, "the purpose of political science is to throw light on political ideas and political actions so that the government of man may be improved". The government is the agency of the state through which the purpose of the state is realised. It is the most lively and integral part of the state. According to Paul Janet "political science is that part of social science which treats of the foundation of state and the principles of the Government".

It is the study of the Relationship between the man and the state. The scope of Political science also includes a study of the nature of the relationship between the individual and the state. The process of men with society is an important aspect of political science. The state guarantees certain rights and liberties to its citizens and at the same time imposes certain reasonable restrictions on them. In fact, state exists for the welfare of the people. As an agent of the state, it is the function of the government to try to secure welfare for all who live within the territorial boundary of the state. Again the government of any state is greatly influenced by the thoughts and ideas of that state. Therefore, the study about the state and government is bounded to be inconclusive without the study of the nature of the people who constitute the state. It is in this connection Max Webber has stated that political science is a descriptive and normative science and describes it as the study of human behaviour in the process of enquiry of justice. Study of Political Theory. The theories are the results of the thoughts and research of many scholars and exponents of political science. Political scientists formulate various political concepts and establish theories. According to Gettle, "political science is

concerned with the historical survey of origin, development of political theories and ideas, the analysis of the fundamental nature of the state, its organization, relation to the individuals that compose it and its relation to 7 other states ". It is the study of the fundamental questions of the state, government, politics, liberty, justice, property, rights, law, the enforcement of legal code by authority etc.

It may be subdivided into political philosophy, legal-political theory, the concept of sovereignty and legal controls for the exercise of political power, scientific political theory, consisting of empirical observations of political events etc. So a student of political science must start his study of the subject with the theories.

Study of political institutions. Political Science is also concerned with the study of political institutions and associations through with the state acts. It covers the study of the constitutions, comparative government, public administration and local government etc. .It also deals with the nature of different political institutions including government, their structure such as legislature, executive and judiciary, its working, its merits and demerits etc. Further it studies about some informal groups like social, economic, educational institutions in a society.

Study of political dynamics. Political dynamics examines the current forces which exert influence on the government and politics. Along with the change of habits also are bound to occur of men, social system also change. This explains why the city states of ancient times are replaced by the nation states in the present century. The search for the cause of this kind of changes in the character of the state and government is the study of political dynamics. It covers a wide range and includes the study of political parties, public opinion pressure groups, lobbies, etc. The study of these political dynamics helps to explain the political behaviour of individuals and different groups.

A study of International relations, international organizations and international law. Political science deals with the matters relating to the maintenance of international relations, international law and the organization concerned with the maintenance of world peace and security. Human society is now thinking in terms of forming a world government in the near future. International law provides the

framework within which the states should enjoy their rights and duties. This has made it necessary to include in the study of political science. It is related to the maintenance of international relations and 8 different organizations connected with the maintenances of peace and security among the states of the world. The subject matter includes international law, international and regional organisations like UNO, European Union, NAM, SAARC and League of Nations, diplomatic relations, treaties and agreements, arms control, human rights, pollution control and global warming, sustainable development etc.

Study of political parties and related organizations. In a democratic state, political parties play an important role in formation and functioning of government. They are regarded as an unavoidable and central part for the successful working of democratic political system. Its studies are important for understanding the nature and working of political institutions of a country. The study of political science is also concerned with the study of informal institutions through which the state acts. ie. Pressure groups, interests groups and other related social, economic, educational institutions etc.

It Studies of Past, Present and Future development of State The scope of Political Science includes the study of the past, present and future of states and its activities. According to Gettle, " In the historical aspects, Political Science deals with the origin of the state and the development of political theories in the past..... in dealing with the present it attempts to describe and classify existing political institutions and ideas. Political Science also look to the future, to improving political organizations and activities in the light of changing conditions and changing ethical standards". so its scope is not restricted to the study of the past and the present alone , but it directs future course of the development of the state. The study is also helpful to improving the political institutions and modifying political activities to meet the changing national and international demands.

## VI. IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Why to study political science

- To study political thought and ideas of the great political Thinkers.
- To understand the current political problems and find solutions.
- Make people

- conscious of their rights and obligations.
- To understand the current trends
- To provide information about international laws, international legislation, organizations and maintenance of world peace and international brotherhood.
- Analyse political parties and pressure groups.
- It makes people vigilant, develops a spirit of cooperation, adjustment and tolerance.
- It deals with great political events like French Revolution, American war of Independence and freedom movements.
- It helps to form public opinion.
- Helps people to safeguard their liberty.
- It prevents to misuse of power of government.
- It improves the quality of government and administration.
- It provides knowledge of the political terminology.
- Liberalises the human outlook.
- Developing and strengthening liberal democratic values and awareness.
- To understanding the political decision-making process.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In this unit the learners will be able to know the definitions of the basic concepts concerning political science. What are the basic differences among them. You have also learned in this unit about the nature of political science whether it is a science or art. The learners will also get a fair idea about the scope of political science i:e the fields where political science is applicable and in the last the learners will know the importance of learning political science.

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