



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL THEORY IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE: EXPLORING THE METHODOLOGICAL HARDCORE OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DISCIPLINE

***MUHAMMAD DAIYABU HASSAN PhD AND **ABDULRAHMAN DANGANA LUKMAN**

**Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria ** International Relations and Strategic Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

ABSTRACT

Being regarded as the hardcore of political science discipline, this paper explored the significance of political theory in contemporary political discourse taken into cognizance its traditional and contemporary dimension. While the method used in the study is content analysis of predominantly secondary sources, the paper adopted the Systems Analysis to the study of Political Theory for proper analysis. Findings revealed that traditional political theory focuses on the history of political thought from the ancient Greek theorists to the present by looking at different historical, philosophical, institutional and legal aspects of politics. Contemporary political theory on the other hand focuses on developing the concepts and language as well as posting the relationships and defending the methodology that allows for testing claims about how political world turns. It reflects upon political phenomenon, processes and institutions and on actual political behaviour by subjecting it to philosophical or ethical criterion. Thus, political theory performs three main functions which include the description of political phenomenon, social criticism, and reconstruction of the political system through postulation of ideas and opinion. It concerned mainly with the fundamental problems of the state such as the rights and duties of citizens, the relationship between the citizens and the state, the role of civil society in an organized entity and the like. In other words, it focuses mainly with prescribing what is right and wrong, good and evil, the nature of an ideal state (justice and political stability), and the purpose of the universe or human life as well as evaluating the desirability of political actions or state of affairs.

Keywords: Political Theory, Political Philosophy, Political Science, Systems Analysis and Political Discourse.

Introduction

Despite the fact that political science has powerful roots in the 4th Century B. C through the philosophical and analytical writings of Aristotle, the organized discipline of political science is a late 19th Century phenomenon. In other words, from its inception as an organized entity, political science has tended to be eclectic comprising a variety of intellectual foci and scholarly interests. Among the various sub-fields of political science, political theory is regarded as the hardcore of the discipline. From the beginning, political theory referred to a subject matter that included ideas about politics, ideas in politics and the study of those ideas (Barry, 1995: 12).

The term political theory and political philosophy were often used interchangeably. The sub-field usually designated as political theory may bring together scholars who carry widely varying intellectual baggage, who come from very different philosophical traditions and who pursue a host of distinctive purposes. Traditionally, the political theory field concerned the history of political thought from the ancient Greek theorists to the present. Plato's Republic and Laws (1943), Aristotle's Politics and Ethics (1905), Augustine's City of God (2012), Machiavelli's Prince and Discourses (1950), Hobbes's Leviathan (1998), Locke's Second Treaties on Civil Government (1948), Rousseau's Social Contract (1974), Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1896), and the writings of Karl Marx (1843, 1845, 1859, 1862, 1871, 1951 etc) are among the major contributions to the historical development of discourse around political ideas.

Beyond tracing the historical experience often referred to as the domain of political philosophy, political theorists may concern themselves with the enterprise of describing or explaining political phenomena or events. Empirical political theory focuses on developing the concepts and language, posting the relationships and defending the methodology that allows for testing claims about how political world turns (Barker, 1951: 04).

In other words, empirical political theory involves application of logic and analytical philosophy to establish an articulate model or adumbrate linguistic clarification. On the other hand, empirical political theory may entail constructing abstract and rational models of political behaviour (Brecht, 1965: 04). In this regard, it may be interpretive and normative concerned mainly with prescribing what is right and just, and evaluating the desirability of political actions or state of affairs.

Normative theory may address what is normally or ethically justifiable, appraise the actions or intentions of the state, elaborate the natural rights of persons, assess the legitimacy of authority and laws or delineate the obligations of citizenship, among others. The historical, empirical, interpretive and diagnostic objectives of political theorists are not necessarily antithetical but they are not the same thing, and practitioners of political theory may debate the inherent issues with fervor. While political theory was for many decades, generously admixed with history, modern political theorists are much influenced by developments in philosophy (a most kindred discipline), sociology and economics (Dahl, 1963: 12).

However, any comprehensive discussion of political theory requires recognition that there are at least five different but related references for the concept over its generic definition as a systematic reflection on the nature and purposes of government. These are: a sub-field of political science; a canon of classic texts of political thought as well as activity associated with these writings; an intellectual component of empirical inquiry; an interdisciplinary scholarly field and a general body of academic literature; and certain ideas in politics (Dahl, 1963; Brecht, 1965; Deutsch, 1966; Germino, 1967 etc).

Against this background, this paper focuses on the relevance of political theory in analyzing contemporary political phenomena. The first section discusses the meaning of political theory in analyzing the nature of politics and political system; the second section analyzes the approaches to the study of politics (both traditional and modern) and their relevance in contemporary political discourse. The last section provides a concluding remark.

Methodology

This study employs the Quantitative Research Method where data were obtained mainly from secondary sources. These include online publications, articles from reputable journals, internet materials and relevant textbooks. The data examines the significance of political theory in contemporary political discourse taken into cognizance its traditional and contemporary dimension.

Also, data sought for the study focuses on the history of political thought from the ancient Greek theorists to the present by looking at different historical, philosophical, institutional, legal as well as actual political behaviour. In other words, the data helped analyzed the nature and functions of political theory in contemporary political discourse through postulation of ideas and opinion.

The Meaning of Political Theory

Political theory is one of the core areas in political science. From the ancient Greece to the present, the history of political theory has dealt with fundamental and perennial ideas in political science. Political theory reflects upon political phenomenon, processes and institutions and on actual political behaviour by subjecting it to philosophical or ethical criterion. In the words of Germino (1967), "Political theory is the most appropriate term to employ in designating that intellectual tradition which affirms the possibility of transcending the sphere of immediate practical concerns and viewing man's societal existence from a critical perspective".

To quote Sabine (1973), "Political theory is quite simply, man's attempt to consciously understand and solve the problems of his group life and organization... It is the disciplined investigation of political problems... not only to show what a political practice is but also show what it means. In showing what a practice means or what it ought to mean, political theory can alter what it is". The term political theory has been defined in both a broad and a narrow sense. George Sabin defines it as "anything about politics or relevant to politics". This is his broad definition of the term. He also gives it a narrow definition as "the disciplined investigation of political problems".

Similarly, Arnold Brecht (1965) provides both a broad and a narrow meaning of Political Theory. According to him in the broad sense, the concept political theory means "a thinkers' entire teaching on a subject", while in the narrow sense, it means only an "an expression of a thought". Hence, to him it means a set of propositions.

Williams T. Bluhem (1965) gives a comprehensive definition of political theory. He holds political theory as "an explanation of what politics is all about, a general understanding of the political world, a frame of reference to understand and explain a political phenomenon, to be able to give a value judgement, and also to be able to predict". Explain thus, political theory is a tool for evaluating what happened, whether it was good or bad, what may happen in the future in the given conditions, and thus enable a serious student of politics to decide his political choices.

Also, political speculations of individual philosophers and some ideologies such as anarchism, communism and so on are put together in one volume which is given the title 'Political Theory'. Here, the segments of political science on governmental organization, political parties and pressure groups, international relations etc. are distinct from political theory. The dangers of viewing political theory in such a way are that a special remaining is being attached to the word

'theory', and this will rule out the possibility of the existence of any theory in other branches of political science (Brecht, 1965: 12).

As Dyke (1960) points out, "the practice has an objectionable aspect in that it seems to suggest that all statements expressing theory belong in the subdivision labeled political theory; and conversely it seems to suggest that books and courses in other subdivisions, go beyond their proper limits if any theory is included. If theory is taken to be synonymous with thought, this attitude becomes disastrous for the other subdivisions".

Political theory is that branch of political science which attempts to arrive at generalizations, inferences or conclusions to be drawn from data gathered by other specialists, not only in political science, but throughout the whole range of human knowledge and experience. Political Theory is a theory about what is 'political', the science and philosophy of something that is 'political' (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007: 11).

However, according to David Held (1991), "Political theory is a network of concepts and generalizations about political life involving ideas, assumptions and statements about the nature, purpose and key features of government, state and society; and about the political capabilities of human beings". W. C. Coker (1938) is of the view that "when political government and its forms and activities are studied not simply as facts to be described and compared and judged in reference to their immediate and temporary effects, but as facts to be understood and appraised in relation to the constant needs, desires and opinions of men, then we have political theory".

To Andrew Hacker (1961), "Political Theory is a combination of a disinterested search for principles of good state and good society on the one hand, and a disinterested search for knowledge of political and social reality on the other". George Catlin (1950) observed that, "Political theory includes political science and political philosophy, while science refers to the phenomenon of control in many forms over all the processes of whole social field... It is concerned with the end or final value, when man asks, what is the national good?" or "what is good society?".

John Plamentaz (1963) defines political theory in functional terms and says: "the function of political theory has come to be restricted to the analysis and clarification of the vocabulary of politics and the critical examination, verification and justification of the concepts employed in political argument". Thus, for Norman Barry (1995), "Political theory is an eclectic subject which draws upon a variety of disciplines. There is no body of knowledge or method of analysis which can be classified as belonging exclusively to political theory".

To sum up, one may say that political theory is an overview of what the political order is about. It is symbolic representation of what is 'political'. It is a formal, logical and systematic analysis of the processes and consequences of political activity. It is analytical, expository and explanatory. It seeks to give order, coherence and meaning to what is described as 'political'.

Systems Analysis to the Study of Political Theory

Systems analysis is part of the behaviouralist movement in political science which had been growing in various American Universities (starting with the University of Chicago) as a reaction to the traditionalist approach. It was in this search for theory-building that some of these scholars saw the potential utility of the General System Theory developed in the twenties by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a biologist. The General System Theory was expected to provide the social scientists, a common set of principles transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries, a format for the organization and synthesis of highly divergent material and a set of directions about potentially fruitful and heuristic investigations.

David Easton was the first to think of analyzing politics from the point of view of systems analysis which he presented in his work, *Political System* (1953). According to Easton, "Political System is that system of interaction in any society through which binding and authoritative allocation of values are made and implemented".

System analysis conceives politics in terms of the political system. Easton has selected the political system as the basic unit of political analysis and concentrated on the intra-system behaviour of various systems. He says that outside the political system, there are other systems (physical, biological, social psychological) for instance. Political system is distinguished from the other systems by the authoritative allocation of values made by the former which broadly constitutes the political process (Easton, 1953).

Easton holds that all political systems are both open and adaptive. He concentrated on the study of the nature of the exchanges and transactions that take place in a close circuit but is made because of the "demands" from the society or "environment". Because of the "supports" from the environment, they become "authoritative" (Easton, 1953: 12). The political system according to Easton, receives inputs from the environment in the form of demands and supports; it produces outputs in the form of policies and decisions. The outputs flow back into the environment through a feedback mechanism, giving rise to fresh demands.

In this direction, it represents a flow model of political system. This is because in every political system, a cyclic process is going on. First of all, there is a political system which is created in which demands are made as input. With its regulatory mechanism, the system allows only a limited number of demands; and actions are taken by the authorities which are transformed to the society in the form of output. The outputs are responded by the society that is communicated back to the authorities to enable them to take further actions in the matter. Thus, every output is a feedback for the authorities for subsequent actions. Input-Output is a continuous process.

Easton has taken note of the changes which comes in the system, which make this approach realistic. He has also taken note of the fact that the system has adaptive process. The System analysis has been found useful for the comparative study of political systems. The political system which takes into consideration the demands of the majority of its population while formulation policies, is described as a democratic political system.

On the other hand, if the political system does not take care of the demands of the people and arbitrarily makes policies, it can be termed as a dictatorial system. The political system which takes into consideration the demand of only market forces and a few rich, can be described as a capitalist political system whereas, the political system which formulates policies on the basis of demands of the poor, the down trodden, the old age etc can be classified as a welfare political system (Easton, 1953: 21).

The Systems analysis has also been extensively used for the analysis of the international system. The model of political system has also served as a basis for Gabriel Almond's model of Structural-functional analysis (1978) as also for Karl Deutsch's Model of Communications and Control (1966). However, it has been criticized for completely ignoring the individual though he had tried to make him subject of empirical observations. He had not even tried to understand the impact of the system on individuals who constitute the systems. It has also been criticized for its inability in the analysis of political power, and also in the analysis of mass political behaviour such as voting and the like. Whatever the criticism, the Systems analysis represents a substantial advance in the direction of constructing a theoretical framework from within political science.

Traditional Approaches to the Study of Political Theory

Political problems have been subjected to various kinds of analysis since the beginning of political thought. Various explanatory methods have been adopted to enhance our understanding of things which are political in nature. What we

call “approaches” to political analysis constitute a variety of orientations to looking at the world politics. The approaches are useful in ordering the apparently disorganized and fragmented political phenomena. One of the most ancient spheres of intellectual enquiry, politics was originally seen as in arm of philosophy, history or law. Its central purpose was to uncover the philosophy upon which human society should be based.

The Philosophical Tradition

The most important aspect of traditional Political theory has been Philosophy. The origins of political analysis date back to Ancient Greece and a tradition usually referred to as ‘political philosophy’. This involved a preoccupation with essentially ethical, prescriptive or normative questions, reflecting a concern with what ‘should’, ‘ought’ or ‘must’ be brought about, rather than what ‘is’. Plato and Aristotle are usually identified as the founding fathers of this tradition.

According to Stephen L Wasby (1970), “the philosophical approach takes in all aspects of man’s political activities, and has as its goal a statement of underlying principles concerning those activities”. This approach is comprehensive in scope and imaginative in spirit. This political thinking presents a conception of good society and the means of realizing it. It is prescriptive in nature which aims at improving the existing social structure considered to be unjust. This approach has normative orientation. Statements of preferences or value questions abound and the old masters did not make any distinction between political and ethical questions.

Most of the classical political theories represent this approach which is deductive. It is also known as ‘speculative’ or *a priori* method. The deductive method draws the conclusion from a number of general principles. It starts with a preconceived assumption or statement and intends to strengthen or establish the same notion. It is reasoning from cause to effect, from a general principle to its consequence. The *a priori* method lays down certain norms and then seeks the facts to support the already formulated norms. The conclusions follow a logical reason rather than an empirical enquiry. In political system, this method of investigation starts from some abstract original idea about human nature and draws deductions from that idea as to the nature of the state, its aims, its functions and its future. It then attempts to harmonize its theories with the actual facts of history. The best examples are Plato’s *Republic* (1955), and Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1991). In brief, the philosophical approach is marked by:

1. Speculation, intuition and norms;
2. Use of powerful logic to convince and justify the stand taken;

3. Absence of effort to provide historical basis and verify facts;
4. Partisan attitude (for instance, Locke wrote to justify the new middle class while Hobbes wrote to justify monarchy);
5. Subjectivity, lacking objectivity and universal validity.

Vernon Van Dyke (1960), states that the philosophical approach:

1. Is concerned with the clarification of concepts used in a particular discipline;
2. Aims at evolving standards of right and wrong for the purpose of a critical evolution of the existing institutions, laws and policies.

Leo Strauss (1953) differentiates between political theory and political philosophy. According to him, these two are parts of political thought and are complementary to each other. He says that political theory is “the attempt truly to know both the nature of political things and the right, or the good political order”. He further says that ‘values’ form an indispensable part of political philosophy and cannot be excluded from the study of politics as they enable us to undertake a critical and coherent analysis of political institutions and activities. The danger of the philosophical method is that it becomes highly imaginative and visionary as in the case of Plato’s *Republic* and More’s *Utopia* (2002). It sinks into empty ideology as it does not necessarily rely on historical facts. However, it continues to be a part of modern political theory in spite of the behavioural revolution and modern approaches. This can be said with certainty as attempts to construct an ideal type of state have been evident since the time of the Greek philosophers, through the Middle Ages and down to the present day.

The Historical Tradition

Political science became a separate branch of intellectual study in the 19th Century and ever since traditional Political Scientists have looked upon History as a primary source of political analysis. They did not recognize any difference between History and Politics. They have regarded history as past politics and politics as present history. Machiavelli, the Italian political thinker of the renaissance period adopted the historical mode of analysis.

Historical approach may denote the process of arriving at the laws governing politics through an analysis of historical events, that is, events of the past. It may also stand for an attempt to understand politics through a historical account of political thought of the past. The historical approach can be regarded as a form of the experimental approach. This is also called the genetic or evolutionary

method. The approach is inductive, that is, based on observation and the study of historical facts. This approach, traced the Aristotelian period, maintained that to understand anything we must study its beginning and development. The other major exponents of this approach are Montesquieu (2013), Savigny (1989), Seeley (1922), Freeman (1917) and Laski (1935).

The historical approach as Fredrick Pollock (1970) observes, “seek an explanation of what institutions are and are tending to be, more in the knowledge of what they have been, how they came to be and what they are than in the analysis of them as they stand”. It helps us to arrive at certain generalizations, based on historical facts. In this process, it subjects the generalizations to a process of continuous verification. The historical approach is best represented by George H Sabine (1973). According to him, the subject-matter of political science coincides with the major themes of discussion in the writings of well-known political philosophers like Plato (1943), Aristotle (1905), Hobbes (1991), Locke (1948), Rousseau (1974), Bentham (1983), Mill (1896, 2013), Green (1899) and Marx (1951). He further says that political theory is advanced in response to a particular situation, and it becomes imperative for us to understand the circumstances under which a particular theory has evolved in order to understand its relevance in the present situation. Political theories not only are a product of history but also serve as an instrument of moulding history by their ideological force. Thus, all great political theories are valid for all times.

However, the historical approach has certain inadequacies and has been criticized by Sidgwick (1919), James Bryce (1870), Ernest Barker (1951) and David Easton (1967, 1969) among others. Their objection amounts to the fact that problems confronting one generation are different from the problems of another generation and can hardly guide in resolving the crises of a particular generation and or meet future needs. They also hold that history is a mere narration of events without ethical or philosophical judgments.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the utility of the historical approach cannot be neglected. History, now becoming more objective has renewed the interest in values and the rich heritage of political thought for evolving guiding principles for our own age. The best example is John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971), which depended on the methodology of Locke and Kant, rejecting utilitarian philosophy. The historical approach is indispensable to the political scientist who studies political institutions because it is related with the peculiar way in which the institutions have been fashioned.

The Legal Approach

Legal approach stands for an attempt to understand politics in terms of law. It focuses its attention on the legal and constitutional framework in which different organs of government have to function, inquires into their respective legal position, their powers and procedure which makes their actions legally valid. For example, legal approach to Nigerian politics will proceed to analyze legal implications of various provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, duly documented by the judgments of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Edward Corwin's *President, His Office, Powers (1940)*, is an important work which adopted the legalistic approach. In this work, Corwin has made use of the judgments of the Supreme Court to describe the powers of the American President.

But the legal approach fails to explain the role of extra-legal factors in politics. It proves inadequate in understanding the political forces, processes and behaviour which might operate outside of the legal formal framework. In spite of its drawbacks, the legal approach is not entirely insignificant because all political processes must culminate in legal provisions in order to become effective and stable. The study of international law and constitutional law also plays a vital role in the social and political life of almost every country.

The Institutional Approach

The institutional approach is another major approach, considered as next only to the philosophical approach. Though it is closely related to the legal approach, it is the only traditional approach which gives an independent identity to the systematic study of politics. The roots of this approach extend to the Aristotelian period, when Aristotle described and classified the constitution of Greek city-states (Aristotle, 1905).

Traditionally, politics has been defined as the study of the state and government. Government itself is an institution, and its various organs such as legislature, executive and judiciary may also be recognized as institutions (Deutsch, 1966). This approach has been closely associated with a legalistic orientation of politics. The approach proceeds to study the organization and function of the government, its various organs, political parties and other institutions affecting politics. Classification of governments, identification of levels of government (federal, state and local) as well as government's functioning is the main concern of this approach.

The institutional approach emphasizes exclusively the formal aspects of government and politics. It studies the organization and functioning of government, its various organs, and political parties and other institutions

affecting politics. It aims at description of facts and its chief concerns include classification of governments, identification of levels of government, branches of government as well as their power composition and interrelationships. The drawbacks of this approach identified by Johari (2011) are as follows:

- i. It neglects the individual while emphasizing the institutions
- ii. It does not assign importance to the study of international politics
- iii. It fails to take into account the role of violence, political movements, agitations, revolutions and war
- iv. It neglects the role of informal groups and processes in shaping politics.

In spite of these drawbacks, the institutional approach plays an important role in the study of politics, as the institutions form an important part of politics.

Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Political Theory

The Behavioural Approach

Behaviouralism is the belief that social theories should be constructed only on the basis of observable behaviour, providing quantifiable data research. The roots of Behaviouralism may be traced back to the general system theory propounded by a biologist, Ludwig von Bertallanty in the 1920s. This theory emphasized the unification of sciences. For the first time, 'Behaviouralism' marked a systematic attempt to integrate Political Science with other Behavioural sciences and therefore, it made deliberate efforts to draw freely from these sciences. In the field of political science, the origins of this approach can be traced to the writings of Graham Wallas (1908) and Arthur Bentley (1908). These two writers in the early twentieth century laid emphasis on the importance of political institutions in isolation. Charles E Merriam (1934), G. E. G. Catlin (1950) and Harold D Lasswell (1951, 1962) stressed on this approach. But it gained popularity with the work of American political scientists after the Second World War.

The Behavioural approach originated from dissatisfaction with the traditional approaches. It was opined that the traditional approaches laid emphasis on organized formal institutional structures, which made political science functionally irrelevant as it lacked an insight into functional operational dimensions. Many developments in other social sciences like Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology influenced the Behaviouralists to restructure the study of Political Science. Behaviouralism as an academic movement in political science first began in the US after the 2nd World War. It emphasizes the political behaviour of men who operate political institutions. It focuses on the simple question "*why do people behave the way they do?*". It emphasizes on the need to

develop a pure science of politics giving a new orientation to research and theory-building exercises within the discipline. It is a reaction against traditionalism in political science.

According to Robert Dahl (1963), "Behaviouralism is a protest movement within political science and its object is to make more rigorous, the empirical component of Political Science". For Heinz Eulau (1964), "it is a renaissance movement, not a revolution". The Behavioural approach focuses on political behaviour. It calls for the study of acts, attitudes, preferences and expectations of man in the political context. It lays emphasis on the collection and examination of facts relating to actual behaviour of man as a social and political being.

Thus, Behaviouralism shifts its focus from study of politics, from formalism and normative orientations of the legalistic and philosophical schools to political behaviour, that is, the behaviour of actual actors in the political field like power-holders and power-seekers as well as voters. As summarized by Kirkpatrick (1962), the main characteristics of Behavioural approach are as follows:

1. It rejects political institutions as the basic unit for research and identifies the behaviour of individuals in political situations as the basic unit of analysis
2. It identifies social sciences as 'Behavioural sciences' and emphasizes the unity of political science with the social sciences, so defined
3. It advocates the utilization and development of more precise techniques of observing, classifying and measuring data and urges the use of statistical or quantitative formulations wherever possible
4. It defines the construction of a systematic and empirical theory as the goal of political science

Thus, Heinz Eulau (1964) stresses that the main characteristics of Behavioural includes:

1. It specifies, as the unit or object of both the theoretical and empirical analysis, the behaviour of persons and social groups rather than events, structures, institutions or ideologies
2. It seeks to place theory and research in a frame of reference common to social psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology
3. It stresses the natural interdependence of theory and research. Theoretical questions need to be stated in operational terms for purposes of empirical research. And in turn, empirical findings should have a bearing on the development of political theory

4. It tries to develop a rigorous research design and to apply precise methods of analysis to political behaviour problems.

Views of David Easton

The intellectual foundations of Behaviouralism have been summed up by David Easton as:

1. Regularities
2. Verification
3. Techniques
4. Quantification
5. Values
6. Systematization of Research
7. Pure Science and
8. Integration

Regularities stand for discernible uniformities in political behaviour which can be expressed in theory like statements facilitating explanation and prediction of political phenomena. Verification implies acceptance of only that kind of knowledge which can be empirically tested and verified. Technique symbolizes the behaviouralists' emphasis on the adoption of appropriate tools of data collection and analysis. Quantification stands for the advocacy of rigorous measurement and data manipulation in political analysis (Eulau, 1964).

Values according to the behaviouralists need to be separated from facts. Ethical evaluation is one thing, empirical explanation is another. Objective scientific inquiry has to be value free or value neutral. Systematization implies the behaviouralist's conscious effort to build casual theories on the basis of logically interrelated structure of concepts and propositions. The pure science advocacy is directed towards forging a link between theoretical understanding of politics and application theory to practical problem-solving. The behaviouralists' urge for integration of political science with other social sciences marks a conscious move to encourage cross-fertilization of ideas across the boundaries of separate social sciences.

The Behavioural approach widened the scope of political science and came to accord importance to a higher degree of reliability instead of a higher degree of generality. Thus, it focused on a micro-level situations rather than attempting macro-level generalizations. Started as a challenge to traditional political analysis, the Behavioural movement itself has not gone unchallenged. It has been argued that the movement might have invented jargons and used sophisticated

methods and techniques, but the concern for systematic orderly thinking and analysis cannot be said to be the monopoly of the Behaviouralists. It was claimed that behaviouralism had significantly constrained the scope of political analysis, preventing it from going beyond what was directly observable.

Although, behavioural analysis undoubtedly produced, and continues to produce, invaluable insights in fields such as voting pattern, a narrow obsession with quantifiable data threatens to reduce the discipline of politics to little else. More worryingly, it inclined a generation of political scientists to turn their backs upon the entire tradition of normative political thought. Concepts such as 'freedom', 'equality', 'rights' and 'justice' were sometimes discarded as being meaningless because they were not empirically verifiable entities.

Christian Bay in his book *'Politics and Pseudo Politics (1965)'* gave the view that the behaviouralists do not attempt to tackle the ancient and perennial problems dealt with by Plato and Aristotle, such as justice, good life and human nature. The behaviouralists also lack political responsibility at the substantial level because they are not committed to question of fundamental importance such as problems of Human welfare. They neglect the 'ought'- side of the question and pay attention to its 'is' side. Behaviouralism is thus criticized for its mindless empiricism, too much stress on facts and negligence of value which can prove to be detrimental for the discipline.

Despite the criticism, the contribution of behavioural revolution to political science needs to be acknowledged. Certain specific areas in political science for example study of voting behaviour, enquiry into political process etc, have been benefited greatly by the new approach. The salutary results of behavioural movement may be summed up as new awareness about the needs of scientific research, a greater degree of empiricism and an increasing use of new analytical technique.

Post-Behaviouralism as an Approach to the Study of Political Theory

Behaviouralism received new challenges as the sixties drew towards a close. The intellectual ferment and socio-political turbulence marked American life in the middle and late sixties which had generated these challenges. Naturally, they were linked up with the movement known as New Left and the Counter culture which found expression within the field of political science, in the setting up of a caucus for a New Political Science.

The caucus acted vigorously within the American Political Science Association (APSA), to nullify or reverse dominant patterns of political science. In 1969, David Easton announced a new revolution that is, Post-Behaviouralism. The term

'post-behaviouralism' was used to designate the mood and programmatic intent of the new disasters. Among the major post-behavioural tenets and tendencies, one could mention the new emphasis values, on issues of justice, liberty and equality. It was alleged that political science had become too narrowly defined and too much identified with the established order. It should be incumbent on political scientists not only to show concern with issues of public policy and political reform but to become engaged with issues of radical socio-political restructuring.

During the sixties, the political scientists in the United States were taking interest not only in issues on which decisions were being taken by the state, but also on issues on which no decisions were being taken. The post-behaviouralists admitted that too much time had been spent by them on trivial and quite often irrelevant research. While they were engaged in the framing of different paradigms, conceptual frameworks, model, theories the world was facing more and more social, economic and cultural crisis, of which they seemed to be completely unaware. David Easton pointed out that Post-Behaviouralism was future oriented, seeking to propel political science in new directions, and to add rather than deny its past heritage. It was both a movement and an intellectual tendency. Post-Behaviouralism emphasizes on the facts as well as values. It is a reform movement within the discipline of Political Science.

The two basic motivation of Post-Behaviouralism is relevance and action. Relevance means the development of such theories which can be utilize for the good of the society. The research techniques are good but emphasis should be on using these research techniques to make theories which will answer to the problem of the society. The action part involves bringing about changes in the society by social action. David Easton (1967), who had once enumerated eight main characteristics of behaviouralism and called them "the intellectual foundation stones" of the movement, now came out with seven major traits of post-behaviouralism and described them as the "*Credo of Relevance*" or "*a distillation of maximal image*". Thus, they can be summarized as follows:

1. Substance must have precedence over technique: it may be good to have sophisticated tools of investigation, but the more important point was the purpose for which these tools were to be applied. Unless the scientific research was relevant and meaningful for the contemporary urgent social problems, it was not worth being undertaken. To the slogan raised by the behaviouralist that it was better to be wrong than vague, the post-behaviouralist raised the counter-slogan that it was better to be vague than non-relevantly precise.

2. Political science should not lose touch with brute realities of politics. Political science during the behavioural movement had broken itself from the brute realities of politics. With its enormous wealth and technical resources, and a fantastic rate of increase in man's material comforts, the western world was at the same time, moving towards increasing social conflicts and deepening fears and anxieties about the future. If it was not the responsibility of the political scientists to reach out to the real needs of the humanity, of what use political science was to society? Political science must not be value force.
3. Behaviouralism had put much emphasis on scientism and value-free approaches. This was a very unhappy situation. It was on value premises that all knowledge stood and unless were regarded as the propelling force behind knowledge, there was a danger that the knowledge was to be used for wrong purposes. Values played an important role in politics, and research. They should not be thrown out from political science in the name of science.
4. Political science should aim for social change and not for social preservation. Contemporary political science should place its main emphasis on social change and not on social preservation as the behaviouralists seemed to be doing.
5. Political science should preserve the human values of civilization. The post-behaviouralists wanted to remind the political scientists that, being intellectuals, they had a role to play in the society. It was their responsibility to do the best to protect the human values of civilization.
6. There is need for action in place of contemplative science. If the intellectuals understood the social problems and felt themselves involved in them, they could not keep themselves away from action. Knowledge must be put to work. As Easton points out "To know is to bear the responsibility for acting and to act is to engage in reshaping society". Contemplative science might have all right in the nineteenth century when there was a broader moral agreement among the nations, but it was completely out of place in the contemporary society which was sharply divided over ideals and ideologies. The post-behaviouralists ask for action science in place of contemplative science.
7. There is an urgent need to politicize the profession. Once it was recognized that the intellectuals had a positive role to play in the society and this role was to try to determine proper goals for society and make society move in the direction of these goals, it became inevitable to draw

the conclusion that the politicization of the profession (all of professional associations as well as universities) became not only inescapable but highly desirable.

To conclude, we can say that the post-behavioural approach does not mean a new wave of methodological innovations. Rather, it signifies stock-taking and reappraisal. There is a noticeable trend back to the vital aspect concerning value-preferences identified with the normative approach. The post-behaviouralist reply to the argument that science had some ideal commitments and that behaviouralism shared these ideal commitments of science. That is, if science led its votaries to close their eyes in the face of urgent social problems the very image of sciences should change.

The post-behaviouralists did not deny the importance of technical proficiency, but they did not agree that the search for basic understanding and reliable knowledge necessarily implied that the scientist should not cut himself adrift from the practical concerns of society, nor did they believe that values could be kept out of all scientific pursuits.

Research according to post-behaviouralist was to be related to urgent social problems and was to be purposive. If the present crisis in society arose out of deep social conflicts, these conflicts had to be resolved. If the resolution of the conflicts needed breaking up of the existing political order, the political scientist should fairly and boldly ask for that, and he must not only rest content with suggesting reforms or, if need be revolution, but also contribute his best to the reshaping of society in the direction in which it could serve the desired goal more effectively. Thus, it can be concluded that, from the traditional approaches to the post-behavioural approach, there is not only change but continuity in the study of politics and the role of political theories in political discourses.

The Significance of Political Theory in Contemporary Political Discourse

While political theory performs three main functions which include the description of political phenomenon, social criticism, and reconstruction of the political system through postulation of ideas and opinion; the significance of political theory to contemporary political discourse can be analyzed in two different perspectives namely: political science and political philosophy. Gauba (2007) highlighted some of the significances which include: control of social life; social criticism and reconstruction; clarification of concepts; and the encouragement to mutual respect and toleration.

Thus, scientific analysis of political life enables us to understand and solve the problems of social life. For instance, just as the knowledge of geology helps us in understanding the causes of earthquake and gives us insights for preventing the havoc causes of conflict and violence in society and also gives us insights for preventing their outburst. Or just as the knowledge of physics enables us to generate electricity from our thermal and water resources, so knowledge of political science enables us to secured development of society from our human resources. Also, just as the knowledge of medical science enables us to control and cure various diseases of human body, so political science guides us to find remedies of political instability and various types of social crises (Gaub, 2007). Social criticism and reconstruction revolves around political philosophy which is primarily concerned with issues like right and wrong, good and evil social life, the nature of an ideal state, the purpose of the universe or human life etc. It provides logical grounds for criticizing the existing status quo thereby speculating about the creation of a good, just and egalitarian society. Political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Macpherson, Rawls etc, have pointed to the prevailing ills in society and they have given own schemes of social reconstruction.

For instance, Plato brilliantly exposed the 'modus operandi' of selfish and cunning of politicians in a democracy (Plato, 1955). Machiavelli vividly described the character of selfish and greedy people (Machiavelli, 1950). Marx and Engels (1951) analyzed the sources of conflict between the owners and non-owners of property, while Macpherson (1962) pointed to the intricacies of power and structure in contemporary society which obstructs the way to creative freedom of individuals.

Similarly, the clarification of concepts in each area of study (whether science or philosophy), is essential for the development of knowledge. Political philosophy helps us a lot in the clarification of concepts used in the analysis of political life. Political terms like authority, power, rule, social class, liberty, justice, equality, democracy etc, may be applied by different schools of thought to indicate different ideas. Simply put, political philosophy tries to determine their precise meaning which should be acceptable to the upholders of different ideologies in the analysis of political system and its characteristics.

Thus, political theory generates mutual respect and toleration between and among upholders of different points of view. As Andrew Hacker (1961) observed that:

*Political theory is a never-ending conversation
among theorists. And while the greatest of the*

debates are never resolved, the criticisms which the writers make of each other are always most vivid and illuminating... politics is, after all, the most democratic of sciences. The final judgments concerning political reality and the good life are the responsibility of all who undertake the study of theory.

Behavioural science on the other hand, has had an impact on two important areas where the first concentrates on the developments in the field of research technique and the second one is related to expanded theory and verified propositions. The research technique concentrates on the technical aspect while the second is based on the theoretical aspect of understanding the Behavioural Revolution.

The basic objective that differentiates empirical from normative approach is the use of scientific tools because the traditional approach concentrates on the abstract while contemporary approach focuses on facts. There have been remarkable enhancements in the field of developing tools of research such as content analysis, case analysis Interview, sample survey, observation and statistics.

Harold Lasswell (1962) was one of the first to utilize the technique of content analysis in his study of propaganda. Sample survey is yet another tool which has gained importance in the research of social science. The increasing levels of sophistication that one finds in sample survey methods have largely contributed to the progress in techniques of measurement.

Contemporary political scientists such as Lazarsfeld, Guttman and others have made a large number of advancements in detailed study of this discipline through the adoption of varied measurements devices. These sophisticated methods have helped them in conducting a more detailed study of the survey data and thereby reaching a conclusion based on the facts gathered through the survey.

Experimentation is one of the key methods of gaining factual insights and hence it has been used in different forms within the controlled laboratory setting as well as in the natural situation. The various techniques used to conduct experimentation include observing, recording and analyses of behaviour in small groups. Truman (1951) observes that, this type of methods either used within the laboratory or the field contributes towards gathering a large amount of information face-to-face and also provides stimulus to garner sophistication in the observational fieldwork.

While research technique is the first area, there is another area called the theoretical aspect, which has had an equally powerful impact on the study of political science from the behavioural point of view. However, measuring the contribution of theory in the empirical approach isn't easy considering it requires a certain level of verification. Understanding behavioural approach through research techniques is much more rational and exact, but the development in theory of behavioural science is confronted with two major concerns.

Firstly, the theories in the behavioural sciences are many and secondly, the implications of the various theories have not been explored completely. However, it is still possible to analyze the impact of the behavioural sciences in terms of theory. As per David B Truman (1951), the behavioural sciences or the contemporary approach have created two different bodies of propositions.

The first one concentrates only on individual behaviour or face-to-face groups and the second offers an inclusive explanation of a variety of actions that may not possess any particular institutional context (Truman, 1951). Although, both the propositions may contain certain value, they do not offer a solution to the problems that students of politics encounter. The impact of behavioural science theory is more fundamental and despite the growing influence of research technique, this fact cannot be ignored. There has emerged a divergence between political behaviour and institutional tendency due to the impact of behavioural science theory. The difference between the two lies in the approach adopted towards political institutions and the type of data and technique used in the study of political science (Kirkpatrick, 1962).

It is not sufficient to simply know about the divergence because it is also important to understand the reasons that led to divergence between political behaviour and institutional tendencies. Before the emergence of the behavioural approach, political scientists focused on institutional studies and their respective historical, political and legal aspects (Johari, 2011). They completely ignored the human element that was integral to the functioning of the political institutions. The Behaviouralism approach was meant to change this and in turn bring into prominence the empirical aspect of political science.

However, a substantial portion of behavioural science theory is non-institutional, as it covers topics such as sociology, psychology and anthropology. In a way, this type of approach basically focuses on highlighting the effects of institutional pattern and the kind of impact it will have on individuals or an aggregate of individuals (Sabine, 1973). It is not concerned with the process of describing the working or the functioning of the institution itself.

The social psychologist's main intention is to study the behaviour of men in groups and to analyze the effects of group environments on the behaviour of individuals. It is the responsibility of the social psychologists to study small face-to-face groups such as family, club, classroom and even neighborhood. This type of group dynamics has helped in creating a body of fundamental and applied theory on the subject of leadership (Held, 1991). Numerous developments in behavioural sciences have explored the importance of research technique and theory through experimenting it on an individual or small group of people (Kirkpatrick, 1962). It analyses and determines the behaviour of a small group of individuals through adopting various techniques but primarily excludes larger organizations and inclusive institutions.

The theoretical developments have also created a substantial impact on political science. Political scientists knew the restrictions of applying theory of Behavioural science to their problems. They were surprised by the realization that the theory got seamlessly infused with empirical research and it became far more important to the concerns of the investigators. This was not the case before the advancements that took place in research technique and theory. Scientific theory was given more importance and what was remarkable was, it led to an increased commitment to the discovery of uniformities that would help with the verification of hypotheses and also assist in searching for empirically supported generalizations ((Gaub, 2007).

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the significance of political theory in the contemporary political discourse. It gained an insight into the different theories that exist within political science. Analytically, political theory consists of political science and political philosophy. These two branches of political theory directly impact the politics of any particular state and they form the basis on how political scientists study and draw their conclusions in their analysis of political events. As such, political theory performs three main functions which include: the description of political phenomenon, social criticism, and reconstruction of the political system through postulation of ideas and opinion. Political theory is learned through two different approaches namely: Traditional and Behavioural. Political sciences mainly relies on empirical method based on practical experience which is supposed to be reliable hence, it specializes in 'description' while political philosophy being concerned with value-judgment specializes in 'criticism' and 'reconstruction' which played a significant role in shaping and changing the political environment.

References:

- Almond, G. and Powell, B. G. (1978). *Comparative Politics, Systems, Process and Policy*. Boston: M A: Little, Brown.
- Aristotle. (1905). *Aristotle's Politics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Augustine, (2012). *Augustine's City of God*. Edited by James, Wetzel, Villanova University, Pennsylvania, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, E. (1951). *Principles of Social and Political Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barry, N. P. (1995). *Introduction to Modern Political Theory*. London: Macmillan.
- Bay, C. (1965). A Critical Evaluation of Some Behavioural Literature. *American Political Science Review*, vol. 59 (1), pp. 39-51.
- Bentham, J. (1983). *Fragment on Government*. In *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bntham*. Edited by J. H. Burns and F. Rosen. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bentley, A. F. (1908). *The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bluhem, W. T. (1965). *Theories of Political Systems: Classics of Political Thought and Modern Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice-Hall.
- Brecht, A. (1965). *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*. Bombay: The Times of India Press.
- Bryce, J. (1870). *The International Atlas and Geography: Modern, Historical, Classical and Physical*. London: Collins and Son.
- Catlin, G. (1950). *A History of Political Philosophers*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Corwins, E. (1940). *The President: Office and Powers*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Dahl, R. (1963). *Modern Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice-Hall.
- Dahl, R. (1966). *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.
- Deutsch, K. (1966). *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. New York: Free Press.
- Easton, D. (1953). *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. New York: Wiley.
- Easton, D. (1967). *Introduction: The Current Meaning of Behaviouralism*. In Charlesworth, J. C. (Eds.), *Contemporary Political Analysis*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Easton, D. (1969). *The New Revolution in Political Science*. *American Political Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 12, pp. 1051-1061.

- Engels, F. (1884). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Eulau, H. (1964). *The Behavioural Persuasion in Politics*. New York: Random House.
- Freeman, J. (1917). *Ancient and Modern Essays in Literary Criticism*. Oxford; Oxford University Press.
- Germino, D. (1967). *Beyond Ideology: The Revival of Political Theory*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Green, T. H. (1899). *Lectures on Kant, on Logic, on the Principles of Political Obligation*. Edited by Bradley, A. C. New York: Appolo Editions.
- Hacker, A. (1961). *Political Theory: Philosophy, Ideology and Science*. New York: Macmillan.
- Hegel, G. W. F. & Dyde, S. W. (1896). *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. London: G. Bell.
- Held, D. (1991). *Political Theory and the Modern State*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Held, D. (1991). *Political Theory Today*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Hobbes, T. & Gaskin, J. C. A. (1998). *Leviathan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobbes, T. (1991). *Leviathan*. In R. Truck (Eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johari, J. C. (2011). *Contemporary Political Theory*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Private Limited.
- Kant, I. (1969). *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by White, L. B, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Kirkpatrick, J. M. (1962). *The Impact of Behavioural Approach on Traditional Political Science*. In Austin, R. (eds.), *Essays*. New York: Free Press.
- Laski, H. J. (1921). *The Foundations of Sovereignty*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Laski, H. J. (1930). *Liberty in the Modern State*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Laski, H. J. (1935). *The State in Theory and Practice*. Allen & Unwin.
- Lasswell, H. (1951). *The Policy of Orientation: The Policy Sciences*, edited by Max Lerner and Harold Lasswell. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lasswell, H. (1951). *Who Gets What, When and How?* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Lasswell, H. and Cleveland, H. (1962). *The Ethics of Power* (eds.), New York: The Modern Library.
- Locke, J. (1948). *The Second Treaties of Civil Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. Oxford: B. Blackwell.
- Locke, J. (1988). *Two Treaties of Government*. Edited by Peter, Laslwt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Machiavelli, N. (1950). *The Prince and the Discourses*. New York: Modern Library.
- Macpherson, C. B. (1962). *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1843). *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Allen & Unwin.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1845). *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Allen & Unwin.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1859). *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1862). *Theories of Surplus Value*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Marx, K. & Engels, F. (1871). *Value, Price and Profit*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1951). *The Communist Manifesto*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Merriam, C. (1934). *New Aspect of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mills, J. S. (1896). *Systems of Logic*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Mills, J. S. (2013). *Social Liberty and the Tyranny of Mjority*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Montesquieu, B. (2013). *The Spirit of the Laws*. The Wayback Machine Electronic Text Centre, University of Virginia Library.
- More, T. (2002). *Utopia*. Raymond Guess and Quentin Skinner Series (eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mukherjee, S. and Ramaswamy, S. (2007). *A History of Political Thought: Plato to Marx*. New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited.
- Plamentaz, J. (1969). *German Marxism and Russian Communism*. London: Longman.
- Plato (1955). *The Republic*. Harmondsworth, Penguins.
- Pollock. F. (1970). *A First Book of Jurisprudence for Students of Common Law*. New York: The Modern Library.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rousseau, J. J. (1974). *The Essential Rousseau: The Social Contract, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, The Creed of a Savoyard Priest*. New York: New American Library.
- Sabine, G. H. (1973). *A History of Political Theory*. 4th Edition, Revised by T. L. Thorson, New Delhi: Oxford and IBH.

- Savigny, F. C. (1989). Savigny's Research Program of the Historical School of Law and its Intellectual Impact in the 19th Century Berlin. *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 37(1), pp. 67.
- Seeley, J. R. (1922). *The Expansion of England*. London: Little Brown.
- Sidgwick, H. (1919). *Principles of Political Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strauss, L. (1953). *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Truman, D. (1951). *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*. New York: A. Knopf.
- Van, D. V. (1960), *Political Theory: A Philosophical Analysis*. Standard: Standard University Press.
- Wallas, G. (1908). *Human Nature in Politics*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice-Hall.
- Wasby, S. L. (1970). *Political Science: The Discipline and Its Dimension: An Introduction*. Calcutta: University of Illinois Press.