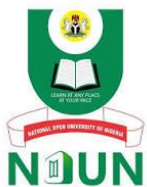


## **COURSE GUIDE**

### **POL 713 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary Political Analysis is a course in Political Science that deals with the various approaches to the study of politics, from the classical to the modern. The former serves as a springboard to understanding the latter. Areas covered in the module include the philosophical approach, historical approach, institutional approach and legal approach. Thereafter, the Marxist approach, Dependency approach, modernization approach and political-economy approach are examined. The course ends with a look at the behavioural approach, system theory, structural-functionalist theory, game theory, elite theory, decision-making theory, rational choice theory and the new institutionalism.

## **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE**

Going through POL 713-Contemporary Political Analysis will provide students with the various analytical frameworks in political science. The course will help students to understand the approaches to political studies spanning the earliest traditional methods through the behavioural revolution to post-behaviouralism.

## **COURSE AIMS**

One of the aims of this course is to (1) make students have a proper understanding of the meaning of political analysis; (2) familiarize students with the major approaches to the study of politics, their utility and limitation in analyzing political events; (3) equip students with the skills of analyzing political events using the various approaches.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this study, students should be able to:

- Explain what political analysis entail
- Understand the various modern approaches to the study of politics
- Appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches

## **WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE**

To complete this course, it is necessary you read through this material and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). There are self- assessment exercises at the end of each unit. As the course progresses, you will be required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. You will write a final examination at the end of the course. To complete this course will take you 16-17 weeks. You will

find the components of the course below and you are required to allocate time to cover each of the units successfully on time so as to have a good outing during examination.

## **COURSE MATERIAL**

Major components of the course are:

- Course Guide
- Course Units
- References/Further Reading
- Assignment
- Presentation Schedule

## **COURSE UNITS**

The Study Units of this course:

### **Module 1     Introductory Issues**

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Contemporary Political Analysis: Meaning & Clarification |
| Unit 2 | The Science of Politics                                  |
| Unit 3 | Types/forms of Contemporary Political Analysis           |

### **Module 2     The Traditional/Classical Approaches to Politics**

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Traditional Approach                         |
| Unit 2 | Modernisation theory                         |
| Unit 3 | Marxian theory                               |
| Unit 4 | Dependency theory/Political-Economy Approach |

### **Module 3     Behavioural Revolution**

- |        |                                    |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Behaviouralism                     |
| Unit 2 | System theory                      |
| Unit 3 | Structuralist-Functionalist theory |
| Unit 4 | Elite theory/Group Theory          |

### **Module 4     Communication, Game, Rational Choice, Decision Making and the New Institutional theories**

- |        |                        |
|--------|------------------------|
| Unit 1 | Communication theory   |
| Unit 2 | Game theory            |
| Unit 3 | Rational Choice theory |
| Unit 4 | Decision making theory |
| Unit 5 | New Institutionalism   |

## ASSESSMENT FILES

There are many assignments in this course. The assignments cover all the topics in the course material and they are meant to guide your understanding so that you have a full grasp of the course.

## PRESENTATION SCHEDULES

As determined by NOUN

## ASSESSMENT

The assessment takes two forms. There is the self-assessment test and the written examination. In your assignments you are expected to apply the knowledge you acquire during the course. At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final written examination of two (2) hours to two and half (2 hours thirty minutes). The examination will form 70% of the total course mark. These are in line with the minimum benchmark prescribed by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES (SAE)

You need to read and attend to the assignment questions in this course, make sure you submit before the deadline to your tutor.

## COURSE MARKING SCHEME

Total Course marking Scheme are as presented below: ASSIGNMENTS MARKS Assignments 1-9 Nine assignments, best six marks of the nine count @ 5% each = 30% of course marks Final Examination 70% of overall course marks Total 100% of course marks

Assignment	Mark
Assignment 1-9	Six of the assignments where a student has the best scores at 5% each = 30% will be used
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
<b>Total</b>	100% of course marks

## COURSE OVERVIEW

### Module 1: Introductory issues

Unit	Title of work	Week Activity	Assignment (end of unit)
	<b>COURSE GUIDE</b>		
1	Contemporary Political Analysis: Meaning &	1	

	Clarifications		
2	The Science of Politics	1	Assignment 1
3	Types/Forms of Political Analysis	1	Assignment 2

## **Module 2 Traditional and Classical Approaches of Political Analysis**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Week Activity</b>	<b>Assignment (end of unit)</b>
	<b>COURSE GUIDE</b>		
1	Traditional approach (philosophical, history, legal and Institutional approaches)	2	Assignment 1
2	Modernisation theory	1	
3	Marxian theory	1	Assignment 1
4	Political-Economy/Dependency theory		

## **Module 3 Behavioural Revolution, System, Structural-Functionalist & Elite Theories**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Week Activity</b>	<b>Assignment (end of unit)</b>
	<b>COURSE GUIDE</b>		
1	Behavioural Revolution	1	Assignment 1
2	System theory	1	
3	Structural-Functionalist theory		
4	Elite theory/Group Theory	1	Assignment 1

## **Module 4 Communication, Game, Rational Choice, Decision Making and the New Institutional theories**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Week Activity</b>	<b>Assignment (end of unit)</b>
	<b>COURSE GUIDE</b>		
1	Communication theory	1	Assignment 1
2	Game theory	1	
3	Rational Choice Theory	1	Assignment 1
4	Decision Making and New Institutional theories	1	

## MAIN COURSE

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## **MODULE 1            INTRODUCTORY ISSUES**

This module consists of three units as presented below:

Unit 1	Contemporary Political Analysis: Meaning and Clarification
Unit 2	The Science of Politics
Unit 3	Types/Forms of Political Analysis

### **UNIT 1            CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ANALYSIS: MEANING AND CLARIFICATION**

#### **Units Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcome
- 1.3 Defining Political Analysis
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Reading
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit is a clarification of the two terms, politics and political analysis. Explain the context of politics will enable us understand the nature and content of political analysis.

#### **1.2 Learning Outcome**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Explain the nature of political analysis
- Differentiate between the classical approaches from modern/contemporary approaches

#### **1.3 Defining Political Analysis**

The word politics is amorphous, is like a proverbial elephant with diverse descriptions. A story is told of some blind men that were asked to describe an elephant. One touched the leg and said an elephant looks like a tree, another one touched the side and concluded that an elephant looks like a wall, still another laid hold on the tusk and yelled, an elephant looks like an arrow and many others describing the elephant based on the parts they touched. Thus, describing political phenomena is like touching different parts of politics with different methods of analyzing them and that is what political analysis does. It deals with the

various approaches that have been evolved by political scientists to describe political events.

Political science is one of the oldest disciplines. Ever since people began to live together, the need for whom to exercise power, the relationship between the rulers and the ruled and the type of system that will guarantee the control of such power as well as the rights of the citizens agitated the curious minds of citizens through all the centuries. Some political thinkers in the ancient times concentrated on what an ideal state looks like, the medieval thinkers concerned themselves with evolving a framework for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, those that came after them had dwelt on the problem of power, authority among others. Before the advent of behavioural scholars, emphasis of political studies was institutionally based and eclectic in approach. It was also historical instead of analytical. In short, there was no attempt made to distinguish political science from history. It was in the later year of nineteenth century that political thinkers got to know that perhaps, they had not taken sufficient time to understand and analyze the governments and political institutions as they had been actually working. Political thinkers came to understand that what they actually needed in the study of politics was facts and also mooted the idea of politics being science and also insisted on the fact that there appear to be a constancy and uniformity in tendencies of human nature which enables us to regard the acts of men at one time due to the same causes which have governed their acts previously (Varma, 1999).

With the passage of time, emphasis on formal structures of government started giving way to functionally oriented research as scholars now developed interest in studying non-governmental organizations, groups and the study of their impact on government activities. Thus, the scope of political studies became broaden beyond political philosophy and institutional description. This scenario led to a greater tendency to use empirical methods in studying institutions and organizations. With the new emphasis on empirical methods, there arose the need for new data and generalizations and dissatisfaction with the technique of political studies, hence the need for a new methods of studying the workings of governments. Progress made by other disciplines led to the adoption of inter-disciplinary approach in the study of politics. In summary, behavioural revolution led to the scientific orientation in the study of politics.

The question now is what is political science? Scholars do not agree on the definition of political science. Suffice to say that there are as many definitions of politics as there are scholars commenting on the subject matter. Ayam (2004:11) argues that "the plethora of definitions of politics has introduced the issue whether there is need to define the

activity or not". To David Easton (1965) politics is the "authoritative allocation of values for society". Here politics is portrayed as distributing values in a society. It presupposes that there is a higher authority charged with the responsibility of distributing these values. These values could be in form of material things political positions or scarce resources etc. Lasswell (1930) sees politics as who gets what, when and how. However, Dahl (1980) defines political science as the systematic study of politics and not its practice. In the main, when political scientists talk of the science of the study of politics, they are simply referring to making use of the scientific methods in political studies.

Having seen some of the definitions of politics, we now turn our attention to political analysis. Political analysis encapsulates the process, the approaches as well as methods used by political scientists in explaining why political events occur, how they occur, when they occur as well as how such occurrence can be controlled. Political analysis in essence explicates the various concepts, theories, methods and approaches political scientists normally employ to condense and explain various political experiences, themes, events, political issues and phenomena. For analytical purposes, political analysis involves the process through which political events or phenomena are investigated systematically and the information organized into categories leading to establishing a relationship between these data for the basic objective of explanation and subsequently prediction (Osaghae, 1988).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES**

- i. Defining politics is a difficult task. Elucidate
- ii. Describe the context and content of contemporary political analysis?
- iii. Identify the two categorisations of political analysis.

### **1.4 Summary**

The unit explains the concepts of political analysis and politics. This is the foundational structure into our understanding of contemporary political analysis.

### **1.5 References/Further Reading**

Ayam, J. (2004) The Nature, Scope and Methods of Political Science, in Ayam, J. (ed) Introduction to Politics. Ota: Department of Strategic Studies, Covenant University. Pp. 11-39.

Dahl, J. (1984) Modern Political Analysis New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc. U.S.A.

Osaghae, E. (1988). Political Analysis. Ibadan: University of Ibadan External Studies Programme

Varma, S.P. (1999) Modern Political Theory, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House

### **1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Students are expected to explain the different definitions of politics from the various perspectives of the concept.
2. While there are many approaches to the study of politics, contemporary political analysis zero in on some of the modern methods of analyzing political phenomena.
3. Traditional and the scientific categories.

## **UNIT 2 THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS**

### **Units Structure**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Scientific Study of Politics
  - 2.3.1 The Methodology of Political Science
  - 2.3.2 Collection of Data
  - 2.3.4 Measurement and classification of Data
  - 2.3.5 Hypothesis
- 2.4 Problems of applying scientific Methods to political science
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 References/Further Reading
- 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise

### **2.1 Introduction**

This unit discusses the scientific orientation in political studies. Behaviouralists crave for scientism in the investigation of political phenomena by adopting scientific methods which entail key components of observation, collection of data, analyzing data, formulation of hypothesis, testing of hypothesis, formulating and verification of theory.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the study, student should be able to:

- Explain the place of science in investigation of political phenomena.
- Identify the problems associated with the scientific studies of politics.

### **2.3 Scientific Study of Politics**

The main focus of political science as a discipline is the study of power, authority, influence and the state, and the relationship of the individual to the state.

Generally, Science is a system of practice and beliefs that serve the function of social control by allowing people to develop the means of understanding and manipulating the social world.

In contemporary time, science is defined as a method by which systematic and accurate knowledge of the world is acquired as opposed to intuition, speculation or philosophy.

The major objective of any scientific inquiry is the description of phenomena and the establishment of general principles by which phenomena can be explained and predicted. The following are the major characteristics of a scientific inquiry:

- Objectivity
- Reliability
- Predictability and
- Verifiability

It is important to note that there is some reasonable level of unanimity among scholars of political science that unlike the natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, it cannot be an exact science because its object of investigation is man unlike the natural sciences that study matter. Appadorai (1975:5) quite succinctly observed:

Let it at once be admitted that politics is not and cannot be an exact science that physics and chemistry are. It has too few certainties. Its premises are uncertain; its conclusions are dubious. On almost every aspect of the subject, there are at least two, and often more, views... Even on the definition of fundamental terms, such as the state, there is no unanimity.

Furthermore, politics is not an exact science, like physics and chemistry, because the material with which it deals is incapable of being treated in the same way. Physics and chemistry are natural sciences, they deal with matter. Politics, economics and ethics are social sciences and as such they deal with man and society.

### **2.3.1 The Methodology of Political Science**

Political scientists use the scientific method hence they claim that the study of politics is scientific. What is scientific method? Simply put scientific refer to steps that are taken in the process of scientific investigation. These steps according to Ujo, (2003) are:

- (1) Observation of data (phenomenon);
- (2) Collection of data;
- (3) Measurement and classification of data;
- (4) Formulation of hypothesis;
- (5) Testing of hypothesis;
- (6) Creating of laws;
- (7) Verification of laws;
- (8) Acceptance of laws as theories.

**Observation**

Observation is an objective viewing of data. A scientific observation is usually empirical. The data to be observed must therefore be seen; heard, or felt by any of the five senses. The process of observation may be extrospective (focusing on the outside) or introspective (focusing on the inner side of things to be observed).

**2.3.2 Collection of Data**

The essence of data collection is to enable scientists to gather things or events related to each other in a more or less coherent way. The methods to be adopted depend on the nature of the research. If the method is historical, then some form of chronological order of data is necessary. Data should then be gathered in the order in which they occur. On the other hand, if the method is cross-sectional, it calls for a description of the phenomena at a given time or without regard to time.

**2.3.4 Measurement and classification of Data**

Measurement and classification reduce the enormous amount of data to be handled into manageable categories. Various kinds of classification can be used in scientific research, i.e., classification by colour- white, blue, black, green, yellow etc.; according to size- small, medium and large; or by sex- male and female. Quantitative data are translated into qualitative materials through measurement.

**2.3.5 Hypothesis**

Hypothesis are questions and statement resting on contingency, e.g. "If we do not have rain in August, the animals will die." Thus, hypothesis assert facts for consideration which can only be proved wrong or right when they have been tested.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

All hypotheses are subjected to tests. These tests will provide the necessary answers which confirm or refute such hypothesis.

**Law**

If a hypothesis is tested and proved valid, it would become a scientific law. The concept of law as used in this context means the regularity or uniformity of events.

**Verification of Law**

Like hypotheses, scientific laws must be tested before final acceptance. If a law is confirmed after test, it then becomes an acceptable law and part of a theory.

### **Acceptance of Laws as Theories**

If a law is accepted it becomes part of a theory of a given scientific subject. A scientific theory can be described as a collection of scientific laws. It is usually through these steps in scientific method that most of the laws in the natural sciences were discovered.

## **2.4 Problems of applying scientific Methods to political science**

There many obstacles in the application of scientific method to political research:

- (1) **The subject matter of political science is man.** Man cannot be manipulated like physical and chemical matters. The behaviour of man is determined by many forces like culture, economic, sociology and psychological forces.
- (2) **Problem of experimentation.** Experiments can easily be carried out in the natural sciences. Atoms, oxygen, heat, electrons, light can be manipulated and experimented in laboratory condition. Water can be boiled or frozen. On the other hand, political scientists cannot experiment on his subject matter as political events cannot be reduced to laboratory condition.
- (3) **Problem of prediction.** Human behaviour cannot be predicted accurately.
- (4) **Problem of change.** Human behaviours are vulnerable to changes. Changes in governments in particular have made the study of Nigeria government and politics difficult.
- (5) **Problem of values.** Political scientists are first and foremost human beings who have been socialized into specific cultural values. This socialization directly and indirectly influences their perceptions and attitude towards research.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. To what extent can the study of politics be scientific?
- ii. Name the initial three of the major steps in scientific analysis.
- iii. What is a hypothesis?

## **2.5 Summary**

This unit explains the scientific orientation in the study of politics. It shows that though political scientists can adopt the scientific principles, the methodology cannot be as exact as the natural science. This is



because the object of study, which is man is value-laden and therefore unpredictable.

## **2.6 References/Further Reading**

Ayam, J. (2004). "The Nature, Scope and Methods of Political Science" in Ayam, J (ed) *Introduction to Politics*, Ota: Department of Politics and Strategic Studies, Covenant University. pp. 11-39.

Appadorai, A. (1975) *The Substance of Politics*, India

## **2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Politics cannot be studied in the mold of the natural science given the fluidity of the human nature, which constitutes the central element in political studies.
2. Observation of data (phenomenon); Collection of data; and Measurement and classification of data;
3. A hypothesis is a tentative answer to a research question that can either be proved or disproved.

## **UNIT 3      FORMS/TYPES OF ANALYSIS**

### **Units Structure**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Form of Analysis
  - 3.3.1 Normative Analysis
  - 3.3.2 Empirical Analysis
  - 3.3.4 Policy Analysis
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Reading

### **3.1 Introduction**

Analysing politics can take different forms; normative, empirical, semantic analysis or policy analysis. This unit discusses each of these forms of analysis.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this study, student should be able to:

- Identify the various forms of analysis in the study of politics.
- Discuss the context applicable to each analytic form.

### **3.3 Form of Analysis**

Analyses of contemporary political issues take different forms. They are

- i. Normative Analysis
- ii. Empirical Analysis
- iii. Semantic Analysis and
- iv. Policy Analysis

#### **3.3.1 Normative Analysis**

This seeks answers to questions that relate with values and to identify what is good or better with a view to recommending what we ought to value. Normative Political Analyst therefore is interested in the ideals or what “ought” to be. This is the method that early political scientists like Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, Plato adopted in conjuring solutions to the problems of their societies. They asked, such questions as: why should men obey authorities? how should the King rule? or what should be the nature of justice?

### 3.3.2 Empirical Analysis

Empiricism deals with observable referents, the issue of “what is”, not “what ought to” It focuses on verifiable facts derivable from logical steps of inquiry, and not individual’s opinions, with a view to generating theories.

### 3.3.3 Semantic Analysis

It is also referred to as conceptual analysis, because it is concerned with clarification of concepts. This is very relevant in analysing political events. Given the fact that many concepts such as democracy, development, power, influence and authority often attract different meaning to political analysts, it is necessary and expedient to define what we mean in political analysis. Conceptual clarification therefore serves as a starting point in political discourse.

There are two ways of carrying out Semantic Analysis. They are;

- i. Definition of the term by appealing to an authority whose definition is widely accepted.
- ii. Rely on normal definition by accepting such on certain criteria or what we want them to mean.

This is also referred to as operationalisation of concepts.

### 3.3.4 Policy Analysis

Simply denotes the search for policies or course of action which will leap us from the present state to that which we desire. It also focuses on the solution provided to already observed challenges in the course of investigation of political events. Policy option however is a function of the goal or problem, the cost and benefits of the policy options available.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Identify different types of analysis in political studies.
- ii. What is the dividing line between normative and empirical analysis?
- iii. Name two ways of semantic analysis.

## 3.4 Summary

In this unit, we examine the various forms of analysis from the normative to the scientific. The elements of each of these are also stated.

### 3.5 References/Further Reading

Anifowose Remi (2005) *Elements of Politics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

Appadorai A. (1975) *The Substance of Politics (11<sup>th</sup> Ed)*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ayam, John (2004) *Introduction to Politics*. Ota: Covenant University Press.

Ujo, A. A. (2002) *Theory and Methods of Political Enquiry*. Kaduna: Joyce Graphic Printers and Publishers Ltd.

Varma, S. P. (1975) *Modern Political Theory*. New Delhi. Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd.

### 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Normative Analysis; Empirical Analysis and Semantic Analysis and
2. The dividing line between the normative and empirical forms of analysis is the tool of investigation. While the former represents the pre-scientific, the latter is the scientific stage of inquiry.
3. Definition of the term by appealing to an authority whose definition is widely accepted; and by relying on normal definition by accepting such on certain criteria or what we want them to mean.

## **MODULE 2            THE TRADITIONAL/CLASSICAL APPROACHES**

Unit 1	The Philosophical/Traditional Approach
Unit 2	Modernization theory and its application
Unit 3	Marxian theory and practice
Unit 4	Dependency/Political-Economy

### **UNIT 1            THE PHILOSOPHICAL/TRADITIONAL APPROACH**

#### **Units Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Philosophical/Historical Approach
  - 1.3.1 Criticisms of Philosophical/Historical Approach
- 1.4 The Legal/Institutional Approach
  - 1.4.1 Criticisms of the Legal/Institutional Approach
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Reading
- 1.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

#### **1.1 Introduction**

There are different types of approaches to the study of politics. This unit begins with the traditional, also known as the classical approach. Here, we shall examine the philosophical/historical, institutional/legal approaches.

#### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the study, students should be able to:

- Discuss the traditional approach in political studies.
- Identify the strength and weaknesses of the various approaches.

#### **1.3 Philosophical/Historical Approach**

This is the earliest approach to the study of politics. It is concerned with the search for the ideal political forms. Philosophical approach attempts at arriving the truth through the use of reason. It is therefore normative in orientation and depends on deductive reasoning for deriving its conclusions. The basic assumption of this approach is that certain values are good and desirable and can be discovered through logical reasoning. Philosophical enquiries usually result in statements of preference,

description of ideals and prescription of values. Thus, the application of philosophical approach in political science usually leads to a focus on the great ideas, values and doctrines of politics.

Traditional philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau were concerned with philosophical reflections on universal political values that were regarded as essential to the just state and the good state. They were concerned with questions of “what ought to be.” Specifically, their focus was on the issues of the nature and essence of good government, justice, the good life, sovereignty, freedom, obligation of the citizen to the state etc. The objectives of such efforts were to establish standards of good, the right, and the just and to appraise or prescribe political institutions and practices in the light of these standards.

### **1.3.1 Criticisms of Philosophical/Historical Approach**

One major weakness of this approach is that its premise is based on highly subjective reasoning. Moreover, because of the speculative nature of the propositions derived through this approach, their reliability and usefulness can only be evaluated in terms of their coherence. Political scientists have argued that the concentration of this approach on the elaboration of abstract moral values like justice, freedom and obligation, whose truth or falsehood cannot be practically validated, tends to work against the growth of scientific study of politics.

The philosophical approach was prevalent at the infancy stage of the study of politics. When the focus of the study of politics however changed from the ideal ends of the state to the origins, significance and functioning of the actual institutions, it became necessary to develop a new perspective for studying politics.

### **1.4 The Legal/Institutional Approach**

This approach focuses on the formal institutions of government and the state. An institution can be seen as any persistent system of activities or any pattern of group behaviour. In a concrete term it means offices and agencies arranged in a hierarchy, each agency having certain functions and powers. The approach is concerned with the study of the formal structures and agencies of government such as the evolution and operation of legislature, executive and judiciary, political parties, constitutions and analysis of statutes of states, bureaucracies, interest groups and other institutions engaged in politics. It studies the roles and functions they perform as well as their interrelationship.

Although this approach is fairly old, its central focus is of utmost relevance to political scientists today in gaining insight into the institutions of government and the functions they perform to maintain the structure and organisation of the society.

One of the oldest methods of analyzing politics is the legal institutional approach. This approach deals mainly with the study of political institutions like the legislative bodies, electoral system, court, political parties, bureaucracies and interest groups. Institutional comparison necessitates a relatively detailed description of the institutions under analysis with the aim to clarifying the similarities and differences. In many comparisons at the institutional level, one must take various characteristics into account such as : (a) the genesis of the institution, (b) the purpose of its creation, (c) the process of growth of the institution, (d) the means by which the institution is perpetuated, (e) the manner in which new members are brought into the institution, (f) the external and internal structures of institution, (g) the relationship of the institution to others and to the general community, (h) the spheres of life in which the institution operate, (i) the functions of the institution and (j) the importance of the institution in the total and social configurations of the system being examined (Harry Eckstein:1963)

#### **1.4.1 Criticisms of the Legal/Institutional Approach**

Political scientists have however flawed this approach, principally, for neglecting the informal aspects of politics; the norms, beliefs, values, attitudes, personality and the processes. Politics entails more than the functioning of state institutions. It includes the activities of myriad of formal and informal groups that regularly participate in politics and share in the exercise of power with authorities controlling state institutions. Political power is diffused among individuals, groups, parties, institutions etc. and not concentrated solely in state institutions.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Explain the focus of the philosophical approach
- ii. Identify briefly the shortcomings of the traditional approach
- iii. Discuss the strength and weaknesses of the legal/institutional approach in political studies.

#### **1.5 Summary**

This unit discusses the traditional approach to political studies. It explains that the traditional methods consist of the philosophical, historical, legal as well as institutional approaches. Their strength and shortcomings are also highlighted.

### **1.7 References/Further Reading**

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### **1.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Traditional philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau were concerned with philosophical reflections on universal political values that were regarded as essential to the just state and the good state.
2. The concentration of this approach on the elaboration of abstract moral values like justice, freedom and obligation, whose truth or falsehood cannot be practically validated, tends to work against the growth of scientific study of politics.
3. The emphasis of the approach is on the structures and institutions of government and their role in the society. But politics is beyond institutions. There are many non-governmental entities involved, which the approach fails to account for.



## **UNIT 2      THE MODERNISATION THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Economy Theory
- 2.4 The Psychology Theory
- 2.5 The Socio-Cultural Theory
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 References/Further Reading
- 2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### **2.1 Introduction**

The modernization theory constitutes one of the earliest foundations of the liberal interpretation of development, and the factors that account for the discrepancies in the rate of development between the developed and underdeveloped (or developing) societies. In this unit, we shall examine some theories under the three broad perspectives of the modernization theory: the Economy theory; the Psychology theory; and, the Socio-cultural theory.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the study, students should be able to:

- Discuss the three broad perspectives of the modernization theory: the Economy theory; the Psychology theory; and, the Socio-cultural theory.
- Analyse the criticisms of the various approaches.

### **2.3 The Economy Theory**

This theory attempts at explaining the underdevelopment of poor nations using some basic economic indices, such as their poor attitudes towards production, saving and investment.

Fisher (1939) contends that there are three stages of production; the primary, the secondary and the tertiary. For development to occur in states, they must undergo the stages in a chronological order beginning with the primary through secondary to the tertiary. The primary as the starting point is the agricultural stage; the secondary is the manufacturing; and the tertiary constitutes the service sector of banking, hospitality or tourism with potential for increased returns on investment. A similar proposition was advanced by Clark (1940) indicative of not just a shared perspective but a reflection of the reality of the developed

states' stages of development. Judging by the western world economic history, the agricultural sector was the mainstay of the civilized society economy before the nineteenth-century industrial revolution which has now been overtaken by the service sector, as the leading one in terms of contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in the twenty-first century. In this sense, the theory highlights the importance of progressive movement of the productive sectors from the primitive to the modern which is not the case in the underdeveloped countries. For instance, in Nigeria and most of the African countries, the agricultural practice remains at the primitive stage of simple farm implements utilization while the industrialization drive is still ongoing and the service sector is yet to be meaningfully exploited, or at best at an inchoate stage.

The theory did not escape criticism as Thirlwall (1983) posits that the phases ignore the doctrine of comparative advantage production principle where the state is expected to major in what they have a relative advantage. Aside from this, the theory assumed that state migration to the phases is natural without considering the challenges associated with each stage, especially in the developing states that are still struggling to mechanize the agricultural sector and revolutionize the industrial sector when their developed counterparts are gearing to consolidate the service sector and gearing for the next phase of robotic and space led economy. Nonetheless, the sectoral phase movement theory is instructive to the underdeveloped economy, more importantly of the necessity to fast-track their implementation of growth strategies for these sectors.

Akin to the above theory is the W. W. Rostow Stages of Economic Growth which identified five stages of development as the traditional society; the pre-condition for take-off; the take-off; the drive to modernity; and, the age of high mass production (Rostow, 1963). The pre-industrial stage is referred to as the pre-Newton science era characterized by agrarian and ignorance of capacity for societal transformation via science and technology hence have low productivity and poor social change belief. In reality, this type of society is not in existence in this age but everyone has undergone it as the starting point of humanity's existence.

The features of the pre-condition for take-off are slightly different from the traditional stage. There is awareness of the potentials for change through science and technology and people have started to harness it, though minimally due to the traditional constraints of cultural values, local or regional political beliefs and poor productive system. Hence, the primitive socio-political and cultural system still prevails, but it is a veil blurring the sight of the society from seeing opportunities lying beyond

the sustenance of the current norms. This stage better describes many of the underdeveloped economies especially the least developed state (LDS) occupying the lowest cadre of the development hierarchy such as Comoros Island and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

At the take-off stage, the application of science and technology in the development of both agriculture and industry. As such, the traditional orientation and constraints have been overcome, positioning the society for modernization wherein the agricultural sector is commercialized and the industrial sector investment is rising as the leading sector. However, Rostow submits that any other sector can as well lead aside from the agricultural sector to orchestrate a secondary sector growth that would engender a continuous capital formation from the generated profits and increased new sectors injection and productivity (Rostow, 1986). Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico and many other developing countries can relatively be situated in this stage. But it demands intentional activation of the human and material resources together with very high-technical know-how to optimize potentials benefits accruable from this developmental stage which will facilitate the leap-frogging to the next - the drive for maturity.

The drive to maturity stage is characterized by the development of a steel industry (a prominent one among other indices of economic development) and the economy manifested the trait to develop beyond the industrial sector that is indispensable to the take-off stage. The United States of America, and most of the European countries like France, Britain, Italy and Germany at fitting in this category going by their current economic features.

The final stage, which is the age of mass consumption is achieved by a country when the production capacity is not only massive but transcends that of foods, shelter and clothing that are basic human needs while the urbanization with a rising population and high skilled manpower is growing fast (Okereke and Ekpe, 2010). It implies that the society has moved to the crescendo of development with a diversified economy and capacity to absorb both internal and external economic shocks. This is a yet to attain feat by any country as none has demonstrated such character in history especially during economic downturns including that of 2007 or 2020 triggered by the covid-19 pandemic.

The linear stage growth model of Rostow can be said to be somewhat rigid and as one-size-fits-all that is not possible in the real world aside from overemphasis on economic sectors as the most important variable for development, undermining political leadership that does superintend the economy management.

## **2.4 The Psychology Theory**

This theory's thrust is that the quality of the people making up the society is the determining factor for a society or country's development. Citing Hagen (1963), Okereke and Ekpe (2010:53) maintain that:

The traditional societies are characterized by non-innovating societies...hierarchical and authoritarian in all aspects, economic, political, religious...every individual in a traditional hierarchy except perhaps for one or few at the very apex is submissive to authoritarian decisions above him and in turn, exercises authority on persons below him. Conversely, the developed countries exhibit personality traits motivating them for self-achievement. Implicitly, the societal features are the motivating factor that drives innovation and motivate investment in every country. Therefore, the entrenched social structure that is primitive or ascriptive inhibits the modernization of the developing economy unlike that of the industrialized societies. While the developing countries' traditional traits cannot be discounted in defining their business environment or climate, often noted to be unfriendly and hostile to both the domestic and foreign investment, the submission of this theory lacks substantive evidence because it is singularly predicated on human perception. Hence, it is not often employed by scholars for national development analysis in contemporary times.

## **2.5 The Socio-Cultural Theory**

The theory postulates that the society's social and cultural structures are what determine its economic development. In other words, the social conditions including the degree of social cohesion and modernization together with the level of cultural secularization and diversity of a country would affect its capacity to imbibe a saving and investment ability out of its earned income. The absence of these factors, on the other hand, has accentuated the underdeveloped status of the poor nations.

To reverse this unfortunate trend in the developing nations, a social change that accommodate and institutionalize secularity and a collective orientation alongside a universal or diffuse culture is desirable. While this argument seems appealing and logical, its generalization to all countries is misleading given the social and cultural peculiarities of each nation. Therefore, the nexus between socio-cultural milieu and economic development can at best be situational.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Discuss briefly the assumptions of Fisher and Rostow's stages of development theories.
- ii. Explain the relevance of the socio-cultural theory to the contemporary understanding of development.
- iii. What are the strength and weaknesses of the psychology theory?

**2.6 Summary**

A common thread in the three perspectives of the modernization theory is that the reasons behind the backwardness of developing societies are endogenous, i.e., they consist of socio-cultural factors that are located within the territorial boundaries of developing societies.

**2.7 References/Further Reading****2.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. The emphasis is on the three stages of production; the primary, the secondary and the tertiary.
2. The focus is on social cohesion and cultural secularization.
3. It lacks substantive evidence because it is singularly predicated on human perception.

## **UNIT 3      MARXIAN THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Theory of Marxism
  - 3.3.1 Evolution of Marxism
  - 3.3.2 Marxist Philosophy
  - 3.3.3 Dialectical and Historical Materialism
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Reading
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Tests

### **3.1 Introduction**

This unit examines the theory of Marxism as a framework of analysis. It focuses on the history, philosophy, strength and weaknesses of the theory as a tool of political studies.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain Marxism as a tool of political discourse.
- Identify the significance and loopholes of the theory in political analysis.

### **3.3 Theory of Marxism**

Marxism is both a theory and practice that derived its name from its progenitor, Karl Max. The theoretical aspect enunciates the thrusts of Marxism while the practice reveals the success and challenges experienced in the application of the theory by some states. Both dimensions are essential as they expand the length and depth of our understanding of the Marxist ideology.

#### **3.3.1 Evolution of Marxism**

The experience and curiosity of Karl Max (1818-1883), a German political and socio-economic philosopher, about the thriving capitalist political-economy in Europe laid the foundation of the ideology of Marxism, with contributions from Fredrick Engel (1820-1895), his close ally. Marx had observed a sharp inequality between those with access to the means of production and those who did not have that privilege and ending up becoming vassals of the owners of capital. This exploitative relationship formed the kernel of his epics, the Communist Manifestoes

(1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867). These two major works revealed the theoretical underpinnings of Marxism, with later modifications by Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong.

### **3.3.2 Marxist Philosophy**

The “Marxist philosophy”, according to Ibanga (2021: xvi) “is a critical study of man as it relates to matter”, and “it focuses on man, matter, consciousness, motion, labour, society and nature”. This clarification speaks about the multiple variables encompassing the theory and application of Marx’s thoughts and ideology. As well, the interactions of man with nature as a conscious exercise is indicative of Marxist methodology revealing the centrality of the historical evolvement of material production and accumulation.

Therefore, it is pertinent to state that the Marxist philosophy is associated with the historical development of production in society alongside human relationships in every epoch popularly referred to as historical materialism. In other words, from the writings of Marx, the reliable source of data capable to offer a factual explanation for both the political and economic interactions with a view to analyze the present and predict the future is to carefully observe the trends of the pattern of the material productive system from the angle of ownership, production and distribution (Abalzin, Zarazou, and Kulikov, 1993). And, arising from this are the three groupings of the Marxist theory: Dialectical materialism; historical materialism and political economy. These three summations of Karl Max are integrated and discussed in the next section.

### **3.3.3 Dialectical and Historical Materialism**

Dialectical materialism underscores contradiction in the development of the productive forces and relations in the society from the feudal to the capitalist era. To Marx, the economy is the foundation upon which the society is based, and any contradiction in its configuration would create an imbalance in its functioning. Tracking the history of human production and interaction, the first phase of communalism is where men lived in a classless community devoid of competition for natural resources or material things. It is obtainable in the stone age when crude implements were employed to harness the natural resources singly for self-sustenance and not mainly for wealth accumulation. Historically, it is only this age that is characterized by equality, equity and zero class consciousness or distinction.

However, as society progresses and social transformation set in, the production system changes affecting both the productive and the social

interpersonal relations. The era of slave and master relations was ushered into the society wherein the masters muster the slaves (labour) to increase their productive capacity to create wealth and distinguish their status. This marks the introduction of class division into the human relations underpinned by wealth or access to means of production. As such, exploitative relations begin alongside competition for material accumulation. According to Karl Max, the contradictions in the relations arising from the consciousness of the slaves to liberate themselves from the unprofitable service triggered a revolution resulting in the demise of the epoch and emergence of the feudal production system.

The feudal system is a class production mode having the serfs as the have-not and the feudal class as the landlords – owners of capital from which the former depends for cultivation or survival. Hence, the relations encompass both the material production and social distinction between both groups, revealing the inherent contrast. The termination of this mode was orchestrated by the increasing capacity of the serfs to acquire wealth from the leftover after paying the landlords their rent dues, enabling them to engage in the merchant trade of buying and selling precious materials such as gold, Arabic gum in which the landlords constitute the chunk of their customers. Consequently, the serfs became wealthy and displaced the land owners of their privileged position resulting to the beginning of a new epoch of capitalist mode of production with the serfs having a greater percentage of the number of capitalists.

With the emergence of the new productive system, material accumulation ascended a greater height accompanied by political power. Put differently, society has gained both an increased economic consciousness and political civilization. The amalgam of both reinforces each other security and offers a greater opportunity for the capitalists to circumscribe the polity to their advantage leveraging their economic power. In this sense, economic relations not only change but also influence the socio-political dimensions of the societal relational configuration. Meanwhile, the production transaction becomes that of the capitalists and workers while the technological breakthrough of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the famous industrial revolution that displaces the primitive production (especially the primitive agro-based economy) and shifts the economy to an industry-based economy characterized by mass production. Also, the shift from agriculture to industry is accompanied by urbanization as the new industries were mostly cited in the urban areas, raising the urban-rural migration of workers in search of modern jobs.

Furthermore, the rural-urban migration comes with the consequence of reduced agricultural products and unemployment in the urban cities.



This new development is arguably one of the factors that raised Karl Marx's curiosity to track the past and the likely future development. Marx reasoned that the class disparity between the capitalists and workers is premised on the economic advantage of the former and the platform upon which it thrives but will eventually collapse because of the opposing forces inherent in it. The exploitative relations are perpetuated through excess capital accumulated by the capitalists via excess labour output, which is the main source of capital generation serving as profit to the capitalists. He states further the avarice for wealth by the capitalists is so strong that even the labourers are not regarded beyond a commodity that is always at their disposal for exploitation (commodity relations), diminishing their social status.

Nonetheless, the increasing rate of unemployment is the breeding ground for those he tagged 'reserve Army' that will lead the revolution against the capitalists, marking the end of capitalism and the enthronement of a new socio-economic order or the ideology of socialism. This, as enunciated, will be a masses or peasants-oriented-government to be led by workers to champion their economic interest as well as break the yoke of class distinction. Socialism would institute a new production regime where each offers to all according to his ability and receives in return from all according to his needs. It presupposes a just and an egalitarian society where the state owns the means of production and a sense of commonwealth ownership of the state material resources exists.

In reality, socialism, as a political and economic underpinned ideology, has been operationalized by some states around the globe. While most of these countries or federations like the defunct Soviet Union and China have taken it beyond the patriarch submissions to the modification of Lenin communism, which broadens its application to absolute state ownership of all including the people, most of the western capitalist-oriented economies including Britain, United States, France Germany amongst others have incorporated masses welfare as part of their economic policy to whittle down the economic class consciousness and poverty that can make the prediction of Marx labour's revolution a reality.

Although some western scholars posit that the upturning of capitalism is utopian, the leftists objected to the assertion. For instance, Abalzin, Zarazou, and Kulikov (1993) averred that it was the betrayal by the labour elites in the western countries that made the projection unrealizable as the masses' representatives were lured with capital to join the capitalist class while the leaders of the new states were also incorporated into the group as petit capitalists. Consequently, the proletariats' bond and collective resolve was weakened, such that it

remained at the level of union agitation for improved service and welfare realm till today while they continue to create wealth for the capitalists.

Nonetheless, Marxism has strongly raised the consciousness of the capitalists' countries to the excesses of the mode of production such as imperialism or export of capital described by Lenin as the highest level of capitalism, class disparity, workers welfare and global polarization (North and South or Developed and under-developed). And, in response, states have continually come up with different packages or policies to strike a balance between the upper and lower classes. These include stimulus packages sponsored by the government, such as interest-free or soft loans, palliatives to the poor, tax incentives and other similar assistance. A typical manifestation of these was in the states' response to 2020 global financial crisis occasioned by the Corona Virus (Covid 19) pandemic. Additionally, the welfare state or mixed-economy constituting part of the most liberal economy-oriented states is also in response to the capitalist's socio-economic imbalance and perhaps, as well to avert the imminent revolution predicted by Marx.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. What is dialectical materialism?
- ii. Explain the limitations of Marxism.
- iii. Identify the historical trajectory in the socialist revolution of Karl Marx.

### **3.4 Summary**

The thought of Karl Max and Fredrick Engel on capitalist production mode, its foundation on historical and dialectical materialism were discussed in this unit. It elaborates on the conflicts of exploitation of the upper class over the lower class inherent in the slave, feudal and capitalist modes of production. It also discussed the place of Marxism as a response to the inadequacies of the capitalist mode of production.

### **3.6 References/Further Reading**

#### **3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Tests**

1. Dialectical materialism underscores contradiction in the development of the productive forces and relations in the society from the feudal to the capitalist era.
2. The expectations of a proletarian revolution and a classless society predicted by Marx appear to be a mirage in a highly capitalist world.
3. Communalism; Slavery; Feudalism; Capitalism and Socialism.

## **UNIT 4      DEPENDENCY THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 The Dependency Theory
  - 4.3.1 Assumptions of the Dependency Theory
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Reading
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise

### **4.1 Introduction**

Dependency explains the relationship of superordination and subordination between the western capitalist nations and the developing countries of the world. This unit focuses on the basic postulations, strengths and weaknesses of the dependency theory as a tool of political analysis.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, the student will be able to

- Identify the key features of the dependency theory.
- Explain the relevance of dependency in political analysis

### **4.3 The Dependency Theory**

Dependency is a word that was used firstly by Lenin to explain the pattern of relationship described as non-autonomous between the developed and the less-developed countries in his analysis of imperialism to justify how the former relies on the latter for political and economic survival. It metamorphosed into a theory after the second world war when the newly independent states of Latin America and Africa began to question the asymmetrical relationship with their former colonial overlords. Scholars advancing this theory are mostly from Latin America and Africa, influenced by their post-war experience, especially in the 1960s when the Bretton wood institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) policies of autonomous development and import substitutions failed to yield the envisaged development of their nations.

Although dependency theory has its origin in the work of Karl Max, Fedrick Engel and Lenin, Paul Baran, Dos Santos, Osvaldo Sunkel, Raul Presbich, Samin Amin, Walter Rodney and Claude Ake amongst others popularized it through their scholarly discussions that shed more light on

the nature, pattern and the trends of the interrelationship between the north and the south. As well, some of the flaws and spurious claims or assertions of the modernization theory are queried and debunked by the Dependency school.

#### **4.3.1 Assumptions of the Dependency Theory**

The thrust of the dependency theory is that the historical relationship between the western and the under-developed countries accounted for the current status both sides occupy in the global development divide as the former ascended by exploiting the latter to their detriment, making the less-developed groups perpetually dependent on the developed counterparts for their socio-economic and political advancement. Hence, the relationship of countries within the polarized entities has not been premised on equal advantage or mutual and equivalent benefit, and this is largely responsible for the conditions of both parties.

The historical trajectory was amply explicated by Walter Rodney (1983) in his book titled 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa'. The book aptly narrated the three major epochs thus: First, the mercantilist and slave trade era of the mid-sixteen to nineteen century when the Europeans came to Africa and Latin America for exploration, formal trading in gold, Arabic gum and illegal trade of human trafficking whereby human resources were exported for agricultural business, and both were to the advantage of the Europeans merchants; second, the colonial era when the Europeans forcefully subjugated same people territory for political governance and economic exploitation by making them the producers of cash crops, such as Cocoa, Rubber, Groundnut, Palm oil, required to service their industrial needs for economic growth; third is the post-colonial era characterized by neo-colonialism resulting from the already existing or established structure. It is on this premises that the theory of dependency is predicated and justified as a dialectical relationship between the developed and the less-developed countries.

Furthermore, Santos (1970:231) captures dependency succinctly as: A situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of inter-dependence between two or more economies and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or negative effect on their immediate development.

Dependency underscores the imbalance of economic intercourse and its adverse implications between the advanced and the developing economies. The political dominance of the colonial era is consolidated

today with the propagation of democracy as the most liberal and development-oriented form of government having almost a universal acceptability. Though democratic regimes are synonymous with development in the west, its wholesale adoption in the southern countries is yet to be empirically validated. As a matter of fact, Amartya Sen, renown and Nobel prize-winner economist was quoted by Kesselman, Krieger and Joseph (2011:17) that “there is no clear relation between economic growth and democracy in either direction” and that in China, as an authoritarian communist party-state, development validated the assertion. As such, political liberalism advanced by the advanced states of the west as a key indicator of political development and crucial to both the national economic and global peaceful coexistence is bereft of a universal generalization. It is thus perceived by the dependency theorists as a form of political neo-colonialism meant to reinforce the capitalist liberal ideology.

The strength of the dependency theory notwithstanding, it has also been criticized. For some, dependency represents nothing but a mere response to the modernization theory that has not scientifically justified its position on the dependent relationship between the North and South, especially in terms of clearly articulating those economic indices that make the poor countries dependent on the rich ones. Despite these limitations, its deep insight into the historical trajectory of the relationship between the north and the south is the hallmark of the dependency theory.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Define Dependency
- ii. Explain dependency theory as dialectical relationship.
- iii. Identify the major shortcoming of the dependency theory.
- iv. between the developed and the less-developed countries contribute to its assumptions.

## **4.4 Summary**

The unit underscored the unequal and exploitative relationship between the metropolitan and developing societies. Dependency, as the study demonstrates, is a feature of relations in trade, finance, technology and politics between the rich and poor nations.

### **4.4 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Dependency dwells on the pattern of an unequal relationship between the advanced capitalist nations and the developing states, especially of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

2. Emphasis is on those factors and tendencies that constrain and jeopardise the independence of developing countries, and negate their ability to chart autonomous development plans. Dependency traverses the areas of technology, finance, trade and politics.
3. The theory has not clearly articulated the solutions to the dependency syndrome. De-linking as advocated appears unrealistic in the increasingly inter-dependent world.

## **UNIT 5      POLITICAL ECONOMY THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3 Postulates of the Political Economy Theory
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Reading/Web Sources
- 5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### **5.1 Introduction**

The unit explains the basic features of the political economy theory. It shows its underlying differences from other theories, especially the dependency school.

### **5.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the unit, the student will be able to:

- Explain the distinctive features of the political economy school.
- Demonstrate the relevance of the political economy theory to the understanding of local and international politics.

### **5.3 Postulates of the Political Economy Theory**

Political economy focuses on the nexus between the economic system and political decisions whether at the nation state or international level. The theory, according to Alt and Alesina (1996), unravels the evolution of institutions in response to individual choices and strategies, alongside how their performance affects both the political and economic system. In other words, the intersections and interrelationships existing amongst the political institutions (legislative, executive, judiciary), policymakers – including government agencies, economic institutions such as the Central Bank, citizens and interest groups are issues political economy study to unveil the impacts of their convergence on the political and economic development.

The theory is traceable to the father of liberal economics, Adam's Smith, in his work 'Wealth of Nations' published in 1776 (O'Neil and Rogowski, 2006). Alfred Marshall, Malthus, and other neo-classical scholars contributed to its meaning and content. However, it took a new perspective when Karl Marx and Fredrick Engel's thesis on political economy as enunciated in their work Communist Manifestoes (1848) and Das Kapital (1867) with further expansion by Lenin and some leftist scholars, redefined the science of political economy as a theory.

It is noteworthy that the liberalists explain the theory from the functioning of the national economy through the understanding of the production process of factors of production, division of labour for wealth creation while the theory of comparative advantage and factor proportion theory was employed to analyse international trade and mutual benefits transactions amongst nations. But the Marxist scholars took a radical approach to the study of political economy which popularise and expand the scope of the theory beyond the orthodox leaning.

The analytical method of the domestic economy is far apart from that of the liberalists as the Marxists, beginning with Marx, adopted historical and material dialectics to dissect the conflicts inherent in the capitalist mode of production like other preceding ones – slavery and feudalism. Excess labour (surplus value) dispensed by workers was underscored as the main source of the capitalists' wealth and forecasted its termination through the revolution of the teeming unemployed masses for the enthronement of the socialist society.

At the international level, the mutually beneficial trade relation is seen as imperialism according to Lenin who prescribed rejection of the capitalist political-economic system for the communist to engender a just, egalitarian, and exploitative-free international community. The viewpoint implies that the liberalist international political economy that depicts the relationship of the national economy with the international market as symbiotic rather than parasitic is false.

One thing that needs mentioning is that the Marxist perspective has greatly influenced some of the development scholars from the developing continents of Africa, Latin America and Asia as evidenced in their contributions to the theory of dependency. And, while their thoughts are somewhat reflected in the domestic political and economic policies (for example, the welfare policy of poverty alleviation, cash gifts, soft loans economic policies and political parties with socialist ideology), the commanding effects or firm grip of the orthodox political, social and economic at the domestic and international frontiers is very ostensible and undeniable.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Name the two major points of emphasis of political economy
- ii. Explain the central theme of the liberal political economy.
- iii. Identify the central theme of the radical political economy.
- iv. Discuss briefly how political economy theory has helped you understand the relationship between the political system and economy at both the domestic and international levels.



## **5.4 Summary**

The unit discussed the correlation between (or inseparability of) the economy and politics. It underscored the position that the sub-structure determines largely the context and content of the superstructure, a symbiotic relation that underscores the nature and pattern of developments in both local and international systems.

## **5.5 References/Further Reading**

## **5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. The economy and political system.
2. Adam Smith's "free market" and Malthus "population theory"
3. That the economy of a state must be understood as the sub-structure that galvanizes the superstructure of the society, nationally and internationally.

## **MODULE 3                      BEHAVIOURALISM, SYSTEM, STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST & ELITE THEORIES**

Unit 1	Behaviouralism
Unit 2	System Theory
Unit 3	Elite Theory
Unit 4	Group Theory

### **UNIT 1                      BEHAVIOURALISM**

#### **Units Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Traditionalism versus Behaviouralism
  - 1.3.1 Tenets of Behaviouralism
  - 1.3.2 Influence of Political Behaviour on Political Science
  - 1.3.3 Weaknesses of the Behavioural School
  - 1.3.4 Post Behaviouralism
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Reading
- 1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit discusses the behavioural revolution in political analysis, which was an attempt at redressing the imperfections of the traditional approach as well as position the study of politics within the realm of science. The salient features of behaviouralism are highlighted alongside its weaknesses. The unit ends with an exposition on the post-behavioural school.

#### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this study, students should be able to:

- Understand the traditional methods of political studies as a prelude to the emergence of behavioural approach.
- Explain the impact of behaviouralism on the study of politics

#### **1.3 Traditionalism versus Behaviouralism**

The traditional approaches consist of those methods that fall into the “pre-scientific” era of political analysis. Such, as earlier examined in the previous units described politics from either philosophical, historical, institutional or structural perspectives. Their method was basically a

priori, largely based on intuitions, experiences and opinions of individuals. Much as earlier approaches attempted to advance the study of politics, the postulations lacked the basic ingredients of objectivity, reliability, validity and predictability. The reason was the place of man as the central theme in political discourse was ignored in those early analysis. The nature, pattern and dynamics of politics are as determined by man who run the institutions and structures of government. For example, while early approaches emphasise the constitution as the grund norm of politics, and in the regulations of the polity, they fail to understand that the constitution is as efficacious as the man who operates it. Therefore, good as the constitution of a country is, it cannot be a useful tool in analysing the impact of religion, ethnicity or money, which are human-related, on voting behaviour.

### **1.3.1 Tenets of Behaviouralism**

Political behavior as a major approach in political science is distinguished from the traditional approach because of its attempt to describe government as a process made up of actions and interrelations of men and groups of men. Political behaviouralism is an empirically – oriented discipline, developed as a protest movement to challenge traditionalism which had become excessively ideological and scientifically deficient in the eyes of behaviouralists. The approach – to use Claude Ake's term (1982:2) seeks to “convert the study of politics into a more rigorously scientific discipline patterned after the methodology of the natural sciences”. The main thrust of the behavioural movement occurred in the 1960s. Major contributions during this crusade appeared in the areas of voting behaviour, political participation and the understanding of psychology of human beings. An apparent manifestation of this era involved the restoration of unity within the social sciences, as political science developed affection for theories, methods and orientations of psychology, sociology, Anthropology and Economics (Charles Worth, 1967:3). Other features of this time were the fierce contention between behaviouralists and traditionalists. Opposition to the new science of politics came from classical school whose approach to theorizing was either philosophical, historical, institutional or legal (Otanez, 1992:1).

Easton (1967:16) itemized the characteristics of the behavioural approach as follows:

1. **Regularities:** There are discoverable uniformities in political behavior. These can be expressed in generalizations of theories with explanatory and predictive value.
2. **Verification:** The validity of such generalizations must be testable, in principle, by reference to relevant behaviour.

3. Techniques: means for acquiring and interpreting data cannot be taken for granted. They are problematic and need to be examined self- consciously, refined and validated so that rigorous means can be found for observing, recording and analyzing behaviour
4. Quantification: Precision in the recording of data and the statement of finding requires measurement and qualification, not for their own sake, but only where possible, relevant and meaningful in the light of other objectives.
5. Values: Ethical evaluation and empirical explanation involve two different kinds of propositions that, for the sake of clarity, should be kept analytically distinct. However, a student of political behaviour is not prohibited from asserting propositions of either kind separately or in combination as long as he does not mistake one for the other
6. Systematization: Research ought to be systematic that is to say, theory and research are to be seen as closely intertwined parts of a coherent and orderly body of knowledge.
7. Pure Science: The application of knowledge is as much a part of the scientific enterprise as theoretical understanding and explanation of political behavior, logically precede and provide the basis for efforts to utilize political knowledge in the solution of urgent practical problems of society.
8. Integration: Because the social science deal with the whole human situation, political research can ignore the findings of other disciplines only at the peril of weakening the validity and undermining the generality of its own results. Recognition of this interrelationship will help to bring political science back to its status of earlier centuries and return it to the main fold of the social sciences.

### **1.3.2 Influence of Political Behaviour on Political Science**

According to Truman cited in Olawuyi (2004), the major areas of behavioural influence of the study of political science are:

- Through behaviouralism, the discipline of political science has become more self-conscious and self-critical about its objectives, procedures and findings.
- Behaviouralism has brought about great and dramatic changes in the vocabulary of politics.
- The study of political science has become more interdisciplinary because most of the vocabularies associated with it are borrowed from other social sciences and other academic fields of inquiry.
- The influence of behaviouralism has greatly improved the methods and techniques of gathering data in political science including its analysis through the use of scientific methods like

questionnaire, sample survey, mathematical models and statistical analysis.

- With the behavioural movement, political science is capable of explanation and prediction.
- Phenomena can be observed whether of individual, groups or political aggregate.
- It makes the study of politics to be more focused on quantification and data so as to be able to make precise statement of relationships and regularities.
- It makes political science more interdisciplinary in orientation.
- It makes political science to focus less on moral and ethical questions while embracing issues that can be empirically treated.

### **1.3.3 Weaknesses of the Behavioural School**

- One set of criticisms relate to fundamental or philosophical objections against the behaviouralist approach, its methods, assumptions and techniques. The first of the behavioural approach is the assumption of value-neutrality. This involves the distinction between facts and values which are necessary. According to behaviouralist, there is need to disassociate subjective phenomena from objective information for the sake of scientific clarity. This value-fact dichotomy is best comprehended within the realm of philosophy. Virtually everybody possesses experiences, value and motives, which influence their understanding of others. Objectively, the ability to free oneself from personal prejudice in interpreting human behavior is believed to be impossible for investigators, consciously or unconsciously, that they are influenced by their values and are inclined to attach a personalized significance to observables. This natural intrusion of values is over looked by political behaviouralists. An understanding of political phenomena without acknowledging these intervening factors leads to an inchoate and illusionary body of knowledge.
- Political phenomena by their nature cannot be subjected to any rigorous study because human behavior is not stable and cannot be studied objectively.
- Political phenomena is not amenable to experimental enquiry.
- Hypothesis can be formulated at the early stage of research, but any attempt to adhere to it rigidly could defeat the purpose of the research.
- On verification through empirical test and observation, the traditionalists argued that anyone who wishes to understand political phenomena should be prepared to go beyond observable behavior because individuals or groups do not behave in a vacuum. Their behavior is determined largely by the institutions

and the social setting in which they work. Knowledge of that setting is therefore associated to the meaningful explanation of the behavior.

- On correct techniques of acquiring and interpreting data for objectivity, the traditionalists pointed out that data in social sciences can never be objective and that techniques should not be exalted over content. Self-consciousness about methodology is carried too far and may impede rather than advance the pursuit of knowledge. Another problem with the behavioral approach is its alignment with the natural sciences. Observation, quantification formulation of hypotheses, and verification with measurement are some of the methodologies used in the natural sciences (Norman Campbell, 1952). Scholars of the new in the science of politics have attributed the success of the natural sciences to the use of their methodological tools. Behaviouralists have appeared to believe that they could themselves aspire to the level of "science". But identification with the natural sciences is troubling for behaviouralism in the area of mathematical applications.

In his Presidential Address to the Political Science Association David Easton (1969) criticized the behavioural approach for concentrating on trivial and irrelevant research and ignoring urgent contemporary social and polemical problems. Easton acknowledged that behaviouralism is an ideology of social conservatism tempered by modest incrementalism. He then spoke of the need for a post behavioural resolution which without abandoning scientific sophistication and methodological rigour would promote a political science that is relevant, active and supporting of progressive and constructive social reforms. Increasing recognition has also been given to the fact that to be useful, the behavioural approach must complement and incorporate more of traditional, normative and institutional approaches to the study of politics. He made the call with the following words: A new revolution is under way in American political science...Its battle cries are relevance and action. Its objects of criticism are the disciplines, the professions and the universities", (Ronald Chicote, 1981:29). As Mulford Sibley(1967:51-71) also put it, "We must turn not only to the behaviouralists but also to the historians of political idea, the moral philosopher, the cultural historian, the speculative political philosopher of the classical tradition. The descriptive politicists and the man of direct political experience.

### **1.3.4 Post Behaviouralism**

David Easton, among others who championed this movement argued that:

- a. The substance of politics must precede technique. In other words, they argue that it is more vital to be relevant for contemporary social problems than to be sophisticated in tools of investigation.
- b. Values cannot be separated from the study of politics and
- c. The behavioural perspective is ideologically conservative because it confines itself only to the description and analysis of fact and does not do beyond that to seek to understand the forces behind the facts.

In the late 1960s political science moved to the direction of a more methodologically sophisticated traditionalism and a more theoretically meaningful type of behaviouralism. This meant a return to basic concepts of politics and to philosophy which encourages students of politics to prescribe and to act as to improve political life according to human criteria. Behaviouralism, along with all previous paradigms despite its weaknesses remains an integral part of the foundation of contemporary political science.

#### **1.4 Summary**

In the unit above, we traced the origin of behaviouralism to the inherent weaknesses of the traditional approaches. The salient features and shortcomings of the behavioural school which formed the basis for the post-behavioural school are also highlighted.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Trace the origin of behavioural revolution in political science
- ii. Discuss the impact of behaviouralism in the study of politics
- iii. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of the behavioural approach

#### **1.5 References/Further Reading**

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### **1.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Behaviouralism as a movement is rooted in the inadequacies of the traditional approaches, especially the excessive focus on the structures and institutions of politics, and neglecting the place of man as the center of politics.
2. The major impact of the behavioural movement is in the scientific revolution it engendered in the study of politics.
3. The strength of the behavioural approach is the scientific study of politics, with its associated benefits of objectivity and reliability of political analysis. However, there are salient areas of politics that may not be completely subjected to scientific interrogation. Also, man, with his fluid nature cannot be easily predicted as a specimen of political analysis.

## UNIT 2      SYSTEMS THEORY

### Units Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.1 The Systems Theory Defined
  - 2.3.1 David Easton Model
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Reading

### 2.1 Introduction

This unit examines the emergence, tenets and application of the systems theory as an analytical framework in political studies.

### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of the unit, the student should be able to

- Explains the features of the systems theory
- Discuss the usefulness of systems theory as an analytical framework

### 2.3 The Systems Theory Defined

The System theory as Ludwig Von Bertallanty's work demonstrated, has its offshoot in the biological sciences, and it later spread its tentacles to the fields of Anthropology and Sociology through the works of Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown (Olaniyi,2021). It was later adopted by David Easton in his study of the political system. The theory, also known as the 'general system theory' describes how parts (individuals with attributes) of a whole relate with each other to sustain its existence. The body system with many parts typifies this in the biological sciences wherein the eyes, nose, ears or hands are individual parts performing separate functions for the sustainability or functioning of the human being. Hence, the basic elements of the system are the individual parts; the relatedness of the parts to the system; and the contributions the parts made to the functioning of the system. In this sense, the workings of individuals are paramount for the overall survival of the system and relevance.

The political system is a set of structure, processes, instructions, interactions or relationships It could also be a sub-system of the national or international system when it is employed for transnational analysis. Furthermore, Robert and Edward (1991, cited in Olaniyi, 2001:40) explain the political system as:

The political arrangement of a society, and thus is almost a synonym for the “state” but does not have the legalistic and philosophic connotations which the word state carries and, in any case, societies without state structure can nevertheless be regarded as a political system.

### 2.3.1 David Easton Model

David Easton’s definition of politics as a system of binding interactions by which resources are allocated by the governing authority is indicative of a decision-making approach to the understanding of politics (Easton, 1968), and it emanates from the perspective of a system. He states that a political system has a decision-making mechanism that begins with receiving inputs from the environment through the gatekeepers (political parties or pressure groups) to the authoritative decision-makers (legislature or executive with power to allocate values). Decisions made are sent back into the environment and feedback is received about it from the populace by the value allocators in the form of satisfaction or otherwise.

From the explanation, the operation of a political system is seen through the contributions individual components – populace, gatekeepers, and decision makers - make to ensure its survival. Where demands are overwhelming for the system, the gatekeepers assist in streaming it down to a manageable form in order not overheat it. Also, for the system to continue enjoying the support, the values must be evenly and meaningfully allocated. Otherwise, the system will be interrupted through protests or other legitimate means of expressing dissatisfaction. This is illustrated in figure 1.3.5. Though the Easton’s model has been found useful in explaining the processes that go into decision-making, its application to real-life situation has been disputed. For instance, some decisions are made without recourse to all the inputs, by way of information needed. Even where this done, the human factor often corrupts the processing of such information such that rationality takes its flight in those periods. And, more importantly, feedbacks to most decisions are usually jettisoned by decision makers when evaluating the outcome of their policies.

#### Figure 1.3.5 Illustration of David Easton System Model

Demands  
Support=====Gatekeepers=====Authoritative and Decision  
Feedback

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Explain briefly the system theory.
- ii. How relevant is the systems theory to our understanding of decision-making process?

- iii. What are the limitations of the systems theory as an analytical framework?

## 2.4 Summary

This unit discussed the basic postulates of the systems theory, its usefulness and limitations as a framework for analysing decision making using the David Easton's model of input-process-output-feedback mechanism.

## 2.5 References/Further Reading

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## 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Systems theory is predicated on the input-process-output model, where decisions are made from inputs that are made into organisations by way of demands or supports. These are processed into output. Reactions to the output are processed back to the system in the form of feedbacks, which serve as another source of input for further decision-making.
2. The systems theory demonstrates that decisions could be made rationally as products of the demands or supports from the society.
3. Not all societal decisions go through the processing mill as propounded by the systems theory. Also, decision makers at times fail to reckon with the feedbacks to their actions. These are sometimes ignored. Similarly, not all inputs are countenanced in making decisions in the society.

## UNIT 3 ELITE THEORY

### Units Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning outcomes
- 3.3 Elite theory
  - 3.3.1 Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923)
  - 3.3.2 Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941)
  - 3.3.3 Roberto Michel (1876-1936)
  - 3.3.4 Ortega Y. Gasset
  - 3.3.5 Weaknesses of the Elites Theory
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Reading
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### 3.1 Introduction

This unit discusses the elite theory. It starts with a description of the theory, its proponents and their various postulations. The usefulness and limitations of the theory as an analytical tool are also highlighted.

### 3.2 Learning outcomes

At the end of this unit, student should be able to:

- Explain the tenets of the elite theory
- Analyse the views of scholars on the theory
- Identify the various strength and weaknesses of the theory

### 3.3 Elite theory

Elite theory presupposes that society is divided into two groups of people, the masses who are destined to be ruled and the selected few, who are capable and also have right to supreme leadership (Varma, 1999). Mariotti (2020) categorise such a society into the class of a ruling minority and the vast mass of people that are ruled or the governing elite and non- governing elite. The elite theory draws attention in particular to the skewed pattern of distribution of resources - intellectual, economic, political and cultural- in favour of a tiny few every who superintend over every society.

The theory first started as a critique of democracy and socialism in central and western European countries. In the United States, a number of writers used it to explain political processes as they existed in that country or in any democratic country. The motivation by the political elite to play active role in politics is the inevitable and irrepressible urge

in human beings to come to power as politics is a game of power and power is the primary urge for involvement in politics.

Proponent of elite theory in the United States in the fifties include economists like Schumpeter, political scientists like Lasswell as well as sociologists like Wright Mills and European thinkers like Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Roberto Michels, Jose Ortega Gasset. Those who get to the top are the best. Every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for ascension. The elite are the successful persons who occupy the topmost positions in their respective professions. There are elites among lawyers, medical doctors, intellectuals, technocrats, mechanics and indeed every profession. We take a look at some of the proponents of the theory.

### **3.3.1 Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923)**

Pareto a sociopsychologist is reputed for his writing on the “circulation of elites”. History, he says, is the graveyard of aristocracies, as rulers have devised ways and means of perpetuating themselves in positions of power and authority. He speaks about elite rotation; that there is always a movement of individuals and elite from one level of power to another e.g., from higher level to lower level and vice versa. This movement, he says will eventually lead to the extinction of every elite group in the society with implication for social equilibrium. Pareto also developed the concept of “residue”, which simply means the qualities through which one can rise in life. These residues according to him are six in number, however, two of them are of primary importance as they are needed to sustain the elites in power and they are the residue of combination (which means cunning) and the residue of the persistent aggregate (which means force). These attributes are akin to Machiavelli’s characteristics of the governing elites, namely the attributes of a fox and lion. The fox is wise and cunning, and can easily recognize traps, while the lion is strong but does not have the instinct to recognize traps. Thus, there are two types of elites, those who rule by cunning and those who rule by force. The elites create myths to make the people subservient, and this is sustained through the use of force.

He added that revolution takes place as a result of accumulation at the higher strata of society, which could be as a result of slowing down in class circulation or inability to possess the residue needed for governing by the political elites.

### **3.3.2 Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941)**

Gaetano Mosca’s postulation begins with a critique of Aristotle’s classification of government into three, which are monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. He argued that there is only one kind of government,

and that is oligarchy; That in all societies, developed, developing or underdeveloped, there are two classes; the first class fewer but monopolizes power and perform all political functions. The second class, which is in the majority, is controlled and governed by the first class. He noted that the larger the political community, the smaller will be the proportion of the governing minority and the more difficult to organize resistance against the minority by the majority.

Mosca also believe in the circulation of elites, noting that the distinguishing characteristics of the elites are aptitude to command and exercise political control. He argues that, once the ruling class loses this aptitude and a large number of people outside the ruling class cultivate this aptitude, there is possibility of the old ruling class being deposed and replaced by the new one. Other factors highlighted by Mosca that can lead to the replacement of the elite class among others include the inability of the elite class to provide the necessary services to the masses or the services they continue to provide are no longer regarded as valuable, a new religion arises, or some changes occur in the social forces that inevitably culminate in more changes in the society. He also established a relationship between changes in social circumstances and individual characteristics. New interests and ideals are formulated in society, new problems arise, and the circulation of elite's process is accelerated. Mosca has a modest use of force by the political elites in his analysis. He also advises the governing elites to facilitate gradual alterations in the political system to reflect public opinion.

In explaining further, the rule of the minority over the majority, Mosca noted that while the individuals in the majority are alone, the minority is usually composed of superior conspiratorial individuals. Mosca also introduces the concept of "sub-elite" which is made up of the new middle class of civil servants, managers, scientists, scholars, and treats it as a vital element in the governing of society. He argues that what determines the stability of any political organism is a function of the morality, intelligence and activity that this second stratum (sub-elites) has attained. Another concept he developed in his analysis of elite theory is what he called "political formula" which is synonymous with Pareto derivation. He is of the view that in every society the governing elite tries to justify itself as the citadels of power and represents the logical and necessary consequence of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognized and accepted. This political formula may not necessarily be an acceptable truth but a myth by those who accept them as Mosca did not see it as a fraud cleverly contrived by the ruling class in order to deceive the masses into subjection. Even though policies formulated are in the interest of the governing elite, they masquerade it with the garb of morality and legality and surmises that it is better to be



governed on the basis of some moral principles than being governed by mere physical force which he refers to as instrument of moral cohesion.

### **3.3.3 Roberto Michel (1876-1936)**

Robert Michels is famous for his “iron law of oligarchy”, which he says is one of the “iron laws” of history from which most democratic modern societies and advanced parties cannot escape from. He sees the elite in every organisation as the vital element necessary for such organization to succeed. any movement or party to succeed in modern times. To him, “he who says organisation, says oligarchy”, because at the apex of every human setting is a tiny minority who rules over the affairs of others. He argues further that the majority in every organisation are under eternal tutelage and predestined to submit to the dominion of this small minority. Thus, leadership is a necessity in every form of social life. As a movement or party increases in size, more functions as a matter of necessity will be delegated to an inner circle of leaders and with the passage of time, the members of the organization are rendered incompetent to direct and control them. This scenario makes such officers to acquire great freedom of action and a vested interest in their new position, which they cling to desperately and become almost irremovable. He went further to state that, the growth of this new oligarchy is accentuated by the apathetic, indolent and slavish mentality of the majority who are incapable of self-government. Leaders often capitalize on these qualities to perpetuate themselves in power, and different methods like oratory, persuasion, playing on the string of emotion of people are often deployed to fool the people. The purported laws that are passed to control the dominion of leaders, more often than not whittle down in no long a time and the leaders’ dominion are not affected by such laws.

### **3.3.4 Ortega Y. Gasset**

According to Ortega, a nation’s greatness is dependent upon the capacity of “the people”, “the public” “the masses”, “the crowd” to finds their “symbol in certain chosen people on whom it pours out the vast store of it vital enthusiasm. The “chosen people” are those that are outstanding and they are the ones that lead the masses that are not chosen. A nation is an organized human mass, given structure by a minority of selected individuals. A state may adopt any system of government like democracy or any other but its living and extra-legal constitution will always consist in the dynamic influence of minority acting on the masses. He sees this as a natural law and is important in the biology of social bodies as the law of densities in physics. Thus, he said the primary social fact is the organization of a human heap in leaders and led. So, there are those with the capacity to lead and those with certain

capacity to be led. The mass revolt when the aristocrats become corrupt and inefficient and the essence of this revolt is not that they don't want to be ruled by aristocracy but they would like to be ruled by a more competent aristocracy. He went further to state that where there is not a minority acting over a collective mass, and that knows how to accept the influx of a minority, there is no society, or very nearly so. When the masses believe that they can do without aristocracy the nation will decline inevitably. The masses will eventually become disillusioned and in their disillusionment the masses will again turn to a new leadership and a new aristocracy emerges. Suffice to say that historically, society oscillates between two epochs- period in which aristocracies and societies are being formed, and periods in which these same aristocracies are decaying and society is dissolving along with them.

### **3.3.5 Weaknesses of the Elites Theory**

The weaknesses of elite theory include the following:

- Elite theory is in opposition to pluralism and also contradicts state autonomy theory. It is also antithetical to democracy as it views democracy as a fraud and a utopian ideal. It does not depend upon the majority or the willingness of a sufficient part of the citizenship to ensure accountability and transformation of the political elite through free and fair election. Rather, it relies upon the virtue and other standards of self-appointed political elite for securing responsible conduct to perpetuate or maintain power.
- The theory tends toward oligarchy in the sense that it gives tacit support for selfish use of power by a few. Only the minority elite group is favoured by the theory at the expense of the non-elite majority.
- The theory negates equality and celebrates inequality. It is therefore premised on the inequalities that exist among the people and in the various segments of the society.
- The theory has been criticised on the grounds that it is more normative than empirical in content and intent. It therefore does not easily lend itself to empiricism and science of politics.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES**

- i. Explain the basic principles of the elite theory.
- ii. Describe the common thread in the works of Pareto, Mosca and Michel.
- iii. How is the elite theory antithetical to the principles of democracy?

### 3.4 Summary

The unit addressed the subject of elitism as an inevitable feature of every organisation. It dwells on those factors that promote the rule of the minority over the majority. It however, argues that the justification of elite rule, in all ramifications, contradicts the basic principles of democratic governance.

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### **3.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. The elite theory is premised on the skewed pattern of resource or power distribution in favour of a tiny few who exercise dominance over the majority in every society.
2. The elites are conscious, coherent and conspiratorial (the 3Cs). This guarantees the continuous circulation of the elite in a political system.
3. It is the rule of the minority over the majority, with the former relying on the complacency, ignorance and poverty of the latter to exercise and perpetuate their political dominance.

## **UNIT 4      GROUP THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 The Group Basis of Politics
  - 4.3.1. Critique of Group Theory
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### **4.1 Introduction**

This unit analyses the basic assumptions of the group theory, and its relevance to contemporary political analysis.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this study, students should be able to:

- Explain the attributes of the group theory
- Identify the relevance and weaknesses of the group theory

### **4.3 The Group Basis of Politics**

The inherent defect in the explanatory capacity of the elitist theory led to a new attention towards the pluralist model in governance. The emphasis here is instead of concentrating power in the hands of a few, it is diffused among various groups competing against each other. David Truman defines a group as a collection of individuals on the basis of one or more shared attitudes which constitute the interest of the group.

The group theory, as earlier stated, is anchored on the ideology of pluralism as developed by a number of early twentieth century English writers – particularly by John Figgis, F.W. Maitland and G.D.H. Cole. Like the pluralists reacting to the prevailing principles of atomistic liberalism (as enunciated by Locke and Bentham) on the one hand, and idealist socialism (by Green and Bosanquet) on the other, the group theorists in the later years tried to establish the group, rather than the individual or the society, as the basic unit in the study of politics. While the pluralists had produced some brilliant insights into the group basis of society, and recognized a multiple pattern of group affiliations and loyalties, the group theorists saw in this pattern the functional basis of government. The origins of the group theory in its present form go back to Arthur F. Bentley (1908). But the theory was subsequently forgotten

but revived in the fifties and sixties by Daniel Truman, Robert Dahl, Grant McConnell, Theodora J. Lewis and other writers.

Bentley, to whom the roots of behaviouralism are generally traced was against the formalism and static quality of the institutional approach to political analysis, and emphasized in his writings on dynamics and processes as characteristics of the activity of the state. Society, according to him, comprises of dynamic processes (actions) than specific institutions (structures) or substantive contents (values), ideas, thoughts, feelings, laws, proceedings of constitutional conventions, essays and addresses are important only when related to action. "There is no idea", wrote Bentley "which is not reflection of social activity. There is no feeling which the individual can fix upon except in a social form". "The raw material we study (in politics) is never found in one man by himself, it cannot even be stated by adding men to men, it must be taken as it comes in many men together, by men in groups." It is a "relation" between men – or the "action" of men with or upon each other.

An early exponent of quantitative methods in politics, Bentley believes that if one is to study politics scientifically one should look for significant measurable quantities in action. Ideas cannot be measured except when they are related to activity. Action, according to Bentley, is "always and invariably" a group process. Society, nation, government – legislation, politics, administration – all are comprised of "groups of men, each group cutting across many others ...". These groups are in a state of perpetual interaction with each other, and politics consisted in "the shunting by some men of other men's conduct along changed lines, the getting of forces to overcome resistance to such alterations, or the dispersal of one grouping of forces by another grouping".

Since Bentley was interested in deemphasizing the institutions and re-emphasizing processes, he conceived of the group as a mass of activity and not a collection of individuals. Group was defined by him as "a certain portion of the men of a society, taken, however, not as a physical mass cut off from other masses of men, but as a mass (of) activity, which does not preclude the men who participate in it from participating likewise in many other group activities". A group, therefore, represented a pattern of process rather than a static form, and as such could emerge only when the inter actions among its individual members were both relatively frequent and sufficiently patterned to produce directional activity. A genuine group, therefore, was different from a co-incidental collection or a category group. The fact that the same individual can belong to various groups also makes it clear that the activity particular to the group was more important than its structural composition.

Group being a mass of activity, the question was as to what gave direction to this activity. Here Bentley's concept of interest comes in, which he treated as central to the understanding of politics. Interest is a shared attitude concerning a claim or claims to be made by one group upon certain other groups in a social system. Group thus, as a mass of activity directed by interest, and the social system, which consists of a large number of groups, marks the arena for the interaction of groups' activity. The notion of interest is, thus, integrally related by Bentley to the group theory, as he developed it. It is the interest which leads to the organization of groups. One can imagine a large number of interests which have not found expression in any group and, therefore, remain unrepresented till they find such expression. One can, therefore, think of potential groups, latent groups, as well as groups in a stage of "becoming" along with the existing group.

The group theory leads logically to a particular concept of the social system and of political behaviour. The society itself, as Bentley writes, is "nothing other than the complex of groups that compose it", social system being "a sort of mosaic of groups", to quote from Truman, another leading group theorist". It is, therefore, through the social system that the various groups seek to realize or maximize their interest, the society being, in the words of another group theorist, Earl Latham, "a single universe of group which combine, break, federate and form coalitions and constellations of power in a flux of restless alterations", and is kept going by "the push and resistance between groups". The groups theorists like other behaviouralists, are interested in the fact that the society keeps going and, in order to explain how it can keep going in spite of the perpetual conflict among groups in which each is frantically pursuing its own narrow self-interest, the theory of a kind of automatic balance of power is brought in, the theory of the balance of the group pressure as described by Bentley.

Government function is to establish and maintain a measure of order in the relationship among groups and also to resolve conflict as the group theorists posit that there is a ceaseless struggle among groups. There is also a kind of overlapping and cross-cutting membership. Individuals belong to a number of groups and are not likely ready to permit any group that will hurt their interests to become too strong.

#### **4.3.1. Critique of Group Theory**

There are quite a number of criticisms leveled against the group theory:

- Man, outside of a group certainly has his political preferences. His personal idiosyncrasies have not been captured by the assumptions of the group theorists.

- The group theorists have tried to discard the place of reason, knowledge and intelligence from the governmental process, which they stated is characterized by force, tension and pressure. While one may agree that it is true to some extent, however, it would be difficult to believe that reason and logic are total strangers to governmental or decision-making process.
- Group theory is also criticized for it implied reductionism. It reduces everything to the working of groups and live individuals and society out of its consideration.
- Another failure of the group theory is the fact that, while it explains that goal attainment is fundamental to the group approach, no attempt was made to analyze how these goals are formulated, articulated and adopted by the various groups.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The basis of group theory is that groups constitute the most appropriate lens for analysing developments in every political system. Man's political behaviour can also best be understood within the context of the group because his life is subsumed within the various groups he belongs.

#### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Name a major proponent of the group theory.
- ii. Explain the major thrust of the group theory
- iii. Discuss the weaknesses of the group theory

#### **4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources**

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#### **4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. Arthur Bentley  
The group theorists establish the group, rather than the individual or the society, as the basic unit in the study of politics. It is anchored on the popular Arthur Bentley dictum: "When groups



are stated everything is stated, when I say everything, I mean everything”.

2. Man’s idiosyncrasies outside the group setting do inform his decisions. This reality, the group theory ignores.

## **UNIT 5      STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Possible Outcomes
- 5.3 Tenets of the Structural-Functionalist Theory
  - 5.3.1 Almond and Powell's Characterisation
  - 5.3.2 Gaps in Structural-Functionalism
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Reading

### **5.1 Introduction**

This unit discusses the structural-functionalist theory, its postulations and shortcomings.

### **5.2 Possible Outcomes**

At the end of the module, the student will be able to

- Explain the basic tenets of structural-functionalism.
- Identify its relevance as a tool of political analysis.
- Discuss the shortcomings of the structural-functionalist theory.

### **5.3 Tenets of the Structural-Functionalist Theory**

The structural-functionalist theory is a derivative of the systems theory. It is founded on the principle that the political system operates on structures that perform some basic functions. The performance of these functions by the different parts of the structure, according to theory, helps to ensure the survival of the system. Radcliff Brown employs the theory for his sociological analysis which as well popularizes the theory. The structure could be seen in different forms including, but not limited to, political party, religious group, business group or interest groups. The functions these structures perform could be latent (that are not intended or recognized) or manifest (that is obvious or observable), and both are important for the maintenance of the system (Olaniyi, 2001). Therefore, the component structures of a political system are the sources of energy that keep the engine running or at equilibrium. For example, the role of political parties in political education, political mobilization and political communication, among others serve as impetus for the growth, stability and continuity of the system.

### 5.3.1 Almond and Powell's Characterisation

Critical to our understanding of the structural-functionalist theory is Gabriel Almond and Powell (1978) whose work focuses on the seven functions performed by every political system. These functions are:

- i. Political recruitment: this consists of processes leading to selecting or electing people into positions of authority and power.
- ii. Political socialization: it is about role training, culture transmission, and development of individual's political orientations towards the political system. This is with a view to ensuring that individuals cultivate the right attitude towards the system.
- iii. Political communication: this is the transmission of the right information to the citizenry and obtaining the necessary feedback from them on governmental issues, policies and programmes.
- iv. Interest articulation: it entails respect for individual's rights to make and press their demands on the system, which pressure groups are noted for.
- v. Interest aggregation: individuals' rights and demands are aggregated when they are presented in a wholistic and manageable forms, as we see in the manifestoes of political parties
- vi. Policy-making: this is the act of transforming societal demands into programmes or decisions.
- vii. Policy implementation: this falls within the realms of administration, that is, getting things done. Here policies are translated into actionable and realistic points in terms of production and services.

The first three functions (political recruitment, political socialization and political communication) involve activities that will keep the system going or self-sustainable. Recruitment of personnel into political offices is sacrosanct because political succession is a necessary ingredient of every polity, especially a democratic system, but such can only be sustained through socialization and communication. While socialization attempts at incorporating the norms and values of the society into the individual, communication keeps him abreast of developments with a view to sustaining his interest and participation in the polity. When combined with the other four roles— interest articulation, interest aggregation, policy making and policy implementation- interest articulation, interest aggregation, policy making and policy implementation -they all help to guarantee the maintenance and stability of the system.

### 5.3.2 Gaps in Structural-Functionalism

- a. The theory applies more to all political systems especially, those with a history of unbroken democratic rule, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and most of the European countries. But, for many of the developing countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia that have experienced civil regime interruptions by the military, it has been more of system collapse than system maintenance. Even for those under democratic rule, challenges of democratic consolidation peculiar to those country, including nepotism, corruption, electoral malfeasance, poor leadership quality, ethnic and religious politics, have combined to negatively impact the performance of the structures and functions of government in those countries.
- b. Also, similar to the system theory, disequilibrium in the system is a constant feature of every political system, developed or developing. For one intervening reason or another, structures do fail to discharge their responsibilities as the theory postulates. Indeed, it may be utopian expecting a rancor-free democratic political system that upholds the freedom of speech, press, association, right to protest and others. The exercises of these rights and privileges may be abused by citizens resulting in frictions and disruptions in structures of government and the functions they perform.
- c. Lastly, structures of government are as important as the individuals performing this role. Thus, the over-emphasis on the functions of government and neglecting the individual political actor saddled with the responsibility of overseeing the structures is a major gap of the structural-functionalist theory. The constitution of a country may be perfectly crafted detailing what specific duties each structure of government performs, but the performance of those structures is a reflection of the of the competence and disposition of humans overseeing those structures.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

- i. Explain the basic propositions of the Structural-functionalist theory.
- ii. Analyse the Nigerian political system from the perspective of the structural-functionalist theory.
- iii. Identify the major gaps of structural-functionalism.

## 5.4 Summary

The unit identified the structural-functionalist theory as a variant of the systems theory. It also analysed the theory from the perspective of Almond and Powell's perspective of societal structures and the functions they perform for societal balance. However, the unit recognized that maintenance of societal stability may be a mirage as there are various factors mitigating against that.

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## 5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

1. The political system operates on structures that perform some basic functions. The performance of these functions by the different parts of the structure, according to theory, helps to ensure the survival of the system.
2. Focus here is on the formal institutions of government-legislative, executive, judiciary and the bureaucracy, their functions and relationship between them.
3. The theory does not account for instability that constrain the performance of structures of government. Also, it ignores the central place of the human factor in charge of these structures.

## **MODULE 4                      COMMUNICATION, GAME, RATIONAL CHOICE, DECISION MAKING AND NEW INSTITUTIONAL THEORIES**

### **Units Structure**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Communication Theory
  - 1.3.1 Assumptions and Features of Communication Theory: Deutsch's Neuro-politics
  - 1.3.2 Strengths of Communication Theory
  - 1.3.3 Criticism of communication theory
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Reading

### **1.1 Introduction**

The communication theory, also referred to as the study of cybernetics, was developed by Karl Deutsch in his book, "The Nerves of Government" (1963). This unit discusses the core issues and loopholes in the theory as a framework of political analysis. Students will learn the importance of communication to any political system, the features of political communication, concept of feedback as well as the criticisms of the theory of political communication.

### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Explain the fundamentals of communication theory
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of communication theory as a tool of analysis

### **1.3 The Communication Theory**

This approach provides a detailed explanation on the science of cybernetics in explaining the stability, growth and future of political systems, as well as consequences of changes in the structure of the political system. Karl Deutsch ultimate goal for the development of this theory was to reduce the prominence of the concept of power, while promoting the idea of political system that is focused on the attainment of social goals. His perception of government was that of a decision-making system that do not only conduct its affairs forcefully, but also it has become a habit for people to comply with the decisions of government. Therefore, he argued that the growth of any political system depends on its communication mechanism; Its survival a

function of the effectiveness of government personnel to process, interpret and act on information in the global flow.

The communication theory places emphasis on the adoption of models or concepts that are used in the field of engineering. Some of these concepts include the following:

**Receptors or Receptive system:** the receptive system receives information from both domestic and foreign environments. The role of the receptive system is somehow complex as it covers quite a number of functions that goes beyond simple intake and scanning operations, selection of information, data processing among others. Most systems develop a set of fairly specific operating rules for processing the flow of incoming information. The decision-making apparatus provides the context through which information is handled and acted upon by structures representing memory, value, complexes and centers that make actual decision. There are many structures than can be imagined. The structure that stands for memory links up with the inward flow of information to past experiences that are relevant concerning both the process and the consequences. The value complexes also relate possibilities to preferences. There are many structures responsible for implementing the decisions that had already been taken and still more structures which feed information concerning performances back into the apparatus which take the form of fresh input, and it leads to starting the entire process all over again.

**Load:** this simply connotes the extent and speed of changes with reference to the position of the target vis-à-vis goal seeking system.

**Lag:** this is use to depict the slowness associated with the response of the system to information on the consequences of decisions and actions. It is the time of delay experienced from the time information was received and the time action was taken upon the information.

**Load Capacity:** the number and types of channels available for information flow is determined by the load capacity. In fact, load capacity simply means the overall intake of information at a specific period of time. Load varies over time and in quality from one political system to another. Some of the factors that determine load capacity include fidelity, responsiveness, background noise and distortion. If the apparatus is able to handle incoming information with deftness, it is said to be responsive, while the accuracy with which information is transmitted to various processes of selection, perception and handling determines its fidelity. The smoothness of information flow can be affected by different kinds of background noise and specific distortion. When this is the case, we say the apparatus is lacking in fidelity. The

communication system also has ability to bring forward past experiences that are relevant to the analysis of the incoming information. This is often referred to as recall.

**Lead:** is the capacity to act in terms of response to forecast of future consequences. It is important the system is provided with effective predictive processes in order for it to gain proper lead.

**Feedback-**Nobert Weiner explains feedback as the control of a machine on the basis of its actual performance rather than its expected performance.

### **1.3.1 Assumptions and Features of Communication Theory: Deutsch's Neuro-politics**

#### **Society as Machine:**

Karl Deutsch perceives society as a machine or mechanism that encourages habit formation and other similar activities that goes with: information acquisition; information selection and storage; selection and development of norms to information gained.

#### **New Definition of Politics:**

Karl Deutsch's communication theory reduces the focus on power. He perceives power as a component of continuing political activity. To him, politics should be focused on the attainment of social goals. And the decisions made are enforceable as long as it is in the interest of the whole society. Thus, Politics is about enforcement of decisions and the 'essence of politics depends on the co-ordination of human efforts for the attainment societal goals.

#### **New Notion of Government:**

The theory provides a new notion of government's function which has to do with the control of flow of information in any particular preferred direction and through its preferred channels of communication. Therefore, the role of government here is to check information rather than continuous exercise of power over the individuals.

#### **Miniature Communication System:**

A political system is made up of infrastructure that encapsulates political parties and interest groups. They are interconnected and open. They are capable of self-control and are imbued with mechanism to change their structures and behavior. Conflict can emanate between a political system and its sub-systems, but it may not necessarily be a contest of will but collisions which may be caused by the failure of the steering facilities.



### **Homeostatis instead of Equilibrium:**

The desire of Karl Deutsch was to build a model that is not static but dynamic. This is not far-fetched from the fact that, politics is a changing phenomenon and as such political system cannot be static. While political system performs its functions and also works towards the realization of its objectives, it changes its position in relation to the environment. It is this dynamic nature of political system that Karl Deutsch term “homeostatis”

### **1.3.2 Strengths of Communication Theory**

- a. One the strengths of Karl Deutsch’s theory of communication is it application to political system and the subsequent analysis which led to a new phase of political science theory outside the traditional power theory and other concepts. Deutsch’s cybernetics shows that the dynamic, growth, change, structure, and other functioning of political system are manly governed by a system of communication network.
- b. In fact, Deutsch’s theory of cybernetics attempts to build a general systems theory. It was indeed an effort to institute a political system where the various systems of the society and also a part of the whole environment operate. The theory is an expansion of Easton’s system theory. The conceptualization and understanding produced by Easton and Deutsch are in furtherance of political system theory.
- c. Karl Deutsch communications theory provides valid answers to the followings: How does a political system operate? What are the kinds of information being processed from one agency to the other? It also considers how to know the capacity and capability of each of the political system? Despite borrowing most of it concepts and ideas from the engineering, the communication theory or cybernetics provide an interlink between the political systems on one hand, and the agencies/structure on the other hand.
- d. The communication theory of Deutsch helps to provide a detailed analysis of information flow, and the impact this flow of information has, as well as the response claim made on the political system. The strength of the theory is based on its ability to provide an idea of a political system. The Deutsch’s analysis appeals under various concepts such as social change and growth, decision making, power etc. Through this theory, we understand that the operation of a political system is predicated on information flow.

### 1.3.3 Criticism of communication theory

- a. Communication theory gives too much attention to area maintenance i.e., the maintenances of existing system and equilibrium. It is averse to the desired revolutionary change it advocates through decision making. The engineering orientation of this theory cannot totally explain the human behavior, given its fluidity as the social sciences have demonstrated. Karl Deutsch apparently used the engineering models to explain political system but failed to capture the very essence of the social sciences which is the study of human behavior.
- b. Most of the concepts used in the communication theory are majorly derived from the engineering field that does not have direct bearing on politics. The concepts derived from the engineering field and used in the communication theory have not been properly used in the explanation of current political system. Karl Deutsch's communication theory is full of criticism about the performance and effectiveness of the government but fails to provide adequate way out. The theory lays more emphasis on the entire process of decision making leaving out the consequences of those decisions.
- c. Although the communication theory provides analytical tools for studying and gathering of information, the theory appears mechanistic, complex, complicated, and confusing, which is contrary to the understanding of a model as simple and easy to comprehend.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Show the basic components of the communication theory.
- ii. Explain the major strength of the communication theory.
- iii. Attempt a critique of communication theory?

### 1.4 Summary

This unit examined communication theory and its application to the operations of political system. It shows the primacy of communication network rather than power in political systems. However, as elegant as this theory appears, its major drawback is its detachment from political realities, especially the place of the individual in politics.

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## 1.5 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Emphasis here is on the components of the communication system: the receptor, load, load capacity, lag, lead and feedback.
2. Communications theory explains the operation of a political system operate, the kinds of information being processed from one agency to the other, and how to know the capacity and capability of the political system.
3. Borrowing from engineering, the theory appears mechanistic, complex, complicated, and unrealistic in a human environment characterised by emotions and irrationality.

## **UNIT 2      GAME THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 What is Game Theory?
  - 2.3.1 Rationality and Game Theory
  - 2.3.2 Types of Games
  - 2.3.4 Weaknesses of the game theory
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Reading/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assignment Exercises

### **2.1 Introduction**

At the center of the game theory is the application of mathematical models in the study of politics, especially the rationality of human actions. This unit examine the different types of games and how each explains a particular political action. The inadequacies of the theory are also highlighted in the unit.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Explain the different strands of game theory
- Identify the basic assumptions of game theory
- Analyse the application of the theory to political issues
- Highlight the strength and weaknesses of game theory

### **2.3 What is Game Theory?**

Politics like the game of soccer is about supremacy. Both entail the struggle for the control, use and retention of power even though the nature of such power differs from one context to another. Central to the issue of politics is the element of conflict, which is inevitable wherever two individuals are gathered- whether in the family, peer group associations, religious bodies, especially our churches, educational institutions, business organisations or public service. Hence, the popular saying that politics is about conflict and its resolution. That human interaction cannot always be conciliatory is given. What really matters is how every society establishes acceptable method(s) of regulating conflicting human conduct. (Ajayi, 2021).

Politics, from the perspective of John Spanier, is a “Game Nations Play”. Ever since Emil Borel propounded the Game Theory in the 1920s, and further developed by John Von Neumann, the theory has enjoyed wider acceptance by scholars interested in explaining the behavior of the economic man or the rational actor, and more importantly, the task of making “rational decision strategies in situations of conflict and competition, when each participant or player seeks to maximize gains and minimizes losses.” The theory analyses the elements of conflict and cooperation in decision making, using mathematical models to political studies.

In these games, there are two or more players; the decisions of each player “are contingent upon the decisions of others;” and, there is an inter-dependence of whatever decisions are made by the different players participating in the game. This is because it is not possible for any one player to make a choice without giving considerations to the choices made by the other players. Thus, the task before each player is to ensure that decisions are based on expectations of what action the other players would take at any given time. The import of this is that the game entails elements of consistency and rationality among actors because such actors have partial control over the strategic factors affecting their environment.

The use of game theory in political studies is based on the following assumptions:

- That the game is usually well defined.
- That the game has an explicit set of rules.
- That the information available to the players is specified at every point.
- That the scoring system is complete. (Verma, 1975:342)

Also central to the theory are two vital components, namely, the players and strategies or tactics. The players, also known as decision makers could be individuals or institutions, are assumed to be rational with well-defined objectives, and are endowed with resources to checkmate competing forces. To guide the deployment of these resources are rules. These are the ground norm, the prescription and proscription. An example may be the various laws enacted to regulate the electoral process. The strategies consist of the “overall programme of actions which a player, under adverse or conflict conditions, adopts in order to achieve a desired outcome or series of outcomes.”

The game theory further argues that “each player has a scale of utilities, according to which he prefers some outcomes, so long as he plays the game at all.” The player also has a range of options among different moves he can make, and there are particular expectations of such moves. Even though their knowledge of outcome of their actions are uncertain,

the theory further argues that if players must play well, “they must know what they know and what they do not know, and they must know what they can and what they cannot do.” These components are what Rapaport (1974:1) classified as the five components of the game theory, namely:

- a. Players or decision makers;
- b. Strategies available to each player;
- c. Rules governing players behaviour;
- d. Outcomes, each of which is a result of particular choices made by players at any given point in the game; and
- e. Payoffs accrued by each player as a result of each possible outcome.

The game theory assumes or expect that every player will seek after methods that assist the individual with accomplishing the most productive result in each circumstance. Game theory is used to represent these connections which frequently place the interests of two players in different direction: the more noteworthy the result (benefit) for one player, the less for the other. In other to accomplish a commonly useful result, the players should facilitate their methodologies, since, in such a case that every player seeks after their most prominent expected settlements, and the common result is ineffective. Game theory thus, represent the potential for participants to create commonly gainful results. However, we must note that games likewise feature the challenges of getting collaboration among skeptical members, on the grounds that every player is enticed to seek after their singular interest.

No matter its inadequacies, game theory has found relevance in analyzing major issues of national and international politics. It is used for instance as analytical tool of strategic studies to explain the phenomenon of wars, diplomacy and bargaining. But it is in explaining the dynamics of national politics, especially issues of electoral politics, voters’ behavior, political alliances and elite conspiracy that this theory has been found useful as we have tried to do in this lecture.

### **2.3.1 Rationality and Game Theory**

Game theory assumes rational behaviour. But what do we mean by rationality? In everyday parlance, rational behaviour can mean anything from reasonable, thoughtful, or reflective behaviour to wise, just, or sane actions. We generally do not think that someone who drives one hundred and twenty kilometers per hour on narrow side streets is rational. But rational behaviour for our purposes means much less than the common meaning of the term. Put simply, rational behaviour means choosing the best means to gain a predetermined set of ends. It is an evaluation of the consistency of choices and not of the thought process, of implementation of fixed goals and not of morality of those goals.

Rationality implies that the individual must choose the best option that maximises his/her utility or payoffs. The link between neoclassical economics and game theory was and is rationality. Neoclassical economics is based on the assumption that human beings are rational in their choices. Specifically, the assumption is that each person maximises his or her rewards- profits, incomes, or subjective benefits- in the circumstances that he or she faces. This hypothesis serves the double purpose in the study of the allocation of resources. First, it narrows the range of possibilities somewhat. Absolute rational behaviour is more predictable than irrational behaviour. Second, it provides a criterion for evaluation of the efficiency of an economic system.

Game theory as advanced by economists was a theory of economic and strategic behaviour when people interact directly, rather than —through the market. Game theory is about serious interactions as market competition, arms races, environmental pollution etc. that are addressed using the metaphor of a game. In these serious interactions, the individual's choice is essentially a choice of strategy, and the outcome of the interaction depends on the strategies chosen by each participant. In neoclassical economic theory, to choose rationally is to maximise one's rewards. From one point of view, this is a problem in mathematics: choose the activity that maximises rewards in given circumstances. Thus, we may talk of rational economic choices as the —solution to a problem of mathematics. In game theory, the case is more complex, since the outcome depends not only on your strategies and on the —market conditions, but also directly on the strategies chosen by others.

### 2.3.2 Types of Games

The outcome of whatever strategy is adopted gives rise to the different forms of game. These include:

- (a) the zero-sum game: In the zero-sum game we have only two players, and the gains of one are always equal to the loss of the other. It is a winner-takes all or what is referred to as the first-past-the-post in an election, where the race is open to only one winner. This form of game is strictly non cooperative but competitive and adversarial.
- (b) the non-zero-sum game and the zero-sum n-persons games: Here, two or more persons are involved, and the players may share the division of the award, and the gain of one need not be equal to the loss of the other. This is applicable to electoral system built on proportional representation, where parliamentary seats are shared among parties based on their voting strength across the constituencies.

- (c) the non-zero-sum n-person games: Under this category, there are three or more players, it is possible for two or more players to cooperate against the others by pooling resources and making collective decisions during the play. This is the idea behind coalition and realignment in politics or “ganging up” on the front runner in order to stop his chances of winning. (Verma 1975: 345)

### 2.3.4 Weaknesses of the game theory

Game theory is depended on the understanding that people are basically rational being, and their actions are governed by self-interest. But the idea that people will generally act as rational actors whose actions are deliberate is illusionary.

Political decisions are generally products of individual’s social, economic and cultural environments, in addition to his personal idiosyncrasies. Thus, subjecting a person’s action to mathematical calculations amounts to carrying logics too far.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Name two variants of the game theory.
- ii. Explain the usefulness of game theory in political analysis.
- iii. Discuss the place of rationality in the application of game theory.

## 2.4 Summary

This unit discussed elements of the game theory and their relevance of the different types of games in political studies. In spite its utilitarian value, the unit show that the game theory is not a perfect tool for understanding the nature of politics.

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## **2.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assignment Exercises**

1. Zero-sum game; and non-zero-sum game.
2. It is useful in the study of elections and electoral systems, for example, the issue of proportional representation, power sharing and coalitions in politics.
3. Political actors are not always rational in decision-making. Their decisions are not predictable. As such, the assumptions of the game theory are not cast in iron.

## **UNIT 3 THE RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Rational choice theory
  - 3.3.1 Criticisms of the rational choice approach
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Reading
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### **3.1 Introduction**

This unit analyses the rational choice model in political analysis. The theory focuses on the logic behind human behaviour, especially in making decisions. How this applies to the macro political system is further examined in this unit.

It is predicated on the standpoint that individuals are rational, and hence act rationally. Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom offer insight on the meaning of what rationality entails or implies thus: “An activity is rational to the degree that it is accurately intended to augment objectives accomplishment, given the objective being referred to and this present reality as it exists” (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953:38). It clearly indicates the human pursuit of goals via beneficial choice making. Offering further procedure of arriving at this decision is explicated in the economic rational public decision, drawing on the strategy of financial aspects as opposed to the sociological and psychological approaches that leaned toward behaviouralism. Details of the theory content are examined in the main content. The focal concern of this unit is to analyze the essential positions of the objective rational choice approach in contemporary political inquiry, its assets and shortcomings and how it can be applied in contemporary political analysis.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

- explain the basic assumptions of the rational choice theory.
- Analyse political decisions using the rational choice model

### **3.3 Rational choice theory**

The rational choice theory provides a framework for understanding the behaviour of man, how under rational calculations, he is able to make rational choices. Though the theory is dominant in the microeconomics

space, it has in no small measure aided the understanding and analysis of contemporary political issues, and, is well used by scholars in other disciplines like sociology and philosophy.

The rational choice theory underscores the role of individuals' philosophical reasoning in prior decision-making or taking an action. Also, it assumes that individuals consider the costs against benefits before making decisions. Gary Becker, who won the 1992 Nobel Prize in Economics, propounded the theory with its different perspectives and its application to human behaviours. Even though the fact that the models utilized in rational decision theory vary, the common assumption is that people's decisions are largely determined by the stable inclination capabilities and limitations confronting them.

However, the proponent of the theory does not guarantee that a model's assumptions fully portray a real-world experience but beliefs can help think or give assistance in figuring out falsifiable speculations, regardless of the prevailing natural circumstances. As noted, effective speculations are those that endure the experimental tests, and models depend on the embrace of systemic empirical studies which unveil the social circumstances or aggregate behaviours of individuals.

Specifically, the basic assumptions of the rational choice theory according to Abell (2000) cited in Ogu (2013:93) are:

1. Individualism: it depicts that it is the individuals who ultimately take make decisions or actions, and are the actors in the society that behave and act always as rational beings that exhibit self-calculating, self-interested and self-maximizing which constitute sources of the larger social outcomes.
2. Optimality: This states that individuals pick their activities ideally but are influenced by their inclinations or requirements confronting them. Abell (2000) characterizes optimality as occurring when no other course of social activity would be liked by the person throughout the activity such person has picked. But it does not imply that the game-plan that the actors take is the most incredible in terms of goals and outside judgment.
3. Self-Regarding Interest: This assumption believes that the actions of the individual are entirely about their welfare. It should be noted that in as much as this is a key assumption in the rational choice approach, it is less essential to the approach as the assumption of optimality that occupies a central driving force in human endeavor.
4. Rationality: This is the most prevalent of the assumptions of the rational decision theory. It projects the people to only pursue or engage in the utmost benefiting venture at a minimal cost. Therefore, the principle of 'mini-maxim' (minimize cost for

maximum benefit) is outrightly applicable in every individual decision-making. In this sense, anything that is bereft of optimum gains at the lowest cost is unlikely to be accepted by a rational man.

### **3.3.1 Criticisms of the rational choice approach**

As appealing as the rational choice theory is, critics identified some shortfalls that weaken its strength. These are highlighted as follows:

1. Problems of inadequate information and uncertainty surrounding decision-making in the real world which is essential for the justification and the carrying out of empirical analysis are associated with the theory. These challenges make it difficult for individuals to make rational decisions.
2. The complexity of human social action and interactions suggests that the approach is difficult to attain. Social scientists share the consensus that human beings are not only complex but difficult to predict also. Hence, the theory did not factor in milieu uncertainty, especially at the macro-structural level that does interrupt individuals' choices and social actions.
3. Norms and habits often guide much action and where these have taken root unquestionably in people, they might impede the pursuit of meaningful social action.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES**

- i. Discuss the major assumptions of the rational choice theory in contemporary political inquiry.
- ii. Identify one major strength of the rational choice theory.
- iii. Highlight the main criticisms of the rational choice approach.

### **3.4 Summary**

This unit discussed the relevance of the rational choice approach in political analysis. The theory focuses on the individual's methodological approach to explaining social phenomena using rational calculations made to attain self-interest. Also, it views social interaction as a form of exchange tending towards economic activities, as the citizens are often motivated by the rewards and costs of actions to optimize the accruable profits. This emphasis underscored the principle of mini-max application to the human decision-making process. However, the limitations of the theory such as undermining human complex nature, environmental uncertainty and required information are noted. Nevertheless, the theory provides vital clues on the place of the cost-benefit analysis in making individual choices.

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### **3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. The rational choice theory underscores the role of individuals' philosophical reasoning in prior decision-making or taking an action. Also, it assumes that individuals consider the costs against benefits before making decisions.
2. It teaches that organizational decisions can be made in a most objective manner and with the best of intentions, all things being equal.
3. The drawbacks of the theory are in the social milieu (norms and values) of decision-making, the human element, insufficient information for making informed decisions.

## **UNIT 4      DECISION MAKING THEORY**

### **Units Structure**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Basic assumptions of the decision-making approach
  - 4.3.1 Factors Influencing the Decision Maker
- 4.5 Allison's model of decision making
- 4.6 Critique of the decision-making approach
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 References/Further Reading
- 4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

### **4.1 Introduction**

The decision-making theory provides an exceptional picture of a purposeful political behaviour model. As well, it helps political scientists to perceive the decision-making theory as a medium through which political issues can be better understood. The classical political scientists have, through their writings, intellectual reasonings or philosophy, demonstrated the human capacity for decision-making. For example, to John Locke, men resolve to accept social contract for safeguarding their regular privileges or rights as a logical decision. The focal point of this unit is a discussion of the decision-making theory, which is a model of intentional political behaviour, its postulations, utility and shortcomings.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

- Identify the factors that influence the making of decisions
- Analyse the relevance of the decision-making theory to political phenomena
- Explain the strengths and weakness of the decision-making approach

### **4.3 Basic assumptions of the decision-making approach**

The decision-making model is centered on how rational actors behave in the midst of uncertainty and risk. Proposed by Richard Snyder's et al, the model constitutes the first attempt at the behavioral study of foreign policy, and it was inspired by efforts to explain scientifically American intervention in Korea in 1954. The model aims among other things, at identifying some of the crucial variables that determine national responses to conflict situations. By isolating such variables and

examining their inter-relationship in a particular situation, it should be possible, according to the authors, to predict probable patterns of states' responses in similar situations.

Decision-making, from the above, is seen as "a process which results in the selection from a socially defined limited number of problematic alternative projects, of one project intended to bring about the particular future state of affairs envisaged by the decision maker." The unit of analysis of the model is the state, i.e., the state as an actor but represented in its actions by those who act in its name. As such, the focus of analysis is on actions of state's agents both in behavioural and psychological contexts.

Three key variables are identified and these pertain to the perception of the environment of decision makers and the definition of situations in which they have to take decisions. The three variables deal respectively with three overlapping environments of decision. These are:

The internal setting;

The structural setting; and

The external setting.

To be able to explain foreign policy behaviour, Snyder et al recommended the examination of the above three factors and how they are handled by decision makers. The action taken by a decision maker, according to the authors, is usually determined by three spheres:

The sphere of competence;

The sphere of communication and information; and

The sphere of motivation.

Competence is defined as "the totality of those activities of the decision maker relevant and necessary to the achievement of the state objectives; communication and information refer to "the meanings, learnt values and preferences communicated by the decision makers and that are communicated to him". Motivation refers to the psychological state of the actor in which energy is mobilized and directed in a selective way to aspects of decisional context. The details of components of each variable are shown in the table below.

A Internal setting  Non-human environment Society Human Environment; Culture; and Population	B Social structure and Behaviour Major common value orientation Major institutional patterns Major characteristics of social	C Decision Making Process Decision makers	D Action	E External setting Non-human environment. Other cultures Other societies Societies organized and function as state
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	organisations Role differentiation Groupds Relevant      social process Opinion formation Adult socialization political			government
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Snyder's et al model has been criticized as offering a very limited and narrow understanding and explanation of a country's foreign policy because there are some policy decisions that do not follow the path of the model. Some policies are not just decisions, but a sequence of event or decision. Decisions taken can spark off a chain of events, and becoming inputs to other actions.

Also, rationality as espoused in the model may not always be the factor behind every decision. Interest is a consideration the model omits. Whether at local or foreign sphere, decisions are guided by interests of the political actors. In international relations, we dwell on national interest as a major factor in decision making. This, the model failed to capture in the variables that influence decision-making. Michael Brecher et al's model is similar to Snyder's but the former complemented it with the Easton's input-output model in explaining decision-making, namely the input or the source, the process, and the output. Decision making theory according to Isaac (1984:230) is part of the general intentional approach, which falls within the domain of human activity. Human action, according to Snyder, relates to policy decision, because every decision of government is about actions taken by human beings.

### **The decision's unit approach**

The decision unit approach focuses on those actors at the top of foreign policy in the party in government, and it concerns itself with those government officials responsible for, and possessing ultimate decision-making power and authority in foreign policy. This approach allows for a cross-national analysis of foreign policy as applicable to different types of political regimes or systems. The approach is more relevant and applicable to the study of foreign policy.

#### **4.3.1 Factors Influencing the Decision Maker**

- a. Previous experience can impact and influence future decision-making. (Juliussan, Karlsson, and Garling, 2005).

- b. Also, an anticipated positive outcome will influence the nature of a decision taken.
- c. Cognitive biases in the light of perceptions and speculations may influence the decision-taking process and the outcome of such decisions (Evans, Barston, and Pollard, 1983; West, Toplak, and Stanovich, 2008).
- d. Individuals will more often than not keep on pursuing hazardous decisions when they feel liable for the sunk expenses, time, cash, and exertion spent on a task. Juliusson, Karlsson, and Garling (2005)
- e. Demographic factors, notably socio-economic status, age, education, personality, etc. also affect the nature of decisions taken (Reed, Mikels, and Simon, 2008), Bruin et al. (2007)

A few individual contrasts may impact decision. Furthermore, more seasoned individuals might be more arrogant with respect to their capacity to simply decide, which hinders their capacity to apply systems. At long last, regarding age, there is proof to help the idea that more seasoned grown-ups favor less decisions than more youthful grown-ups. Age influence individual decision. As per de, individuals in lower SES gatherings might have less admittance to training and assets, which might make them more defenseless to encountering negative life altering situations, frequently unchangeable as far as they might be concerned; thus, low SES people might go with less fortunate decisions, in view of past decisions.

#### **4.5 Allison's model of decision making**

In 1971, Graham Allison published a seminal book on *Essence of Decision*. The book outlined three models to explain America's foreign policy decision making during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. He termed them the rational actor (Model I), organisational behaviour (Model II) and governmental (bureaucratic) politics (Model III).

In the Rational Actor model, the basic unit of analysis is the actions chosen by the national government to maximise its strategic goals and objectives. The nation or government is considered a rational, unitary decision maker with one set of preferences, one set of perceived choices and a single estimate of the consequences that follow from each alternative. As Allison and Zelikow (1999) note, two of the assumptions of classical realism, namely that unitary states are the main actors in international affairs, and that states act rationally in selecting the course of action that is value maximising informs the rational actor model.

The model assumes that a nation's actions are in response to strategic threats and opportunities in the international environment. In selecting a

response, a process of rational choice is employed based on identifying objectives and goals, usually expressed in terms of national security and national interests; proposing options for the attainment of the objectives; evaluating the cost and benefit of each option against the defined objectives; and selecting the option that ranks highest in achieving desired outcomes.

The second model, Organisational Behaviour, considers the basic unit of analysis as governmental action. The focus is on the outputs of large organisations functioning according to standard pattern of behaviour. Alison and Zelikow (1999) identified seven characteristics of this model. First, the actor is not a monolithic nation or government but rather a collective or bureaucratic organisation, atop of which sit government leaders. They may also be sub-units within large organisations with their own set of procedures and rules. Second, parts of a foreign policy issue may be distributed among different bureaucratic organisations in accordance with their respective specialisation, while specialist attention is devoted to particular aspects of an issue; the trade-off is that there is little control over what an organisation attends to, and how organisational responses are programmed. The fourth is the set of beliefs about how a mission should be carried out and the requirement necessary to do so. Action as organisational output is the fifth characteristic, based on the view that organisational activity is reflective or pre-set routines. The sixth characteristic is central coordination and control. The last characteristic is related to the political arena, where leaders may change governmental behaviour by deciding what organisations will play out which programmes where.

The organisational model emphasises the coherence of organisations. It sees an organisation as a place where all the constituent parts work towards a common objective. Consequently, in spite of competition between the units and the existence of hierarchy, an ultimate authority moderates the competition and enforces relative conformity to the goals or objectives of the organisation.

Governmental (bureaucratic) politics is the final model. Here, an leaders of organisations are themselves players in a competitive game. The model also assumes that decisions/policies are made in an organisational context. However, whereas the organisational model emphasises the element of coalition and coherence in the creation and choice of policy options, the bureaucratic politics model emphasises the role of competition. It assumes that organisations are by virtue of their segmentation and functional differentiations, places where people hold diverse opinions, have competing perceptions as well as incompatible strategies and objectives. Decision making in such a context is,

therefore, not the process of agreeing to a common objective but the process of competing for primacy in the choice of policy objectives.

In other words, decision makers in an organisation are hardly a monolithic group, but a desperate group of game players, each concerned with achieving specific objectives, or as aptly captured by Otubanjo (2001) as rival combatants. The players in such games focus not just on a single strategic objective but on many diverse international problems. As they have their own various conceptions of rational, organisational goals, the tendency is that government decisions and actions emerge as a synthesis of individual preferences and objectives. In other words, decisions are put together as in a collage, the various interest/perceptions and objectives of the game players. Thus, the organisational content, rather than making policy necessarily rational has a tendency of imposing irrationality on policy decisions.

Allison's models have been widely criticised although they continue to structure analysis of foreign, defence and other public policy decision-making processes. Kegley and Wittklof (1997) have argued that the rational actor model is deficient in recognising an impending problem because of neglect about or denial of its existence until direct evidence or a crisis precipitate a response. In addition, it implies that decisions are based on no, partial or obsolete information or, conversely, too much information or contradictory information. Other weaknesses include trade-offs in prioritising different national interests; time constraints that restrict the identification and analysis of alternative courses of action; and psychological restraints related to the decision maker's personality or emotional needs or passions that may blur the distinction between advancing personal goals and the national good. The organisational behaviour model has been criticised for its ability to promote organisational capture, a process in which an agency's support of or opposition to an issue or policy is associated with perceptions of whether its influence will be enhanced or reduced. It can also not be assumed that an organisation's mission and capabilities are coherently defined. The governmental (bureaucratic) politics model has been criticised for ignoring hierarchy in decision-making and for being imprecise. Its assumption that policy making necessarily proceeds by a process of bargaining has also been criticised.

#### **4.6 Critique of the decision-making approach**

1. The theory does not account for some of the details that go into decision -making, especially at the national level. For example, while attention is given to the actors involved in making decisions, in some cases, what goes on in the minds of those actors may not be adequately captured.

2. The bases of decisions are certainly more than what the theory has stated. There are obvious limitations to the rationality of an actor in taking a decision beyond the postulations of the theory.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

- i. Clearly explain the assumptions of the decision-making theory to contemporary political analysis.
- ii. Discuss the statement that decision maker is seen as operating within a framework of systematic factors.
- iii. How true is the statement that the decision-making approach in contemporary political analysis appears too ambitious?

### **4.7 Summary**

The decision-making approach represents of the major analytic frameworks in political studies with its heuristic value. Decision-making, as the unit has shown, is a function of both internal and external contexts. Nevertheless, in its strength as a theory are the weaknesses especially its oversimplification of man's rationality, which may not be reflective in every decision he takes.

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#### **4.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises**

1. The decision-making model is centered on how rational actors behave in the midst of uncertainty and risk, that is a process which results in the selection from a socially defined limited number of problematic alternative projects, of one project intended to bring about the particular future state of affairs envisaged by the decision maker.
2. Systematic factors influencing decision making include: previous experience, an anticipated positive outcome, cognitive biases in the light of perceptions and speculations, anticipated liability for the sunk expenses, time, cash, and exertion spent on a task, and demographic factors, notably socio-economic status, age, education or personality.
3. The theory ignores greater details in decision-making, especially what goes on in the inner mind of the decision maker.

## UNIT 5      NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

### Units Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives
- 5.3 Main Content
  - 3.1 What Is New Institutionalism?
  - 3.2 Features of New Institutionalism
  - 3.3 Three Strands of New Institutionalism
    - 3.3.1 Historical Institutionalism
    - 3.3.2 Rational Choice Institutionalism
- 3.4 Summary
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### 5.1 Introduction

The focus of this unit is on new institutionalism which is one of the new approaches in contemporary political analysis. The approach developed as a reaction to the behavioural approach in political studies, and became popular during the 1960s and 1970s. It seeks to explain the role institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes.

### 5.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Discuss the assumptions of the new institutionalism approach.
- Identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the new institutionalism

### 5.3 What is the new institutionalism?

Institutionalism is one of the new approaches to the study of politics and political institutions. It includes a set of theoretical ideas that relate to relationship between institutional characteristics and political agencies. Traditionalism encompasses philosophy, history, legal and institutional based analysis. However, as the behavioural scholars had noted, the focus of politics is not exclusively on structures and institutions but man should be the basis of analysis in investigating political phenomena. However, new institutionalism sees the behavioural school as highly deficient. Suberu (2006) identified five lapses that define the behavioral school. These are: contextual, reductionist, utilitarian, functional and instrumental.

**Contextual:** At the contextual level, the behavioural approach to political studies tends to see the causal link between the polity and the

society as running from the latter to the former rather than the other way round.

**Reductionist:** Because political behavior in its analysis reduces the macro-political issues to micro, as it believes that political phenomena are best presented and understood when its aggregate consequence are shown at the level of individual.

**Utilitarianism:** The utilitarian tendency has been attributed to behavioural approach to the study of politics as the ability to see political action as the product of calculation of self-interest or rational choice, and it was less inclined to see political actors as responding to obligations, duties and other institutionalized rituals.

**Functionalism:** Also, the behavioural perspective was also considered as being too functionalist because it sees history as an efficient mechanism for reaching a unique appropriate equilibrium and less concerned with the possibilities for mal-adaptation and non-uniqueness in historical development.

**Instrumentalism:** Behavioural approach sees all political actions as strategic moves towards self-conscious political action. The approach also was seen as instrumentalist in the sense that it is inclined to define decision-making, as well as the allocation of scarce resources, as the central focus and concern of life. More so, that it was less attentive to the ways in which political life is organized around the development of meaning through symbols, rituals and ceremonies.

The new institutionalism is a crusade to revive the old institutional approach that gives primacy to the study of institutions in political studies. The new institutional approach, strives to emphasize the important roles played by institutions in determining political outcomes. In any case, the difference between the old institutionalism and the new institutionalism are not precisely indistinguishable, rather the last option mixes components of the old institutionalism with the non-institutionalist styles of later theories of legislative issues.

### 5.3.1 Features of New institutionalism

- 1) **Relative autonomy or causal importance of institution:** the argument in this context borders on the position of the behaviouralists who contend that policy depends on society but the new institutionalism argues that there is a kind of interdependence between politics and social context. This is in line with the exposition of Suberu (2006) that in a democracy, politics does not depend on economic and social conditions



alone, but also on the way institutions are designed. Adherents of institutionalism believe that institutions are indeed actors in the context of politics and are capable of shaping the course of history.

- 2) **Casual complexity of history and the constraints of reductionism:** the Behavioralists embrace a reductionist approach in their analysis of political events by focusing on man as a unit of analysis, while the advocates of the new institutionalism are of the view that modern state is more complex than focusing on individuals in the state alone. There is a kind of complication or complexity between individuals, events as well as institutions as far as relationships are concerned.
- 3) **Social designs and the constraints of utilitarianism:** In the main, utilitarian principle as enunciated by Jeremy Bentham has to do with satisfaction. That is to say, the yardstick for measuring whether a government is good or bad is the measure of satisfaction the governed derives from such government. This notion of utilitarianism is seen as self-interest by the behaviouralists, but the advocate of the new institutionalism posit that, behaviour is not simply a function of self-interest, it is rather dictated by social norms and culture interfaced by institutions.
- 4) **Historical shortcoming and the restrictions of functionalism:** While both behaviouralists and functionalists stress the efficiency of history in understanding politics, the new institutionalism exposes the inefficiency of history as history is affected by the peculiar features of political motivation.
- 5) **Rituals at the social context and the limit of institutionalism:** the new institutionalism criticizes the behavioural school on the premise that it is outcome oriented in conception as far as collective choice is concerned. The new institutionalism argues further that, politics is more than outcome of events, it is more than authoritative decisions made collectively, politics and governance are indeed social rituals.

### 5.3.2 Three Schools of New Institutionalism

The new institutionalism has three strands. They are: Historical institutionalism, Rational Choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Brief explanations on these are discussed below:

- 1) **Historical Institutionalism**  
This approach uses the group and structuralist-functionalist theories as a springboard for analysis but go beyond them. It conceives the relationship between individuals and institutions in broader perspectives, it depicts relationship between institution

and actions, and it emphasizes the primacy of power in the analysis, operations and development of institutions. It also strives towards integrating analysis of institutions with other factors with implications on political outcomes.

## 2) **Rational Choice Institutionalism**

Rational choice institutionalism originates from the study of the behaviour of American Congress. Rational choice institutionalism presumes that, actors have preferences and they devise strategies and are very calculative in achieving their preferences. It also focuses on how institutions came about as well as the functions they perform. It also discusses how political outcomes are determined through strategic interaction.

- 3) Sociological Institutionalism: Its emergence is traceable to the field of organization theory. It came up as a protest against the distinction often drawn from parts of the social world that have different impact on culture. The salient features of this strand are that, its conception of institution is broader than that of political science; it portrays a world of sociological institutions seeking to give expression to their identity in a way that is socially appropriate.

## **SELF-ASSIGNMENT EXERCISES**

- i. How “new” is the new institutional approach in political studies?
- ii. Compare the historical and sociological variants of the new institutionalism as an approach in political analysis.
- iii. In what ways do institutions aid our understanding of politics and governance?

## **5.4 Summary**

In this unit, we discussed new institutionalism as an off-shoot of the behavioural revolution in political analysis. The three variations of the approach, historical, rational choice, and sociological new institutionalism were also analysed.

## **5.5 References/Further Reading**

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## **5.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assignment Exercises**

1. New institutionalism draws largely from existing theories, particularly the historical, sociological and rational-choice theories, among others.
2. While historical institutionalism is founded on the structural-functionalist perspective, the rational choice is embedded in the human actor with a focus on the cost-benefit analysis of a decision.
3. Institutionalism confers order on the political process. The political analyst is able to determine what institution performs what role. Where there are deviations, the analyst is able to explain why?