

BLOCK: I
POLITICAL THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION

Unit 1 : What is Political Theory?

Unit 2 : Why do we need Political Theory?

Unit 3 : Historical Tradition of Political Theory

Unit 4 : Contemporary Debates in Political Theory

Unit 5 : Decline of Political Theory

UNIT: 1
WHAT IS POLITICAL THEORY?

Unit Structure:

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- 1.2 Objectives**
- 1.3 Meaning and Definitions of Political Theory**
- 1.4 Nature, Scope and Subject Matter of Political Theory**
- 1.5 Growth of Political Theory**
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1.1 Introduction

Political theory is an interdisciplinary venture. The traditions, approaches and styles of political theory varies. But there is a common structure of theoretizing, criticizing and diagnosing the norms, practices and organization of political action of past and present. Political theory is a set of idea which explains the political, social and economic condition of the state. The political behavior of individual and states can be studied and analysed in the form of political theory. Hence, it constitutes an important part of political science. It is not possible to consider any subject as an academic discipline without political theory.

Here in this unit, you are going to learn the meaning and definitions of political theory. Political theory deals with the political aspect. This unit shall also help you in analyzing the nature, scope and subject matter of political theory. After reading this unit you shall also be able to trace the growth of political theory by analyzing the phases from ancient Greek to modern period. Here in this unit, an attempt has also been made to familiarize you with different types of political theory.

1.2 Objectives

This unit has been designed to familiarize you with the concept political theory. After reading this unit you will be able to–

- *understand* the meaning and definitions of political theory,
- *analyse* the nature, scope and subject matter of political theory,
- *trace* the evolution of political theory,
- *examine* the types of political theory.

1.3 Meaning and Definitions of Political Theory

Before discussing what political theory is, let us discuss what theory is. The word theory has been originated from the Greek word *theoria*. It means a well-focused mental look taken at something in a state of contemplation with the intent to grasp or understand it. Arnold Brecht has defined the word theory in two senses. In the broader sense, theory implies the entire teaching on a subject by a thinker. In the narrow sense, theory implies the explanatory thought only. Theory guides the practice. It adds much to what is merely described. It also clarifies hypotheses. Most importantly, theory explains an issue which needs both reason and vision. Political theory deals with the political aspect of the society. In broader sense political theory means anything about politics or relevant to politics. In narrower sense, Sabine defined political theory as a disciplined investigation of political problems. According to Bluhm, ‘political theory is an explanation of what politics is all about, a general understanding of the political world, a frame of reference. Without one we should be unable to recognize an event as political, decide anything about why it happened, judge whether it was good or bad or decide that was likely to happen next.’ Andrew Hacker defined political theory as a combination of a disinterested search for the principles of good state and good society on the one hand, and a disinterested search for political knowledge and social reality on the other. According to David Held, “political theory is a network of concepts and generalizations about political life involving ideas, assumptions and statements about the nature,

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purpose and key features of government, state and society and about the political capabilities of human beings.”

On the basis of these definitions you are now able to sum up the meaning of political theory. It is important to mention here that political theory includes the area of politics only. It means political theory deals with issues like political life of a citizen, his political behavior, his political ideas, the government he establishes and the task the government performs. Political theory also means the methods it applies which are description, explanation, or investigation of any political phenomenon. You should remember here that political theory tries to understand the concepts in relation to social, economic, psychological, ecological, historical, moral etc. Political theory wants to build a good state in a good society. In a nutshell, political theory explains the political order. It needs mention here that the traditions, approaches and styles of political theory varies. But there is a common structure of theoretizing, criticizing and diagnosing the norms, practices and organization of political action of past and present. The theories of politics can be expressed at low, high or middle ranges of generality. V. V. Dyke compares it with a tree. He opined that this theoretical system is like a tree and the outermost small branches represent the data or facts with which we start.

It is important to mention here that political theory lack a core identity. Political theory is a set of idea which explains the political, social and economic condition of the state. Individuals and state's political behavior can be studied and analysed in the form of political theory. Hence, it constitutes an important part of political science. It is not possible to consider any subject as an academic discipline without political theory. You must remember here that political theory is connected with political system and political system is associated with the social system. And social system is dependent on the period it exists and environment. Political theory is concerned with two different types of knowledge. First one is ideology. Ideologies are political belief systems of a general and comprehensive sort. The second one is philosophy. This type of knowledge is concerned with political philosophy which deals with political thought.

1.4 Nature, Scope and Subject Matter of Political Theory

You have already learnt that political theory can be explained in terms of political activity. There are various negative aspects associated with political activity like cynicism, skepticism, demonstrating self-seeking behavior, hypocrisy, manipulation of attitudes etc. Hence, the subject matter of political theory varies from time to time. From the early Greek tradition till eighteenth century, political theory included what politics ought to be. After that till the first half of the 20th century, political theory dealt with the nature and structure of government as a decision making body. In the later phase, a group of American theorists declared political theory as dead while at the same time a group of British theorists advocated the usefulness of political theory. It is important to mention here that political theory is the disciplined investigation of political problems. These problems include the problems associated with the institution of government. It studies the relationship of government with the outer world. As political system is a part of social system, it needs to include in itself the non political issues like economic, moral, geopolitical, cultural, ecological etc. You have already learnt that political theory cannot exist in isolation. In fact, political theory explains what is political as well as links it to what is non political. According to Arnold Brecht, political theory includes various things. It includes groups. The existence of groups implies clash of interest which demands reconciliation of opposing interest. This is also a part of scope of political theory. The group life embraces the concepts like power, influence, control, legitimacy, justice etc which automatically comes under the scope of political theory. Political theory also includes action or policy which is an integral part of political theory. The scope and subject matter of political theory also includes its agents and actors. It is important to mention here that the elites form an indispensable part of political theory. Choice and decision making also form a part of political theory. The study of political theory is more quantitative and formal in nature especially in USA. But recently the perestroika movement has changed the trend. This movement has emphasized on the qualitative and interpretive study of politics. It is important to know here that while some associates political theory with political thought, others associate it with political philosophy.

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The subject matter of political theory examines the link between political and non political.

SAQ

Q. Trace the relationship between political theory and philosophy.

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Again, it needs mention here that political theory can be associated with history in the sense that it tries to understand the time, place and circumstances in which it evolves. Philosophy and political theory has a connection. It is impossible to connect to present without connecting it to past or future. The nature of political theory matches with philosophy as it connects between past and future. Political theory explains the nature of the things. Moreover, it also examines why things really exist.

You should learn here that scholars like Arthur Bentley, George Catlin, David Easton, Robert Dahl etc opine political theory as science. Though it is not a science like physics, chemistry or mathematics, yet it admits concepts and norms which are both observable and testable. Moreover, it also requires reason and rationalism. From that sense, political theory can be termed as science. Moreover, political theory can be termed as social science due to its methodology, approach and analysis. Again, like science, in political theory, the conclusions are drawn after study, observation and experiments.

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Q. Can political theory be described as pure science? Explain.

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It is important to mention here that three types of statements are associated with political theory.

- A. Empirical statement. It is based on observation through sense experience.
- B. Logical statement. It is based on reasoning like two plus two is four.
- C. Evaluative statement. It is based on value judgment like men are born free and equal.

You should learn here that political theory mostly relies on empirical and logical statements. It is opined that different persons with correct observation and correct reasoning will get the similar conclusions. Therefore, empirical and logical statements can be verified. On the other hand, evaluative statements are associated with group or individual preferences. That is why it is not possible to draw a correct conclusion as the nature of the individual varies.

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Check Your Progress- 1

1. Who defined political theory as the entire teaching on a subject by a thinker?
2. “Political theory is a combination of a disinterested search for the principles of good state and good society on the one hand, and a disinterested search for political knowledge and social reality on the other.” Who said this?
3. Individual’s and state’s political behavior can be studied and analysed in the form of political theory. (write true or false).
4. Till the first half of the 20th century, political theory dealt with the nature and structure of government as a decision making body. (write true or false.)
5. The elites do not come under the subject matter of political theory. (write true or false)
6. Name one scholar who advocated that political theory is science.
7. What are the three types of statements associated with political theory?
8. What is evaluative statement?

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1.5 Growth of Political Theory

You have already learnt above that during the ancient greek and medieval period, the political theory emphasized on the ethical nature of the state. It implies the objectives of the state which the state will cherish to achieve. The history of political theory has dealt with various fundamental ideas from ancient Greece to present. To understand the growth of political theory we must understand various concepts and ideas prevailing during that time.

It has already been mentioned above that political theory is nothing but a disciplined investigation of what politics is. It has already been mentioned above that during the period from ancient Greeks to the end of 18th century, political theory was concerned with what politics ought to be. From 19th century to first half of 20th century, political theory dealt with nature and structure of government as decision making body. Then came a period when there was clash between two groups of people specially the Americans and the British people regarding the status of the political theory. While the Americans showed the demise of political theory, the British people advocated for the role of political theory as a guide to political action. It is important to mention here that political theory in this era is mainly concerned with why and what of the institutions of the government, and the political system where the government operates.

It is important to learn here that the growth of political theory can be divided into three main stages. These are as follows.

1.5.1 Classical Political Theory

The classical political theory lacks the elements of science. This phase is purely dominated by philosophy. Still there were thinkers like Aristotle and Thomas Hobbes who emphasized on the element of science in their theories. This phase began with the ancient greek culture and continued till the beginning of the 19th century. The classical political theory does a systematic enquiry. The aim of this systematic enquiry is to acquire reliable knowledge about the matters concerning the people. The philosophical element in this phase of political theory wanted to provide a rational basis for the beliefs

and actions. This phase is associated with the common involvements. Political theory in this phase aims at the whole. It also analyses the significant parts of the whole, how these parts work, their effects on the quality of the political life etc. The classical period of political theory defined it as a unit of structures dependent on various interrelated structures. These structures imply activity, relationships and belief. Activity includes ruling, warfare, education, religious practices, production of commodities etc. Relationships involve those between social classes, between types of superiority and inferiority, between the authorities and the subjects etc. Belief implies anything concerning gods, justice, equality, natural law and the like. This phase of political theory also analysed concepts like system, balance, equilibrium, stability, harmony etc. It also emphasized on the sources of conflicts, anarchy, instability, anomic, revolution etc. The political theory in this phase emphasized on the comparative study for providing a more rational output. The development of classifications like monarchy, aristocracy, democracy or concepts like law, citizenship, justice etc prove it. Again it needs to be mentioned here that, classical political theory is ethical in nature rooted in moral outlook. It emphasized on the best possible or best.

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1.5.2 Modern Political Theory

The modern political theory is dominated by the trends like institutional-structural, positivistic, empirical, behavioural, post-behavioural, Marxist etc. the modern political theory can further be divided into two phases i.e. the liberal which includes the individualist, the elitist and the pluralists. The second phase is the Marxist which includes dialectic materialist. The liberal tradition began from 15th to 16th century. The modern political theorists denounce the historical- normative- evaluative trend of classical phase and emphasized on the scientific- empirical- behavioural study. This phase emphasizes on present rather than past, objective rather than subjective, analytic rather than philosophic, explanatory rather than descriptive, process oriented rather than purpose oriented, scientific rather than theoretical etc. the modern political theory is purely based on facts and data which can be

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accumulated, explained and can be used for testing hypothesis. It also focuses on studying human behavior and generalizing it. Moreover, facts and values have also been separated. It adopts self conscious, explicit and quantitative method for research and study. It also emphasizes on inter disciplinary synthesis. It focuses more on realism than on utopianism. You should learn here that the phase of modern political theory is associated with both facts and values, description and prescription, explanation and valuation etc. The later period of modern political theory was dominated by the phase of Marxist theories. The Marxist theory points the direction of movement from lower to higher stage of development. The Marxist believes that between mind and matter, it is the matter which dictates while the mind only reflects. And the own law of evolution inherent in the matter helps in the evolution of it. It needs mention here that according to the Marxists theory, man, labour and nature are the main components of social development. The advocates during this phase of development of political theory opined that politics justify the class character of a society. The politics got its significance till class society exists. The Marxists political theory also opines that the growth of political theory implies the destruction of the old structure of the society and building the new structure of the society.

1.5.3 Contemporary Political Theory

The contemporary phase of political theory believes that political theory is more than philosophy or science. The mere inclination of political theory towards philosophy makes it non relevant and mere dependence on science makes political theory deviate from the path of serving as a vision. The contemporary theory confines itself to the explanation, investigation and comprehension of what relates to politics. One of the theorist of this phase, Brian Barry, studied the relation between institution and principles. The main feature of this theory is to examine the significance of text in their historical context.

Check Your Progress- 2

1. The phase of classical political theory is purely dominated by science. (write true or false)
2. The phase of classical political theory lacks the element of philosophy. (write true or false)
3. Mention the trends that dominated the phase of modern political theory.
4. The modern political theory can be divided into two phases viz. liberal and _____. (fill in the blanks)
5. The phase of modern political theory emphasized on the scientific- empirical- behavioural study. (write true or false)
6. The facts and values have been separated in the phase of modern political theory. (write true or false)
7. According to the Marxist theory, what are the main components of social development?
8. Name one theorist from the phase of contemporary political theory.

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1.6 Types of Political Theory

Andrew Hacker in his book 'Political Theory' divides political theory into two categories viz. traditional political approach and modern political approach. The traditional political approach deals with the history of political ideas. Modern political approach deals with the modern political behavior and scientific study.

You should learn here that David Easton has divided political theory into two parts. Value theory and causal theory. Value theories are traditional theories which mainly focus on human preferences. The causal theories explain the relationship between different political events.

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Stop to Consider

Types of Political Theory According to Ronald Pennock:

According to Ronald Pennock, political theory can be divided into five parts. The first one is speculative theory. This theory examines the establishment of ideal social structures and systems on the basis of imaginations. The second theory i.e. the ethical theory describes that the discussions about the state and political life are based on the question of what ought to be and ought not to be. The next theory that is the legal theory explains the state is a legal institution and hence all the relations of political life are reviewed from a legal point of view. The fourth theory is sociological theory. This theory observes state as a social organization and emphasize on empirical theory. The last one is scientific theory. This theory adopts the method of reaching general conclusion through observation, analysis etc. based on information and statistical data.

It is important to mention here that, Rajeev Bhargava in his book, 'Political Theory; An Introduction' divides political theory into three categories. These are as follows –

1. Explanatory Theory:

The first one is explanatory theory. According to this theory, different political theorists have differently interpreted the political theories based on their views. Moreover, every theorist has found their story acceptable. You should learn here that Rajeev Bhargava has beautifully explains this. If we take the example of birth of capitalist socio- economic formation, we find several different explanations. For example, Karl Marx has explained the relationship between productive force and means of production as the reason behind the birth of socio economic structure of capitalism. On the other hand, Max Weber has believed that, capitalism could not have come into existence without a change in the cultural climate, in the attitudes of a specific set of people.

2. Normative Theory:

The normative theory believes that most people can endorse. This theory explains the things which help a system to go from imperfect to perfect.

3. Contemplative Theory:

The contemplative theory explains the changes and developments like satellites, man made objects stayed in skies, atom bombs, birth of a new language of mathematical symbols etc. which impacted the human lives.

It is important to mention here that the above discussion has led us to the conclusion that political theory can be divided into three important categories.

1.6.1 Normative or prescriptive or traditional political theory

This theory provides certain formulas which help in transforming the imperfect social order to a perfect social order. You should learn here that normative political theory is also called the prescriptive political theory. When a person become sick he/she goes to a doctor. The doctor gives a prescription of medicines. The patient takes those medicines and gets better. In the same way, the normative theory, prescribes certain ways to make the state a ideal or perfect one. The state adopts those prescribed ways and heals the sick system. It needs mention here that in this type of political theory, no division is made between political theory and political philosophy. The traditional normative political theory emphasizes on the presentation of values. This theory systematically thinks about the government, state and other government institutions. The theorists during that period based their theories on value. For eg., Plato's ideal state, Hegel's dialectics, divine theory of state, social contract theories etc. The most important goal of these theorists is to establish a good order of society. The normative theory has dominated the field of political theory from the ancient time to the 18th century.

From the above discussion we can summarise the features of normative theory. These are as follows :-

1. Normative political theory is a value based political theory.

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2. The normative theory mainly focuses on what ought to be. It is not concerned with what it is or what is going on.
3. This theory focuses on values which are important to achieve social harmony, stability and unity in our common life.
4. Normative political theory aims at establishing a good order society.
5. This theory is based on practical philosophy that is related to the government.

1.6.2 Empirical or Modern or Scientific or Descriptive Political Theory

You should learn here that this theory has emerged in the 20th century. This theory is also called the modern theory and the empirical theory. This theory depends primarily on data. It focuses on observation and examination of data. And aims at making political reality dependent on information. Therefore it explains what is actually happening rather than concentrating on what should be happened or supposed to happen. It needs mention here that this theory aims at arriving at conclusions through scientific interpretation of information. This is why this theory is also known as scientific theory. You should remember here that this theory focuses on the political behavior of individuals. A conclusion regarding the political culture of a group can be derived from observing the political behavior of the members of that group and through quantitative assessment of that behavior.

If we take one example like women's groups are protesting against government. We need to take into considerations questions like, why they are protesting, what are the reasons behind these protests etc. and for finding the reasons, a field work is necessary. The protests need to be observed actively. Then data need to be collected from various sources. Also data need to be collected through interviewing the protestors. Then these data need to be analysed using scientific methods. And after that the conclusions can be drawn by generalizing the findings. This is how the empirical political theory works.

The features of empirical political theory can be summarized as follows :-

1. Data collected through experiments or observations can only be considered as the source of knowledge.
2. For interpreting collected data, use of scientific methods are important.
3. This theory focuses on what is happening rather than what ought to be.
4. This theory is value neutral as it does not rely on values but on facts.
5. It focuses on quantitative assessment of individual's political behavior.

It needs mention here that the empirical theory has helped in broadening the subject matter of political science by including concepts like, elite, group theory, their role in political system, political system and sub system, structural functional analysis, decision making approach, political culture, political socialization etc. This theory is enriched from the contributions of the various famous scientists like, Max Weber, Graham Wallas, Arthur Bentley etc.

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Decline of Political Theory:

The norms, practices and organization of political action is analysed and explained with the help of political theory. It also helped in analyzing what a better political world would look like and how to achieve it. Political theory deals with the issues like what justice requires of citizens and states, what are the essential rights and liberties etc. Political theory critically analyse the process of organizing state and society. This critical analysis is the key to the maximization of harmony and prosperity as well as to provide the conditions for individual self realization. In the second half of the 20th century, new debates emerged regarding the nature and status of political theory and some scholars have advocated the decline of political theory. David Easton has pointed out certain reasons behind the decline of political theory. These are historicism, moral relativism, confusion between science and theory or craziness for science and lastly hyper factualism. According to Easton, the lack of interest towards

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developing new ideas among the political theorists and there inclination towards the past ideas was the main reason behind the decline of political theory. Again, the complete elimination of values has also contributed towards the decline of the political theory. This over dependency on science has led to the decline of the political theory. Moreover, Easton has also opined that lack of theoretical dimension in the research studies has contributed to the decline of political theory.

1.6.3 Contemporary Political Theory

The reemergence of Europe after the World War II, and changes in the ideologies like socialism and communism, brought about a new dimension in the field of political science. The contemporary political theory is describing the explanation, investigation and comprehension of concepts, principles and institutions of politics. David Held has discussed about the four tasks of contemporary political theory. Firstly, it is philosophical in nature. It means the theory is concerned with the normative and conceptual framework. Secondly, it is also empirical in nature. It is associated with the problems, understanding and explanation of the concept. Thirdly, the theory has a historical aspect as well. It examines the key concepts of political theory in historical context. Fourthly, this theory is strategic in nature. It implies that it emphasizes on the feasibility of moving from where we are to where we might likely to be.

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Q. Do you think empirical political theory is more useful than the normative political theory? Give reasons in favour of your answer. (80 words)

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It can be summarized from the above discussion that over the period, we can find different types of political theory. Since the ancient times, the normative theory has dominated the political field and focuses on state and government. This theory is value based theory. In the 20th century, the rise of value free empirical theory has influenced the whole scenario. This theory is based on observation, data collection and testing.

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Check Your Progress- 3

1. Who divided political theory into value theory and causal theory?
2. What is speculative theory according to Ronald Pennock?
3. The ethical theory according to Ronald Pennock describes that the discussions about the state and political life are based on the question of what ought to be and ought not to be. (write true or false)
4. Define sociological theory according to Ronald Pennock.
5. What is Rajeev Bhargava's explanatory theory?
6. Why normative political theory is also called prescriptive political theory?
7. Write the features of empirical political theory.
8. What are the four tasks of contemporary political theory according to David Held?

1.7 Summing Up

After reading this unit now you are able to understand the meaning and definitions of political theory. Political theory is a set of ideas which is connected with political as well as social system. Political theory tries to understand the concepts in relation to social, economic, psychological, ecological, historical, moral etc. It explains the political order. Here in this unit, the nature, scope and subject matter of political theory have also been discussed. Political theory explains what is political as well as link it to what is non-political. This unit has also familiarized you with the growth of political

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theory during the different phases. In the ancient greek to the end of the 18th century political theory was defined as disciplined investigation of what politics is. Till the first half of the 20th century, political theory mainly dealt with the nature and structure of government as decision making body. The next phase of the growth of political theory witnessed the debate on the decline of political theory. After reading this unit, you have also learnt the various types of political theory. The three important categories of political theory are normative or prescriptive or traditional political theory, empirical or modern or scientific or descriptive political theory and lastly the contemporary political theory. This unit has helped you in understanding what is political theory.

1.8 References/Suggested Readings

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UNIT: 2

WHY DO WE NEED POLITICAL THEORY?

Unit Structure :

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Objectives

2.3 Why we need political theory

2.3.1 Functions of Political Theory

2.4 Summing Up

2.5 Reference/Suggested Readings

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2.1 Introduction

In the previous unit you have already learnt that political theory deals with issues like political life of a citizen, his political behavior, his political ideas, the government he establishes and the task the government performs. Political theory explains the political order. It needs mention here that the traditions, approaches and styles of political theory varies. But there is a common structure of theorizing, criticizing and diagnosing the norms, practices and organization of political action of past and present.

Here in this unit, you are going to learn the importance of political theory. We are going to study why we need political theory.

2.2 Objectives

This unit has been designed to familiarize you with the concept political theory. After reading this unit you will be able to–

- *understand* the functions of political theory,
- *analyse* the role of political theory,
- *understand* the importance of political theory.

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2.3 Why we need Political Theory?

We as individuals belong to a society and political theory shapes our thought process towards that society. This is why it is necessary to study political theory. Political theory helps us in explaining what is going on around us. Political theory also helps us in understanding our rights and duties as a member of the society. The study of political theory also helps us in deciding what should be and what should not be. It also helps us in solving the ethical problems. Political theory is useful to understand the political development and political crisis in the world.

The political theory makes it easy for the individuals to understand the society where he/she belongs. In a society, ideas are carried by the individuals. These ideas and concepts help in understanding the position of an individual in the society. It also helps to realise the identity of the individual. For suppose the answer to the question who I am can be answered as the citizen of a particular country. The next question comes to mind then will be what is a citizen. This idea of citizenship is defined by political theory. Just like this, political theory shapes all our ideas like equality, freedom, rights, justice etc. political theory shapes our ideas as political animal. Another example is that suppose you are deprived of some luxuries that others are enjoying. The question will arise in your mind why you are deprived. The concept of hierarchy and class will answer your questions. The Marxian theory of class struggle will help you in understanding the concept of class.

2.3.1 Functions of political theory

Political theory performs several functions. These are as follows :-

1. Understanding what is going on in the society and the world as well

Political theory helps in understanding about the happenings in the society and the world. It guides the individual to collect data from the political events and do a systematic study of the events.

2. Political theory plays explanatory role

Political theory explains the events are occurring. If we take example of a woman organisation protesting against the government, it is well understood that there are some reasons behind the protest. With the help of political theory we can understand the theoretican and conceptual frameworks explaining these reasons. The theory will help one understand the concepts like equality, empowerment, rights, justice etc. and these concepts will help in understanding the reasons behind the protests.

3. Political theory solves ethical questions.

Political theory not only explains the events but at the same time it also tells the society whether the events are good or bad, right or wrong. It extracts the truth from the society. It also sets some criterion to decide how bad or good that truth can be.

4. It tells us what ought to be or not to be

Political theory gives an idea about the good ordered society. It also tells us what makes a society perfect. Political theory also offers solution if anything wrong occurs.

5. Justification of human actions

Human actions are justified by political theory. Political theory provides proper reason justifying human actions. For example the just war theory justified the invasion of Iraq by usa in 2003.

Political theory performs various tasks. According to davidEaston, following are the functions performed by political theory :-

- a. Political theory identifies the significant political variablkes. It also describes the mutual relations among the variables through an analytic scheme. This helps in making research meaningful and arranging facts leading to generalisations.
- b. Political theory provides theoretical framework to the workers in the field. It helps various researches to be compared. It also help in the verification of conclusions, drawn up by earlier researches,

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and may also reveal the areas of research which require empirical work.

- c. As political theory provides theoretical framework, it makes research more reliable.

As political theory is both science and philosophy, the area goes beyond science. As a science political theory needs to study the phenomena but as a philosophy, political science needs to understand the phenomena. It not only studies the present but also studies for what the present exists. It deals with the future. Political theory not only develop general principles for evaluating the social structure, but also designs appropriate institutions, procedures and policies.

The purpose a political theory serves or supposed to serve and the task performed by it defines the significance of political theory. To understand the political reality and if necessary to change it, the society adopts some system of values as its ideal and these values are forms of political theory. The political theory provides the following things and that is why it becomes important——

- a. Political theory describes the political phenomena
- b. Explanation of political phenomena based on philosophical, religious or empirical studies.
- c. Political theory provides proposals for the selection of political goals and actions.
- d. Political theory provides moral judgements.

Human beings often face the problem like how to live together. Politics gives that opportunity to engage themselves in the management of collective affairs of society. Political theory has helped in evolving various ideas and approaches related to nature and purpose of the state, the bases of political authority, vision of an ideal state, best form of government, relations between the states and the individuals etc. political theory also helps in evolving ideas like rights, liberty, equality, property, justice etc. political theory also explains the relation between one concept and another like between liberty and equality, equality and property, justice and property etc. these concepts

are directly related to the concepts like peace, order, harmony, stability, unity etc. interpretation and implementation of the values like liberty, equality and justice decides the peace and harmony in the society. There are numerous issues and problems in the contemporary states. These include poverty, over- population, corruption, racial and ethnic tensions, environment pollution, conflicts among individuals, groups as well as nations. Political theory studies these problems in a more accurate manner and also provides alternative course of action to the politicians. In the words of david held, without this systematic study by the political theory, the politicians will be ignorant and wouls politics as power. Political theory is important as it offers systematic study about the nature and purpose of state and government. Political theory correlates the socio political phenomena with ideals. Individuals in the society get aware of his/ her rights and duties in the society through political theory. In short, political theory explains the nature and problems of the socio- economic system like poverty, violence, corruption, ethnicity etc. you must remember here that political theory not only helps in understanding and explaining the social reality but also changing it. Political theory helps in evolving ways and means to change society either through reform or revolution. Correct theories help them in choosing the right alternative.

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SAQ

Q. Do you think political theory has lost its significance in the contemporary time? Explain.

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Political theory is not easy and simple. Political theory is an elaborate and consistent exercise which aims at achieving a better world of politics. Political

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theory is not only a discipline but also an intellectual exercise and activity. It is both a science and philosophy.

John Plamenatz in his essay “the case of political theory”, provides the uses of political theory which are as follows :-

- (i) Political theory is a serious and difficult intellectual activity and the need for this kind of exercise, in modern times, is indeed much greater.
- (ii) It is a study of values, norms and goals, though it does not produce the same kind of knowledge as empirical political theory does.
- (iii) It is a study of theories which have, historically, powerfully influenced men’s images of themselves, and of society, and profoundly determined their social and political behaviour.
- (iv) It has an element of socially conditioned ideology. This ideology may be an illusion, and yet, unless man had these illusions, the course of social development would not have been what it is and
- (v) It produces a coherent system of political principles which can guide us to an appropriate political action.

Stop to Consider

David Easton on Decline of political theory:

With the revolutionary achievement of science and technology, the normative political theory is slowly declining. According to David Easton, there are four main reasons behind the decline of political theory. These can be explained as follows :

1. Historicism is the first reason. It means undue importance on historical studies.
2. Two movements viz. moral relativism and scienticism also contributed towards the decline of political theory. Moral relativism as a movement began with Hume and popularised by Max Weber and Comte. This movement emphasised social scientists to be

neutral. Values cannot be transplanted from one age group to another. Therefore these values are not universal. As there is no universal value, there cannot be any universal theory.

3. The craze for science also contributed towards the decline of political theory. According to the scientists studying the actual behaviour is more important than studying what ought to be.
4. Hyper factualism is another reason behind this decline.

C. Wright mills also describes the significance of political theory in the following words–

- (i) “Firstly, it is itself a social reality; it is an ideology in terms of which certain institutions and practices are justified and others attacked; it provides the phrases in which demands are raised, criticisms made, exhortations delivered, proclamations formulated, and at times, policies determined.
- (ii) Second, it is an ethic, an articulation of ideal, which, at various levels of generality and sophistication, is used in judging man, events and movements and as goals and guidelines for aspirations and policies.
- (iii) Third, it designates agencies of action, of the means of reform, revolution and conservation. It contains strategies and programmes that embody both ends and means. It designates, in short, the historical levels by which ideals are to be won or maintained after they have been won.
- (iv) Fourth, it contains theories of man, society, and history, or at least assumptions about how society is made up of, and how it works. It tells us how to find out where we stand, and where we may be going.”

Political theory enables a man to understand himself, his polity and his history. It also analyse why the world has come into being and the crisis facing by the

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world. It also tries to find ways to resolve that crisis. Political theory explains, illuminates, understands, evaluates, enlightens and alters. Political theory describes political reality without judging on what is being depicted.

Political theory enables us to organise our knowledge, orient our research and interpret our findings. Political theory is both a part of science and philosophy. As a part of science, political theory is one that finds the truth of life. And as a part of philosophy, political theory attempts to find out what the truth is in a particular situation. It also tries to generalise from that what the truth would be in a different state of circumstances.

When political life is scientifically analysed, it becomes easier to solve the problems of our social life. For example, the knowledge of geology can help in understanding the cause of earthquake. It can also provide an insight how in how to prevent the havoc caused by it. Similarly, study of political theory can help us in understanding the causes of conflict and violence in society and how to prevent them. Again, the knowledge of physics help us to know how to generate electricity from our thermal and water resources. Likewise, theory can enable us to secure development of society from our human resources. Again, like the knowledge of medical science can help us control and cure various diseases of human body, political theory can also guide us to find remedies of political instability and vatrious types of social crises.

When there is something wrong in our society and polity, we find logical reasons for criticising it. We also try to create a good society. Political philosophers like plato, Aristotle, st. Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Mill, Macphersonetc severely criticised the prevailing ills of the society and suggested their own sets of reconstructions. These proposed suggestions are not final truth. But it gives enough insight into the social life and remedies. On the basis of these suggestions, we can draw our own scheme of reconstructions. For example, Plato pointed out the ill effects of democracy, Machiavelli pointed out the selfish nature of human beings, marx analysed the sources of owners and non owners of property etc. these theories can provide remedies to various ills in the society.

Political theory also helps in clarification of concept which is very important for development of knowledge. It can help in determining the technical

meaning of the terms used in political discourse. Again, the terms like authority, social class, liberty, equality, justice, democracy etc are used by different schools of thoughts to indicate different meanings. Political theory gives a precise meaning to these terms which are acceptable by the advocates belonging to different schools of thought.

Political theory encourages a healthy debate among the advocates of different schools of thoughts. It provides an opportunity to understand each other's viewpoint. It leads to mutual respect and toleration among us and prompts us to resolve our differences peacefully. In short, political theory describes, criticises and reconstructs.

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Check Your Progress

1. Which among the following is a function of political theory?
 - a. Political theory helps us in understanding what is going on in the society.
 - b. Political theory plays explanatory role.
 - c. Political theory solves ethical questions.
 - d. All of the above
2. What are the functions of political theory according to David Easton?
3. Political theory describes the _____ phenomena. (fill in the blanks)
4. Political theory provides _____ framework. (fill in the blanks)
5. Explain the uses of political theory?
6. Write a note on C. W. Mill's notion of significance of political theory.

2.4 Summing Up

After reading this unit you have understood that political theory provides solution to every political problem in the society. It also justifies human actions. A theory in a discipline helps in understanding the reality of the

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discipline. Theories conceptualise innumerable facts having uniformities. A theory helps in understanding the subject matter of the discipline. It also helps in understanding the existence, survival and recognition of the discipline as autonomous discipline. Political theory helps in developing the techniques and methods of political science. Political theory evaluates the existing knowledge of political science and expands it. Political theory also suggest new areas of research. It helps in policy making of the government. It also integrates the different areas of branches, areas and sub areas. Political theory defines the status of political science among other disciplines.

2.5 References/Suggested Readings

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UNIT: 3

HISTORICAL TRADITION OF POLITICAL THEORY

Unit Structure:

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Historical Tradition of Political Theory

3.3.1 Characteristics

3.3.2 Why historical tradition to political theory is important?

3.4 Summing Up

3.5 References/Suggested Readings

3.1 Introduction

In the previous units we have already learnt what is political theory and why we need political theory. Political theory is a set of idea which explains the political, social and economic condition of the state. Individuals and state's political behavior can be studied and analysed in the form of political theory. Hence, it constitutes an important part of political science. We have also learnt that we as individuals belong to a society and political theory shapes our thought process towards that society. This is why it is necessary to study political theory. Political theory helps us in explaining what is going on around us. Political theory also helps us in understanding our rights and duties as a member of the society. Here in this unit we are going to analyse the historical tradition of political theory. Historical tradition believes that various factors like age, place, situation etc help in understanding political phenomena.

3.2 Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to—

- *understand* the historical perspective of political theory,
- *examine* the characteristics of this tradition,
- *analyse* the importance of history in understanding political theory.

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3.3 Historical Tradition of Political Theory

Political theory is not a product of a single period. It is also not a by product of research of any single person or few persons. In fact, it is the history of development which includes work, research and philosophy of numerous people. This tradition is dominated by values and philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and few others. They believed in ideal state. It has already been mentioned above that historical tradition believes that various factors like age, place, situation etc help in understanding political phenomena. Political thinkers like Machiavelli, Sabine and Dunning believe that politics and history are intricately related and the study of politics always should have a historical perspective. Sabine is of the view that Political Science should include all those subjects which have been discussed in the writings of different political thinkers from the time of Plato. Every past is linked with the present and thus the historical analysis provides a chronological order of every political phenomenon.

Many theorists have attempted to build theory on the basis of insights and resources from history. Sabine was one of the main advocates of this approach. He explained that a question like what is the nature of political theory can be answered descriptively. The answer can be found in how the theory has responded to the historical events and specific situations. By this he analyses that political theory can be situation based. The historical situations set a problem and this problem is solved by the mechanism devised through the theory. Cobban, in his 'Introducing Political Theory' also stated that the traditional mode, in which a sense of history is instilled to the full, is the right way to consider the problems of political theory. History is a valuable guide in the endeavour of our theory building. It also hints that it is possible to think in ways other than those which are fashionable and dominant, besides shedding light on the sources. History also teaches us the failings of the past generations. It also contributes to our normative vision. It enlighten us that our social and political universe is a product of things whose root lies in the past. We come to know about our moral values, norms and moral expectations and also from where they have come. We Can also interrogate these values and critically assess their utility. But history can also be a hindrance if not accepted with criticisms.

The classical historical tradition in political theory contains the age old ideas which stood the test of time. It is not that these ideas are always valid, but the authors of these ideas have been successful in raising the key issues. The historical tradition of political theory embraces the works written in the Greek and the roman period. This tradition has put forwarded a completely different understanding of politics, city and society than we have today. This can be count both as limitation and advantage of this tradition. It has provided the basis for almost most of the theories of contemporary time. For example, theory of communism can be traced back to Plato's writing. The term 'historical approach' to politics may be used in two senses. Firstly, it may denote the process of arriving at the laws governing politics through an analysis of historical Normative means establishing, relating to, or deriving from a standard or norm, especially of behaviour. 1 It is characterized by idealism; unrealistically aiming for perfection. 2 events, that is events of the past, as exemplified by the theories propounded by Hegel and Marx. In the second place, historical approach stands for an attempt at understanding politics through a historical account of political thought of the past, as exemplified by George H. Sabine's 'A History of Political Theory'. Critics of the historical approach point out that it is not possible to understand ideas of the past ages in terms of the contemporary ideas and concepts. Moreover, ideas of the past are hardly any guide for resolving the crises of the present-day world which were beyond comprehension of the past thinkers.

Stop to Consider

The difference between Classical Political Theory and Modern Political Theory:

Classical political theory emerged in the ancient Greek culture, in the writings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Classical Political Theory aimed at acquiring reliable knowledge about matters concerning the people. Facts and data constitute the base of study. These are accumulated, explained

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and then used for testing hypothesis. Facts and values are separated; values are so arranged that the facts become relevant. Methodology has to be self-conscious, explicit and quantitative. It had been largely ethical in perspective. Its response was rooted in a moral outlook. "What it is" is regarded as more important than either "what it was" or "what it ought to be or could be".

3.3.1 Characteristics

According to the historical traditions, political theory can be understood only when the historical factors are taken into considerations. It emphasise on studying the history of every political reality to analyse any situation. Many theorists like Machiavelli, sabine, dunning etc. are of the view that politics and history are strongly inter- related. They opined that study of politics should always have a historical viewpoint. Sabine was of the view that Political Science should include all those subjects which have been discussed in the writings of different political thinkers since Plato. History defines about the past as well as links it with the present events. Without studying the past political events, institutions and political environment, the analysis of the present would remain largely imperfect.

The main characteristic of this tradition is that history as a written or recorded subject and focuses on the past events. History helps the researchers in knowing how man was in the past and what he is now. History is the store-house of events. From the profiles, autobiographies, descriptions by authors and journalists investigators know what event occurred in the past.

It is important that events must have some political revealing or they must be politically significant. The theory and principles of political science are based on the materials provided by these events. History communicates researchers how government, political parties and many other institutions worked, their successes and failures and from these, they receive lessons which guide them in determining the future course of action.

Historical tradition examines past events through available evidences like memoirs and biographies of statesmen, journalistic accounts etc. it also

draws tentative conclusions regarding various aspects of contemporary politics. Origin and development of political organisations and movements are being studied in this tradition. It adopts descriptive methodology. The characteristics can be summarised as follows :-

Firstly, there was no clear distinction between philosophical, theological and political issues. Political theory was not an autonomous subject as it is today.

Secondly, political theory was concerned with probing into issues, asking important questions and serving as a sort of conscience keeper of politics.

Thirdly According to this tradition, political theory dealt with the political whole - the theory must be all-comprehensive and all-inclusive. It included ruling, warfare, religious practices, economic problems or relations between the classes and also beliefs such as God, justice, equality etc. The hunt for an absolutely best form of government was also an important preoccupation of political theory.

Fourthly, this tradition believes in ultimate good. Therefore, political good was a part of it. State was a part of the moral framework of man's earthly living. It considers state as a natural institution and also believes that state came prior to individuals. Individuals are not self sufficient if isolated and is a part in relation to the whole. State is sensitive to the recognition of law and virtue of civic obedience and can be considered as an educational institution which made man a good citizen. State wants to promote good life. There has always been a debate as which come first common good or individual good. But historical tradition believes that common good implies the good of the individuals at the end of the day. The common good was more complete than the private good of the individual and it was this completeness 'which determined the greater excellence of the common good'.

And lastly, an important theme of this tradition was the search for an ideal state and the most stable system of government. Classical theorists repeatedly asked questions like: Who should rule and why; what is the best form of government? Theory was preoccupied with analyzing the sources

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of conflict and to enunciate the principles of justice which might guide the political organization in discharging its distributive functions of assigning material and non-material goods. The search for an ideal state provided an invaluable means of practicing theory and of acquiring experience in its handling. The trend of an idealist state as set by classical political theory had clear reflection on later political thinking. The classical political tradition -a tradition usually considered to include eighteen or so centuries sandwiched between Plato and Machiavelli was considerably richer and more varied. However, even differences that are more important and variations were yet to come. With Renaissance, Reformation and industrial revolution, new ideas and events shook the foundation of Western world. During this period a new school of political theory was born, which was later known as liberalism.

Stop to Consider

Natural Law and Classical Political Theory:

Classical political theory includes morality, ethics, eternal values as well as concept of natural law. The idea of natural law also influenced thinkers like Plato and Aristotle. It is believed that natural law is the greatest manifestation of reason, rationality, correctness and human intellect. It also includes Rational knowledge, goodness, reasonability, justice, structured reality and morality. Everyone including politicians, statesmen, philosophers, and educationists gave utmost importance to the concept of natural law. According to history, in the ancient period importance was given to natural law rather than man made laws. The exponents of the classical political theory were so much imbued with the thought and importance of natural law that they started to think both natural law and rationalism as the two sides of the same coin and here the coin is society and its political structure. The Christian thinkers and philosophers were highly influenced by the idea of natural law. Both hobbes and locke paid utmost importance to the concept of natural law. They wanted to build up a civil society through the instrumentality of contract. Natural law even influenced the societies made by contract.

The thinkers wanted to build the society on the basis of the idea of natural law. Rousseau has beautifully blended the ideas of plato's idealism, morality and natural law. Even karlmarx was highly influenced by natural law while he said that there were no discrimination among men and hence no exploitation during the ancient age. Everything was managed by the law of the nature. Even the idea of private property is dependent on the idea of natural law.

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3.3.2 Why Historical Tradition to Political Theory is Important?

Quentin skinner has beautifully explained this tradition. He opined that history can help us in three different ways. Firstly, history can help us ask critical questions about political arrangements and concepts of the present which we might accept uncritically otherwise. We might not be able to avoid falling under the spell of our own intellectual heritage. It is only through studying different ancient political thought we will be able to select different methods. history can allow us to perform "acts of excavation." We have abandoned various theories and concepts in our history. We also forget our important theories that were a part of our history. We can re enter that domain and revive those theories which might be useful in the present scenario. The third use of history championed by Skinner similarly emphasizes the contingent nature of the beliefs we currently hold.

Herodotus's history of the Persian wars, written between 445 and 425 BC and Thucydides's history of the long conflict between Athens and Sparta, which he began in 424 BC can be considered as two of the most important books about history of politics. The theories regarding law and institutions and nation and nation building are the most important during this phase. While Herodotus wrote about the recent past, Thucydides wrote about the events where he himself had taken part. They have beautifully reflected on the problems of historical research, the reliability of eye witnesses, and the necessity of critically analyzing source material. The historians in Rome had studied the problems of politics from various perspectives like leadership and institutions, military strategy and court intrigue, republican virtues, and imperial ambitions etc. The emergence of Christianity and its adoption as

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the Roman Empire's official religion transformed all of western culture, including both politics and history. This has brought the issue of conflict between church and state. This has shaped the theory and practice of European politics from the end of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the twentieth century. The Christians created religious institutions that were connected to political authority.

Dunning, Sabine and Sibley are some of the authors who advocated this approach. They try to analyse why political ideas and theories appear when and where they do, why they change over time, and why (or whether) they have any influence on contemporaneous and subsequent thought and behavior. This approach presupposes that all thoughts are rooted in the historical context.

Political theory can hardly get anywhere without analysing the history. At least for large-scale political processes, explanations always make implicit or explicit assumptions concerning historical origins of the phenomenon and time-place scope conditions for the claimed explanation. Those assumptions remain open to historical verification and falsification. Example: students of international relations commonly assume that sometime between the treaty of Augsburg (1555) and the treaties of Westphalia (1648), Europeans supplanted a web of overlapping jurisdictions with a system of clearly bounded sovereign states that then provided the context for war and diplomacy up to the present. In the context of long term processes, the features of the process which occur outside the observation of any connected group of human analysts requires the historical reconstruction. For example, displacement of personal armies, feudal levies, militias, and mercenary bands by centrally controlled national standing armies took several centuries to occur. The political processes incorporate locally available cultures like language, social categories, and widely shared beliefs etc. political processes therefore vary as a function of historically determined local cultural accumulations. Example: economically, linguistically, ethnically, racially, and religiously segmented regions create significantly different configurations of state-citizen relations. The local political processes get influence by the political processes of the neighbouring countries and hence historically variable

adjacencies alter the operation of those processes. Example: the Swiss Confederation survived as a loosely connected but distinct political entity after 1500 in part precisely because much larger but competing Austrian, Savoyard, French, and German states formed around its perimeter. Path dependency prevails in political processes, such that events occurring at one stage in a sequence constrain the range of events that is possible at later stages. Example: for all its service of privilege, the entrenchment of the assembly that became England's Parliament by the barons' rebellion of 1215 set limits on arbitrary royal power in England from that point forward. Once a process (e.g. a revolution) has occurred and acquired a name, both the name and one or more representations of the process become available as signals, models, threats, and/or aspirations for later actors. Example: the creation of an elected national assembly in the France of 1789 to 1792 provided a model for subsequent political programs in France and elsewhere. Though historical tradition to political theory is one of the most important traditions of political theory, yet it has been severely challenged. It has often been criticised that history has two faces. One is documentation of facts which is quite naive and the other is construal of facts and phenomena. One needs a proper perspective to judge the growth of evidences.

While evaluating the evidence and facts provided by history, adequate care needs to be taken. But in reality, this is not strictly followed and therefore historical facts do not serve the purpose of those who use it. Alan Ball has also criticized the historical approach. He debated that "past evidence does leave-alarming gaps, and political history is often simply a record of great men and great events, rather than a comprehensive account of total political activity."

This approach has been criticised for various reasons. This tradition is being criticised for biased, subjective and sometimes confusing outlook. There is also scarcity of data. Chief propagators of historical approach include: Ivor Jennings (British Cabinet System), Robert Mackenzie (British Political Parties), J.P. Macintosh (British Cabinet System), Robert Palmer (Age of Democratic Revolution) and Barrington Moore (Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy).

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SAQ

Q. Do you think history can shape the theories of the future? Give reasons in favour of your answer.

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Check Your Progress

1. Political thinkers like Machiavelli, Sabine and Dunning believe that politics and history are intricately related. (write true or false)
2. Cobban has authored 'Introducing Political Theory'. (write true or false)
3. Mention the characteristics of historical tradition to political theory.
4. Write a note on Quentin Skinner's view on historical tradition.
5. Explain how the conflict between state and church has shaped the theory and practice of European politics.
6. What is treaty of Westphalia?
7. The treaty of Augsburg was signed in the year _____. (fill in the blanks)

3.4 Summing Up

After reading this unit you have understood that political theory is the history of development. Historical tradition believes that various factors like age, place, situation etc help in understanding political phenomena. This unit has also helped you in understanding the characteristics of this tradition. The most important among them is emphasis on past events which has political significance. You have also learnt Quentin Skinner's opinion regarding this aspect. He opined that history can help us in different ways like asking

critical question, to help us selecting different methods to study political theory. This tradition is often criticised as biased, subjective and sometimes confused.

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CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN POLITICAL THEORY

Unit Structure :

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Development versus Environment

4.3.1 Concept of Development

4.4 Environment and it's Incompatibility with Development

4.5 Protective Discrimination versus Principle of Fairness

4.5.1. Concept of Protective Discrimination

4.6 Principle of Fairness and it's incompatibility with the concept of protective discrimination.

4.7 Summing Up

4.8 References/Suggested Readings

4.1 Introduction

Political theory is a comprehensive subject which encompasses a wide array of issues and topics within its ambit. The subject has evolved with time and consequently its scope has expanded even more. The nature of the subject is dynamic and it accommodates many topics and debates which have gained popularity in the recent past. We are going to discuss of these debates in this chapter.

The first debate that we are going to take up is on development versus environment. This debate will explain as to how the idea of development which primarily focuses on economic growth can be detrimental to the environment and how that has emerged as an extremely serious concern in the contemporary times.

The second debate is on protective discrimination versus principle of fairness. This debate though not exactly a new one will try to understand why the preferential treatment of a few sections is viewed as problematic by the others in a state and society.

4.2 Objectives

After completing this chapter you shall be able to –

- *comprehend* the idea of development,
- *understand* the idea of environment,
- *understand* the debate between development and environment,
- *grasp* the idea of protective discrimination,
- *understand* the principle of fairness,
- *comprehend* the debate between protective discrimination and the principle of fairness.

4.3 Development versus Environment

The term development is often used in a very broad sense. In a narrower context however development mainly implies economic growth. It relates with ideas like increasing the Gross Domestic Product(GDP) of a country, industrialization, migration of labour, advancements in terms of infrastructure, increasing the national income, increase in investments etc. In simple language it has a largely economic connotation.

4.3.1 Concept of Development

The concept of development however poses as a problematic one because the process and repercussions of the process of development are largely uneven on society. In the last few decades development, primarily since the 1980s, development has come to be questioned about its uneven impacts on society.

It has come to be very closely related to capitalism and neoliberalism as a result of which the process generally ends up benefitting only selected sections of the society. In addition to this, some people and sections have to become the scapegoats for the development of the others. This meaning that the benefits and burdens of development have not been justly distributed across societies. Thus, given such a context development has become a very controversial and contested topic in the current times.

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The concept gained importance primarily in the post war period. It was during this time that the countries of Asia and Africa had attained their independence from their colonial rulers and had emerged as sovereign nation states. These countries now had to form their own governments and also had to take up the task of nation building. And development was an indispensable part of the nation building process. These nations understood that political independence had to be supported by economic development in order to achieve stability as a nation. These newly independent countries which came to be known as the Third World thus formulated their own worldview of development which was built on an acute criticism of the existing world order which was marked by sharp inequalities among nations. They asked for justifications for the backwardness of the nations outside of Europe, North America and Japan. They tried to highlight the role played by national governments and the markets in this context.

These countries of the Third World though a diverse lot, but they form a group on the basis of some common characteristics. Some of these characteristics are a) most or all of these countries share a colonial past and hence exhibit a common antipathy towards the former colonial powers b) these countries also experienced a massive exploitation and drainage of resources along with severe oppression of their people during the period of colonial rule. One of the primary reasons for the backwardness of these nations was this exhaustion of resources, as a result of this these countries have a low per capita income, limited technology, and other socio-economic problems like unemployment, malnutrition, low level of health infrastructure etc. c) the bureaucracy and politics of these countries is largely dominated by a western elite; the masses thus have little opportunity to impact the policy-making process (Gaubha, O.P. 1981, An Introduction to Political Theory, Fourth Edition, Macmillan).

This Third World perspective therefore highlighted the inconsistencies of this capitalist model of development. In the progression of capitalistic development towards integration into foreign markets, even democratic states efficiently exclude the enormous masses from political and economic decision-making. Instead the state itself evolves into a national oligarchy circumvented with dictatorial and bureaucratic organizations and apparatuses

that restrain social participation and popular action. (Shah, Shelly, Development: Meaning and Concept of Development, <https://www.sociologydiscussion.com/society/development-meaning-and-concept-of-development/688>)

This kind of development model only caters to select sections of the society. The benefits and profits of development do not trickle down evenly to all stratas or in this context, all states.

This problem of development was aptly highlighted by the Dependency Theory; this theory believes that resources flow from a “periphery” which comprises of underdeveloped nations to a “core” which again comprises of the developed or richer states thus, enriching the latter at the cost of the former. It is a central argument of the dependency theory that poorer states are diminished and richer states are augmented and by this way poor states are integrated into the “world system”. This theory was formally developed in the late 1960s after the Second World War, as scholars were researching to find root issue in the lack of development in Latin America. (Ahiakpor, James C. W. (1985). “The Success and Failure of Dependency Theory: The Experience of Ghana”. *International Organization*. 39 (3): 535–552. doi:10.1017/S0020818300019172. ISSN 0020-8183. JSTOR 2706689)

Scholars like Samir Amin have also spoken very staunchly against such models of development and had proposed alternative models based on regional cooperation.

This theory supplements the fact powerful economic interest groups generally set the agendas of development, but often such agenda are largely unrepresentative of the heterogeneous and multifaceted nature of our civil society thus resulting in consolidation and absorption of power and resources in the hands of a few. (Shah, Shelly, Development: Meaning and Concept of Development, <https://www.sociologydiscussion.com/society/development-meaning-and-concept-of-development/688>)

Critics of development have pointed out that such models of development which have been adopted by most countries have proved to be extremely exploitative and disadvantageous for the developing countries. The financial consequences have been massive, pushing many countries into long-term

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debts. For instance, Africa still has enormous debts which it accumulated by borrowings from the richer countries. The gains in terms of growth have not been corresponding and poverty and health issues continue to plague the continent. (<https://ncert.nic.in/textbook/pdf/keps110.pdf>)

In addition to this the social costs and environmental impacts of this model of development have been immense. Internal displacement, deforestation, desertification, and unsustainable practices are few of the repercussions that we can name.

4.4 Environment and it's Incompatibility with Development

Environmentalism as an ideology is a development of the modern times. Robert Malthus, Godwin and Condercet and a few others had highlighted some specific problems that the world would witness with the coming in of development. It was specifically during the 1960s and 1970s that escalated levels of pollution generated a consciousness that the emergence of environmental problems were due to a strained relationship between mankind, global resources, and the social as well as physical environments(Turner 1988). This had led to debates on the conventional developmental models, objectives, policies and strategies. (Ramaswamy, Sushila, 2003, Political Theory, Concepts and Ideas, Macmillan, New Delhi)

This was followed by the emergence of environment based organisations, NGOs and political parties. Of all these the most renowned was the political party German Greens which even attained parliamentary recognition in 1983. The rise of this particular movement was attributed to the emergence of a generation of 'post-materialists' in the welfare states of the Second World War Western Europe (Inglehart 1977).

It was highlighted by environmentalists that there is an inherent conflict between development and the environment. Development models largely do not prioritise the environment and give rise to major environmental problems like deforestation, global warming, climate change, ozone layer depletion etc among many others. Thus, environmentalists assert on developing a harmonious relationship with the environment and on developing

practices that would not interfere with the biosphere and the native ecosystems. The core argument is that development cannot take place at the cost of the environment.

Many organisations like the Green Peace and many associations of 'Green Politics' have been voicing these concerns. Green politics emphasizes generally on no-growth, as they believe that infinite growth within a finite system is not credible and therefore propose a 'steady-state' economy by either adroit usage of resources or by implementing selective taxation or political usage of resource quotas.

Thus, such a crisis has led to the emergence of alternative models of development and also of alternative strategies of development. In alternative models, there have been suggestions of models of human development, a rights based approach, and of models based on democratic participation. However the most significant alternative to conventional development came in the form of 'Sustainable Development'. This model was largely accepted and acknowledged. However there were certain problems with it; sustainable development was based on accentuating ecological development rather than economic development. But later the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the Brundtland Report further expanded the meaning of the term. It was used to imply economic development and environmental safety parallelly. The Brundtland Report established the idea of assimilating environmental policies with the developmental strategies hence breaking away from the notion that environmental protection can only be attained at the cost of economic development and vice-versa.

The Brundtland Report highlighted and asserted on three principles :

- a) The economic decision-making policies and procedures of all states and institutions would be guided by enhanced environmental management. This would mean i) to abandon the practices of dumping wastes into the seas, rivers and the atmosphere and ii) to find new innovative methods that would specifically reduce the usage of energy and materials in every sphere of life.

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- b) Abstain from misusing and dissipating any kind of environmental resources and to leave the planet as a better place for the future generations. And the developed countries should help the poorer countries to achieve economic progress with no or negligible damage to the environment.
- c) Sustainability implies to give more emphasis to the quality of life instead of higher material standards of living.

Thus the contradiction between development and environment is attempted to be reconciled by combining development and environment goals. By resorting to alternate models and approaches the two ideas of development and environment are attempted to be brought closer together and to be made less contradictory.

Development should be seen as a process which empowers the individual as well as societies. Amartya Sen's idea of *Development as freedom*, may be one possible explanation or alternative to understand development as a holistic process.

Development is the process of expanding human freedom. It is "the enhancement of freedoms that allow people to lead lives that they have reason to live". Hence "development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states.-(<https://www.asiancenturyinstitute.com/development/333-amartya-sen-on-development-as-freedom>)

SAQ:

1. Write a note on the inherent conflict between environmentalism and development.

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4.5 Protective Discrimination versus Principle of Fairness

Though the concept of protective discrimination may seem controversial but it's advocates believe that it is rooted in equality.

The society is not equal in nature. Inequality is an inherent aspect of society. Some of these inequalities derive from ascription while some others are social inequalities. All people are not placed similarly in society. People and groups have differential access to resources and privileges in a society and state. While some may be privileged, most are not so privileged and thus need assistance to rise up and be at par with the rest of the society. Thus, the concept of social justice comes in here; justice in order to be truly fair shall have to be accessible to all in a similar fashion and that becomes the founding principle of the idea of protective discrimination. Hence, protective discrimination in simple words refers to those policies and provisions made by the state for granting special protection to privileges to the vulnerable, weaker or deprived sections of a society.

4.5.1 Concept of Protective Discrimination

Concept of protective discrimination aimed at improving the conditions of the marginalized and subaltern sections in a society and to remodel their situations if possible.

We may summarise some important points about the idea as under:

- Protective discrimination is about preferential treatment of certain select sections of the society.

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- It is based on positive differentiation or discrimination
- It stems from the idea of social justice.
- This idea was developed to truly instill equality in society.
- Protective discrimination is generally accorded to the historically and socio-economically deprived sections of society. Eg. certain races/castes, poorer sections, handicapped, women etc.
- The principle of protective discrimination tries to offer equality of opportunities and also facilitates equality of conditions as well as outcomes.
- Protective discrimination aims at creating an egalitarian society based on equity.

Examples of protective discrimination are most commonly seen in India and in the United States of America. In the USA this policy is called affirmative action while in India we have it in the form of reservation. In the USA, this policy was largely evolved against the backdrop of racial discrimination against the Blacks that is against the African Americans.

While in India the need for reservation was strongly felt for the people of the lower castes and backward tribes, along with the women; this is because these sections have been historically oppressed and exploited in the Indian society. The need to protect these sections especially the lower castes and tribes was strongly felt and emphasized by Mahatma Gandhi who worked relentlessly for the lower castes and even named them positively as *Harijans* in an attempt to uplift them. This was also a conscious endeavour to usher in these sections into the political and social mainstream.

However the idea has been quite poignant and contested in India as well. The Mandal Commission Report for instance received both support and opposition. While some outrightly rejected the idea stating that the provision should have long been withdrawn as it now apparently contributes to inequality in society, the others who have been benefitted by it are all for it.

An example of protective discrimination against the lower castes in India is Article 17 of the Indian Constitution which makes untouchability a criminal offence.

Besides this, India also has provisions for the reservations of minorities and women. Since India is largely a multicultural country with numerous religions, and since some religions make up small sections of the population, reservations were provided for them in education and employment, along with some other benefits.

Women have long been oppressed in the Indian society. The social reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may have helped in reducing and eradicating some patriarchal and social evils, but largely the position of women has not improved drastically even after so many years of independence. This position of women was questioned around the 1960s when the United Nations had called for reports on women's status from their member states.

Now, generally and ideally the state recognizes everyone as equal however the modern liberal democratic state obliges the need for preferential treatment of the deprived or oppressed sections. This is mainly because the historical and societal exploitation cannot be materialized into real change by means of rhetoric only. The distribution of the primary goods of society as Rawls had highlighted in his theory of distributive justice has to be in place based on certain principles of fairness. Rawls had also talked about the *Difference Principle*; this principle advocates inequality for the sake of equality and also helps in strengthening the worse off in a society. The idea of protective discrimination is exactly this, as it favours unequal treatment of a few sections for the overall equality of the entire society. Also, this principle is ultimately aimed at enhancing the conditions of the weakest sections in the society.

The modern democratic state is built on the premise of equality. And the state is empowered to take measures to facilitate equality and the principle of protective discrimination helps in doing that.

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SAQ:

1. How protective discrimination is related with the idea of Social Justice?

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4.6 Principle of Fairness and it's incompatibility with the concept of protective discrimination

John Rawls in his theory of justice talks about justice as fairness. In fact he propounded his entire theory of justice premised on the idea of justice as fairness. In this theory of justice he also introduces certain moral principles which would be the basis for formulating justice. Hence, justice for Rawls is appropriately arrived at by resorting to reason and by the right kind of procedure.

He begins by acknowledging the different situations and statuses of all individuals in society. He then introduces his idea of the veil of ignorance by which people are blinded not only to the conditions and situations of others but also to that of their own. Thus, the ones behind the veil of ignorance in the *original position* also do not know if they themselves come from the least advantaged section of the society. Justice according to Rawls has to be delivered to all including the least advantaged sections. It is only when the worse off are benefitted by a scheme of justice that justice will actually be fair. Justice as fairness assumes a worldview in which the society is comprised of free and equal persons who are interested for mutual cooperation. This scheme of justice is focuses on establishing liberty and equality by means of certain principles. Once equality and liberty are attained the people seek equal distribution of primary goods as well. Thus, justice would mean an equal distribution of the primary goods among all and resorting to inequality if it helps in attaining equality.

For Rawls therefore justice is all about a 'fair' distribution of the primary goods in a society. This scheme of justice caters especially to the worse-off sections and is focused on strengthening the weakest link in the chain.

Coming to the principle of fairness, the simplest definition of it would be — . If a number of people are producing a public good that everyone gets an advantage from, then it would not be ethically correct to free ride on their backs, benefitting from their profits without having to bear the expense of the same. We are obligated to bear the fair share of the costs of the production of that particular good. (Boran, Idil Benefits, Intentions and the Principle of Fairness, Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Volume 36, Issue 1, March 2006, pp. 95 - 115)

This principle is credited to H.L.A. Hart and then to John Rawls, both of whom tried to find a principle-based understanding of the distribution of burdens and benefits concerning the production of public goods in a fair system of cooperation.

The principle of fairness grounds a moral obligation not to free ride as part of a fair scheme of cooperation, also called 'the duty of fair play.' The principle is standardly summarized as follows. If some people are contributing to the production of a public good, one should not simply enjoy the benefits without doing one's share in the production of that good. This is a non-consequentialist moral obligation for the underlying rationale is guided not so much by a desire to avoid the bad outcome of under supply as to set a standard of justice to aspire to. The underlying intuition is that it would be an injustice to those who contribute to production of the public good if some of those who benefit from it turn out to be, in a patterned fashion, those who do nothing for its production.

Thus basically this principle states that someone who has not contributed to the production of a good should not be entitled to enjoy the benefits and advantages of the same. If the ones who have not contributed to the production of a good can enjoy the benefits of the same then it would be unfair to those who contributed to the same.

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Libertarians take this position and oppose the idea advocated by Rawls about how the disadvantaged sections have a 'right' to the assets gathered by those with apparent advantage. Libertarians like Nozick are firmly opposed to the Rawlsian idea of justice; Nozick believes that such rights to the disadvantaged sections are no less than moral blackmail.

Thus, the incompatibility of protective discrimination versus the principle of fairness arises from the fact that while the former advocates a fair share for all the latter opposes stating that not everyone deserves a fair share. While the idea of protective discrimination is premised on inequality in society and aims at building equality; the principle of fairness believes that only those who deserve to be equal should be equal, not the others.

Some commonly placed arguments for protective discrimination are:

- a) Protective discrimination is necessary to undo the inequality which has been historically and socially created and which continues to exist.
- b) Protective discrimination is necessary because many sections are still in economically deplorable conditions with negligible access to basic human rights, opportunities and resources.
- c) Protective discrimination is necessary to facilitate equality of conditions for equality of opportunity and outcomes.

Stop to Consider:

Some important points:

Some other commonly placed arguments against protective discrimination are:

- a) Protective discrimination is a partial and biased process as it favours some sections of the society.
- b) Protective discrimination is largely misused as the sections which were historically deprived are now no longer so.
- c) Protective discrimination overrides merit and hence violates the fundamental right to equality.
- d) Protective Discrimination is only partial as it leaves out many other vulnerable sections.

There may be further arguments in this debate if we take into account the ideas of 'desert' and 'need'. Let us briefly understand these two ideas.

Desert is a normative concept and it is largely believed that being treated as one deserves to be treated is a matter of justice, fairness, or rightness. Though the claims of desert come in a variety of forms, generally they are claims about some positive or negative treatments or about things that people think they do (or do not) deserve. (<https://iep.utm.edu/desert/#H1>)

The principle of 'need' on the other hand simply believes that any distribution of goods should be in accordance with the 'needs' of the individuals of a society. This view advocates the idea that some people and sections have greater needs than others and hence that should be the basis of protective discrimination.

These two views of distributive justice also complicate the idea of protective discrimination. While, desert and need may appear simple to understand. They are actually not so lucid in reality. While egalitarians make arguments against the principle of desert the idea of 'need' is again quite critical to comprehend.

Within Egalitarianism we find two strands, the Strict (substantive) Egalitarians and the Luck Egalitarians. From a moral perspective Strict Egalitarians are of the belief that all people should get equal material goods and services since all the humans are equal. Equality, they believe, has got an intrinsic worth besides its instrumental outcomes. Any measure to equalize the people in terms of income and resources is welcome. Intervention in the liberties of the individuals by the state may be deemed fit if it leads to equality of outcome in the society. Such measures may be the 'protective discrimination' or 'progressive taxation' or any other redistributive programme. In short Equality for them is a prior concern than Liberty.

The other strand of Egalitarians is that of Luck egalitarians who believe that although it is not possible nor is it desirable to equalize the outcomes of distribution in a society, there must be

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a formal 'equality of opportunity' for all. The state may not ensure equal results for all but what it must ensure is that equal consideration and equal treatment is meted out to the people irrespective of their social belongingness. Luck should not play a part in determining the access to the opportunities people get in their lives. (https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0Izh6GcIA_Db0NoZXVETTVUjQ/edit?resourcekey=0-Bysg4TEj5yeR5QMMi1nLMQ)

The principle of need again becomes critical because need is a subjective and variable concept. This is because there is no concrete way to define or understand need. Moreover there are bound to be people whose needs will be dire or justified than the others.

SAQ:

1. How and why the principle of fairness opposes the idea of protective discrimination?

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Check Your Progress

- a) Core and _____ are two central ideas stated by the Dependency Theory.
- b) Name a scholar who offers alternatives to the conventional models of development.
- c) Briefly explain the idea of protective discrimination.
- d) Write true or false:
 - Protective discrimination is not related to the idea of social justice.
- e) Give two arguments in favour of the principle of fairness.

4.7 Summing Up

After reading this unit you have learnt that the debate is not just about protective discrimination versus the principle of fairness but even about who should be entitled to protective discrimination and on what basis.

Though substantial arguments can be made for both sides of the debate, we however will need to understand that the focus should be on arriving at a generally acceptable model of justice. It has to be kept in mind that while according justice to the deprived, other principles of equality like merit cannot and should not be completely overridden. Also justice by such methods should not be reduced to the monopoly of a few select categories who take advantage of these provisions.

Maybe if the basis of such principles are revised and improvised at frequent intervals we may be able to detect the fallacies of these models and arrive at a true model of distributive justice

4.8 References/Suggested Readings

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2. Shah, Shelly, Development: Meaning and Concept of Development, <https://www.sociologydiscussion.com/society/development-meaning-and-concept-of-development/688>
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UNIT: 5

DECLINE OF POLITICAL THEORY

Unit Structure:

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Objectives

5.3 Decline of Political Theory

5.3.1 Reason for Decline of Political Theory: Various view points

5.4 Resurgence of Political Theory

5.5 Summing Up

5.6 Reference/Suggested Readings

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5.1 Introduction

Political theory and its significance have faced many questions and queries from time to time. A discipline is often evaluated in terms of its practical applicability and Political Theory is no exception. There have been periods when the abstract concepts and ideas of political theory have been judged for lack of practical applicability. Fundamental queries like what is more crucial – reality or ideas were raised. Do ideas reflect reality or reality is in turn shaped by ideas were also areas of enquiry. Along with this, one is left to wonder what is the use of Political Theory — is it only to understand the world around us through various concepts or to also alter it for the better. This query is at the heart of crucial developments that the field of Political Theory underwent in the 1950s and 60s.

The post Second world War era saw the emergence of such queries. The occurrence of two Great devastating wars pointed to the absence of a coherent universal belief in values and ideas. It also questioned the futility of disciplines which failed to provide precise information and suggestions for periods of crisis. In the 1950s and 1960s political theory continued to be dominated by the traditional methods and was reflective and explanatory in nature. The shadow of historicism loomed large. As a result many political

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scientists like David Easton, Alfred Cobban and Dante Germino announced the decline of political theory. Along with this there was an obsessive interest in the formulation of a “science of politics”. The high point in this development came in the United States in the form of behaviouralism which focussed on mainly studying the aspects of human behaviour which can be observed and measured. This was also the reason that voting behaviour, voting patterns gained a lot of interest as subject matter of study.

Easton stated that as political theory continued to depend on century old concepts, its significance has largely declined. Further with the rise of newer schools of thoughts like Vienna Circle which gave precedence to experience as the mode of knowledge construction, political theory faced newer challenges. Political theory was often reduced to political philosophy and a study of vague political ideas without any practical utility. As a result, the critics could declare that political theory was in decline. However there was no unanimity on the causes of decline of political theory. For some it was the rise of logical positivism while for others, it was an excessive emphasis on ideologies. There was a lack of coherence in the reasons put forth by Easton and others who believed that political theory was in decline.

Scholars on the other hand, who did not agree that political theory was in decline pointed out to these problematic presuppositions. They stated that it was only one trend of political theory which focussed too much on the history that faced challenges and not the entire discipline. They also felt that the solution to this crisis will come from within the discipline and it will lead to the resurgence of political theory. These periods saw the production of a number of important works in political theory. So to declare that the discipline was in decline or have run its course of relevance of premature.

Stop to Consider

Vienna Circle: The Vienna Circle of Logical Empiricism was a group of philosophers and scientists drawn from the natural and social sciences, logic and mathematics who met regularly from 1924 to 1936 at the University of Vienna, chaired by **Moritz Schlick**. This school of thought had the aim of making the study of philosophy scientific with the help of modern logic.

5.2 Objectives

This section will enable the student to understand a number of things. It will help the students to

- *get* an idea of the different phases of development of political theory,
- *understand* the main reasons for the decline of political theory in the post second world war era,
- *pinpoint* the differences of opinion among scholars who declared that political theory was in decline,
- *understand* the various reasons that contributed to the revival of political theory in the 1970s,
- *understand* and be able to comprehend the current state of political theory.

5.3 Decline of Political Theory

In the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, a number of scholars starting with David Easton and Alfred Cobban talked about the decline of political theory. Political philosophers like Robert Dahl and Peter Laslett went a step further and declared political theory as ‘dead’. Looking back at the history of political theory, Easton argued that political theory often flourished in times of social turmoil. Ancient Greece was the theatre of emergence of earliest political ideas and the cradle of democracy. The society back then was going through a churning. Political theory in the ancient period took a dynamic role and could provide ideas that fuelled political change. Similar was the case in England of 16th and 17th centuries upto the Glorious Revolution, France of 18th century which witnessed the French Revolution. But philosophers like Easton lament that similar dynamism was missing in the discipline in the mid 20th century despite the continued widespread social conflicts. The main reason behind this stagnation was the dependence on ideas a century old and the hegemony of historical approaches in studying political systems. Easton stated that during that period political theory was largely interested in the history of ideas. It was related to the notions of

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value and presented very general principles. Easton felt that this was not enough. Value, principles and history cannot be the sole determinants of political theory. Easton believed that there is a scope to still ‘upgrade’ political theory and political science as a part of empirical science and reject the tendency to reduce the term to both metaphysical speculation or abstractions which are not founded on facts and the history of political thought. Along with Easton some other scholars also voiced concern regarding the decline of political theory. Some of the prominent views have been discussed in the next section.

5.3.1 Reason for Decline of Political Theory: Various view points

A. David Easton’s Views:

Amongst the various scholars that declared the demise and decline of political theory, David Easton took the lead. In his book *Political System: An Enquiry into the State of Political Science (1953)*, he asserted that traditional political theory was based on sheer speculation and was devoid of acute observation of political reality. It cannot continue to fall back on its glory of ancient days. In fact, post Second World War saw the emergence of different schools of ideologies which believed that Political Science should do more justice to its name and adapt a more scientific approach. The first step in doing this was to rescue the discipline from a study of classics and an excessive emphasis on history of ideas. As the nature of problems in contemporary society was different, Easton believed that political theory will have to undergo a fundamental change to be relevant in contemporary times.

The post war period saw a comparison drawn between the various disciplines. Other disciplines like Sociology, Psychology and Economics have already tried to work out a more objective framework of studying human behaviour. According to Easton and others, Political Scientists on the other hand could not develop adequate research tools to explain the socio-political changes that were taking place. During the war period, while other disciplines played a more vital role in decision making, political science could not play a similar role. Easton believed that only an emergence of a new approach – a new behavioural science will elevate political science to the status of other social sciences.

Easton further believed that the discipline of political science continued to be overshadowed by history. Historical approach championed by George Sabine and other philosophers like W. A Dunning, C.K Allen, A.D Lindsay focused on explaining the development of political ideas, values through the ages. But while doing so, they were largely focussed on the Western European countries leading to euro-centrism. Such narrow understanding falls short of addressing the concerns of non-western world. This became more stark in the mid 20th century when the theatre of political upheaval shifted from Europe to Asia and Africa. Traditional political theory fell short of analysing the developments in these countries.

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Stop to Consider

What is Historicism?

It is the idea of attributing significance to space and time to contextualise and understand an event. For example, historical events should be evaluated in terms of the time it emerged and not evaluated from the present perspective. While the term 'Historicism' was coined by **Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel**, over the period of time, its meaning took different forms.

Political theory at that time was being studied by analysing political thought of bygone centuries and the political philosophy of each political thinker was being traced to particular historical contexts. But this foreclosed the engagements required to formulate universal knowledge as the study was limited to specific time periods and locations. Historical analysis was being used to only analyse and understand the factual condition that gave rise to a particular ideology of system but did not contribute to the development of new knowledge which will be applicable in contemporary times.

Easton also believed that a relativistic approach to values which found expression in the works of David Hume and Maxweber led to the decline of political theory. Values should correspond to social problems and contribute to solutions. Merely transplanting values and systems will fall

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short of solving a social crisis. Moral relativism rendered such an exercise useless. Rather all kinds of ideologies found support in the eyes of moral relativists who did not believe in universal values. This actually led to some of the worst crisis that humanity faced in the form of revolutions. Till Russian Revolution, capitalism and liberal democracy were the accepted values. Similarly Nazism and Fascism also rose as a challenge to the existing values. The rise of such extreme values pinpointed to the limits of political theory in explaining the problems of the society and providing solutions. In fact even during such periods of crisis, political theorists failed to explain the rise of such extreme and exclusivist ideologies. Easton emphasised on the need to revive critical theory which will on one hand subject traditional values to scrutiny and on the other hand act as a bridge between traditional knowledge and the changing needs of the society.

The decade of 1950s and 1960s saw an obsession of upgrading social science to the status of natural sciences amongst political scientists. While the method of research can be inspired by that of natural sciences to an extent to ensure an objective study, the theory that evolves from the research has to go beyond science as it cannot be completely devoid of human values. While the traditionalists have stopped at merely pinpointing how things were and what ought to be, the behaviouralists contented with explaining and analysing 'what is'. They did not feel the necessity to analysis why is it so and how it can reach the ideal state of 'what ought to be'. Easton felt that a much needed dialogue between the traditionalists and the behaviouralists were missing and this was a major cause of the decline of political theory. Easton stated this problem as "hyper-factualism".

Stop to Consider

Hyper-Factualism:

The term hyper-factualism means an excessive dependence on facts and an inability to relate it to theory. In other words, theory becomes subservient to facts. Imagine a situation in which a researcher very enthusiastically collects data and goes on to generalise his/her findings

without trying to theorise the causal relations. In such a situation, it is likely that the findings may not be universal and may be found lacking when implemented in a different situation. Easton did not dismiss the importance of facts. In fact he emphasised the need of theorising based on facts. But he was critical of hyper-factualism.

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Too much emphasis either on the study of institutions or merely ideas fall short of explaining the interactions between the two if any. Historicism further suffers from the problem of trying to explain the present situation in the light of age-old values instead of discovering newer set of values. Come to think of it, modern concepts of citizenship, democracy, rights, justice cannot be studied in the light of ancient political theory. Newer framework of social justice, universal human rights which have a particular context of emergence will have to be taken into account. For this scholars like Easton believed that political theory must be more dynamic and adapt to the changing situation.

From the above discussion, the key points of David Easton's argument can be stated as follows:

- Political theory was still overshadowed by historicism
- Political theorists continued to focus too much on values and less on facts.
- Political theorists failed in formulating theories based on facts and merging facts and values creatively.
- A dependence on century old ideas rendered political theory irrelevant in present time.

B. Alfred Cobban's Views:

Another scholar along with Easton who have been vocal about the decline of political theory is Alfred Cobban. Cobban even believed that political theory was going through a crisis period from which it may not emerge. Going back to ancient Greeks, Cobban pointed out that the political theory

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and ideas of those days was a result of active political life of people. If one traces the development of political theory, such active engagement and even conflicts can be witnessed which saw the birth of new and original political ideas. Be it the conflict between the church and the state or the great revolutions that marked the middle ages, people took active part in these developments.

Cobban talked of two kinds of factors responsible for the decline of political theory – external factors and internal factors. Talking about the external factors responsible for the decline – Cobban points out that huge military, bureaucracy and an interventionist state was fast shrinking the space of free expression of political thought. He felt that this was across countries – be it Communist countries or the liberal democracies. In Communist countries, the hold of party elites was too strong and it discouraged any kind of conflict from the rank and file. Dissent was seen as a danger and suppressed brutally. This also foreclosed the possibility of critically engaging with the government and giving rise to new political thought. The situation was no better in Western Democracies. Dominant bureaucracies did not give much space for active engagement of the people. And democracy in these countries have been reduced to procedural democracies with timely elections. However internal conflicts persisted. Even in successful and mature democracies like the US, inherent inequalities and prejudice in the form of racism persisted. Equality fell short of transforming into equity.

Stop to Consider

Ancient Greek society often regarded as the cradle of democracy saw an active engagement of citizens in the governance of the country. Democracy meant direct participation in those days.

SAQ:

1. Do you feel that representative democracy of today have reduced the scope of direct engagement of people and hence led to the lack of dynamism in political theory again?

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In his paper “The Decline of Political Theory (1953)”, Cobban stated that political theory has lost both its significance in the communist as well as capitalist world. He found Marxism to be concentrated to a narrow part of the world. For Cobban theories like these cannot explain the political developments taking place on a large scale. Cobban also believed that the excessive emphasis on facts devoid of values that marked the work of logical positivists further led to the decline of political theory. Cobban however was not pessimistic about the possibility of revival of political theory. He did not think that all was lost. In fact he believed that political theory could become significant if it could formulate and evolve a criteria of judgement.

Interestingly Cobban also points out that a decline of active political life with the success of democracy in different parts of the world, the absence of large scale revolutions are also responsible for the decline of political theory. People don't have to take to streets for their basic rights and requirements too often. As a result, this complacency and a level of apathy to active politics have led to a kind of stagnation in the discipline.

Coming to the internal factors, Cobban pointed out certain problems inherent in the discipline itself. He felt that political philosophers of the earlier century from Hobbes to Mills clearly adhered to certain principles and their theories were also morally grounded. The Social Contractualists clearly stated what the aim of modern state should be and how safeguarding the rights of individuals should be the priority. The political theorists of modern day lack this clarity. They are more engaged according to Cobban are either with

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historical approach or with scientific approach. There is an absolute gap between the two approaches.

Political thinkers like Niccolo Machiavelli and later Hans J Morgenthau, Neibuhr and others from the realist school pointed out the hegemony of power politics. Politics was essentially a struggle for power. Machiavelli was the first to endorse a separation between politics and morality. In his advice in *The Prince*, Machiavelli stated how values and morality should be subservient to politics and power. In fact values are useful so far as they serve in ruling the country.

Another cause of decline of political theory is that politics in the modern period has been pushed to merely the academic circle. Its practical aspect is being overlooked and it is only being studied as a theoretical subject. This further led to a decline in its significance. Cobban also believed that absence of values have pushed the discipline to a mere analysis of power politics. The behavioural revolution caused an excessive emphasis on empiricism and created a huge gap between facts and values. All this led to a decline of political theory.

The Key points of Cobban's criticism can be listed as follows:

- External factors like interventionist state and bureaucracy stalemated the emergence of new theory.
- Absence of active political engagement and political movements have led to the decline of political theory.
- Internal factors like the absence of clear goals and values of political philosophers is a problem.
- Similarly the tendency to reduce political theory to a merely academic activity have further reduced its significance.

C. Dante Germino's views:

In his book *Beyond Ideology: The Revival of Political Theory*, he talked about ideological reductionism. He believed that in the greater part of 19th and 20th century positivism was the cause of the decline of political

theory. On the other hand, ideology especially ideologies like Marxism was a root cause of the decline of political theory. He called it “*ideological reductionism*”.

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Stop to Consider

Ideological Reductionism:

Ideology is a coherent set of ideas that provides a basis for organised political action. Ideological Reductionism means reducing complex phenomenon to its simple or fundamental constituents believing that it provides sufficient explanation. Dante Germino states that Marxism indulged in such reductionism as it tried to explain historical changes through the narrow prism of economic factors. Marxism is often accused of economic determinism. However Marxists have often countered by using the models of Base-Superstructure which shows an ongoing interaction between the economic and other factors in the society.

However like some political philosophers Germino did not think that political theory was dead and could not be revived. Instead he believed that political theory would soon see a revival. In fact political theory was again in ascendancy after the crisis of the decades of 1950s and 1960s. Germino accuses inimical political and intellectual traditions and an obsession with empiricism and natural sciences which saw its culmination in the behavioural revolution as the root cause of decline of political theory. However scholars like Michael Oakshott, Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss and Eric Vogelin through their writings contributed to the resurgence of political theory.

Check Your Progress: 1

1. The 1950s and 60s was a period of crisis for political theory. Do you agree? Can you pinpoint the crisis in your own words?
2. Political theory and its significance faced a challenge in the form of Behaviouralism. How do you explain this?

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3. What were the two main arguments forwarded in favour of the decline of political theory?
4. According to Easton, what were the main causes of decline of political theory?
5. According to Alfred Cobban, what were the main causes for decline of political theory?
6. What were the propositions forwarded by Dante Germino in his book *Beyond Ideology: The Revival of Political Theory*?

5.4 Resurgence of Political Theory

Political theory was anything but dead. By the end of 1960s, the resurgence of political theory became evident. David Easton was again at the helm of people working for its resurgence. In his presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1969, he launched the ‘post behavioural revolution’. While Behavioural Revolution marked the decline of political theory, post behavioural revolution was a clear marker of its resurgence. Post behavioural revolution did not dismiss the emphasis on facts and empirical research that was the hallmark of behaviouralism. Instead it aimed to take on board ‘values’ which were left out in Behaviouralism. Easton believed that scientific investigation will play a crucial role in providing precise solutions for social crisis, analysing causes of crisis in an objective manner and pointing out trends in studies of political processes. Easton did not see values and facts to be mutually exclusive. In fact with post behaviouralism he tried to bring in a synthesis of theory and facts.

Behaviouralism emphasised on the use of scientific methodology for research in political science. It believed that political theory can be sustained only if it is removed from political philosophy. It should rather focus on objective facts and provide concrete solutions. Champions of political philosophy like Leo Strauss on the other hand believed that this very obsession with pure natural science was an indication of the decline of political theory.

The limitation of an approach based purely on facts without adhering to values quickly culminated to a crisis in the discipline. Political theory in its

behavioural ‘avatar’ again fell short of explaining the newer developments in the society. In the 1960s, the Western World witnessed multiple social movements in the form of environmentalism, the rise of feminism. The two decade long Vietnam War also raised questions about the alleged peace that was supposed to follow the Second World War. All this put newer challenge in front of political theory.

Dante Germino who on one hand pointed out to the decline of political theory, also saw this as an opportunity for the resurgence of political theory. Germino was of the view that to survive a period of crisis, political theory must identify more with political philosophy than with any pure science. But it had to go back to the tradition of critical theory which will put philosophy through a rigorous examination of what is right and what is wrong, rather than taking political thought as given and endorsing it by merely pointing out that it was true in a given socio-economic context. This revived political theory will not be reductionist. It will theorise based on facts.

SAQ:

Can you find out the main difference between Behaviouralism and Post Behaviouralism?

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Political philosophy cannot be just objective and detached as it deals with the problems that a human being faces. Indifference to political struggles, the inequality of power relation in such struggles must be taken into account by a political philosopher. The aim of political philosophy cannot be just to explain how things are but also pin point why they are as such and how they ought to be. Easton championed the need of empirical theory. But he soon realised the problems that arose of dismissing values. Rather he is critical of both ‘hyper-factualism’ and an excessive emphasis on values and opinions. Easton believed that a researcher should not start with pre-conceived notions

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as this will impact the outcome of the research. But at the same time he also believed that values cannot be completely shed off in social science. Rise of conservative regimes, rise of extreme ideologies and totalitarian governments cannot be just objectively studied. Political philosophers must juxtapose these developments against the larger development of human beings and then also pin point how such developments can be avoided if they are detrimental to the society.

In order to bridge the gap between values and facts, Easton talked of formulating a new kind of theory called 'creative theory' (Easton, 1969). Creative theory is an empirical theory sustained by moral principles. Political theory must respond to the need of the society. And the sensible way to do it would be a judicious binding of the two – facts and values. Such a theory will have multiple methods – a statement of the actual situation, a statement of the desirable situation both long term and short term, and the possible steps to reach that desirable situation. This will contribute to bridging the gap between what the society requires and the scientific knowledge based on facts. In order to revive political theory Easton wanted it to be recast in a new conceptual framework. Easton called it 'the broad-gauge theory'. One of the major cause of decline of political theory was the belief that normativism and empiricism were mutually exclusive. Unlike other social sciences, political science was not at its peak because it did not use the tools and techniques that other social sciences were using. In other words, political science did not transform by responding to the changing nature of society.

Interestingly, to understand the debate around the decline of political theory, we have to also know the views of scholars who believed that political theory was not in any form of crisis. It was neither in decline nor dead. In fact it was very much actively existing. The chief exponents of this view were Leo Strauss, Isaiah Berlin and Blondel. Isaiah Berlin refuted the views that political theory did not produce any new plausible work in the last century or that political theory has lost its relevance. Berlin on the other hand stated that so far as there is no single universal solution to social problems in society, political theory will continue to open newer avenues of dialogue. Berlin further stated that some philosophical traditions or theories

might have lost its relevance owing to changing socio-political situation but this does not mean that the discipline itself has lost relevance.

Berlin goes on to pinpoint that when metaphysical theories of middle ages were challenged, they disappeared because they could not respond to those challenges. But the entire discipline did not decline. In fact the answer to the challenge also came from political theorists in the form of Social Contractualist theories. As opposed to the belief of critics, these decades saw a number of works emerge in political theory. John Rawls wrote “*Justice as Fairness*” (1957) and *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Karl Popper’s *Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) provided a criticism of Marx and Hegel’s philosophy. Berlin himself wrote a number of books including *Does Political Theory Still Exist* (1962). All these works contributed to the revival of political theory and the discipline was not exactly barren in this period.

Berlin refuted the claim that political theory is facing a crisis. His views can be stated as follows:

- The alleged period of crisis saw the production of large amount of theoretical works by Berlin, Rawls and others.
- The decline was of traditional political theory and not of the entire discipline of political science.
- For Berlin, the problem started because the critics did not differentiate between political theory and political philosophy.

Blondel opines that the problem arises because by decline of political theory one means the empirical study have overtaken political theory. At the peak of Behavioural Revolution, many political philosophers believed that this was in fact progress and political science have finally been alleviated to the status of natural science. But for the traditionalists, it left a vacuum in the discipline as political philosophers emphasised more on facts and less on the larger questions that concerned the society. Blondel also is of the view that empirical theory need not be in contradiction to political theory. Rather facts can actually help political theory be significant. Political theory should

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take the form of an analysis based on facts. It should move beyond the study of mere facts and try to respond to the political questions of our times. While both Berlin and Blondel believed that there was no contradiction as such between facts and values, Leo Strauss gave a different perspective. He went back to classical political philosophy and dismissed empiricism as well as historicism. According to him, political theory might be in a decline because theorists moved away from the right way of doing political theory.

In response to Easton's complaint that philosophers at present are not inspired by any ideal, Strauss said that philosophy is the highest activity of man and when indulging in philosophy, a philosopher must have certain values as goals or ideals. Classical political philosophy always strived towards finding the means of good life for the individual. Political theory should not stop at merely analysing historical instances or explaining them. In fact political theorists must use historical knowledge to provide solutions for contemporary problems.

Strauss also disagrees with the stand of positivists who believe that knowledge of values is unnecessary. He believed that such criticism stands true in terms of historicism which fell short of engaging with contemporary problems. But even political theorists should work towards rescuing political theory from historicism.

Critics further pointed out that as liberal democracy took roots in different countries, the occurrence of revolutions and conflicts declined. As a result political engagement of people were reduced and this also brought a stagnation of political theory. Leo Strauss on the other hand believed that liberal democracy provides a better environment for the development of political theory. Authoritarian regimes which deny the right to freedom of speech, expression and peaceful dissent cannot prepare a ground for the emergence of new political theories. Rather liberal democracies have in fact seen the emergence of new concepts based on peaceful social movements which worked towards the broadening of political values.

Here we can take the example of India. India witnessed the rise of historically marginalised communities in the 1990s. While the Mandal Commission gave

political representation to OBCs, it broadened the concept of social justice. Similarly Dalit rights activists and academics have worked towards formulating new discourse on the rights of Dalits. All this broadened the concepts of equity, social justice by bringing in newer ideas. But this was not merely limited to ideas. The notion of social justice have been implemented through affirmative action and positive discrimination undertaken by the Welfare state of India.

A number of new themes surfaced during the revival of political theory including Communitarianism which gave more importance to the community instead of the individual, Post-modernism which gave precedence to diverse individual experience instead of grand universal narratives, multiculturalism whose proponents like Will Kymlicka, Iris Marion Young and Bhikhu Parekh emphasised on group rights, cultural identity and proposed tolerance and peaceful coexistence, Feminism which supported a gendered lens to understand the world, Environmentalism which supported alternative models of sustainable development. None of these new themes rejected the importance of political theory. Instead the very scope of political science was broadened by the inclusion of the components from these new themes.

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SAQ:

Do you think group rights emphasised by Communitarianism and Multiculturalism leads to put limitations on individual rights? Can you think over this issue in the context of personal laws and the rights of minority within minorities – for example – Muslim women?

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The debate regarding the decline and the resurgence of political theory is largely because of two issues. Political theorists who tried to focus more on the behavioural and observable aspect of human beings and emphasise more on empirical models borrowing heavily from natural science felt disillusioned with the future of political theory. They felt that unlike other

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disciplines of social science, political theory could not adapt to changing social situation and hence was in decline. Secondly, the decline of political theory largely meant the decline of a particular trend of political theory dominated by historicism. It did not mean the decline of the discipline per se. In fact the decline further pointed out the impossibility of having theory without values and values based merely on abstractions and not facts. Rather the crisis period actually paved way for the resurgence of political theory in a stronger way and its manifestation was the post-behavioural revolution led by David Easton. It became clear that social science need not be exact like natural science. In fact social science should never try to blindly imitate natural science. Rather social science should step in when facts fall short of providing creative solutions.

Check Your Progress: 2

1. Which political theorists contested the view that political theory was in decline? Name some of them.
2. Briefly discuss Isaiah Berlin's views on the resurgence of political theory.
3. Is newer concepts like multiculturalism a reason for revival of political theory?
4. Unlike Isaiah Berlin, Strauss supported the idea of going back to classical political theory. Elaborate.
5. How do you reconcile the debate around the decline of political theory?

5.5 Summing Up

After reading this unit you have learnt that during the period of 1950s and 1960s, the discipline of Political Science and especially Political Theory underwent a period of crisis. A significant section of political theorists believed that political theory was on the verge of extinction. Such concerns were raised by mainly two groups – firstly those theorists who believed that political theory could not emulate natural science and hence was in decline. Secondly,

some theorists believed that due to behavioural revolution, political theorists were emphasising too much on facts and empiricism and have moved away from the original goal of political theorists – to strive to find out the means to achieve a good life for the people. For the behaviouralists, the problem was that political science was largely speculative and abstract. On the other hand, for scholars who supported classical political theory, the 1950s saw the rise of a new trend of political theory which moved away from values. The critics did not agree as to the causes of decline of political theory and provided different views.

However a number of scholars disagreed with the claim that political theory was in decline. In fact, Easton who headed the Behavioural Revolution himself ushered in the Post Behavioural Revolution and declared that it was crucial to have a theory that would be analytical but also based on facts. declared that it was crucial to have a theory that would be analytical but also based on facts. declared that it was crucial to have a theory that would be analytical but also based on facts. He felt it was crucial to bridge the gap between values and facts. Along with Easton, other scholars mainly Isaiah Berlin, Blondel and Leo Strauss also pointed out that what was perceived as decline of political theory was in fact a churning which was much required and it prepared the situation for the resurgence of political theory. Berlin and others pointed out that the alleged decline was mainly the decline of the traditional classical theory which was dominated by historicism. This trend had certain limitations as it emphasised to study the history of values, philosophy and focus more on how things ought to be instead of understanding and analysing how things are and why. This trend has been rendered insignificant because it failed to explain the new changes in the society and provide elaborate solutions. Berlin and others are of the view that while political theory in the decades of 1960s and 1970 s saw a crisis period, it was neither in decline nor dead. In fact it responded to the crisis and resurged.

Most scholars did not dismiss political theory and its importance outrightly. Even the critics of historicism believed that political theory only needs to be rescued from historicism and this will be help in making political theory significant.

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