

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Political Theory and Indian Politics
Paper I (Section A)



POLITICAL SCIENCE

**(Political Theory & Indian Politics
Paper-I Section A)**

**for C.S. Main Exam according to
the Revised Syllabus**

Prem Arora



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Preface To Eighth Edition

This edition of the book has been prepared in accordance with the latest syllabus for the Civil Services Examination prescribed by UPSC. While the existing topics have been thoroughly revised, new topics like Feminism, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Gramsci and Hanah Arendt have been included in this edition.

This book entitled POLITICAL THEORY AND INDIAN POLITICS, covers' Part 'A' of Paper I of Political Science for the main examination. While preparing the revised edition, the author has immensely benefited from the various suggestions sent by the esteemed readers. It is hoped that in future also readers would send valuable suggestions which shall be gratefully acknowledged and utilized for the improvement of the next edition of the book.

The author is grateful to M/s Cosmos Bookhive (P) Ltd., for the pains taken to bring out this thoroughly revised edition with great speed.

PREM ARORA

Contents

Chapter-1	Approaches to the Study of Political Theory	1
Chapter-2	Liberal Theory of State	14
Chapter-3	Marxian Theory of State	24
Chapter-4	Neo-Liberal Theory of State	28
Chapter-5	Communitarian Theory	32
Chapter-6	Post-Colonial State	36
Chapter-7	Sovereignty	44
Chapter-8	Marxist Theory of Sovereignty	59
Chapter-9	Globalisation and the State	61
Chapter-10	Theories of Democracy	66
Chapter-11	Human Rights	84
Chapter-12	Theories of Rights	94
Chapter-13	Justice	108
Chapter-14	Equality	117
Chapter-15	Revolution	124
Chapter-16	Political Obligation	132
Chapter-17	New Social Movements	141
Chapter-18	Political Culture	148
Chapter-19	Theories of Political Economy	156
Chapter-20	Liberalism	164
Chapter-21	Socialism—Evolutionary, Democratic and Fabian	177
Chapter-22	Marxian Socialism	189
Chapter-23	Fascism	196
Chapter-24	Gandhism	205
Chapter-25	Anarchism	223
Chapter-26	Theories of Power	228
Chapter-27	Indian Political Thought—Manu and Kautilya	236
Chapter-28	M.N. Roy (1893-1954)	253
Chapter-29	B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956)	260
Chapter-30	E.V. Ramaswami Naicker (1879-1973)	263
Chapter-31	Plato	280
Chapter-32	Aristotle	316
Chapter-33	Machiavelli (1469-1527)	350
Chapter-34	Thomas Hobbes (1581-1679)	367
Chapter-35	John Stuart Mill (1806-1878)	384
Chapter-36	George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)	396
Chapter-37	Karl Marx (1818-1883)	407
Chapter-38	Lenin (1870-1924)	425
Chapter-39	Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919)	435
Chapter-40	Mao Zedong or Mao Tse Tung (1893-1977)	441
Chapter-41	Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)	448
Chapter-42	Post-Colonial State	450
Chapter-43	Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)	453
Chapter-44	Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898)	457

Approaches to the Study of Political Theory

MEANING OF POLITICAL THEORY

To understand the meaning of 'political theory' shall be desirable to first understand the meaning of 'theory'. The term 'theory' has been drawn from the Greek word 'Theoria' which implies a well-focused mental look taken at something in a state of contemplation with the intent to grasp or understand. When this approach is applied to 'political' field, it is described as political theory. It may be noted that the term 'political theory' has been taken in two senses—broad and narrow. According to Sabine, in the broad sense it means "anything about politics or relevant to politics". In the narrow sense it means 'disciplined investigation of political problems'.

Scholars have offered different definitions of 'political theory' according to their perceptions. According to Andrew Hacker, "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 knowledge of political and social reality on the other."

Bluhm says "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 what was likely to happen next."

Arnold Brecht, in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, says that political theory "comprises a thinker's entire teaching on a subject, including his description of facts, his explanations (whether religious, philosophical or empirical,) his conception of history, his value-judgements and his proposals of goals, of policy and of principles".

M. A. Weinstein says that political theory "can be viewed as an activity that involves posing questions, developing responses to those questions, and creating imaginative perceptives on the public life of human beings". He says there is "no correct definition of the scope of political theory.

The great political created their works in response to problems that they discovered in the realms of practical affairs or speculative thought. The best way to become a political theorist, or at least to appreciate the work of political theorists, is to become seriously concerned about a problem in public life."

Cocker says "When political government and its forms and activities are studied not simply as facts to be described and compared, or judge in reference to their immediate and temporary effects, but as facts to be understood and appraised in relation to the constant needs, desires and opinions of men – then we have political theory".

According to David Held political theory is "a network of concepts and generalizations about political life involving ideas, assumptions and statements about the nature, purpose and key features of government, state and society and about the political capabilities of human beings".

An analysis of the various definitions of political theory highlights the following features of political theory:

1. The sphere of Political Theory extends to the realm of politics only, viz., Political life of citizens, his political behaviour, his political ideas, the government he establishes and the tasks which the government performs.

2. Political theory tries to examine political phenomenon through description, explanation and investigation.

3. Though political theory is primarily concerned with 'political' activities, it tries to understand the political in relation to the social, economic, psychological, ecological, historical and moral conditions.

4. The ultimate aim of Political Theory is to build a good state in a good society. For the attainment of this objective it evolves processes, procedures, institutions and structures which have stood the test of history and are rational.

Approaches to the Study of Political Theory

After examining the meaning of political theory, it shall be desirable to examine the various approaches of its study.

By approach we mean a way of looking at and explaining a particular phenomenon. According to Isaak, "An approach, in political inquiry, is a general strategy for studying political phenomena. An approach might provide the framework for, and even take the form of, a model or conceptual scheme, or it might serve as the impetus for the development of theory of politics". According to Van Dyke, "approaches consist of criteria for selecting problems and relevant data, whereas methods are procedures for getting and utilizing data".

In the main there are two approaches for the study of political

science, viz., the traditional and contemporary.

1. Traditional Approach

The traditional approach, was the most popular approach for the study of political science till the dawn of the present century. This approach tried to make use of history, ethics, philosophy and law for the study of political science. Some of the important political thinkers who made use of the traditional approach for the study of political science included Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Kant, Hegal, Bentham, Grotius, Austin, etc. Though all these thinkers adopted traditional approach there were fundamental differences in their attitude. While Plato, Kant and Hegal tried to idealise the state and present the picture of an ideal community, thinkers like Aristotle, Machiavelli and Hobbes adopted a realistic approach to explain the nature of power and its operation. Others like Grotius, Bentham, Austin, etc., tried to evolve theories which sought to establish close connection between politics and law. However, despite difference in emphasis, one thing was common to these thinkers, viz., they tried to examine the past events and draw some sort of tentative conclusions about the contemporary political activity.

Major Traditional Approaches: Before highlighting the main features of the traditional approaches, it shall be desirable to have a brief idea about the various traditional approaches. At the outset it may be observed that in contrast to the modern approaches the traditional approaches are highly speculative and prescriptive in nature.

Philosophical Approaches: This is the oldest approach for the study of Politics. It is also known as speculative, ethical metaphysical approach. In this approach the study of state, government, and man is intimately linked with the pursuits of certain goals, morals, truths, etc. This approach was applied by Plato, More, Bacon, Harrington, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Green, Hobhouse, Oakeshott, etc. This approach is highly abstract and tries to comprehend reality hidden behind the apparent reality. This approach has been criticised on the ground that it is highly speculative and abstract and takes us far away from the world of reality. As a result an average man is not able to comprehend politics in its true perspective. Secondly, the followers of this approach try to examine the purpose and nature of state on the basis of certain pre-conceived ideas. Thus Plato built up his ideal state on the basis of his belief in the triplicity of soul and Thomas Moore based his Utopia on the theory of ideas. As a result the ideas expressed by the scholars adopting philosophical approach are often imaginary, unrealistic and unscientific. Despite these shortcomings of the philosophical approach it cannot be denied that it has enabled us to understand the merits and defects of the existing political system.

Historical Approach: This approach lays emphasis on the study of historical events and factors for the proper understanding of the existing institutions and predictions about the future. In the words of Zimmern this approach emphasises that "It is a contact with the past which equips men and communities for the task of present". This approach enables us to know the role of individual motives, actions, accomplishments, failures and contingencies in historical continuity and change. The prominent writers who adopted historical approach include Aristotle, Montesquieu, Hegel, Marx, Sir Henry Maine, Burke, Oakeshott, etc.

The historical approach for the study of politics suffers from numerous shortcomings. In the first instance, the views of the investigator may be greatly influenced by his religious beliefs and political participation, his racial prejudices, etc. and the same historical incidents may be presented in different ways by different scholars. According to Lord Bryce the historical approach is often loaded with superficial resemblances. As such, 'historical parallels may sometimes be illuminating, but they are also misleading in most of the cases'. Secondly, this approach attaches too much importance to the past incidents and experiences. Thirdly, the historical approach is defective in so far as scholars adopting this approach try to do too much and in the end contributed very little except some interesting problems and theoretical approaches, and some very far-ranging mis-information". (Eckstein) Fourthly, Sidgwick has been highly critical of historical approach. He maintains that the primary aim of political science is to determine what ought to be so far as the constitution and action of government are concerned and this end cannot be discovered by an historical study of the forms and functions of government. He asserts "I do not think that the historical method is one to be primarily used in attempting to find reasoned solutions to the problems of practical politics".

Despite these shortcomings of the historical approach, it cannot be denied that it has greatly contributed to the study of the relevance of the origin and growth of political institutions. This approach has also greatly contributed in imparting universal and respectable character to political theory.

Legal Approach: This approach gained popularity in the nineteenth century when an effort was made to study the political institutions on the basis of their formal and legal structure with a view to understand the political actualities. This approach treats the state primarily as an organisation for the creation and enforcement of law. It treats organized society not as a social or a political phenomenon but as purely judicial regime, an ensemble of public law rights and obligations, founded on a system of pure logic and reason. Some of the prominent writers who

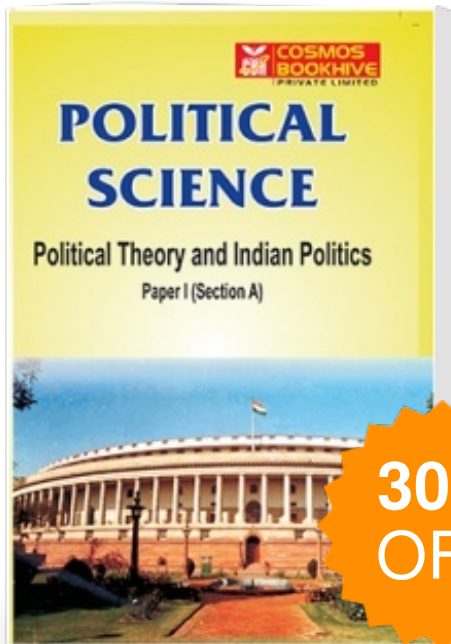
adopted this approach include Cicero, Jean Bodin, Grotius, Hobbes, Bentham, Austin, Henry Maine, A. V. Dicey, etc. The legal approach rests on the assumption that law prescribes action to be taken in a given situation and also forbids the same in some other situations. It treats the organized society not as a mere social or political phenomenon but as an ensemble of public law, rights and obligations founded on a system of pure logic.

This approach suffers from serious shortcomings. It errs in so far as it reduces every aspect of political system to a judicial entity and attaches too much importance to the study of formal institutional law and constitutions and completely neglects the social, religious, economic and other factors which influence the working of these institutions. Further, a legal truth can be a political untruth. For example in Britain even today the Queen is legally all powerful and can assume dictatorial powers, but in reality she is only a constitutional ruler and does not enjoy any real powers. Another shortcoming of the legal approach is that it is descriptive rather than analytical. Further, it mainly concentrates on the study of the western political system. But despite these shortcomings it cannot be denied that the legal approach has greatly contributed to making politics an interesting field of study.

Institutional Approach: This approach concentrates on the study of various political institutions like the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, political parties, etc., in different countries with a view to determine their role and functions in different conditions. This approach has been followed since the times of Aristotle. Polybius was another prominent ancient philosopher who made use of this approach. In modern times this approach has been adopted by Laski, Finer, James Bryce, Maurice Duverger, etc. Most of these writers studied formal as well as informal institutional structures of political systems. However, these writers in the main concentrated on the study of major governmental systems of advanced countries to substantiate their conclusions. In later years a new trend appeared and writers like G.A. Almond and J.C. Coleman tried to study the political system of the third world countries as well.

The institutional approach is defective in so far it completely ignores the role of the individuals in the operation of the formal as well as informal structures. Further it tries to study the various institutions by removing them from their natural context. Despite these shortcomings it cannot be denied that the approach has greatly contributed to the growth of the behavioural approach. The structural-functionalists made certain improvements in the institutional approach and laid focus on the role of political parties, pressure groups, channels of

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