NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: POL 311

COURSE TITLE: Contemporary Political Analysis

COURSE GUIDE

POL 311
Contemporary Political Analysis

Course Team   Terhemba N. Ambe-Uva (Developer/Writer)-NOUN
                   Stephen Lafenwa   (Editor)- UI
                   Abdul Rahoof A. Bello (Coordinator)-NOUN

.

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
National Open University of Nigeria

Headquarters
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way
Victoria Island
Lagos

Abuja Annex
245 Samuel Adesujo Ademulegun Street
Central Business District
Opposite Arewa Suites
Abuja

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng
URL: www.nou.edu.ng

National Open University of Nigeria

First Printed

ISBN:

Printed by ……………..
For
National Open University of Nigeria

TABLE OF CONTENTS   PAGE

Introduction

Welcome to POL 311: Contemporary Political Analysis! This is a three credit unit course available for students in the undergraduate Political Science programme at the three hundred level. The course provides an opportunity for students to acquire a detailed knowledge and understanding of theoretical approaches in contemporary political analysis. Analysis is a word that has a variety of meanings. To analyse something means to ask a question; give an answer, and then give the reasons for the answer. In looking at political analysis that political scientists have engaged in, we have labelled them scientific, normative, instrumental, and analytic. Students who have gone through this course would be able to apply different approaches in political science to the analysis of political events and phenomena. Students would also be expected to know the mainstream literature in political analysis and their discussion, and be able to apply approaches to case studies. An interesting concern of the course is to introduce students to the distinction between political science and the natural sciences. While both of them adopt the scientific method, political science can never be an exact science like physics and chemistry because of the substance, which it deals with, i.e., human behaviour. Another concern is to introduce you to the distinction between political philosophy and political science.

This course guide provides you with the necessary information about the contents of the course and the materials you will need to be familiar with for a proper understanding of the subject matter. It is designed to help you to get the best of the course by enabling you to think productively about the principles underlying the issues you study and the projects you execute in the course of your study and thereafter. It also provides some guidance on the way to approach your tutor-marked assignments (TMA). You will of course receive on-the-spot guidance from your tutorial classes, which you are advised to approach with all seriousness.

Overall, this module will fill an important vacuum in the study of Political Science, especially as it is interested in knowing why certain political events and phenomena occur at certain times, and why political actors behave the way they do. Students will acquire an understanding of and the skills to evaluate and discuss political inquiries literature. They will also be able to apply contemporary political approaches to real world events, both at the domestic and international level.

Course Aims

The course aims of this course are to:

(i)   Explicate the concept of political analysis
(ii)   Present an overview of approaches in contemporary political analysis
(iii)   Distinguish between philosophy and political science
(iv)   Understand why the science in political science is not the same as the one in natural sciences.
(v)   Apply different approaches in political science to a wide and diverse area of politics at the domestic and international level

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

(i)   Define analysis in general and contemporary political analysis in particular
(ii)   Differentiate between heuristic and explanatory approaches
(iii)   Identify and explain various approaches in contemporary political inquiry
(iv)   Describe various theories in political analysis
(v)   Apply political approaches to real political events
(vi)   Identify and discuss types of knowledge
(vii)   Elucidate the major distinctions in dominant approaches in Political Science

Working through the Course

I would advise you to carefully study each unit, beginning with this *study guide*, especially since this course provides an opportunity for you to understand the major approaches in contemporary political analysis. Also make a habit of noting down any question you have for tutorials. In addition, please try your hand at formulating or identifying theories relevant to, and that can be applied to political inquiry.

Course Materials

1.   Course guide
2.   Study units
3.   Textbooks
4.   Assignment file
5.   Presentation schedule.

Study Units

There are five modules in this course, and twenty each module made up of four units. Apart from modules 1 and 3 that are made of five units, the

remaining three modules each contain four units. Overall therefore, you will find a total of twenty two units in this course. Some units may be longer and/or more in depth than others, depending on the scope of the course that is in focus. The five modules in the course are as follows:

Module 1   Contemporary   Political   Analysis: An Introduction

Unit 1   What does political analysis entails?
Unit 2   The divide in political science
Unit 3   Understanding Science
Unit 4   Understanding the science of politics
Unit 5   Understanding politics

Module 2   Development-Oriented Approaches

Unit 1   Marxism
Unit 2   Modernisation theory
Unit 3   Dependency theory
Unit 4   The political economy approach

Module 3   Behaviouralism and Emerging Approaches

Unit 1   Behaviouralism and Post-Behaviouralism
Unit 2   New institutionalism
Unit 3   Political culture approach
Unit 4   Role theory
Unit 5   Post-modernism

Module 4   Political Systems and Power Approaches

Unit 1   Systems theory
Unit 2   Structural   functional   approach/structural functionalism
Unit 3   Group theory
Unit 4   Elite theory

Module 5   Rational and Intentional Approaches

Unit 1   Game theory
Unit 2   Rational choice theory
Unit 3   Decision making theory
Unit 4   Communication theory

Each module is preceded with a listing of the units contained in it, and a table of contents, an introduction, a list of objectives and the main content in turn precedes each unit, including Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs). At the end of each unit, you will find one or more Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA) which you are expected to work on and submit for marking.

Textbooks and References

At the end of each unit, you will find a list of relevant reference materials which you may yourself wish to consult as the need arises, even though I have made efforts to provide you with the most important information you need to pass this course. However, I would encourage you, as a third year student to cultivate the habit of consulting as many relevant materials as you are able to within the time available to you. In particular, make sure you consult whatever material you are advised to consult before attempting any exercise.

Assessment

Two types of assessment are involved in the course: the Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs), and the Tutor-Marked Assessment (TMA) questions. Your answers to the SAEs are not meant to be submitted, but they are also important since they give you an opportunity to assess your own understanding of course content. Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMA) on the other hand are to be carefully answered and kept in your assignment file for submission and marking. This will count for 30% of your total score in the course.

Tutor Marked Assignment

At the end of every unit, you will find a Tutor-Marked Assignment which you should answer as instructed and put in your assignment file for submission. However, this Course Guide does not contain any Tutor-Marked Assignment question. The Tutor-Marked Assignment questions are provided from Unit 1 of Module 1 to Unit 4 of Module 5.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for POL 311 will take three hours and carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination questions will reflect the SAEs and TMAs that you have already worked on. I advise you to spend the time between your completion of the last unit and the examination revising the entire course. You will certainly find it helpful to also review both your SAEs and TMAs before the examination.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table sets out how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Four assignments (the best four of all the assignments submitted for marking).	Four assignments, each marked out of 10%, but highest scoring three selected, thus totalling 30%
Final Examination	70% of overall course score.
Total	**100% of course score.**

Course Overview Presentation Scheme

Units	Title of Work	Week Activity	Assignment (End-of-Unit)
Course Guide			
Module 1	**Contemporary Political Analysis: An Introduction**		
Unit 1	What does political analysis entails?	Week 1	Assignment
Unit 2	The divide in political science	Week 1	Assignment
Unit 3	Understanding science	Week 2	Assignment
Unit 4	Understanding the science of politics	Week 2	Assignment
Unit 5	Understanding politics	Week 3	TMA 1 to be submitted
Module 2	**Development-Oriented Approaches**		
Unit 1	Marxism	Week 3	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Modernisation theory	Week 4	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Dependency theory	Week 4	Assignment 1
Unit 4	The political economy approach	Week 5	TMA 2 to be submitted
Module 3	**Behaviouralism and Emerging Approaches**		
Unit 1	Behaviouralism	Week 6	Assignment 1
Unit 2	New institutionalism	Week 6	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Political culture approach	Week 7	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Role theory	Week 8	Assignment 1
Unit 5	Post-modernism	Week 9	TMA 3 to be submitted

Units	Title of Work	Week Activity	Assignment (End-of-Unit)
Module 4	**Structural Systems and Power Approaches**		
Unit 1	Systems theory	Week 10	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Structural functional analysis	Week 10	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Group theory	Week 11	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Elite theory	Week 12	TMA 4 to be submitted
Module 5	**Rational and Intentional Approaches**		
Unit 1	Game theory	Week 13	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Rational choice theory	Week 13	Assignment 1
Unit 3	Decision making theory	Week 14	Assignment 1
Unit 4	Communications theory	Week 15	TMA 5 to be submitted
	Revision	Week 16	
	Examination	Week 17	
	Total	**17 Weeks**	

What You Will Learn In the Course

Contemporary Political Analysis provides you with the opportunity to gain a mastery and an in -depth understanding of approaches in contemporary political science. The first module provides you with in-depth understanding of the concept of political analysis, levels of analysis and criteria for distinguishing between various approaches in contemporary political analysis. The second module will provide you with an understanding of development-oriented approaches. The remaining three modules will also introduce you other theoretical approaches in the study of political phenomena, events and behaviour. Overall, the course argues that political science can never be an exact science as physics and chemistry. Nevertheless, it adopts the scientific method and approaches in the study of political phenomena.

What You Will Need for the Course

First, I think it will be of immense help to you if you try to review what you studied at 200 level in the course, *POL 211:Introduction to Political Analysis*, to refresh your mind about what analysis is about. Second, you may need to purchase one or two texts recommended as important for your mastery of the course content. You need quality time in a study-friendly environment every week. If you are computer-literate (which

ideally you should be), you should be prepared to visit recommended websites. You should also cultivate the habit of visiting reputable physical libraries accessible to you.

Tutors and Tutorials

There are fifteen (15) hours of tutorials provided in support of the course. You will be notified of the dates and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, and keep a close watch on your progress. Be sure to send in your tutor-marked assignments promptly, and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty with your self-assessment exercise, tutor-marked assignment or the grading of an assignment. In any case, I advise you to attend the tutorials regularly and punctually. Always take a list of such prepared questions to the tutorials and participate actively in the discussions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all the features of this course guide have been designed to facilitate your learning in order that you achieve the aims and objectives of the course. They include the aims and objectives, course summary, course overview, Self Assessment Exercises and study questions. You should ensure that you make maximum use of them in your study to achieve maximum results.

Summary

POL 311: Contemporary Political Analysis provides a theoretical foundation upon which you will develop mastery in contemporary political analysis. It is aimed at equipping you with analytical skills for the understanding of theoretical approaches in contemporary political analysis. Analysis is a word that has a variety of meanings. To analyse some thing means to ask a question; give an answer, and then give the reasons for the answer. Upon completing this course you should be able to explain the various approaches employed in contemporary analysis of politics, including their weaknesses and strengths. You will also be able to apply these approaches to real life political phenomena. This course assumes a prior knowledge of political analysis which you would have taken at the first year.

I wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful!

Course Code   POL 311

Course Title   Contemporary Political Analysis

Course Team   Terhemba Ambe-Uva (Developer/Writer)- NOUN
                       Stephen Lephan (Editor)- UI
                       Abdul Rahoof Bello (Coordinator) - NOUN

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
National Open University of Nigeria

TABLE OF CONTENTS   PAGE

x

**MODULE 1   CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL
                    ANALYSIS: AN INTRODUCTION**

The general aim of this module is to provide you with an in-depth understanding of the concept of political analysis, levels of analysis and criteria for distinguishing between various approaches in contemporary political analysis. To analyse something means to ask a question; give an answer, and then give the reasons for the answer. When political scientists talk about political analysis, their enterprise is essentially concerned with inquiries that can either be scientific, normative, descriptive, or analytic. This module is prepared to give you insight on various theoretical approaches employed in political analysis.

Contemporary political analysis refers to new methods and approaches in political science that seek to explain why certain political events occur, how they occur, when they occur and how such events can be controlled. Contemporary political analysis is the major task undertaken by Political Scientists.

In this module, you will be introduced to what political analysis is; approaches to political analysis and distinctions in approaches. In the first unit, you will be told what an approach to political inquiry is all about. This unit will also provide us with the criteria for distinguishing between various approaches in contemporary political analysis. The second unit will focus on the divide in political science- between the normative, legal and philosophical approaches- and contemporary approaches in political inquiry. The third unit looks at the distinctive features of a scientific enterprise. In the fourth unit, we would attempt a general understanding of the concept of politics. Here, we would argue that the concept of politics does not have a universal definition. However, scholars have viewed it in three perspectives: government; power, authority and conflict; and the authoritative allocation of values. The focus of unit five is on understanding the concept of politics. The general theme of this module is that that political science can never be an exact science as physics and chemistry. Nevertheless, it adopts the scientific approach in the study of political phenomena.

The five units that constitute this module are thematically linked. By the end of this module, the stage would have been set for you to appreciate the various theoretical approaches in contemporary political analysis.

Unit 1 • What does political analysis entails?

Unit 2 • The divide in Political Science

Unit 3 • Understanding science

Unit 4 • Understanding the science of politics

Unit 5 • Understanding politics

UNIT 1   WHAT   DOES   POLITICAL   ANALYSIS ENTAILS?

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
      3.1   What does political analysis entails?
      3.2   What is contemporary political analysis?
            3.2.1   Theoretical approaches in political analysis
      3.3   Tools for contemporary political analysis
            3.3.1   Approaches
            3.3.2   Models
            3.3.3   Paradigms
            3.3.4   Theories
      3.5   Distinction between approaches in political enquiry
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

You must have read the Course Guide and familiarised yourself with the introductory comments in Module 1. The main thrust of the unit is for you to understand what is meant by contemporary political analysis, tools for contemporary analysis, their significance in contemporary analysis, and the distinction between various approaches in contemporary political inquiry. This unit forms the bedrock upon which other subsequent units and modules are built, and therefore demands that you give it the attention it deserves.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

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

- explain what political analysis entails
- define   contemporary political analysis
- explain the significance of tools for contemporary political analysis to political inquiry
- distinguish various approaches in political inquiry

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What does political analysis entails?

Political analysis refers to processes, methods and approaches in political science that seek to explain why certain political events occur, how they occur, when they occur and how such events can be controlled. Contemporary political analysis is the major task undertaken by Political Scientists. According to Osaghae (1988) political analysis has three main goals:

- To know what is important in politics, i.e. those things that influence or determine the outcome of events.

- To know what is valuable, i.e. the difference every political outcome makes to our desires, both individually and collectively; and

- To know what is real or true by systematically subjecting our guesses, impressions, popular belief, even rumours, to verification.

Political analysis covers some of the important philosophical questions underlying the epistemological, ontological and methodological choices that all political scientists must make, and relate these to current research and debates in the discipline.

There are different types of political analysis. In the sections below, you will be introduced to these different types in contemporary political analysis.

Normative Analysis
When we talk of normative analysis in political science, our focus is on the type of political analysis that asks questions of value and seeks to identify what is good or better with a view to recommending what we ought to value. It will ask, for instance, whether, when, and why we ought to value freedom, or democracy or equality and why should we obey the state. Many of the 'founding fathers' of political science, ranging from Plato through Thomas Hobbes to a more recent major work of political philosophy, John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (see Rawls, 1971), have all sought to set out what constitutes the 'good life', the kind of society and polity within which it would be desirable for us to live.

Empirical Analysis
The second type of analysis common to politics is empirical. Empirical analysis seeks to identify observable phenomena in the real world with a view to establishing what is, rather than what ought to be. Empirical analysis, of course, is the basis of the natural sciences, and many so-called positivist political analysts seek to

bring to bear what they see as the impartial and value free methods of the natural sciences to the study of political phenomena.

A key element of the empirical approach to the study of political institutions and processes is the comparative method. When political scientists seek to develop testable generalisations by examining political phenomena across different political systems or historically within the same political system, they are carrying out comparative analysis. Comparative political analysis is also an aid in understanding and identifying those characteristics which may be universal to the political process, regardless of time or place.

The quality of empirical analysis depends on its explanatory and predictive force. For instance, because empirical analysis involves making predictions, its quality will be determined by how true the predictions prove to be. To this extent, "empirical analysis falls short of what we want from it if it leads to expectations about the future that are falsified by events" (Dahl, 1976).

Semantic Analysis
The third type of analysis commonly used in politics is that of semantics. This is also called conceptual analysis. As its name suggests, this form of analysis is concerned with clarifying the meaning of concepts. This is an important function in political studies. So many of the concepts used in politics like power, influence, democracy, freedom, development, even politics itself, have no commonly accepted definitions and, indeed, have been described as 'essentially contested concepts' (Gallie, 1956). In effect, defining what we mean by these terms therefore is a crucial starting point in any political analysis.

According to Osaghae (1988), there are two ways of carrying out semantic analysis. First, a term or concept can be defined by appealing to an authority whose definition is widely accepted, or by relying on definitions offered in Standard English or technical dictionaries. This is called nominal definition. Second, in the case of concepts like democracy, freedom, or equality which are often coloured by ideological considerations, we can devise certain "objective" indices according to which they can be defined, and insist that they mean exactly what we want them to mean. This is called "operationalisation" of concepts.

Policy Analysis
Policy analysis involves the search for policies or course of action which will take us from the present state to that which we desire. In other words, policies are solutions which we think will bring desired

and satisfactory results. Certainly, in any unsatisfactory situation, there would be more than one possible solution. Each of these options has the potential to help us achieve our desired goal. But the option or options we will choose would depend on many considerations: how we define the goal or problem, the relative costs and benefits of each option, the practicability of each option and so on. All policies involve decision making by public officials that authorise or give direction and content to public policy actions. Decision-making involves the choice of an alternative from a series of competing alternatives. Some decisions which affect public policy actions are fundamental while others are largely routine and are made by officials in the day-to-day application of public policy.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
What are the different types of analysis in political science?

3.2 What is Contemporary Political Analysis?

Blondel (1976:13) identifies the development of contemporary political analysis as a history of the 'three main battlefields', each dominating political analysis at different times. One 'battlefield' has been represented by the distinction between *normative and distinctive political science*- that is, the study of what ought to be versus the study of what actually occurs.

Second, Blondel identifies the 'battlefield' between *law and reality, the problem of structures*, in which a legal approach is taken towards the study of politics. Examples of this approach would be analyses which focuses upon constitutional law, public law and administrative law, when the problem rotates around the question of implementations of rules plays in political life' (Ibid: 21). The problem here is that political behaviour is influenced by a range of structures and procedures (for example, the family, membership of the political party) which lie beyond the remit of legal rules.

Blondel's third 'battlefield' is that between *the unique and the general* in which we have witnessed a move towards the quantification of political analysis and the development of behaviouralism (which was first developed in the USA). It is this approach which makes the difference between political studies and political science, and which we refer to as contemporary political analysis.

Hence, contemporary political analysis can be defined as new processes, approaches and strategies that guide the political scientists in studying political phenomena. Contemporary political analysis requires adopting new tools, methods, and concepts in dissecting

political phenomenon in other to explain why an event occurred, how it occurred, when it occurred and how a political analyst can predict and control political events.

Analysis is a word that has a variety of meanings; since this is the concern of this course, I would advise you to pause a bit and consider its varieties. To chemists, analysis means breaking things down into their constituents parts; to biologists, sorting things into categories; to mathematicians, deriving conclusions from premises, to social scientists, identifying the causes of various kinds of human behaviour; to moral philosophers, showing which actions are good ones. A common thread that runs through all these definitions is the attempt to answer one kind of question or another: what is the nature of this substance? What species of animals do we have here? What is the solution to this problem? Why did she refuse to vote in the election? Thus, to analyse something means to ask a question; give an answer, and then give the reasons for the answer. In looking at political analysis that political scientists have engaged in: we have labelled them scientific, normative, descriptive and logical

Describing a political system, or an aspect of it, or a general political phenomenon, and explaining or accounting for such facts are scientific activities. Traditional political philosophers have always been engaged in such scientific activities. For instance, Aristotle spent much of his time describing and comparing various kinds of constitutions, and in another section of *Politics,* he attempts an explanation of political change and political revolution (Baker, 1958). Machiavelli is also reputed for the down-to-earth description of politics as it really is- namely, a struggle for power (See *The Prince).*

The traditionalists include theologians, historians, lawyers journalists, etc and their emphasis is on 'what ought to be' questions. They dominated the realm of political analysis before the 19th century when political science formally emerged as a separate discipline.

Traditional approaches to the analysis of politics have never been without criticisms. First, and largely beyond his control, the traditional political philosopher lacked the sophisticated scientific and methodological technology and hardware. The statistical and mathematical tools so essential to modern social scientists were not available to Plato and Aristotle, Locke and Marx. Second, and perhaps more crucial in the long run, is the fact that scientific activities have never been the main concern of the political philosopher.

The primary activities of political philosophers have probably been *normative*: activities, which involve moral, ethical, or value judgements. While scientific activities deals with what is*,* value judgements express what a political philosopher believes *ought* to be. As you will learn in this course, the distinction between *is* and *ought* is fundamental to an understanding of the contemporary political analysis.

There are several varieties of normative activity. First, many political philosophers spend much time *prescribing* the best state of political system. Plato (428-348BC.), an early Greek philosopher, who taught Aristotle, was fascinated by the political question of what constitutes the ideal state or utopia. In his *Republic,* Plato was concerned particularly with the concept of justice, which he perceived resulted from adhering to relatively strict principles. Drawing on his knowledge of how Greek city-states functioned, Plato categorised political systems according to which level of society had most influence on the governance of a given state. The ideal state, he said, would be ruled by philosopher kings who were imbued with wisdom. Of course, Plato was not naïve, he posited that an "ideal" state would persist only if the people believed in their leaders. Political activities also engage in the normative activity of *recommending* the proper or true goals of politics. Thus, Jeremy Bentham argues that happiness should be the basis of all political activities.

Instrumental or applied value judgements should not be confused with normative statements in that the former recommends the best way of achieving a given end, but they do not attempt to justify the end in itself. This is the significance of an alternative label, *means-ends analysis.* An instrumental judgement is therefore a scientific-empirical activity, for it is really an explanation of why certain conditions or actions lead to the desired results. The last kind of activity is known as *analytic or logical.* This category includes both the analysis of political words and concepts and the examination of certain aspects of political arguments, for instance, their logical consistency. Plato, using the dialectical method, analyses and criticises a number of definitions of justice in his attempt to arrive at its real meaning (Cornford, 1945).

You may also wish to know that early contributions to the study of politics and government came, then, largely from philosophers, but also from the fields of history and law. For many years, the subject was commonly taught in history departments. Political scientists were, in fact, often considered to be "historians of the present", and

early studies of political institutions and international relations emphasised historicity methodology. Since it was particularly concerned with government organisation and law making, the field of law, too, was important to the evolution of modern political science. The traditional approaches also include the descriptive-institutional approaches in political analysis. However, it will surprise you to know in subsequent units that, their has been a renewed interest in institutions, what is essentially now known as new institutionalism.

By the late 1950s, the traditional approach came under severe attack. The basic criticisms alleged that its practitioners were essentially *parochial* (biased towards Western thought and ideas), *formal-legal* (interested mainly in constitutions and the operations of institutions such as the executives, legislature, courts and bureaucracies), *non-comparative* (based essentially on the configurative study of single countries), and *unscientific* (concepts, models and theories were rudimentary, or even non-existent). Furthermore, the approach was said to exclude informal politics and therefore ignores a large important source of relevant information (Jackson and Jackson, 2000:32).

Davies and Lewis (1971) in their book '*Models of Political Analysis'* argued that

> Too much emphasis came to be placed on the analysis of the law and the constitution, and as a consequence, too little attention was given to general social framework of state… Institutions could become outmoded; they could be seen   to be failing to reflect and thus cope with changes in the patterns of structures of behaviour among men. They then ceased to be relevant formalisation of social and other processes".

In addition, they argued "there was a tendency simply to compare the institutions of other countries by starting off with ones own country as the standard comparison". And since, for example the political institutions of Britain were often seen as among the most stable, if not the most stable in the world, the procedures of political analysis usually involved taking British political institutions as the yard stick for comparison. There were, in fact it was argued no objective criteria provided for comparison. Thus, there was not a satisfactory basis for the study of politics.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
What are the main weaknesses of the traditional approach to political analysis?

3.2.1 Theoretical approaches in political analysis

In the section above, you have been told that an approach to a discipline is the particular orientation that one adopts when addressing the subject. It is a predisposition to adopt a conceptual framework and to explore certain hypotheses in order to generate theory (Bill and Hardware Jnr, 1982). An approach may be implicit or explicit, but it must be identifiable because it determines the questions, perspectives, and procedures or methods that a researcher will use in his or her study. An approach provides a guide in selecting facts and organising them in a meaningful way.

Scholars have tended to bring approaches and methods of study from other fields to their research in political science. The discipline is therefore multidisplinary. As well, different generations of scholars have developed approaches based on their unique interests, values, and methodologies. Approaches to the study of politics have therefore changed overtime, with notions about which ones were best, shifting according to what was needed, or sometimes fashionable, to study specific topics or problems. However, they mostly focus now on vital questions such as who exercises power and influence in political decision making and how politicians seek and maintain power.

In contemporary political science, you will discover that there is no universally accepted approach. Instead, what you will find out is that there are a number of alternative approaches each with its own claimed advantages. No approach is right or wrong. Quite interestingly, most approaches to the study of politics have been borrowed by political scientists from other disciplines. Systems and structural functional analysis are largely the products of sociology and anthropology. Game theory was developed by economists and mathematics. Psychologists are responsible for learning theory, which is an aspect of political culture. In essence, the portrait of political science is one of a highly pluralistic discipline that comprises several approaches, which are assessed based on the evaluative criteria already mentioned in this unit.

Underlying all approaches to the study of politics, however, is the principle that political scientists should be analytical and comparative and should avoid basing generalisations on causal observation (Jackson and Jackson, 2000:31). They have argued that whether the research is based on experiments, statistics, or configurative case studies, it ought to be ordered by the desire to be explicit about the rules employed to describe and analyse politics.

Jackson and Jackson also argue that many modern approaches to the study of political science are based on the belief that studies of politics must employ a *general theory* of the polity; that is, they must identify all the critical structures and processes of society, explain their interrelationships with politics, and predict a wide range of governmental outcomes. Such a theory, it is argued, would allow scholars to obtain scientific-law-like generalisations about politics.

Two analogies summarise the core of this debate on the status of general theory in political science. One is that politics is like the shifting formlessness of clouds; the other is that it is based on precise mechanical causation like a watch. But for Gabriel Almond and Stephen Genco, in their "Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics", the conclusion is that "the current quandary in political science can, to a large extent, by the fact, by themselves, clock-model assumptions are inappropriate in dealing with the substance of political phenomena". Almond and Genco maintain that politics is not totally predictable because, since human behaviour is involved, there can be no direct cause-and-effect relationship among the variables. They contend that political reality "has distinctive properties which make it unamendable to the forms of explanations used in the natural sciences. Therefore, the science of politics should not be seen as a set of methods with a predetermined theory, but rather, as Almond and Genco noted, as a "commitment to explore and attempt to understand a given segment of empirical reality" (Almond and Genco, 1977:505).

An extended discussion of the reasons why grand over-arching theory is impossible in the study of politics would be discussed in Unit 4: *Understanding the Science of Politics*.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
Is general theory of politics possible?

3.3   Tools for Contemporary Political Analysis

3.3.1 Approaches
An approach to political inquiry refers to a general strategy for studying political phenomena (Isaak, 1985:185). In other words, approaches are attempts to develop strategies for directing research activities of political scientists. They represent a set of assumptions that structure the research of any political scientists.

Approaches provide political scientists with underlying assumption and organising concepts or set of concepts that orients research and coordinate empirical data from several sources. A list of all the

observations, one makes in a day will be useless, unless the observations are selected and organised according to a set of assumptions or an approach. In essence, approaches articulate the basic assumptions that shape political science research. They are tools that are useful in opening the political scientists mind to new concepts, hypothesis and theories.

Many historians of science have emphasised the role of approaches in scientific discovery. They have noted that great "change is brought about, not by new observations or additional evidence in the first instance, but by transpositions that were taking place inside the minds of the scientists themselves" (Butterfield, 1957:13). This psychological change is usually manifested by a change in approaches. An example of physics can be a change from Newton to Einstein. An overt approach is not necessary for the discovery of new concepts and relationships, at least for the political scientists.

As earlier mentioned, an approach may involve the attempt to locate an organising concept or set of concepts that can orient research and coordinate empirical data from several sources. For example, when political scientists research democracy, they are interested in universal concepts like free elections, human rights, the rule of law, the well being of the citizens etc. All these concepts would enable them orient their research.

An approach according to Isaak (1985:187) is designed to include a wide range of political phenomena as possible within a single set of concepts. It is the responsibility of the political scientists to determine how much revision is required if it is to include an even wider range of sources. Or it may be realised that it applies only to a limited range. This activity involves both conceptual analysis and empirical research as the conceptual scheme is refined and expanded or reduced in scope. In this process, the political scientists will be able to organise the study and may have hypotheses suggested to him/her. The ultimate success in this regard, in the final analysis would be the generation of an empirical theory.

In political analysis, you will discover that some of the approaches to be examined are highly developed more than others. Some are broad conceptual schemes, while others are narrower models revolving around a single central concept. Some are sets of empirical generalisations, while others are formal models. However, you must be aware that the various approaches only represents the idea of cutting into politics at a number of points to examine different slices of political life. Thus, no approach is right or wrong: but some may be more useful than others may. However, because political

scientists do not have a finely honed knife available, there is an overlap in the approaches, as they may be a thin line of demarcation when we empirically want to differentiate between one approach from another. Nevertheless, they are differences to be drawn that are meaningful to the political analyst.

In this course, several major evaluative criteria will be employed as approaches are examined. Among them: how appropriate the approach is for political analysis; how effectively it organises knowledge; how fruitful it is in suggesting new insights and hypotheses. The last criterion is the one we are mostly interested in, for it speaks directly about the role of approaches to the process of discovery.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
How would you define an approach?

3.3.2 Models
We have just learned about what approaches are. What then do we mean by models in political analysis? Generally, a model is defined as a theoretical construct that represents political processes by a set of variables and a set of logical and/or quantitative relationships between them. Models are simplified frameworks designed to illustrate complex processes, often but not always using mathematical techniques.

Models are abstraction of a real-life system used to facilitate understanding and to aid in decision making. In political analysis, models refer to a representation of some phenomenon of the real world made in order to facilitate an understanding of its workings. A model is a simplified and generalised version of real political events, from which the incidental detail, or 'noise', has been removed.

Whilst nobody doubts that models have a useful heuristic role in science, there has been intense debate over whether a good explanation of some phenomenon needs a model, or whether an organised structure of laws from which it can be deduced suffices for scientific explanation. The debate was inaugurated by Duhem in his *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (1906), which attacked the 'shallow' pictorial imaginings of British physicists, contrasting them with the pure deductive structures of proper science. Good models often represent simplifications and idealisations and even while fertile and useful can be approximations to more complex real phenomena.

In the most general sense, a model is anything used in any way to represent anything else. Conceptual models, may only be drawn on paper, described in words, or imagined in the mind. They are used to help us know and understand the subject matter they represent.

3.3.3 Paradigms

The historian of science Thomas Kuhn gave paradigm its contemporary meaning when he adopted the word to refer to the set of practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time. Kuhn himself came to prefer the terms exemplar and normal science, which have more precise philosophical meanings. However in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn defines a scientific paradigm as:

- what is to be observed and scrutinised
- the kind of questions that are supposed to be asked and probed for answers in relation to this subject
- how these questions are to be structured
- how the results of scientific investigations should be interpreted

Alternatively, the Oxford English Dictionary defines paradigm as "a pattern or model, an exemplar." Thus an additional component of Kuhn's definition of paradigm is:

- how is an experiment to be conducted, and what equipment is available to conduct the experiment.

Thus, within normal science, the paradigm is the set of exemplary experiments that are likely to be copied or emulated. In this scientific context, the prevailing paradigm often represents a more specific way of viewing reality, or limitations on acceptable programs for future research, than the more general scientific method.

A currently accepted paradigm would be the standard model of physics. The scientific method would allow for orthodox scientific investigations into phenomena which might contradict or disprove the standard model.

One important aspect of Kuhn's paradigms is that the paradigms are incommensurable, meaning two paradigms cannot be reconciled with each other because they cannot be subjected to the same common standard of comparison. That is, no meaningful comparison between them is possible without fundamental modification of the concepts that are an intrinsic part of the paradigms being compared.

This way of looking at the concept of "paradigm" creates a paradox of sorts, since competing paradigms are in fact constantly being measured against each other. (Nonetheless, competing paradigms are not fully intelligible solely within the context of their own conceptual frameworks). For this reason, paradigm as a concept in the philosophy of science might more meaningfully be defined as a self-reliant explanatory model or conceptual framework. This definition makes it clear that the real barrier to comparison is not necessarily the absence of common units of measurement, but an absence of mutually compatible or mutually intelligible concepts. Under this system, a new paradigm which replaces an old paradigm is not necessarily better, because the criteria of judgment are controlled by the paradigm itself, and by the conceptual framework which defines the paradigm and gives it its explanatory value.

3.3.4   Conceptual Frameworks

Conceptual frameworks also known as theoretical frameworks are a type of intermediate theory that attempt to connect to all aspects of inquiry (e.g., problem definition, purpose, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis). Conceptual frameworks can act like maps that give coherence to empirical inquiry. Because conceptual frameworks are potentially so close to empirical inquiry, they take different forms depending upon the research question or problem.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Distinguish between approaches, models, paradigms and conceptual frameworks in political inquiry.

3.4   Distinctions between approaches in political enquiry

Let us now move to the next task: how are approaches distinguished in contemporary political analysis? Below are six of such criteria used in categorising/classifying approaches.

Heuristic versus explanatory approaches

Approaches can be either heuristic or explanatory or both. What do we mean by this categorisation? An approach is said to be heuristic when it provides the framework for a model or conceptual scheme. Any approach which suggests new concepts and hypotheses, is said to be of a heuristic value. An example of a heuristic approach is Eastonian model of a political system which suggest new concepts such as the environment, inputs-outputs, feedback, conversion process, stress, demands, supports etc.

In this regard, an approach is more of an aspect of scientific discovery than an explanation. A heuristic approach does not have a

direct explanatory value but can suggest hypothesis that can be tested. Even though a heuristic device does not provide explanation to political phenomena, it nevertheless suggest explanatory hypothesis. It directs the political scientist's attention to certain variables that might account for the facts that are interesting and at the same time suggest hypothesis that can be tested.

An approach is an explanatory device when it offers basic empirical generalisations that might serve as impetus for the development of a theory of politics. An approach in this context shows why an event, situation or relationship exists or happens. Thus, in this sense, an approach offers "a story" or "an explanation" of social, economic or political processes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Distinguish between heuristic and explanatory devices of political approaches.

Consensus and conflict perspectives
While some analysts' think of politics primarily as a cooperative act, others think of it primarily as one group of people imposing their values and interests on others. Political scientists of the consensual perspective might look at the low turn out of election and conclude, "enough people are content with both sides that they did not regard voting as important this time." The second sort of political scientists (i.e. those of the conflict perspective) might interpret the same thing as "the political elite did not offer people the real choice this time so there was no use voting" (Isaak, 1985:187). Although they are obviously related, these are quite different interpretations. The first interpretation emanates from the cooperative or consensus paradigm, while the second reflect a conflict perspective.

Cultural and calculus or rational and institutional approaches
This refers to the distinction between approaches that assume that human behaviour is the result of unconscious motivations or subjective beliefs and others that view human behaviour as rational, intentional, and conscious or goal seeking. A cultural explanation for instance accounts for differences between countries in terms of basic differences in values and assumptions about politics. Thus, we might account for the differences between politics in Japan and politics in the United States by differences in national cultures. It is generally thought that Japanese culture emphasises cooperative activity as individuals are supposed to subordinate themselves to the group whereas the American culture emphasises competition and individual striving.

Comparison with a cultural emphasis often uses underlined cultural values and assumptions as an explanation of how politics works. Japanese diplomats' preference for negotiations as compared with American's preferences for confrontation is a good example of a cultural explanation to the nature and character of their politics.

In addition, a cultural explanation of comparison will often investigate where these values and assumptions come from. The rational/institutional explanation places less emphasis on differences in values and is less concerned with where values originate, rather it focuses on the situations political decision makers find themselves in and how these situations help to determine the decisions made.

The cultural approach asks, "on what values is this act based" and "where did these values come from?" The rational/intentional approach asks, "given your values, how might we expect you to act in the present environment or what are the rules and circumstances that are shaping your action?" In essence, the rational/institutional approach treats values as given in any particular situation. Analysis in this mode for instance might explain the fact that political parties are more highly disciplined in Germany than in the United States by the fact that Germany is a parliamentary system in which parties must function as steam to fund government coalitions while the United States constitution provides for presidential system in which the Congress operates more or less as free agents.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
Differentiate between the cultural and calculus, and the rational or institutional approaches.

Cultural, structural and institutional approaches
A related distinction is between cultural, structural and institutional approaches to political analysis. These approaches reflect underlined differences about the most useful level of analysis.

Structuralists (including Marxists, dependency theorists and weberians) stress broad macro level conditions in the state, economy and society. In other words, structuralists give analytical primacy to those relatively enduring structural features of society that rarely change and usually only over long period of time including class, ethnic and regional divisions as well as demographic factors like population size, or the distribution of sector make up of the political economy.

For example, structuralists' account of the development process as formulated in dependency theory presumed that political development could only be understood in terms of the international

economic system as a whole. Similarly, structural perspectives on democratisation tend to stress the macro level conditions (for example, economic development, urbanisation, mass literacy etc) that are necessary for the creation of democracy out of a non-democratic regime.

Process-oriented approaches stand in diametric opposition to structural approaches. Unlike the structuralists, process-oriented analysts will start with the individual insisting that differences in individual behaviour best account for variations in politics. Consequently, process perspectives tend to document the actions of political elites and to stress their resourcefulness, autonomy or sovereignty as a key variable in political change to the exclusion of both state and society as critical analytical and contextual components. For example, process-oriented analysis of democratisation concentrates on the interactions of elite political figures and the success or failure of such elite negotiations in producing stable democracy. Working at the process-oriented level are the students of political leadership, behaviouralists and public or rational choice theorists.

Institutionalism constitutes an intermediate level of analysis between structure-based and process-oriented approaches. Institutional approaches stress the impact of institutions on the ordering and formation of social and political relations. Institutionalism sees political institutions as the black box of politics through which societal interests are translated or transformed into policy or political outcome.

Micro versus macro approaches
The distinction between micro and macro approaches refers to the level of analysis that the researcher selects as a starting point for the study of politics. By levels of analysis, we mean a method for grouping theories together, based on the types of assumptions made about the most important actors.

One of the most challenging tasks in teaching introductory-level courses in international relations is to introduce students to important concepts and theories that are often highly abstract and disconnected with their real world experiences. One such concept is levels of analysis. The levels-of-analysis problem in political science, especially in international relations is essentially a question of where to look for explanations of state behaviour. As David Singer put it, "whether in the physical or social sciences, the observer may choose to focus upon the parts or upon the whole, upon the components or upon the system" (Singer, 1989:67). This can often be a difficult concept for students to understand. Not only does it require them to

recognise that there may be multiple explanations of any given decision or event, but that the 'correct' choice of which level to utilise largely depends on the type of question one is asking. For students who are used to answers being 'right' or 'wrong,' this can be a daunting task. It is therefore necessary to develop methods that can aid in your comprehension of this critically important concept. The best way to go about this is for you to learn how to apply levels of analysis to specific events or decisions in political science. For instance, case studies of real world decisions can be used for you to look for explanations at different levels.

Political Science research occurs at different levels ranging from individuals (micro), to groups (macro) of increasing size (committee, party, ethnic group, nation-state). Selection of the appropriate unit and level of analysis are important considerations. Once the "proper" level and unit of analysis are determined, the researcher must then decide which specific cases to study. Since it usually is not possible to study the universe of cases, a sample of cases must be identified and in ways the maximise variance and minimise bias.

A micro approach begins with the smallest unit in politics, i.e. the individual. On the other hand, a macro approach begins with the largest, namely the political system. In between the two levels is an intermediary unit (medium level), which consists of the analysis of political units like the interests groups.

The general commonsense idea is that we use smaller or lower level units to explain higher-level ones such as the behaviour of Senators to explain the behaviour of Senate- this is an example of a micro approach. If on the other hand, we use higher-level units to explain lower level ones like the structure of the Senate to explain the voting behaviour of individual Senators, we have a macro approach.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
What distinguishes macro approaches from micro approaches in political inquiry?

Qualitative and quantitative approaches
This is another distinction among approaches in political analysis. The quantitative approach to political science uses numbers and statistical methods. It tends to be based on numerical measurements of specific aspects of political phenomena usually across a very large number of cases. Hence, another name for quantitative research is large N-research. This approach abstracts from particular instances to seek general description or to test causal hypotheses. Furthermore,

the quantitative approach seeks to measure and analyse phenomena and events that are easily replicable by other researchers.

Qualitative research on the other hand covers a wide range of approaches but by definition, none of these approaches relies on numerical measurements. This approach tends to focus on small number of cases; uses intensive interviews or in depth analysis of historical materials, and is concerned with a rounded detailed or comprehensive account of some events or units. Thus, qualitative approaches are often normative, philosophical, historic and descriptive.

The key difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches is their flexibility. Generally, quantitative approaches are fairly inflexible. With quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires, for example, researchers ask all participants identical questions in the same order. The response categories from which participants may choose are "closed-ended" or fixed. The advantage of this inflexibility is that it allows for meaningful comparison of responses across participants and study sites. However, it requires a thorough understanding of the important questions to ask, the best way to ask them, and the range of possible responses.

Qualitative approaches are typically more flexible – that is, they allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. For example, qualitative methods ask mostly "open-ended" questions that are not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply "yes" or "no."

In addition, with qualitative methods, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research. Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by tailoring subsequent questions to information the participant has provided.

It is important to note, however, that there is a range of flexibility among methods used in both quantitative and qualitative research and that flexibility is not an indication of how scientifically rigorous a method is. Rather, the degree of flexibility reflects the kind of understanding of the problem that is being pursued using the method. For a more grounded understanding of the strengths and

weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches, see www.anderson.edu/academics/sot/guide/ch1.html

4.0 CONCLUSION

You must note in this concluding section that the different approaches to political analysis are not really competing in the sense that to accept one is to reject the others. Rather, the different approaches employ different levels and styles of analysis and different aspects of causation. No single approach offers the sole or whole truth about politics. Most of the approaches provide accurate explanations but at different levels of analysis. Many scholars move back and forth between the various approaches differing only in their emphasis on one or the other. Generally, scholars chose approaches or levels of explanations partly as a matter of test and partly based on what they need an explanation for.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed what an is approach in political inquiry. You learned that this refers to a general strategy for studying political phenomena. We also mentioned that approaches in the study of politics have both heuristic and explanatory significance. While the former refers to a conceptual scheme which suggests new concepts and hypothesis, the latter offers basic empirical generalisations that may serve as the impetus for the development of a theory of politics. The unit finally considered the various schematic distinctions among approaches in political inquiry. We have identified other distinctions as consensus versus conflict approaches; cultural and calculus versus rational and institutional approaches; cultural and structural versus institutional approaches; micro versus macro approaches and; qualitative versus quantitative approaches. We concluded that scholars chose approaches or levels of explanations partly as a matter of test and partly based on what they need to explain.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss the significance of an 'approach' in political analysis.

Briefly distinguish among conflict, consensus, process-oriented, micro-level and macro-level approaches in political inquiry.

With relevant examples, discuss the various forms of political analysis.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Almond, Gabriel and Bingham, G. Powell (1978) *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (2nd Ed.) Boston: Little, Brown.

Almond, Gabriel and Genco, Stephen (1977) 'Clouds, Clocks and the Study of Politics'. *World Politics*, 29 (4).

Bill, James and Hardgrave L. Robert Jnr (1982) *Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

Blondel, J (1975) *Thinking Politically*. Harmondsworth. Middx: Penguin.

Butterfield, Herbert (1957) *The Origins of Modern Science*. New York: Free Press.
Dahl, R. (1991) *Modern Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Gallie, W.B. (1956) "Essentially Contested Concepts", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56: 167-198.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry* . Pacific Grove: California; The Dorsey Press.

Jackson, J. Robert and Jackson, Doreen (2000) *An Introduction to Political Science: Comparative and World Politics* (3rd Ed.) Ontario: Prentice Hall, Canada.

Osaghae, E. (1988) Political Analysis (POS 211). Ibadan: External Studies Programme.

Singer, David J (1989) "The Levels-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," in G. John Ikenberry (ed.) *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Somit, Albert and Tenenhaus, Joseph (1967) *The Development of American Political Science: From Burgess to Behaviouralism.* Boston: Little Brown.

UNIT 2   •   THE DIVIDE IN POLITICAL ANALYSIS

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

You must have read the first unit of this module. If you have, then I believe you must have known what political analysis is. This unit is the second among the four constituent units of this module. The main thrust of the unit is to explain the dichotomy in political analysis: political science versus political philosophy. The first question that a present-day student of politics ought to ask is, "What is political science? Or putting it more answerable form, "What kind of activities interest those who call themselves political scientists?. This unit, therefore, is primarily concerned with the distinction between traditional analysis of politics and contemporary political analysis.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
• describe traditional political analysis
• describe contemporary political analysis
• distinguish between political science and political philosophy
• identify the different sources of knowledge

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Historical development of the discipline of Political Science

Political science is the study of government and political processes, institutions, and behaviour. Government and politics have been studied and commented on since the time of the ancient Greeks. However, it was only with the general systematisation of the social sciences in the last 100 years that political science has emerged as a an independent discipline in higher education, previously being subsumed under other disciplines such as law, philosophy, and history and other fields concerned with normative determinations of what ought to be and with deducing the characteristics and functions of the ideal state (Columbia Encyclopaedia, 2009)

Western politics can trace their roots back to Plato (427–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC). For instance, Plato analysed political systems, abstracted their analysis from more literary- and history-oriented studies and applied an approach we would understand as closer to philosophy. Similarly, Aristotle built upon Plato's analysis to include historical empirical evidence in his analysis. Aristotle first used the term politics to refer to the affairs of a Greek city-state. Aristotle observed that 'man by nature is a political animal.' By this he meant that the essence of social existence is politics and that two or more men interacting with one another are invariably involved in a political relationship. It is from 'polis' that we derive our modern word politics.

Between the sixteenth and early twentieth centuries, European political philosophers established a narrower definition of politics. For example, Jean Bodin (1430-1596), a French political philosopher, who first used the term "political science" (*science politique*) was a lawyer. Because of his legal training, Bodin focused on the characteristics of the state more than any other aspect of the political process. He concentrated on analysing the relationship between the organisation of the state and how this relates to law.

Another French philosopher Montesquieu (1689-1755) argued that the functions of government could be encompassed within the categories of legislation, execution, and the adjudication of law. Montesquieu categories found their way into the United States Constitution and other Republican Constitutions with the assumption that liberty was best assured by separation of powers between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. It was the work of these two philosophers that imposed a restricted definition of politics on political scientists. Political scientist for years concentrated almost

exclusively on the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary as major concern until recently.

In the mid nineteenth century, Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection began to exert a powerful influence upon political science. In fact, Biology came to reinforce history in the study of political institutions, which were seen as the product of historical change and, apparently organic evolution. The development of sociology after the 19th century prompted political scientists to give more attention to the impact on government of social forces not defined with reference to the institutional outline of the state. The industrialisation of previously agricultural societies and sharpening clash between the emergent working classes and their employers (industrialists) compelled a closer study of economic facts, forces and trends, as these produced political problems and helped to shape political behaviour.

The first institution dedicated to the study of politics, the Free School of Political Science, was founded in Paris in 1871 (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2009). The American Political Science Association was founded in 1903 and its journal, *American Political Science Review*, was founded in 1906 in an effort to distinguish the study of politics from economics and other social phenomena. The advent of political science as a university discipline was marked by the creation of university departments and chairs with the title of political science arising in the late 19th century, and the integration of political studies of the past into a unified discipline.

The advent of World War II brought about a re-think by political scientist that legislature, Executives, agencies, and the Courts did not exist by themselves and that they did not operate independently of one another or of the other political organisations in society. Political scientists in America and Europe embarked on new fields of study by examining the political parties, interest groups, trade unions, as well as corporations and church organisations. This was the behavioural revolution in the social sciences.

You may also wish to know that early contributions to the study of politics and government came, then, largely from philosophers, but also from the fields of history and law. For many years, the subject was commonly taught in history departments. Political scientists were, in fact, often considered to be "historians of the present", and early studies of political institutions and international relations emphasised historicity methodology. Since it was particularly concerned with government organisation and law making, the field of law, too, was important to the evolution of modern political science. The behavioural revolution that started in the USA in the

1950s changed the normative nature of the discipline to its present scientific status.

3.2 Sources of knowledge

Three distinctions of knowledge are generally recognised in social sciences literature. These are the empirical (based on observation of the world), analytic (based on logical derivations from premises), and normative (based on a host of different theories). To modern political scientists, only the first two typologies are qualified as sources of knowledge. However, a political philosopher accepts all three. There is, though, a common thread that connects the two traditions. From the very beginning, political analysts have had a practical bent even when coming across as philosophical and abstract. Just as Plato and Hobbes tried to formulate policies to save their disordered societies, modern political scientists, often calling themselves 'policy scientists', attempt to apply their knowledge to real world political problems. The activity that all have in common is the analysis of instrumental questions: how to maintain order in ancient Athens and how to adjust to an energy-scarce world in modern times are logically similar. Each deals with a goal and the best ways to achieve that goal. Thus, despite the normative tilt of the philosopher and the empirical leaning of the scientist, the two meet at times on a common ground.

Despite the differences in the sources of knowledge mentioned above, post- behaviouralists, however, have tried to integrate/marry facts with values. These scholars complained that most of the discipline's scholarship was removed from the imperatives of political life or inaccurate in its depiction of a benevolent democratic pluralism. They also questioned the existence of rigorous determinist laws and the possibility of scientific objectivity in the study of politics. They were concerned with the propriety of the participation of behavioural political science in citizenship education and public affairs, endeavours that made objectivity difficult.

Empiricism and *scienticism,* they argued, could be perceived as amoral and irrelevant to the normative concerns governing human lives" (US History Encyclopedia, 2009). Research, according to the post-behaviouralists, was to be related to urgent social problems and was to be purposive. It was the duty of the political scientist to find out solutions to contemporary problems.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Briefly explain the three distinctions of knowledge in political science.

3.3   Traditional political analysis

Since the beginning of recorded history, people have observed, thought about, evaluated, and analysed politics. Those who have analysed politics on a fairly regular and systematic basis are called political philosophers; they include such well-known figures as Plato, Aristotle, Locke, and Rousseau. You may wish to know that the product of their analyses is referred to as traditional political philosophy or theory. But there is a more precise and fruitful way of characterising traditional political philosophy, which involves sorting out its main activities and indicating which of these activities political philosophers have spent most of their time on. Each activity is really a type of *analysis.* As mentioned in the previous unit, to analyse something means to ask a question; give an answer, and then the reasons for the answer.

Describing a political system, or an aspect of it, or a general political phenomenon, and explaining or accounting for such facts are scientific activities. Traditional political philosophers have always been engaged in such scientific activities. For instance, Aristotle spent much of his time describing and comparing various kinds of constitutions, and in another section of *Politics,* he attempts an explanation of political change and political revolution. Machiavelli is also reputed for the down-to-earth description of politics as it really is- namely, a struggle for power (See *The Prince).*

The traditionalists include theologians, historians, lawyers journalists, etc and their emphasis is on 'what ought to be' questions. They dominated the realm of political analysis before the 19th century when political science formally emerged as a separate discipline. As one of the traditional approaches and a central pillar of the discipline of political science, this approach focuses on the normative values and norms that should underpin politics as well as the rules, procedures and formal organisations of governments. Today, it remains a defining characteristic of the discipline and it has found renewed vigour within the new-institutionalism framework.

Normative political approach is concerned with the discovery and application of moral notions in the sphere of political relations and practice. It deals with the inquiry into the problems of man and society. In the view of Leo Strauss, "it is the attempt to know both the nature of political things and the right, or the good political conduct... [through] critical and coherent analysis" (Straus, 1969). This has been the preoccupation of early political philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and modern political philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mills.

The subject matter of the normative approach has principally remained the state, its evolution, organisation and purpose. Accordingly, normative political thinkers seek answers to questions such as these: What is the state and who should preside over the affairs of the state? What is political obligation and why should the state be obeyed? What ends should the state serve and how can it be structured to achieve these ends? What are the proper limits on state authority and when may citizens refuse to obey it? How should the state relate to other organisations in society? What is justice and how best can it be guaranteed? What is the essence of liberty and equity? Where is sovereignty to be located? What makes political power and its exercise legitimate? What is political representation and who has the right to present others? What is political participation and to what extent should ordinary citizens be entitled to participate in the decision-making processes of government? etc.

Answers to these and similar questions are based on ethical and political values that are regarded as essential for the good citizen and a just state and not necessarily on empirical analysis. Consequently, normative political approach is the least scientific sub-discipline of political science.

The primary activities of political philosophers have probably been *normative*: activities, which involve moral, ethical, or value judgements. While scientific activities deals with what is, value judgements express what a political philosopher believes *ought* to be. As you will learn in this course, the distinction between *is* and *ought* is fundamental to an understanding of the contemporary political analysis.

There are several varieties of normative activity. First, many political philosophers spend much time *prescribing* the best state of political system. Plato (428-348BC.), an early Greek philosopher, who taught Aristotle, was fascinated by the political question of what constitutes the ideal state or utopia. In his *Republic,* Plato was concerned particularly with the concept of justice, which he perceived resulted from adhering to relatively strict principles. Drawing on his knowledge of how Greek city-states functioned, Plato categorised political systems according to which level of society had most influence on the governance of a given state. The ideal state, he said, would be ruled by philosopher kings who were imbued with wisdom. Of course, Plato was not naïve; he posited that an "ideal" state would persist only if the people believed in their leaders. Political activities also engage in the normative activity of *recommending* the proper or true goals of politics. Thus, Jeremy Bentham argues that happiness should be the basis of all political activities.

Instrumental or applied value judgements should not be confused with normative statements in that the former recommends the best way of achieving a given end, but they do not attempt to justify the end in itself. This is the significance of an alternative label, *means-ends analysis.* An instrumental judgement is therefore a scientific-empirical activity, for it is really an explanation of why certain conditions or actions lead to the desired results. The last kind of activity is known as *analytic or logical.* This category includes both the analysis of political words and concepts and the examination of certain aspects of political arguments, for instance, their logical consistency. Plato, using the dialectical method, analyses and criticises a number of definitions of justice in his attempt to arrive at its real meaning (Cornford, 1945).

By the late 1950s, the traditional approach came under severe attack. The basic criticisms alleged that its practitioners were essentially *parochial* (biased towards Western thought and ideas), *formal-legal* (interested mainly in constitutions and the operations of institutions such as the executives, legislature, courts and bureaucracies), *non-comparative* (based essentially on the configurative study of single countries), and *unscientific* (concepts, models and theories were rudimentary, or even non-existent). Furthermore, the approach was said to exclude informal politics and therefore ignores a large important source of relevant information (Jackson and Jackson, 2000:32).

Davies and Lewis (1971) in their book '*Models of Political Analysis'* argued that

> Too much emphasis came to be placed on the analysis of the law and the constitution, and as a consequence, too little attention was given to general social framework of state… Institutions could become outmoded; they could be seen   to be failing to reflect and thus cope with changes in the patterns of structures of behaviour among men. They then ceased to be relevant formalisation of social and other processes".

In addition, they argued

> "there was a tendency simply to compare the institutions of other countries by starting off with ones own country as the standard comparison. And since, for example the political institutions of Britain were often seen as among the most stable, if not the most stable in the world, the procedures of political analysis usually involved taking British political institutions as the yard stick for comparison. There were, in

fact it was argued no objective criteria provided for comparison. Thus, there was not a satisfactory basis for the study of politics.

The traditional approaches have therefore been criticised as static and oversimplified assumptions about today's reality in the political process. Much of the work of traditional institutional studies has rightly been subject to criticism for the weakness of its methods, the anti-theoretical, descriptive nature of its product, and an underlying prescriptive perspective based on an idealised conception of the virtues of liberal democratic government.

Specifically, it has been argued that the traditional approach's concern for 'hyper-factualism' or 'reference for facts' meant that political scientists suffered from 'theoretical malnutrition' (Easton, 1971). In the process, they neglected 'the general framework within which these facts could acquire meaning (Easton, ibid, p. 89). They have also been accused of formalism or focusing on rules and procedures to the neglect of the actual political behaviour.

In spite of these criticisms, the traditional approaches still have their use in political study.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Of what relevance is the traditional approach to political analysis?

3.4 Contemporary political analysis
To understand contemporary political analysis, it is essential to examine what political science entails.

Political science did not appear as a separate discipline until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when departmental chairs where first established in the Unites States at the Columbia University in 1880. Even after it was recognised as a distinct field, however, political science continued to be taught for a long time in history departments and in economics departments as "political economy". Political science thus developed as a truly interdisciplinary study. This trend continued into the twentieth century as the developments in sociology, anthropology, biology, physics and economics influenced the thinking of political scientists.

Early political scientists in America such as Harold Lasswell and Charles E. Merriam were interested in moving the study of political science away from the normative, descriptive, legalistic and philosophical bent to the application of the scientific methods in the study of politics. On the other hand, the European tradition was sustained because of immigrants such as Carl Friedrich and many

others who had being trained in the European tradition of philosophical inquiry with its traditional historical methods. These two approaches to the study of politics combined to form the contemporary political science, as we know it today.

Beginning with 1930s and even so in the 1940s and 1950s, the discipline of political science was reoriented as political scientists increasingly studied observable human behaviour in the light of theories borrowed from the social sciences. Because the social sciences developed from biological models, the concept of the political system as a political organism became popular once again, particularly in the study of subjects such as systems analysis.

Behaviouralism, which appeared on the scene in political science, became a revolution in political analysis due to its reaction to the presumed deficiencies in the traditional approach. The behavioural approach or behaviouralism as it is often called is best viewed as a broad-based effort to impose standards of scientific rigor, relying on empirical evidence, on theory building, in contrast to the legalistic and formal approach in vogue in the 1940s and 1950s. Harold Lasswell, Gabriel Almond, David Truman, Robert Dahl, Herbert Simon, and David Easton, the movement's leading figures, each contributed their unique views of how this goal could be achieved. *The Political System* (1953) by Easton and *Political Behavior* (1956) by Heinz Eulau and others exemplified the movement's new approach to a theory-guided empirical science of politics (US History Encyclopedia, 2009).

Behaviouralism represents a post-World War II revolution and disaffection of Political Science over-reliance on the traditional approaches discussed above, which were believed to have little analytical strength. For instance, Leeds (1981:2), criticised the "old institutionalism" for its preoccupation with the formal structures of government and for having quite spectacularly failed "to anticipate the collapse of inter-war German democracy and the emergence of fascism."

The behavioural approach is also a creature of the quantitatively oriented political scientists who were opposed to or dissatisfied with the tenets of traditional political scientists due to their emphasis on the prescriptive nature of political science and lack of adherence to *scienticism*. To achieve its scientific status, behaviouralism prescribes a closer application and affiliation with theories, methods, findings and outlooks in modem psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics which in the words of Robert Dahl aims at improving:

41

> ... our understanding of politics by seeking to explain the empirical aspects of political life by means of methods, theories, and criteria of proof that are acceptable according to the canon, conventions, and assumptions of modern empirical science (Dahl, 1961).

More recently, political scientists are increasingly relying on the fields of mathematics and statistics to help analyse political data, making the political science more interdisciplinary. Can we now say that study of philosophy has been forgotten? Certainly not! It appears that political science wants to have its cake and eat it too; they have tried to be simultaneously humanistic and scientific.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
What would you consider to be the major stimulus for the scientific study of politics?

3.5   Distinction between political science and political philosophy

After going through both the political science of yesterday and today, I will pause to ask you the question, what do you think is the differences between political science of yesterday and today? This simple distinction rests upon a more distinction between *facts* and *values,* or as already mentioned, between the '*is*' and '*ought*'.

Empirical or *is* statements are about and are based upon observation and experience. They are therefore verifiable; that is, it can be determined if an empirical statement is true of false. A true empirical proposition states a *fact*. We can therefore confidently assert that truth has some relation to observation. However, empirical statements are not necessarily true. They simply state facts or relationships that we have observed or discovered through various methods such as experimentation or statistical control procedures.

Normative or '*ought*' propositions on the other hand state value judgements. They are neither true of false, because no amount of empirical evidence can prove or disprove value judgement. Normative propositions are therefore based on logical reasoning with much emphasis on human values. As Hume pointed out, an *is* never implies *ought*. This is a statement of fact-value distinction. Rather than being factual, normative proposition is a statement of individual preferences and perhaps, in addition, an attempt to change the values of others.

Unlike empirical statements, which can be contingently true, valid statements are necessarily true, that is for all time and for all possible words. Nevertheless, they have this quality because they are true

within a specific logical system- they are true by definition, so to speak. Thus, for instance, the proposition of symbolic logic, the truths of arithmetic, or the theorems of geometry are necessarily true. However, necessary truth comes at a price; an analytic statement says nothing new about the world: "3 + 3 = 6" does not give us the information as "Political scientists end up becoming good politicians." Still, this is a clarification and not a criticism of analytic statements, for the powerful apparatuses of logic and mathematics are of immeasurable value to the political philosopher and political scientists (Isaak, 1985:12-13).

The **fact-value** distinction is a concept used to distinguish between arguments which can be claimed through reason alone, and those where rationality is limited to describing a collective opinion. In another formulation, it is the distinction between what ***is*** (can be discovered by science, philosophy or reason) and what ***ought*** to be (a judgment which can be agreed upon by consensus). The terms positive and normative represent another manner of expressing this, as do the terms *descriptive* and *prescriptive*, respectively. Positive statements make the implicit claim to facts (e.g. water molecules are made up of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom), whereas normative statements make a claim to values or to norms (e.g. water ought to be protected from environmental pollution).

In philosophy, the ontological distinction between what is (facts) and what ought to be (values) has explicitly been made by David Hume who gave the distinction its classical formulation in his dictum that it is impossible to derive an "ought" from an "is."

However, you must note that the distinction between normative and empirical statements may some times by hazy. In other words, there is a thin line of demarcation when we want to differentiate between facts and values. In spite of the ease with which some people reject "value judgments" and insist on "just the facts," the fact/value dichotomy involves a cornucopia (abundance) of errors.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Attempt a distinction between normative and empirical statements.

4.0   CONCLUSION
Political scientists describe and analyse the institutions and behaviour involved in governance of states. However, there is also an ethical, normative aspect of political science, which involves the search for the proper relationship between institutional structures and desired ends such as equality, justice and liberty. Political scientists do not only aim to accumulate facts and data, but to explain why events happen as they do. If they cannot be used as

tools to further understanding, mere facts are not enlightening. In essence therefore, scholars approach the study of politics with three fundamental goals: to describe political events and processes, seeking patterns in them that will help explain political behaviour and possibly prescribe policy.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, attempt has been made to identify the distinction between the traditional and contemporary approaches to political analysis. We argued following Hume's distinction with his popular dictum that it is impossible to derive an "ought" from an "is." You also learned that there are three distinctions of knowledge generally recognised in social sciences literature. These are the empirical (based on observation of the world), analytic (based on logical derivations from premises), and normative (based on a host of different theories). This unit concludes that political scientists are not only involved in describing and analysing the institutions and behaviour involved in governance of states, but there is also an ethical, normative aspect of political science, which involves the search for the proper relationship between institutional structures and desired ends such as equality, justice and liberty.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Submit a two-page essay (A4, 1½ spacing) in which you explain the distinction between normative and empirical political science.

7.0   REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Britannica Concise Encyclopedia (2009) "political science" Retrieved on September 12, 2009 from http://www. answers.com/library/Britannica Concise Encyclopedia-cid-63262

Columbia Encyclopedia (2009) "Political Science" Retrieved on September 12, 2009 from http://www. answers.com/library/Columbia+Encyclopedia-cid-63262

Cornford, Francis M (ed., trans.,) (1945) *The Republic of Plato*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dahl, R. (1991) *Modern Political Analysis (*5th ed). Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall.

Easton, David (1957) "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems". *World Politics* 9: 383 – 400

Easton, David (1956) *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Eaglewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall

Easton, David (1960) *The Political System*. New York: Alfred & Knopf.

Easton, David (1965) *A System of Analysis of Political Life*. New York: Valley.

Jackson Robert, J and Jackson Doreen (2000) *An Introduction to Political Science*. (Third Edition) Ontario: Canada, Prentice Hall

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove: California; The Dorsey Press.

Leeds C. A (1981) *Political Study. (*3rd ed). London: Macdonald & Evans ltd.

Strauss, L. (1969) "What is Political Philosophy?" in Gould, J. and Thurby, V. (eds.). *Contemporary Political Thought: Issues* in *Scope, Value and Direction*. New York: Holt, Rinehan and Winston, Inc.

UNIT 3   •   UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Science defined
        3.2   The nature and goals of science
        3.3   The assumptions of science
        3.4   The science of politics
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The main concern of this unit is to aid your understanding of what is meant as science, and the scientific method or procedure. The scientific method as you would soon learn in this unit is what distinguishes the scientific enterprise from other disciplines. It involves vigorous procedures starting from selection of problems to be solved or analysed, followed by formulation of hypothesis, gathering of data and testing of hypothesis, and finally, the use of findings to refute, modify or support existing theories

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
•   define the concept of science
•   state the assumptions of science
•   explain the goals of science
•   discuss the importance of the scientific method in political science.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Science defined

Let us begin with the classical definition of science: "science is a system of practice and beliefs that serve the function of social control by allowing people to develop the means of understanding and manipulating the social world"

The modern definition of science regards it as "a body of knowledge based upon reliable observations and organised system or general

propositions and laws". Science could also be defined as a method by which systematic and accurate knowledge of the world is acquired as opposed to intuition, speculation through more or less penetration observations of theory, philosophy, and literature".

Whatever the claim to the scientific enterprise, science has substantive knowledge, which is made up of logically related propositions supported by empirical evidence. In addition, science as a method emphasise logical analysis and objective observation. It is open, sceptical, objective and precise.

The essential characteristics of science include the following:

   i.   logical deterministic (cause and effect)

   ii.   inter-subjectivity (two scientists using the same method will obtain the same result)

   iii. open to modification (relentlessness search for insights)

   iv.   specific (precise measures)

   v.   empirically verifiable (testing of theories in every day life)

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly list and explain the essential characteristics of science.

3.2 Aims of the scientific method

Pure science is concerned with obtaining accurate knowledge about the structure and behaviour of the physical universe. It deals with rational and systematic analysis of known facts. It is fact seeking as well as fact-using. The ultimate goal of science is the classification of facts, and on the basis of such classification, the formulation of a body of general rules and logically consistent and universally valid statements about the universe.

The scientific method entails vigorous procedures starting from selection of problems to be solved or analysed, followed by formulation of hypothesis, gathering of data and testing of hypothesis, and finally, the use of findings to refute, modify or support existing theories. To evaluate the findings of their own studies and of others, scientists employ a number of knowledge, to be scientific it must be characterised by verifiability; it must be systematic and must, have general applicability. Scientific knowledge on any subject, designed to facilitate explanation and prediction can be thought of as a pyramid rising from a base of

specific bits of data up through more general facts to propositions, laws, and theories.

According to Hollis and Smith (1990: 50), the scientific investigation aims 'to detect the regularities in nature, propose a generalization, deduce what it implies for the next case and observe whether the prediction succeeds. If it does, no consequence action is needed; if it does not, then either discard the generalization or amend it and test the fresh predictions.

According to Osaghae (1988) science aims at the following important goals:

1.   **Value-free Analysis**: This refers to the quest for objectivity and neutrality in political analysis. To be scientific, the analyst must analyse facts (data) as they are rather than as they ought to be. As much as possible, our personal likes and dislike, interest or values must be kept out of our analysis.

2.   **Empirical Analysis**: Concern with what is rather than what ought to be. It focuses its emphasis on direct observation to discover things as they really are, their relationships with other things, and the regularisation of their occurrence. It is on these observed regularities that we base our explanations and predictions.

3.   **Explanation**:   Scientific   explanations   appeal   to generalisations and theories in explaining specific occurrence. If these generalisations and the particular conditions of the occurrence are true, then the conclusion(s) must be true.

4.   **Prediction:** Takes the same logical form as explanation, but is different because it is forward-looking, and involves specifying conditions under which certain occurrences are likely to take place.

5.   **Theories**: A scientific theory is a set of generalisations which specify the direction of relationship among variable. Theories are therefore the major ingredients of explanations. But for them to be really helpful in this regard, they should be general and not restrictive. Finally, a good theory should be open to further empirical tests.

6.   **Laws**: Are statement of universal uniformities which relate to all the cases of a particular phenomenon. i.e. they do not allow for exceptions. They are useful for both explanations and predictions, but do not possess as much explanatory power as theories do though they have greater certainty.

3.3   The nature and goals of science

The first question students of political science do ask is "what does the science in political science mean? Can political science claim the status of the natural science? Is it even right to talk of a science of politics?" These and many more questions occupy the centre stage of political science. If one were to survey the literature on the subject, there would emerge different answers to the nature of political science, as they are political thinkers. Each interpretation is a simplified version of a set of a scientific study.

For us students of political science, it is pertinent to know that "the classifications of facts and the formation upon that basis of absolute judgements, which are consistent and universally valid, sum up the essential aim of modern science (Appadorai, 1968:5). Thus, gravitation tends to make things fall to the ground; two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen constitute water. These are exact statements; physics and chemistry are exact sciences. As Appadorai further puts it "classification, general rules based on such classification, and predictability, these are essentially the scientific method."

There are different ways science has been interpreted. The first uses science in a honourific sense. Just as a nation in contemporary world is adjudged good if it is democratic, a political scientist calls his work scientific, public relations in mind. Science in this context is a label to be used and not to be defined. This interpretation simply views science as a serious study. Almost by definition, then, all those who study politics professionally become scientists, for at the very heart of their profession lies the commitment to study political phenomena more seriously than, for instance, the man on the street or even a journalists. While this is a step forward, it does not tell a student of political science what he/she needs to know: what distinguishes scientific from unscientific study"?

To most people, to be scientific means to be systematic or rigorous. Yet, there is often a tendency to leave these objectives undefined. Some rough operational guidelines is provided to tell us in any given instance where the scientific ends and the unscientific begins. However, these guidelines will not help us much unless we know what is systematic and what is rigorous. A political scientist who believes his discipline is scientific because it studies political phenomena is right. However, he/she has not said enough. What does it mean to be systematic or scientific? What are the distinguishing characteristics of a systematic or scientific discipline?

Most people again answer this question that a scientific discipline is empirical. An empirical proposition according to Isaak (1985:26) is

one that refers to and is based upon the world of experience and observation. He further states that "since political scientists, as scientists, are interested in one aspect of the world around them, they must make sure their descriptions of politics are empirical. Thus, according to this interpretation of science, the political scientist live up to his/her appellation if he/she deals with only facts." Isaak (1986:27) calls this label of science naïve empiricism- the piling of facts upon fact, exhaustive descriptions of a single government institution, or detailed narratives of a particular political decision. Even though this form of science may be criticised, you should note that science begins with empiricism. One must look at the world if one is to explain it.

From what we have said so far, one interpretation equates the term scientific with systematic or rigorous. Another recognises the empirical basis of science. In fact, the political scientist who adopts one probably assumes the other, so that the composite picture of science, which emerges, is a kind of ordered study that stays close to the facts (observation).

Yet, most political scientists are of the view that these principles are only applicable to the developed physical sciences such as physics and chemistry, but are not realistically applicable to political or any social science. Therefore, the political scientist can be empirical and systematic only at the general level.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
In what ways does a political scientist use the concept of science?

3.4   The assumptions of science
Before we consider whether political science is indeed a science, it is pertinent to first consider the assumptions of science. We have seen so far that political science cannot claim the scientific status of the exact science. What then are the basic assumptions of science? In this unit, we have focused on two ways to the approach of science. On the one hand, it can be viewed as "a body of knowledge", on the other, as "a method of obtaining it."

According to the first approach, science or what is scientific includes the laws, facts, and so on, of physics, geometry and chemistry. According to the second method, science is a particular set of principles that tells us to obtain these facts. However, our emphasis here is on the second approach, since we are interested in understanding the approaches in political inquiry.

We are interested in this approach because it unravels how political scientists study political phenomena. Thus, a discipline is adjudged

scientific, if it makes some assumptions and follows certain principles, even though the knowledge it has produced is not impressive. Isaak (1985:28) has argued that there is no opposition between the two approaches in science, as the adjective scientific can be applied both to the principles (scientific method) and to the facts obtained (scientific knowledge). The emphasis on the first approach in this course is because it is logically prior- scientific knowledge is obtained by following the scientific method.

A further distinction can be made between two ways of looking at scientific method. The first is exemplified in the writings of Arnold Brecht who lists eleven "scientific actions" or steps of "scientific procedure" beginning with observation, which together make up the scientific method (Brecht, 1959:28-29). The other approach is to sort out the basic assumptions and principles, rather than operations or procedures, which scientists make and follow. This becomes a more fundamental analysis. However, Isaak argues that these approaches are different sides of the same coin.

"Nothing in the universe just happens" is a simple way of stating the scientists' basic assumption. It is usually labelled "determinism" or the "principle of universal causation". Most people believe there is reason for everything. This is a commonsensical basis of the scientist's assumption of determinism or causality. This view believes that there are certain recurring relationships which can be expressed in such propositions as "If A occurs, B occurs." This is a causal relationship and it is what the scientist is searching for.

The second characteristic of science in the literature is that of examining the world. Describing and explaining politics implies speaking about and basing our explanations on what has been observed (directly or indirectly) about politics. This means that every scientific statement is based on observation.

However, there is more to science than observation. When we look at the world and draw conclusions, does that make us scientists? While science begins with common sense, scientific knowledge is not the same as commonsensical knowledge. The scientist involved in scientific enterprise takes his observations and attempt to classify and analyse them. His first objective is to formulate useful empirical concepts. If successful, he discovers a scientific law or generalisation. Further systematisation of empirical knowledge is achieved by the construction of theories, which are collections of logically related generalisations. Finally, the scientist uses his laws and theories to explain events and situations that have occurred or exist and predict future happenings. It can thus be said that the scientist's attempt to systematise are all leading to this ultimate

objective, to explain and to predict- to show why things were, are or will be.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
The principal concern of a scientist is to analyse and predict. Discuss.

How does a political scientist define science?

4.0 CONCLUSION
In concluding this unit, it suffices to reiterate that, unlike traditional approaches to political science, contemporary political analysis is increasingly seen as scientific. While many contemporary political scientists have preoccupied themselves with the task of making the study of politics scientific, there are still insurmountable obstacles to reaching this stage. However, political science has a body of laws, which help scholars to understand political events and political phenomena. In this context, other scholars regard the discipline of political science as a science.

However, other scholars argue that the science of politics is not the same as the science of the physical sciences. As Appadorai (1968:5) argued:

> Let it at once be admitted that politics is not an exact science, like physics and chemistry, because the material with which it deals is incapable of being treated in the same exact way. Physics and chemistry are natural or physical sciences; they deal with matter. Politics, economics, ethics are social sciences; they deal with man in society.

Political scientists have tried to resolve the problem of the scientific status of political science by classifying the natural sciences as monothetic sciences and the social sciences (including political science) as ideographic sciences.

5.0 SUMMARY
In this unit, you have been introduced to what science is and the science of politics. We learned that science is concerned with "a body of knowledge" and "a method of obtaining knowledge". While we argue that the operational definition of science in this course relates more to the latter than to the former, we are nevertheless reminded that the two approaches are self-enforcing. You also learned about the assumptions of science, and the main objectives of the scientist: to analyse and to predict phenomena.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Why is political science not an exact science?

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Anikpo, M (1986) *Foundations of Social Science Research: A Methodological Guide for Students.* Enugu: Abic Publishers.

Appadorai, A (1968) *The Substance of Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Brectch, Arnold (1959) *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. Princeton University Press.

Dye, R. Thomas and Zeigler, L. Harmon (1970) *The Irony of Democracy*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Eminue, O (2001) *Introduction to Political Science*. Calabar: Cats Publishers.

Ibaba, S. T (2004) *Foundations of Political Science*. Port Harcourt: Amethyst & Colleagues Publishers.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove, California: Dorsey Press.

Kirk, Russell (1963) "Is Social Science Scientific?" In Nelson W. Polsby, Robert A. Dentler, and Paul, A. Smith (eds.) *Politics and Social Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morgenthau, J. Hans (1946) *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Obasi, I. N (1999) *Research Methodology in Political Science*. Enugu: Academic Publishing Comapany.

Paki, F. & Inokoba, P. (2006) *An Invitation to Political Science*. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications.

Ujo, A. A. (1989) Political Science in Nigeria: A Letter to Nigerian 'Newbreeds' in Defence of Politics and Political Science. Unpublished Notes, University of Jos.

UNIT 4   •   UNDERSTANDING THE SCIENCE OF POLITICS

CONTENTS
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   The debate on the scientific status of politics
        3.2   The science of politics
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, our attention was directed towards understanding science. In political science, the behavioural revolution permanently changed the methodological and technical face of political investigation.

According Alapiki (2004:6), the behavioural movement "heightened the level of scientific awareness among political scientists, making them increasingly sensitive to the role of scientific theory. This has led to the development of considerable concepts, propositions, models, conceptual frameworks, and quantitative and methodological rigour in the study, analysis and explanation of the complex and unpredictable world of politics (Ikelegbe, 1995:18).

With this development, can we now, with certainty, say that political science is a science? This is the main thrust of this unit.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- explain whether they is a science of politics
- explain why political science is not regarded as a science
- highlight the main arguments against a science of politics
- discuss the scientific procedure or methodology adopted by political science

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The debate on the scientific status of politics

We had in the previous unit mentioned that the classification of facts and the formation upon that basis of absolute judgements, which are consistence and universally valid, sums up the essential aim of

modern science. Having highlighted the key aim of science, we are now in a better position to answer the question "can politics be a science?" Or rather "is a science of politics possible?"

For some, there is and can be a science of politics. The argument here is that political science like other social sciences has a scientific character because of the scientific method and the scientific tools it employ in examining phenomena. That is, it is a science to the extent that it accumulates facts that are verifiable, links these facts together in causal sequences (systematically) and from these, makes generalizations of fundamental principles and formulate theories.

However, others believe that political science or the social science in general cannot be a science because the material with which it deals is incapable of being treated exactly the same way as physics or chemistry. While physics and chemistry are natural or physical science, and deal with matter; the social sciences which include political science, sociology, economics, etc. deal with man in society. Man in society is not only unpredictable but, also extremely cumbersome to observe accurately because he is ever-changing, and his environment is difficult to control.

3.2   Why political science is not regarded as a science

The major reasons why politics is not regarded as an exact science are given below:

1.   The complexity of political phenomena
A major challenge made against the scientific study of politics claims that no regularities can be discovered because political phenomena are too complex. Politics is seen as possessing too many variables and possible relationships between them to find any order. In contradistinction, physicists and chemists are able to discover relationships and construct phenomena that interest them are less complex. In this context, Hans Morgenthau notes that "the social sciences can, at best, do what is their regular task; that is, present a series of hypothetical possibilities, each of which may occur under conditions- and which of them will actually occur is anybody's guess (Morgenthau, 1946:130).

2.   Human indeterminism
Russell Kirk argues, "human beings are the least controllable, verifiable, law-obeying and predictable of subjects (1963:63). The behaviour of humans is also unpredictable. Similarly, humans are free to choose their course of action at any given point in the political process, hence their actions cannot be classified, and so generalisations- describing their behaviour cannot be formulated. Before the 1979 Election in Nigeria, some political scientists

predicted that the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was going to win the Presidential election. Others predicted that the election would be won by the Nigerian People's Party (NPP). Contrary to these predictions, it was the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) that won the election.

3.   Reaction problem

Even if humans were completely indeterminate, they have another characteristic that makes it impossible to systematically study their behaviour. Much of research in political science is based on the reactions of those being studied. What readily comes to mind is the survey research technique in which human subjects are questioned to elicit responses that will describe their opinions, attitudes or general states of mind. The crux of the matter is that since subjects are aware of the fact that they are being studies, their responses cannot be taken as valid indicators of their opinions.

This problem is not only limited to survey research, as they are methods that place the political scientist in real-world political situations so that he can observe political behaviour up close: participant observation. No matter how extensive, such observations are at best suggestive and not conclusive.

4.   The influence of values

Another major argument against the possibility of a science of politics questions its presumed value-free nature. Here is the fundamental difference between the natural and social sciences. Practitioners of the former do not deal with values- protons and molecules are neither good nor bad- but social scientists do, because people are moral beings and thus social scientists are irretrievably immersed in values. Political science is therefore a policy science, concerning itself over issues of values, morals and the common good.

5.   The problem of change

Human behaviour is vulnerable to change. Dye and Zeigler (1970) argue that:

> Change in other realms also constitutes an obstacle to the development of a science of politics. Many aspects of both the human and non human environment are always changing, and beliefs that are warranted in one environmental situation may be obsolete. Technological, economic, social and other changes occur, rendering previously warranted belief untenable or simply inapplicable to the new situation."

The League of Nation metamorphosed into the United Nation. The same can be said of the Organisation of African Unity, which has changed to the African Union. Nigeria as an example has also operated various forms of government, parliamentary system, military rule, and presidential rule. All these changes make prediction unrealistic.

6   Lack of agreement on the basic concepts

A significant obstacle to the development of the science of politics is the lack of agreement on the basic concepts and categories of political science (Ibaba, 2004:27). Political Science is weighed down by concepts and categories that are yet too imprecise and immeasurable to be useful in scientific analysis. As Paki and Inokoba (2006) have mentioned, "in political enquiry, concepts such as "democracy" and "federalism" have varied meanings and evoke diverse connotations and feelings as there are political scientists defining them". Quantification and precision are still unattainable goals because of the lack of agreement on the basic concepts of the discipline.

From what we have read above, we can deduce two basic obstacles to the scientific study of politics: the first relates to the political science himself and the second relates to the subject matter of the discipline.

Even though these problems are real, and are great obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge, the behavioural and post-behaviour revolution seems to be redefining the scientific status of political science. Overtime, political investigators have been developing methods of controlling observations, abstracting adequately, and reducing variability and complexity, so that political analysis can become more scientific.

3.3 Why political science is regarded as a science

Those who argue that political science is a science, contend that conceptual (definitional) ambiguity represents an inherent problem of any newly emerging scientific enquiry. Since political science has had a shorter history than a good number of other sciences, conceptual ambiguity should not be strange (Paki and Inokoba, 2006:20-21). These problems are likely to reduce in future.

Secondly, they have argued that the criteria of universal validity of conclusions and complete accuracy of predictions before a discipline is considered a science, seems to be an over-stated case. After all, "there are less developed natural sciences" like meteorology or the "the science of tides" which fail to make predictions, yet they are

commonly considered as science. Why then should critics demand precision of a higher degree from any other social sciences? (Eminue, 2001:56).

Thirdly, and more importantly, the behaviouralists also contend that such criticisms of the scientific inclination of political enquiry are consequences of unfortunate misconceptions with regards to the real nature of science in general and political science in particular.

The scientific procedure or methodology adopted by political science from the natural sciences in its analysis of political phenomena involves observations, formulation of hypothesis, verification, experimentation and theory formulation. These are explained below.

a) Observation
This refers to the appreciation of a problem in society and the recognition that such a problems needs to be systematically investigated. Systematically investigating research problems means trying to identify uniform occurrences or irregularities. This process also involves the collection of data (Anikpo, 1986:19). For instance, a researcher may want to find out the causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. He may wonder why conflict (especially ethnic and religious) is on the increase.

b) Hypothesis formulation
Hypotheses are tentative explanations, suppositions, or assertions that are formulated to be tested and, when extensively tested and confirmed, either themselves take on the views of the world. Most political scientists adhere to a simple model of scientific inquiry when building theories. The key to building precise and persuasive theories is to develop and test hypotheses. Hypotheses are statements that researchers construct for the purpose of testing whether or not a certain relationship exists between two phenomena. To see how political scientists use hypotheses, and to imagine how you might use a hypothesis to develop a thesis for your paper, consider the following example. Suppose that we want to know if presidential elections are affected by economic conditions. We could formulate this question into the following hypothesis: "When the national unemployment rate is greater than 7 percent at the time of the election, presidential incumbents are not re-elected".

c) Experimentation
This is the main thrust of empiricism and the scientific method. Experimentation involves the collection of data and the establishment of causal relationships (cause and effect) among

phenomena (Ibaba, 2004:26). It makes room for trial and error as opposed to dogmatic acceptance of ideas and answers. It provides checks and balances to the validity of otherwise of any research findings. Experimentation is not limited to the science laboratory; it could be conducted anywhere depending on the type of research one is engaged in. For political scientists, they laboratory could be the organs of government, the United Nations, political parties, student union government, the electorate, etc. The importance of experimentation is to ensure the objectivity of the research. Objectivity refers to testability or repeatability of the research process and results (Anikpo, 1986:18).

d) Hypothesis verification

This stage of research determines the extent to which the results of an experiment are in agreement with the stated hypothesis. It subjects the responses from the experiment to proof of validity by finding out if the stimulus introduced at the experiment stage has taken the anticipated effect with reference to the earlier formulated hypothesis (Ibaba, 2004:26). The importance of verification in the scientific endeavour is to be absolutely sure and give legitimacy to the objectivity of scientific results (Anikpo, 1986:32).

e) Theory formulation

According to Kerlinger (1977), a "theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena" (cited in Obasai, 1999:38). Theories are explanations of uniformities that involve two or more generalisations but which, even though widely held, require empirical validation for confirmation. A theory is different from a law in that a theory offers at one and the same time less certainty and greater explanatory power; it explains in effect why laws work, but it is not as useful as a law in predicting particular events (Osaghae, 1988).

 A theory is formulated to have three objectives: first, it sets out the connections or linkage among a group of variables; secondly, it represents a systematic view of phenomena described by variables, and finally, it explains and predicts phenomena across time and space. Therefore, we can say that a theory is a scientific generalisation of a research finding that aids the prediction of a research phenomenon. Research and theory are somewhat interrelated. While theory describes the logical parts of the world, research offers means of seeing whether those relationships actually exist in the world (Ibaba, 2004:26). The research endeavour itself is guided by theory.

What we have been trying to do above to answer the question of what makes a discipline a science. And what we have seen is that that what would determine whether a discipline is a science of not is the methods of arriving at the truth. Contemporary political scientists have in their research investigations demonstrated commitment to the scientific methodology and rigorous empiricism in collecting and analysing data. With the discoveries and development of concepts, conceptual frameworks, models, paradigms and theories, in addition to the extensive use of sample survey for gathering information, and statistical methods for quantifying data as well as the recording of these charts, graphs, scales and tables, political science, is now seen as a science.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
What do you consider the major arguments made against the possibility of a science of politics?

4.0   CONCLUSION
Although political scientists are prone to debates and disagreements, the majority view the discipline as an exact science. As a result, political scientists generally strive to emulate the objectivity as well as the conceptual and methodological rigor typically associated with the so-called natural sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, and physics). Political scientists strive to construct and assess theories in accordance with the rigor, objectivity, and logical consistency that characterise the scientific method. Thus, in contrast to scholars in such fields as literature, art, history or classics, political scientists avoid the use of impressionistic or metaphorical language, or language which appeals primarily to our senses, emotions, or moral beliefs. However, because of the unpredictability of man's actions and behaviour, predictions in political science cannot be absolutely certain, no matter how adequate the explanations on which such predictions are based may be. To this extent, in political science, it is convenient and more realistic to talk of the probabilities of events actually taking place (Osaghae, 1988).

5.0 SUMMARY
In this unit, you have learned about the great debated about the scientific status of political science, or as we have succinctly put it, "Is there are science of politics?" For some, there is and can be a science of politics. The argument here is that political science like other social sciences has a scientific character because of the scientific method and the scientific tools it employ in examining phenomena. That is, it is a science to the extent that it accumulates facts that are verifiable, links these facts together in causal sequences (systematically)   and   from   these,   makes   generalisations   of

fundamental principles and formulate theories. However, others believe that political science or the social science in general cannot be a science because the material with which it deals is incapable of being treated exactly the same way as physics or chemistry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)
Why would you regard political science as a science?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Alapiki, H. E (2004) *Politics and Government in Nigeria.* Port Harcourt: Amethyst & Colleagues Publishers.

Anikpo, M (1986) *Foundations of Social Science Research: A Methodological Guide for Students.* Enugu: Abic Publishers.

Appadorai, A (1968) *The Substance of Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Brectch, Arnold (1959) *Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. Princeton University Press.

Dye, R. Thomas and Zeigler, L. Harmon (1970) *The Irony of Democracy*. Belmont: Wadsworth.

Eminue, O (2001) *Introduction to Political Science*. Calabar: Cats Publishers.

Ibaba, S. T (2004) *Foundations of Political Science*. Port Harcourt: Amethyst & Colleagues Publishers.

Ikelegbe, A. O (ed.) *Politics and Government: An Introductory and Comparative Perspective.* Benin City: Uri Publishing House.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove, California: Dorsey Press.

Kirk, Russell (1963) "Is Social Science Scientific?" In Nelson W. Polsby, Robert A. Dentler, and Paul, A. Smith (eds.) *Politics and Social Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morgenthau, J. Hans (1946) *Scientific Man versus Power Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Obasi, I. N (1999) *Research Methodology in Political Science*. Enugu: Academic Publishing Comapany.

Paki, F. & Inokoba, P. (2006) *An Invitation to Political Science*. Port Harcourt: Kemuela Publications.

Ujo, A. A. (1989) Political Science in Nigeria: A Letter to Nigerian 'Newbreeds' in Defence of Politics and Political Science. Unpublished Notes, University of Jos.

UNIT 5   •   UNDERSTANDING POLITICS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to the great debate about the scientific status of politics. You observed the two diametric positions adopted by scholars in explaining whether there is indeed a science of politics. Since political science involves the systematic and scientific study of politics, it is imperative at this point to take time to understand what politics is. This is the main concern of this unit.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
• define politics
• explain the challenges of defining the concept of politics
• highlight the relationships between politics, government and the state
• analyse how politics is related to power, authority and conflict
• explain what is a political activity
• describe the essential characteristics of politics

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Definition of politics

The foundation course on *Introduction to Political Science* has provided you with definitions of politics. A lot of people conceive politics based on what they think is 'political'. It is not uncommon to hear people say 'don't play politics about this issue', 'politics has destroyed him' or 'politics is a dirty game'. When a political issue is

being discussed, the discussants hardly begin by working out an acceptable definition of 'political'. It is usually taken for granted that every body knows what politics entails.

This is certainly a mistaken view of politics. These mistakes arise because most people see politics as partisan politics. Politics is obviously not only party politics as politicians are not the only people who participate in politics. Party politics is an essential feature of politics but is not the only subject matter. Political parties constitute one group in the political system. Other groups involved in politics include professional groups, religious groups, economic groups and social groups (Ujo, 1989:2).

Political issues however are known to generate the strongest of the emotions, attachments, and actions. Many people absorb current information about politics, hold opinions about it, argue about it and participate in it. Some even die for it. Even though every one has a general understanding about what politics is, when asked to be more precise, they are diffident. Some say it means 'government', others 'the art of compromise' or 'manipulation' or 'the struggle for advantage'. It is in this context that Henry Adams notes "politics as a practice, whatever its professions, has always been systematic organisations of hatreds" (Samuels, 1974:7). Others also see politics as 'war without bloodshed'. However, we must also note that despite these negative connotations, politics is also a vehicle for good: politics requires cooperation which enables individuals "to defend themselves from attack, or attack others; to produce goods or to steal them; to educate the youth, or to indoctrinate them with myths, or platonic 'noble lies' that facilitate the exercise of arbitrary power by some persons over others" (Gordon, 1990:21).

One of those who strongly advocated for a clear definition of politics is E. E. Schattschneider. He wrote, "There is something strange about the feeling of scholars that a definition is not necessary. Inevitably, there is a lack of focus in the discipline because it is difficult to see things that are undefined. People who cannot define the object of their studies do not know what they are looking for, and if they do not know what they are looking for, how can they tell when they have found it" (Schattschneider, 1969:8). Not surprising, Schattschneider calls political science "a mountain of data surrounding a vacuum".

The task confronting a student of political science is to examine different types of definitions of politics as offered by practitioners of the field. The argument here is that whatever political scientists claim as politics, is politics, and one will restrict the growth of

political science if he/she prematurely advocates a definition. In their analysis of the discipline of political science, Somit and Tennenhaus (1967:24) pointed out that the discipline has never had a clear conception of its content.

Despite the challenges of conceiving the content of political science, many definitions of politics have been given by political philosophers and political scientists. Some identify politics with government, legal government, or the state; while others revolve around the notions of power, authority, and/ or conflict. Let us briefly look at how people weave their definition of politics.

3.2   The problem of defining politics

As earlier mentioned, politics like most concepts in the social sciences has no universally accepted definition. Every political scientist defines the term through his/her own lenses. Aristotle described politics as the master science, because of his belief that, it controlled and coordinated without destroying other activities. He also viewed man as a political animal. Therefore, to him, political behaviour is part of human activity.

Lenin defines politics as "who does what to whom." Mao sees it as "war without bloodshed." Harold Lasswell is of the view that politics determines "who gets what, when and how". Politics is also defined by others as the "allocation of power and responsibility", "the making of authoritative decisions" and the "authoritative allocation of values." Appadorai (1968) has defined politics as "the science concerned with the State and of the conditions essential to its existence and development" or "that part of social science which treats the foundations of the State and the principles of government.

A common thread that runs through all these definitions is decision-making. Other concepts, which are used changeably with decision-making, are "settlement of disputes", "reconciliation of interests" and "allocation of values." With these various conceptions of politics, we follow Ujo (1989:4) to define politics as the "process of reconciling interests in organised groups. The important words in the definition are reconciliation, interest and group. Reconciliation refers to the decision-making or policy-making, which is authoritative and binding on the community. Every organised community is made up of interest groups. Differences, which manifest themselves, are based, among competing and conflicting interests. When there is conflict of interest or disagreement, there is need for politics, which reconciles these interests. Politics takes place in organised groups. Without some form of social organisation, politics can hardly take place.

3.2 Major Conceptions of Politics

There are four major conceptions that are very useful in our understanding of what politics entails. These include: politics as collective decision and action; politics as the operation of the state; politics as the relations and conflict among social classes; and politics as the peaceful resolution of societal conflicts.

Politics as collective decision and action

The first conception of politics is that it is a matter of reaching collective decisions and taking collective actions. The clearest example of this conception-type is perhaps that given by Miller (2002) who stated that "politics is the process whereby a group of people, whose opinions or interests are initially divergent, reach collective decisions which are generally regarded as binding on the group, and enforced as common policy". Also, Pitkin (1981) stated that "politics is the activity through which relatively large and permanent groups of people determine what they will collectively do, settle how they will live together, and decide their future, to whatever extent that is within their power." Another conception of politics as collective decision and action is given by Weale (2004) when he stated that "politics is the process whereby groups of individually rational people try to make collective choices that will in some sense be binding on the members of the group, and where the choices are aimed at solving collective action problems"

There are two assumptions from this conception of politics as the process by which groups representing divergent interests and values make collective decisions. The first is that all societies must contain diversity; that humans will always have different interests and values, and therefore there will always be a need for a mechanism whereby these different interests and values are reconciled. The second assumption is that scarcity is also an inevitable characteristic of all societies. Since the goods that people want are not enough to go around, there needs to be some mechanism whereby these goods can be distributed. Politics would seem, then, in the words of the American political scientist Harold Lasswell, to be 'Who Gets What, When and How?' (Laswell, 1951). Clearly, of great importance here is the way in which economic goods are distributed, as these are crucially important in determining the nature of society and the well-being of those who live in it.

However, there are at least three unresolved questions about the decisions that are taken if we adopt this view of politics. In the first place, what values do and should the decisions made serve? Do they serve, for instance, the values of justice or liberty and if so what do

we mean by justice and liberty? Is it a just decision that is made in the interests of the few, the many, or all? Authors however differ on the ends that politics serve. For instance, the earliest conception of politics belonged to the Greeks who defined politics as the pursuit of the public interest. The public realm was viewed by the Greeks to be morally superior to the private realm, and was represented by the *polis* or "city-state". Plato and Aristotle, two famous Greek philosophers, were of the opinion that the moral purposes that the decision makers ought to pursue to realise the public or common good was to ensure happiness of all men. This happiness was not however defined as the attainment of mere pleasure, but as the conformity of ideas and actions with "perfect goodness". Thus, Aristotle (1953) wrote that "what the state men is most anxious to produce is a moral character in his fellow citizens, namely a disposition of virtue and the performance of virtuous action".

The second likely question student of politics will ask with regard to the conception of politics as collective action is 'who makes and should make the decisions taken?' Is it one person who makes the decisions, or a few, many, or all? Is there anything special, it will be asked further, about democratic form of government? These questions also have preoccupied the minds of political philosophers and political scientists. For instance, according to the famous Greek Political Philosopher Plato, the most qualified elders must have the authority. Rulers must always act for the good of the commonwealth. Plato believed the Athenian ideal of all citizens being involved in politics was ineffective; he believed ruling was a craft needing a group of trained rulers. Plato believed that wisdom in the state is vital, and that wisdom comes from those who lead. Plato thought that elders (Guardians) should have authority and should do what is best for the state, with younger men "auxiliaries" to enforce the rules of the elders. Plato argued that because of their desire for wisdom, philosophers would be the best choice to hold the positions as rulers. It is the belief that until the philosophers are in power, neither states nor the individuals will be acquitted of trouble. In this scenario, the imagined commonwealth will never be acknowledged (cf. Curtis, 2009).

On the other hand, according to Thomas Hobbes, any valid explanation of society and government must take account of the real nature of man. He says that men in a state of nature, that is a state without civil government, are in a war of all against all in which life is hardly worth living and was "short, brutish, nasty and poor." Man was motivated by his appetites, desires, fear, and self-interest, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. Since the powers men had were essentially equal, there was a natural strife as men sought to satisfy their desires. To escape this intolerable situation, where every

individual lived for himself, and to obtain peace and order, men agreed to form a society. Men surrendered their rights of self-assertion in order to set up a power capable of enforcing its authority. They gave up their rights to defend themselves, made a social contract and created a sovereign. Order was secured by this sovereign. Thomas Hobbes supports monarchical sovereignty because it keeps society stable (Sabine & Thorson, 1973; Curtis, 2009). On the other hand, political philosophers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau argued that no government was legitimate unless the people gave their consent to its authority through a social contract. Rousseau's social contract includes all citizens in the initial agreement to the terms of the contract to participate in the making of law, and so to participate in the decision making that defines the appropriate boundaries of the law and the proper domain of the state activities

The third main question that students of politics will ask is why are those taking decisions able to enforce them? In answering this question, it is important to make a distinction between power and authority, concepts which are central to politics. We could say that rulers are able to enforce their decisions either because they have the power to do so or because they have the authority to do so. The former implies some form of coercion or sanction; that those with power are able to cause those without power to behave in a way they would not otherwise have done. Clearly, a regime that relies exclusively on the exercise of power, in the sense described above, is likely to be inefficient and unstable. Such a regime will only survive if it is able to impose coercion continually, a time-consuming and difficult exercise. If a set of rulers has authority, on the other hand, force may not be necessary since authority is defined in terms of legitimacy. Authority, then, is defined here as legitimate power in the sense that rulers can produce acceptance by the ruled, not because they can exercise coercion but because the ruled recognize the right of the rulers to exercise power. Converting power into authority, then, should be the goal of any set of rulers.

SELF Assessment Exercise (SAE)
What are the main issues in conceptualising politics as collective decision and action?

Politics as the operation of the State
Those who conceive politics as the operation of the state ask the following questions: Where does politics take place? What is the boundary of political activities? Where does it begin and end? For Leftwich (1984: 10), this is the 'single most important factor involved in influencing the way people implicitly or explicitly conceive of politics'.

For some, politics ought to be defined narrowly. According to this view, politics is associated with the activities of the state and the public realm. As a result, institutions other than the state, although important in their own right, are beyond the scope of politics.

Politics has traditionally been associated with the activities of the state. This narrow definition certainly helps to distinguish politics, however artificially, from other social sciences such as sociology and economics. The state has traditionally been the centre of much political analysis because it has been regarded as the highest form of authority in a society. Put in another way, in the words of the great German sociologist Max Weber, the state has a 'monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in enforcing its order within a given territorial area' (Gerth and Mills, 1946). Such authority, according to is tantamount to sovereignty.

The state is sovereign in the sense that it is the supreme law-making body within a particular territory. Ultimately, it has the power of life and death over individuals. It can decide to put people to death for crimes they have committed and it can demand that citizens should fight for their country in wars with other sovereign states, even against their wish. In fact, the state is ubiquitous and individuals feel its impact right from birth to death (in the form of birth and death registrations, public rules and regulations, the police, etc.). Defined in such a way, the state can be distinguished from the government in the sense that government is merely the machinery with which the authority of the state is exercised, and the state is a much larger and permanent entity, containing not just political offices but also bureaucratic institutions, the judiciary, military and police and security services. Indeed, states, according to Hugo Grotius are "immortal" while governments come and go (see Curtis, 2009).

Without doubt, to include the activities of the state in a study of politics is necessary, albeit not necessarily sufficient. The study of government-its legislative, executive, and judicial functions-occupies a great deal of the political analyst's time: the question of state power is central to the study of politics. As Goodwin (2007: 4) points out: 'political theory may be defined as the discipline which aims to explain, justify or criticise the disposition of power in society'. Political theory is therefore intrinsically linked to the study of political obligation. Why should we, it is asked, obey the state? Is there any particular form of the state that we can obey rather than others? Can we obey any state? Questions of political power more often than not focus on the state.

However, many have argued that this narrow drawing of the boundary is to miss much of importance that might fairly be

described as political. For these scholars, we can talk sensibly about politics existing in various types of group from the family to the international community. In other words, politics also takes place within the private realm, especially the realm of the civil society which consists of those non-governmental institutions-such as pressure groups, business organisations, and trade unions-to which individuals belong and that it is these institutions that provide linkages between the individual and the state. Hay (2002: 3), for instance, argues that what is "political should be defined in such a way as to encompass the entire sphere of the social". Leftwich (1984) substantially agrees, arguing that 'politics is at the heart of all collective social activity, formal and informal, public and private, in all human groups, institutions and societies'.

The term governance, which is often, preferred now to government, reflects this reality by drawing the boundaries of the governmental process much wider to include not just the traditional institutions of government but also the other inputs into decisions affecting society such as the workings of the market and the role of interest groups. Indeed, this concurs with everyday discourse where it is common to hear about politics taking place in business organisations, town unions, universities, churches, entertainment industry, and even in the family.

Secondly, the conception of politics as the activities of the state misses the fundamental question with regard to the degree to which politics now exists beyond the state at a higher supranational or international level such as the African Union, European Union, etc. In fact more than ever before, the focus of politics has begun to shift because in a practical sense we are living in a world which is becoming increasingly interdependent, where the forces of globalisation are placing increasing constraints on what individual 'sovereign' states can do on their own.

Thirdly a conception of politics that sees the state as the key player because it is bestowed with the use of physical force misses the point altogether because in some states, the government does not have a monopoly of coercion as we see from countries such as Somalia where various war lords are pitched against one another and also against the state.

What the shortcoming of this conception point to is that we should not confuse politics as an arena with politics as a process. Hay (2002: 72), for instance, has argued that the distinctiveness of politics lies not in the arena within which it takes place but in 'the emphasis it places on the political aspect of social relations'. This

'political aspect' is then defined in terms of the 'distribution, exercise and consequences of power.'

In spite of this reality, the point needs to be made that although politics take place in both public and private arenas, 'the discipline of politics should give special consideration to how that process is resolved in the act of government – in particular how issues reach the governmental agenda and how, within that arena, issues are discussed, contested and decided' (Stoker, 1995: 6). This, then, is the distinctive mark of the political science discipline.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the limitations in conceiving politics exclusively in terms of the State?

Politics as the relations and conflict among social classes
For many, rather than being defined in terms of consensus-building and cooperation, politics is all about conflict and it is the absence of politics that leads to greater social cohesion based around agreement on core values. This is the conception of politics which derive from the writings of Karl Marx. According to Marx, every society is interlocked in a struggle between two broad classes in society. These classes are differentiated in terms of their relations to the mode of production in society: those who own and control the means of production constitute the class of oppressors, and the 'have nots' belongs to the class of the oppressed. Political activity centers on the struggle between these two antagonistic classes for supremacy.

Marx suggests that, since differences of interests in society centre on the existence of competing social classes, the creation of a classless (or socialist) society when the oppressed class ultimately becomes victorious against their oppressors, offers the prospect of a society based on consensus and cooperation, one in which politics and the state is not necessary. Politics, for Marx then, is seen in negative terms. It is about class conflict, and political power, as Marx and Engels famously insisted in the Communist Manifesto (2002), and is 'merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another'. It logically follows from this that once that conflict is ended through the overthrow of capitalism, there are no competing classes and therefore, by definition, no politics.

As important as this conception of politics is, it ignores the fact that politics is also a process of cooperation and that most human interactions are not always conflictual. In addition the conception downplays other identities such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, which, in addition to class, influence political behaviour of individuals and groups.

71

Politics as the peaceful resolution of societal conflicts

There are those who suggest that politics is the art of finding peaceful resolutions to general societal conflicts through compromise and the building of consensus. In so far as this fails to happen and military conflict or any kind of violence results as a consequence, then politics can be said to have been rejected or failed. Crick (1962; 2004) is perhaps the best-known advocate of this position. For him, politics is 'only one possible solution to the problem of order' (1962:18). It is, for Crick, the preferable way in which conflicts can be resolved, a 'great and civilising human activity' associated with admirable values of toleration and respect and fortitude' (Ibid:5). In contrast to tyranny and oligarchy, both of which are concerned with coercing those who disagree with the ruling elite, politics is the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community (Crick, 2004).

Crick argues that conciliation is most likely to occur when power is widely spread in society so that no one small group can impose its will on others. Politics is a form of rule whereby people act together through institutionalised procedures to resolve differences, to conciliate diverse interests and values and to make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes. Unfortunately, as he recognises, politics is a rare activity that is too often rejected in favour of violence and suppression. He therefore calls for its values to be promoted and persevered.

A similar argument is put forward by Gerry Stoker, who argues that politics does not only express the reality of disagreement and conflict in society but is also 'one of the ways we know of how to address and potentially patch up the disagreements that characterise our societies without resource to illegitimate coercion or violence' (Stoker, 2006: 7).

It might be best to describe the arguments put forward by Crick and Stoker as representing a particular kind of politics, rather than politics *per se*. It is true that conflicts and differences are at the heart of politics, but if we can only talk about politics when agreements are reached and compromises made then it would seem to be a very limited activity. In this sense, it is probably sensible to talk of the resort to force and violence and military conflict as politics by another means, as in the famous dictum by the nineteenth-century Prussian military strategist, Carl von Clausewitz (War is an extension of politics). Not all politics results in compromise and consensus. Sometimes the conflict is so sharp that violence, civil wars and revolution become political instruments. In these

circumstances the relatively orderly pursuit of politics gives way to more chaotic and brutal forms. As a student of politics therefore, you must not forget the latent potential of politics to take a more violent and dramatic forms.

3.4 What is a political activity?
Not all human activities are political. As mention earlier in this unit, most of the times, people wrongly understand what politics is and what politics is not. There is a mistaken view of politics by equating it exclusively with the activities of government. This is one sided as not all activities of the government are political.

Political activity is concerned with the activity that has to do with some one doing something about which there is no agreement. That person could use the government as an instrument to achieve that which he is doing. Political situations arise out of disagreement. Disagreement is the atmosphere that creates political phenomena. The second activity, which is known as political, is the behaviour that is concerned with conflict or disagreement.

What is the basis of conflict or disagreement in the society? In all societies and communities, there are different types of disagreement mainly derived from the nature of the society. A society is made in such a way that there is conflict based of differences in the social structure. The most important of these differences refers to the economic situation of the people. Due to scarce resources with an insatiable demand for goods and resources, other people in the society posses more resources than others. Thus, economic disparity translates to a fundamental disagreement in the society. The second is political inequality. There is uneven distribution of power in our society. The third refers to differences in the society derived from geographical locations, ethnic and religious affiliations and language. These differences are at the root cause of conflicts, which is at heart of politics.

According to the renowned political scientists, Billy Dudley in his famous *Scepticism and Political Virtue* (1975), political scientists engage in five major activities:

- consciousness formation
- social mobilisation
- contestations
- institutional struggle; and
- transcendence.

3.5 The necessary conditions for politics

Political life was developed by human beings in the *State of Nature* where the English Writer, Thomas Hobbes has described as "war of all against all, where life was poor, nasty, brutish and short." What this simply means is that every body will be making his/her decisions. Since human beings are intrinsically selfish, everybody will be making decisions aimed at maximising his/her personal pleasure at the expense of others. Conflicts will thus ensure because of conflicting interests and the fact that there would be no common way of resolving these conflicts; hence, they will be perpetual dispute making their existence impossible.

If the existence of living is to continue, certain basic needs must be satisfied. These needs include food, shelter, raiment, sex, etc. All these basic necessities can only be met if there is a minimum peace, i.e. an acceptable way of resolving conflicts. It is therefore possible to establish a causal relationship between the three variables, human existence depends on peace and peace in turn depends on politics. As a student of political science, it is imperative that you should understand that politics does not necessary aim at total elimination of conflicts. What it does is to define the limits of such conflicts and thereby create ways for mitigating it. Conflict exists because of the freedom enjoyed by individuals. Some measure of freedom is necessary for human existence. According to Rowe:

> Disagreement, though a necessary condition for politics is not a sufficient condition, order is also required. If politics is not to disappear into chaos or civil war there needs to be both recognised limits to disagreement and the measure of agreement necessary to maintain order. The extent of agreement may be greater than necessary minimum, but if that minimum is absent, politics is no more. Conversely, if members are forced to behave as if there were virtually no disagreement, then politics is seriously curtailed if not destroyed (Rowe, 1979:2-3).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why do you think there must be minimum agreement if politics is not to result in chaos?

4.0   CONCLUSION

Even though we have not offered a concrete definition of politics in this course, and we do not advocate for the best definition of politics, there nevertheless seems to be a recognisable observable core meaning of the political scientist subject matter. You must have known now that politics has something to do with the use of power

to reconcile conflicts over the distribution of goods and values. Typically, as most definitions have pointed out, this is done through the institution of the government.

The several definitions we have considered above are not in opposition to each other. Rather, they emphasise different aspects of the same basic process and so it follows that most political scientists are playing the same game. Let us conclude this unit by emphasising that the primary objective of this unit is not to arrive at "the" or even "a" definition of politics. If the only conclusion drawn is that there is no such definition, then the discussion has been partially successful. But in addition, by going over the above discussions, it is hoped that in becoming familiar with several of the more popular interpretations of politics or political science, you will be able to better understand the literature of the discipline of political science.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been introduced to the concept of politics. We have looked at the following issues:
- The definition of politics
- The major challenges political scientists experience in defining politics
- The major conceptions of politics, where we have seen that politics can be defined in reference to the operation of the state; as conflicts among classes; as collective decision and action; and as peaceful resolution of societal struggles and conflicts.
- What is referred to as political activity; and
- The necessary conditions for politics to take place.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)
1) Described four major ways in which political scientists have conceptualised politics.
2) What are the challenges of arriving at a universal definition of politics?

7.0   REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS
Appadorai, A (1968) *The Substance of Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, (1953) The *Ethics*. Thomson, J. K (trans.) Hardmonds Worth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Bluhm, William (1965) *Theories of Political System.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Crick, B (1962) *In Defence of Politics*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Crick, B (2004) "Politics as a Form of Rule: Politics, Citizenship and Democracy," in Leftwich A. (ed.) *What Is Politics?*. Oxford: Polity, 67-85.

Curtis, M (ed). (2009) *Great Political Theories.* Expanded Edition. Retrieved   August   24,   2009   from www.http://fs.hutingdon.edu/jlewis/syl/Anthos/CurtisStuudtoutsPage3.htm

de Grazia, Alfred   (1965) *Political Behaviour.* New York: Free Press.

Dudley, Billy(1975) *Scepticism and Political Virtue.*

Easton, David (1960) The Political System. New York: Alfred & Knopf.

Gerth, H. and Mills, W. (1946) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goodwin, B. (2007) *Using Political Ideas*. (5th ed) Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Hay, C. (2002) *Political Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove: California; Dorsey Press.

Lasswell, H (1951) *Politics: Who Gets what, When and How*. Free Press: Glencoe, III.

Leftwich, A (1984) *What is Politics? The Activity and its Study*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Miller, D (1987) "Politics," in Miller, D. (ed.) *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell. 430-431.

Pitkin, H (1981) "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory,* 9: 437-432

Sabine, G. and Thorson, T (1973) *A History of Political Theory.*(4th ed). Hinsdale: Dryden Press.

Stoker, G. (2006). *Why Politics Matter*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Schaffscheider, E. E (1969) *Two Million Americans in Search of a Government*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Somit, Albert and Tenneenhaus, Joseph (1967) *The Development of American Political Science: From Burgess to Behaviouralism*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ujo, A. A (1989) "Political Science in Nigeria. A Letter to Nigerian Newbreed in Defence and Political Science". Unpublished Notes.

Weale, A.(2004) "Politics as Collective Choice," in Leftwich, A. (ed.) *What Is Politics?* Cambridge: Polity. pp. 86-99.

MODULE 2   DEVELOPMENT-ORIENTED
APPROACHES

This module is interested in analysing theoretical approaches in political analysis that are geared towards an inquiry about development in the society. These approaches are concerned with the question, why are some societies more developed than others? These approaches are essentially concerned with the issue of economic and political change. They however vary in relationship to how they view development, and the processes of development.

The first unit focuses on Marxism as a theory in political science. Although Marxism is both a theory and a practice, our central concern here is on the methodology of Marxism. In the second module, the modernisation theory is extensively discussed. We have shown that the modernisation and the dependency theories are diametrically opposed to each other. The third unit considers the dependency perspective, which emerged as a reaction to the modernisation theory. Dependency theory states that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are not integrated into the world system, or not 'fully' integrated as is often argued by free market economists, but because of how they are integrated into the system. The module concludes with the political economy approach, which essentially concerns the interpretation of the works of Karl Marx in elucidating the global character of capitalism.

We will now turn to the discussion of the module under the following units:

Unit 1   Marxism

Unit 2   Modernisation theory

Unit 3   Dependency theory

Unit 4   The political economy approach

UNIT 1   THE THEORY OF MARXISM

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Marxism
        3.2   The historical development of Marxism
                3.2.1   Pre-Marxists philosophies
                3.2.2   Marxism as an antithesis to Hegelian dialectics
        3.3   The methodology of Marxism
        3.4   Neo-Marxists and Karl Marx
        3.5   A critique of Marxism
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Marxism remains one of the most controversial and ideological theories in political science. Although Karl Marx and his collaborator, Frederich Engels had formulated their theory more than one hundred and sixty years ago, this theory nevertheless has continued to impact contemporary political inquiry. Karl Marx's theory was concerned with the creation of a fulfilling world order under the communist victory over capitalism. The nature of the industrial society at the time of Marx was full of injustice and inequalities arising from the industrial society. Marx was therefore interested in changing the society in Western Europe. His philosophy became the most important critique of liberalism in western thought.

His real mission was to provide a revolutionary theory to serve the exploited working class as a guide and strategy to overthrow the evil and exploitative capitalists system, and therefore, establish a material society where the Communist Party would own and control the means of production on behalf of the working class (Akpuru-Aja, 1997:1).

Although Marxism is both a theory and a practice, we will however restrict ourselves to the former. However, it suffices to note that Marxism believes in the tenuous link between theory and practice. It believes that theory enriches practice and vice versa.

The central concern of this unit, therefore is to introduce you to Marxism as a theory in political inquiry. This will be done by tracing the development of this theory; the postulations of the Communist Manifesto and the general critique of Marxism. This unit will further unpack the significant of Marxian approach to contemporary political analysis.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- state the assumptions of Marxism
- trace the historical development of Marxism
- unpack the significant of Karl Marx's Marxism in political analysis
- critique Marxism
- explain the methodology of Marxism

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Marxism
Let us first start with the premise of Marxism: "It is not men's ideals, philosophies or religions that determine their social consciousness, but on the contrary, their economic or material existence that determines their social consciousness" (Marx and Engels, 1977). For the first time therefore, history was able to reveal the concealed truth that men must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, and therefore must work before they fight for dominion, pursue politics, philosophy and any other aspects of life.

Marx and his friend Engels argued that the economic factor is the primarily determinant of the form of politics, culture and ideology of the society, i.e. the economy is the base upon which rest the superstructure (politics, ideology, culture, religion etc). Marxism believed that ideas do not originate from peoples thought but the way in which they live- the manner of production of goods and services. The other dialectical interplay is that the ruling ideas of each age are the ideas of the rich material class. Akpuru-Aja (1997) further notes that Marxism argues that tension or conflict in society, should be found in the relationship and reward of people in social relations of production. Like Lenin who argued that "contradiction is the sword of dialectics", Marx believed that without contradiction, nothing will change.

How did Marx view science? To Marx, science was an historically dynamic and deterministic one. It is in ideology that men become "socially conscious" of their class conflict and fight it out (Althuser,

1970). Marxism also believed that antagonism between the two classes in the capitalist system is an organic part of class struggle. The method of Marx's analysis of the progression of human history is known as dialectical materialism.

To Marx therefore, as proclaimed in the Communist Manifesto, "The history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle." Marxism as a theory is methodological: to create a society dominated by communist victory.

Marxism as a science of revolutionary change is seen as a theory, and not an abstraction. Like other forms of theory, Marxism is not a prophecy but a methodological tool that enables political scientists to predict the future.

3.2   The historical development of Marxism

The ideas of Karl Marx and Frederich Engels have demonstrated that conflict within the material foundation of the society give rise to certain forms of social consciousness. Marx was able to turn the Hegelian philosophy, which believed that it is the consciousness of men that determined their existence on its head.

3.2.1 Pre-Marxist philosophies

Prior to the development of the ideas of Marx and Engels in the 1840s, many outstanding philosophers had written about order in the society. The most notable of them was W. F. Hegel, who was metaphysical in his dialectical approach in the interpretation of human society. The Hegelian dialectic represented in its day a considerable advance in the knowledge of human mind, and through it of the external world. Hegel was an idealist philosopher, holding that ideas were real. He also believed that social conditions could be changed by changing the consciousness of groups and individuals. He argued that changes in human history should be sought for not in any realm of knowledge other than in the ideas and philosophies of men. Hegelian dialects purports that although social changes, arising from social injustice is desirable, it must not follow a violent or revolutionary process. Men should discover and maintain human order by the power of reason. For Hegel, God has ordained every system. Every one, poor or rich; slave or patriarch, exploiter and exploited should accept whatever condition as calling: the design of fate, and try to adjust, adapt and cope with it. In a metaphysical sense, matter cannot be changed; and as a Chinese proverb puts it "Heaven changeth not, like wise the Tao changeth not."

According to Akpuru-Aja (1997:10-11), the Hegelian dialectic believes that "every thing is reality". This is the "thesis". The resulting tension or contradiction in human society is a reality. This is the "antithesis". Resolving tension or contradiction or conflict is similarly a reality. This is "synthesis". However, the Hegelian believes that in the process of building a desirable order (synthesis), attempt should be made not to create any disequilibrium or disorder in the statusquo.

Marx on the other hand accepted the reasoning of Hegelianism that rational argument and analysis could change the world but that such a rationality could change the society if the people understood the limit of change. To Marx, ideas to change the society are not just thought, but are a product of the manner of production of goods and services in a society. Such ideas also have historical origins. Until you know the historical origin, you will not be able to transform a society. Marx thus argued that:

> Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

Marx and Engels were greatly influenced by Hegel's dialectic, especially his conception of contradiction and social change through the thesis-antithesis-synthesis analysis. This excited and greatly impressed Marx. However, like Marx mentioned, philosophers before him had interpreted the world, the vital matter, however, is to change it. The notion of change stood Marx apart from other philosophers of his time.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How did Hegel's dialectics influence Karl Marx's approach to social change?

3.2.2 Marxism as an antithesis of Hegelian dialectics

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederich Engels (1820-1895) were worried about the prevalent condition of social inequality, social injustice and tension in their days. They strongly believed in Hegelian dialectics but criticised his metaphysics for its inability to locate the Material, economic and social existence of men in the society as the root cause of inequality, social injustice and class tension in human history.

To Marxism, things are changeable and not unchangeable. It is therefore unscientific to accept any condition as given. Marx and

Engels therefore refuted Hegelian dialectics of knowledge of social change in human history; by introducing the economic or material existence as the root cause of class conflict in human history and not a matter of ideas and philosophies of men. This approach is referred to as dialectical materialism.

Believing as Hegel did, that without contradiction, nothing changes, Marx and Engels logically deduced that just as the previous mode of production in human history changed from one form to another arising from class contradictions, the same fate must unavoidable be the case with capitalism, which already had seeds of its own negation and destruction.

Marxism has therefore advanced the idea of contradiction. Lenin for instance has stated that without contradiction, nothing changes; antagonism is but only one form of the struggle of opposites (Lenin, 1941). For Mao Tse Tsung, there is a universality of contradiction as a vehicle for social change:

i.   In Mathematics: + and - = Integral and Differential

ii.   In Physics: positive and negative electricity

iii. In Chemistry: combination and dislocation of atoms

iv.   In Social Science: the class struggle between the 'Haves' and 'Have nots'

v.   In Strategic Studies: offensive and defensive; attack and retreat; victory and defeat.

These are mutually contradictory phenomena.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXCERCISE

Briefly explain how Marx's dialectics differs from that of Hegel.

3.3 The methodology of Marxism

Marxism is basically an approach to the study of politics. As an approach, it is mainly a methodology than a philosophy. The method of studying Marxism is known as dialectical materialism- a method of knowledge that has been used for centuries by the ancient Greeks.

What is dialectics? According to Plato, dialectics is the science of the knowledge of ideas. A science of knowing what is the correct truth through debate. This concept came from the Greek word, discourse, meaning to discuss or debate.

Later on, G. W. F. Hegel gave us a comprehensive conception of dialectics. This German philosopher popularised the idea of dialectics as used in the modern times. Hegel introduced three concepts: thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

The philosophy of Marxism concerning dialectics is trying to emphasise the dynamic character of reality. Dialectical thinking emphasise that we should think of the world in terms of change, continuity and relatedness. Dialectics emphasise the fact that for you to know the truth, you must look at the contradiction in the reasoning of the disputant. The most important aspect of dialectics is not continuity, nor its relatedness but perpetual change. Change is ubiquitous.

Karl Marx has proposed three laws of dialectics than summaries the philosophy and methodology of Marxism:

1. **The law of transformation of quantity to quality**: Marx believes that change is inevitable and normal in every system. However, it is the dialectical form of change that transforms quantity into quality. Change under Marxism therefore is fundamentally revolutionary. The change from feudalism to capitalism is a revolutionary change that leads to the increase in the quality of life.

2. **The law of the Unity of Opposite**: The relatedness unity of thesis and antithesis means that contradictions are typical of reality. Reality is about contradictions as positive and negative always exists in life. For example, in capitalists society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are opposite but are connected. In the feudal society, Landlords and Serfs, Slave-owners and Slaves are opposite but connected. Marxists use the contradiction to explain change, and the evolution of the society. Lenin calls contradiction the "sword of dialectics".

3. **The Law of the Negation of the Negation**: When an old thing is changed into something new, it is said to have been negated. Capitalism negated feudalism. Socialism has also in some countries negated capitalism. It is the internal contradiction inherent in the feudalist societies that led to its negation to capitalism. Thus, capitalism is an advancement over feudalism. But it is the negation of capitalism that led to socialism. This is the negation of the negation.

Marxists believe that it is better to understand dialectics through the material world and not through ideas. Marxism as an approach gives

priority to the material conditions, especially the economic factors in explaining the play of dialectics. The economic needs of man are a fundamental in understanding dialectics. Before man does anything, he must survive. To be able to survive, he must eat. The primary activity of man is therefore economic productivity. To be able to eat, man must produce what he can eat. The methodology of Marxism is therefore concerned with the manner man produces for his livelihood.

Historical materialism is related to dialectical materialism. Materialist conception of history emphasises the fact that the productive activity of the society is fundamental, and basic in explaining the ideas, philosophies, concepts, religion that people have. The economic system or mode of production of a society serves as a guidepost in understanding how people interpret, organise and explain what is going on in a society.

Marx was able to use Historical Materialism to interpret that the ideas of the French Revolution and the Constitution of the USA were not eternal truths; they were not ordained by God. What made these events to happen was the nature of production at that time, and the ideas corresponding thereto. This could be seen in the light of new economic class (commercial group) who were opposed to the feudal lords. This was more pronounced in France where the new commercial groups were facing feudal restrictions. They were thus able to organise themselves to take over the means of production.

According to Marx,

> Men's ideas, views and conception in one word, man's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence in his social relations and his social life. What else does the history of ideas prove than the intellectual production changes his character in proportionate as the material production is changed. The ruling idea of each age has been the idea of the ruling class.

The central argument of the ideas of Karl Marx can be summarised in the form that the material existence of the society, involving the mode of production and the social relations of production constitute a distinct nature of the political, economic, social, religious, ideological and all other forms of consciousness. In other words, the material condition of any society correspond with an identified epoch in the development of that society.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Briefly explain how Marx's dialectics differ from that of Hegel.

3.4 Neo-Marxists and Karl Marx

Neo-Marxism is a loose term for various twentieth-century approaches that amend or extend Marxism and Marxist theory, usually by incorporating elements from other intellectual traditions (for example: critical theory, which incorporates psychoanalysis; Erik Olin Wright's theory of contradictory class locations, which incorporates Weberian sociology; and critical criminology, which incorporates anarchism (Scott and Marshall, 1998). As with many uses of the prefix neo-, many theorists and groups designated "neo-Marxist" attempted to supplement the perceived deficiencies of orthodox Marxism or dialectical materialism.

One such approach might be Marxist humanism, a 20th century school that hearkened back to the early writings of Marx before the influence of Engels, which focused on dialectical idealism rather than dialectical materialism, and thus rejected the perceived economic determinism of the late Marx, focusing instead on a non-physical, psychological revolution. It was thus far more libertarian and related to strains of anarchism. It also put more of an emphasis on the evils of global capitalism. It was bound up with the student movements of the 1960s. Many prominent Neo-Marxists such as Herbert Marcuse were sociologists and psychologists.

Different definitions of the term "neo-marxism" exist. For example, the Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism considers only those scholars neo-marxistic, who are non-materialist Marxists. Generally, though, all scholars and followers of Marxism who came after Karl Marx can be classified as Neo-Marxists, as only Karl Marx or scholars representing exactly his philosophy are true Marxists. This ought not to imply that Neo-Marxists are not really Marxists, but that they have applied Marxism to new problems and challenges in different contexts than Karl Marx himself.

The Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism states correctly that "Marxism's children have indeed gone their separate ways". The legacy of Karl Marx's radical critique of society has had numerous followers since its initial publication and history has seen a broad spectrum of Neo-Marxism. Examples are the Frankfurt school, a gathering of dissident Marxists and severe critics of capitalism, who were convinced that some of Marx's alleged followers had come to parrot Marx's ideas too narrowly, self-described Marxist governments (e.g. Laos, Cuba) or the new left, new social

movements, even though they are often criticised on the basis of single-issuedness.

What all of Marxism's children have in common are several irreplaceable blood traits, which form the core of Marxism, thus the minimum required of any individual calling him- or herself Marxist. As the short, and by no means enclosing, overview of the broad range of Neo-Marxists, from governments to the new left, rejecting any kind of government, indicates, each Marxist school philosophically justifies the required minimum according to its own logic.

There are several basic components Neo-Marxism has to adopt in order to remain within the family. If these basic criteria are not met, self-proclaimed Neo-Marxists are not what they describe themselves to be. In that case, the "neo" in "neo-marxism" has been overstretched, and an overstretched answer to the question "what is neo" in any Neo-Marxist philosophy negates the concept of it. If there were too much "neo" in "Neo-Marxism", it would become something completely different. Concerning the necessary blood traits, the philosophy has to remain dialectical, which means that a fragmentation of reality into distinct levels and components, from which few or just one are emphasized for the theory's needs, is prohibited (e.g. the fragmentation of world affairs in politico-strategic, politico-economic and political-social spheres).

The understanding of totality is multidimensional and interpenetrating. Capitalism has to be decried as an alienating, exploitative system, subordinating human welfare to interests of hegemonic elites. Additionally, only socialism has to be treated as a form of human organisation worth thriving for, as no other system maximizes the production's "use" value instead of the "exchange" value, the value exploitative capitalists derive their profit from and refuse to shell out to their workers. Of course, the grounding of all Neo-Marxist philosophy has to be in Karl Marx's writings. Neo-Marxists use the words written and spoken by Karl Marx to legitimize their social theories, whatever they may be. As his at times inconsequent writings allow varying interpretations, many competing schools of Marxism have been inspired by his words, as relevant textual justifications can easily be found for theories based on empiricism, experientialism, reflective critique or revolutionary activism.

Each new Neo-Marxist social theory grounds itself on the aforementioned basic components of Marxism, but differs from non-basic components or applies the theory to new surroundings. For

example, Max Weber and Sigmund Freud influenced the Frankfurt School, which helped overcome Marx's theory of economic determinism / historical materialism. Even though Max Weber himself was far from affiliated to Marxism, his studies regarding the influence of religion on the development of societies were acknowledged by scholars of the Frankfurt School. They helped to add to the concept of strict historical materialism, which was thus negated. Max Weber also observed that even though social class is based on economic relationships to the market, status class is often based on non-economical qualities such as honour, prestige or religion. Such "life chances" added to the simplistic interpretation of social classes into the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Other scholars, such as Immanuel Wallerstein, grounded their works in the writings of Karl Marx, but applied them to an increasing North-South conflict in contemporary world affairs. The critic's focus shifted from a mere critique of capitalism to a one directed at the Western civilization in general. Under these conditions, Marx finding that "big industry creates everywhere the same relations between the classes of society" is not necessarily true. Not all countries industrialise and countries are marginalised by the world-economy, thus more engaged in an international North-South conflict than an internal class struggle, as the local bourgeoisie is missing – not all barbarian nations have been compelled, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production.

3.5 A critique of Marxism

The ideas of Karl Marx are scientifically doubtful. He made predictions and yet cannot be proved to be right or wrong in any meaningful sense. Similarly, his ideas have been polluted by later political events.

He was a political as well as a sociological writer so much of his work was polemic.

His ideas tend to shift and vary according to context or his age when he wrote. His theory developed but sometimes he did not develop individual areas with the whole theory so they are subject to interpretation.

Marx rejects idealism (the idea that men are guided by ideas) and puts forward an opposite philosophy and yet, his ideas have been the guide for many great and infamous historical events and figures.

Marx tends to consider broad social issues and so cannot be criticised with precision because he did not postulate testable hypotheses.

Marx considers the 'sociology of knowledge'. He is the first to point to this area of understanding and this is a valuable contribution to sociology.

Can we be sure that societies evolve? It seems unlikely. There is no evidence to support the Marxist view.

Marx's morality and value judgements are clear in his social theory and yet he claims to be scientific.

The working class do not seem to have developed a united social or political philosophy, and parties which claim to represent the working class are in fact led by intellectuals.

Few people would accept Marx's definition of science, (except the Frankfurt School).

There has been a major development of the middle classes in modern society this was not foreseen by Marx.

However, Marxism is a sound methodology and of greater significance to contemporary political analysis. It gives primacy to the material and economic condition as the determinant of political and organisational process of a society. The theory is also sensitive to the society in terms of continuity and relatedness. It throws more light on the inner laws governing how societies reproduce, manage and reward itself. It also provides basis for an understanding of the strength and weaknesses of differing socio-economic and political societies in the world, and even the pattern of social change. Marxism is also credited for seeing the society as been in a state of motion. It agrees that there is an inherent contradiction in a society, which defines social relations of production, political culture and laws of the people; the people security consciousness, and even trends in foreign relations (Akpuru-Aja, 1997).
As Akpuru-Aja (1997:113) has mentioned, no society in the world can have a political system remarkably different from its economic base. Politics will also correlate with economics. If the economic base of a society is stable, its political system will invariably be stable. If the economic base of a country is corrupt and weak, its political system is likely to be in crisis.

On the other hand, Marx placed too much emphasis on the economy at the detriment of other social structures. The economic structure of the society is not deterministic. While the base largely determines the superstructure, the social structure also determines the base.

There is therefore, a reciprocal relationship of causality between the base and the superstructure.

Similarly, Marx was eurocentric. He was preoccupied with capitalist development in Europe as if the future of capitalism would be decided locally in Europe. However, Marx was limited in terms of understanding the implication of globalisation on the countries of the South, which were integrated into the world capitalists system. A condition that tended to develop the countries of the North as well as dialectically underdeveloped the countries of the South. Given Marx's limitation, it was Lenin that saw the implication of capitalism on the countries of the South. In his book, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1919), Lenin provided a technical knowledge to understand historical process which eventually led to the growth and development of capitalism on a world scale. The forceful integration of pre-capitalists territories overseas reproduced two contrasting societies, the developed and underdeveloped societies that invariably reproduced Marx's class war at an international sphere between the rich and poor countries to the upper hand of the imperialist power.

The implication of capitalism as underdevelopment by Lenin did not receive any backing by scholars for some time. It was not until 1930s that he was joined by scholars from Latin America and in the 1960s by those in Africa. Giovanni Arrighi's *The Geometry of Imperialism*, and Andre Gunder Frank's *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution*, both argued that economic growth and political autonomy were impossible for the poor countries because of the nature of the capitalist world that exploits and subjugates them to the benefit of the rich countries. Immanuel Wallerstien's The *Modern System*, contended that the tendency for the poor countries to depend on the rich countries for trade and investment is seen to be especially damaging to their national interest and international bargaining power. Samir Amin's *Accumulation on a World Scale*, argued that dependency has resulted into a situation characterised by 'growth without development', that is, 'growth engendered and kept from outside, without the construction of socio-economic structures that would enable automatic passage to a still further stage, that of self-centred and self-maintained dynamism. Mittleman's *Underdevelopment and the Transition to Socialism*, Michael Barrat Brown's *The Economics of Imperialism,* Nabuder's *The Political Economy of Imperialism,* Harry Magdoff's *Imperialism*, both asserted that the integration into the world capitalist economy through foreign investment, trade and foreign aid and its antecedent debt trap should be deleterious to the economic and social development of third world countries.

Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, argued that African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the international capitalist system which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the past five centuries, while

Claude Ake's *The Political Economy of Africa* suggested that foreign financial penetration and trade vulnerability would generally have a variety of deleterious effects including widening income inequity, rising socio-political tensions, declining mass wellbeing and deteriorating economic conditions, among others.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Briefly critique the theory of Marxism.

4.0 CONCLUSION
The theory of Marxism, based on the ideas of Karl Marx was based on his views that the whole world would in a dialectical process of socialist revolution come to be dominated by the communist system. However, the future of the world is far from the Marxist vision. In other words, there is a wide gulf between the theory and practice of Marxism. Contrary to Marxism, capitalism is growing even stronger. The bourgeoisie have also borrowed from the tenets of socialism like the introduction of attractive salaries, shareholding, incentives and allowances. However, Marxists inspiration to socialists' countries is declining. Both Russia and China now seem to be operating a weak socialist ideology.

5.0 SUMMARY
The concern of this unit is to introduce you to the theory of Marxism. Although Marxism is an approach and a practice, we have restricted ourselves to the former. You have learned that Hegel's dialectics strongly influenced Marx's conception of social change. Marx however turned Hegel's philosophy on its head by introducing his economic determinism. You learned about the three laws of dialectics as formulated by Karl Marx. You were also introduced to dialectical materialism and historical materialism. I also argued that although Marxism is Eurocentric, for failing to capture the development and reproduction of capitalism beyond Europe, recent scholars working in this tradition like Lenin, Rodney Frank, Mittleman, Brown, Amin, Nabudere, Magdoff, Rodney and Ake have added flesh to this theory by exporting it to the developing countries.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

How relevant is Marxism as an approach in understanding change in contemporary Africa?

Is Neo-Marxism a unified approach in political science?

Discuss the major weaknesses of the Marxian Approach in contemporary analysis.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

Akpuru-Aja, Aja (1997) *Theory and Practice of Marxism in a World in Transition.* Abakaliki, Ebony State: WillyRose & Appleseed Publishing Coy.

Maurice, Comfort (1963) *Dialectical Materialism: An introduction to Knowledge*. London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited.

Althusser, Louis (1970) *For Marx.* New York: Vintage Books

Ake, Claude (1981) *Political economy of Africa*. London: Longman.

Engels, Frederick (1978) *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific.* New York: International Publishers Company.

Engels, Frederick (1975) *On Marx*. Perking Foreign Language Press.

Ihonvbere, Julius (1992) 'The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa'. In Claude Ake (ed.) *Selected Works.* Lagos: JAD Publishers.

Lenin, V. I. (1977) *Karl Marx and his Teachings*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Lenin, V. I. (1975) *Marx, Engels and Marxism*. England: Rengum Books Limited.

Luxembury, Rosa (1973) *Reform and Revolution*. New York: Pathfinder Press.

Marx, Karl (1970) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Moscow: Novosti Press.

Marx, Karl and Frederich Engels (1977) *Manifesto of the Communist Party.* Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Scott, John and Marshall Gordon (eds) (1998) '*A Dictionary of Sociology*'. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel (2006) *Some Like it Cold: Thomas Schelling*: Pinter.

Zeckhauser, R. (1979) *The Capitalists World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

UNIT 2   MODERNISATION THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, our focus would be on the modernisation theory as an approach to political analysis. Both the modernisation and dependency theories in political science clash in explaining why some states remain in a less developed condition. On the whole, the political modernisation school depicts a state's political development in terms of its internal changes over time; in other words, its advocates ask by what processes and institutional changes a traditional state evolves into a developed or modern state (Almond and Powell, 1966; Huntington, 1968). The central question according to Gabriel Almond and James Coleman, in their *Politics of the Developing Areas* is whether one can account systematically for patterns of political development through its various stages.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
•   explain Walet Rostow's stages of development
•   explain how modernisation explains political change
•   state the basic assumption of the modernisation theory
•   critique the modernisation perspective

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What is the modernisation theory?
Modernisation means the appearance of 'modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth

94

century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence' (Giddens, 1991).

Modernisation theory on the other hand refers to a socio-economic theory, sometimes known as (or as being encompassed within) development theory, which highlights the positive role played by the developed world in modernising and facilitating sustainable development in underdeveloped nations, often contrasted with dependency theory. It is also a part of the wider theme of theories in sociology, known as the socio-cultural evolution. During the 1950s, its initial focus was placed on the mass media as a modernising force in the underdeveloped world. Economically, the mass media was viewed as integral to the diffusion of modern forms of social organisations and technology over traditional economies, with literacy playing a special cultural role in this.

Modernisation theorists also maintained that this would serve to promote a diffusion of liberal-democratic political ideals within less developed countries. Several branches of the theory exist today, and it is generally viewed as a model whereby the Third and Second Worlds are seen to benefit (with aid and guidance from the First World) economically, politically, culturally, and demographically through the acculturation of the modern policies and values of the Western world. A theory antithetical to the Modernisation model, which emerged largely as a response to it, was Dependency theory (this is discussed in the next unit). One of its earliest and most critical, branches of Modernisation theory; the world systems approach, was the one developed by Immanuel Wallerstein.

Wallerstein argued that the 'periphery' (the semi-periphery and periphery, both between and within countries) localities are, in fact, exploited and kept in a state of backwardness by the developed core; a core which profits from the peripheries' cheap, unskilled labour and raw materials (i.e. from those nations' lack of a skilled workforce and industries that can process raw materials locally).

Theories of modernisation were developed and popularised in 1950s and 1960s. Modernisation theory combines the previous theories of socio-cultural evolution with practical experiences and empirical research, especially those from the era of decolonisation. The theory states that:

  i.   Western countries are the most developed, and rest of the world (mostly former colonies) are on the earlier stages of development, and will eventually reach the same level as the Western world

ii.   Development stages go from the traditional societies to developed ones

iii.   Third World countries have fallen behind with their social progress and need to be directed on their way to becoming more advanced

Developing from classical social evolutionism theories, theory of modernisation stresses the modernisation factor: many societies are simply trying (or need to) emulate the most successful societies and cultures. It also states that it is possible to do so, thus supporting the concepts of social engineering and that the developed countries can and should help those less developed, directly or indirectly.

Modernisation theory adopted the narrative of progress of nineteenth-century evolutionary theories of social change. It dispensed with the racist overtones of many, which tended to separate societies into 'civilised' and 'savage' and doubted the possibility of development of the latter. Adopting the nation-state as its main unit of analysis, the theory defined development as an endogenously driven process and maintained that modernisation was a goal attainable by all societies. Retaining but elaborating the dichotomous conceptions of earlier evolutionary theories, the modernisation approach conceived of underdeveloped societies as comprising traditional and modern sectors. The traditional sector was rural and agrarian, its socio-political organisation defined by religion, superstition, primordial loyalties, and similar forces. In contrast, the modern sector was urban, its economy dominated by industry; social standing was determined by economic position (social class) and hence the result of personal achievement, and secularism defined the organisation of social relations and public life. In effect, this equated development with the increasing Westernisation of underdeveloped societies through elaboration of market-based economies and liberal, pluralistic political systems.

One of the most famous articulations of the approach, Walet Rostow's The *Stages of Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, made this explicit. Modelling his analysis on Marx's theory of history, but blunt about his intention to present liberal capitalism as the superior path to modernity, Rostow argued that economies progressed through five historical phases: traditional, preconditions for takeoff, takeoff, drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. Contrary to Marx, who saw capitalism as a way station to the ultimate modern society- stateless communism- Rostow argued that high-mass-consumption society, of which the United States was the most fully realised incarnation, was the end of the modernisation process.

Rostow's work, regarded as an attack on Karl Marx and Frederic Engels Communist Manifesto offers five stages of development:

a) Traditional Society: Rostow see the traditional society as being characterised by a low level of technological development which in fact imposes a limit on the level of per capita production in the society, i.e., manual and unsophisticated production. This cannot yield enough for a higher level of consumption and the generation of surplus.

b) The stage of pre-take off to development: At this stage, traditional society sheds off its attributes and there is rapid increase in agriculture production. Effective economic and social infrastructural are established and entrepreneurship are achieved.

c) The take-off stage: here, the last vestiges or characteristics of traditionalism are shedded. Net investment and savings and savings rises to more than five percent of National Income. Industrialisation is also achieved with certain sectors providing the lead and modern technology is disseminated from these sectors.

d) The stage of maturity: during this stage, some industries and their technologies become obsolete and stagnant and are overtaken and replaced by new ones.

e) The stage of mass consumption: at this last stage, citizens satisfy more than the basic needs of life and now move to acquisition of durable goods and services.

David Apter concentrated on the political system and history of democracy, researching the connection between democracy, good governance and efficiency and modernisation. David McClelland work titled the *"The Achieving Society"* approached this subject from the psychological perspective , with his motivations theory, arguing that modernisation cannot happen until a given society values innovation, success and free enterprise (McClelland, 1967). Alex Inkeles work on *"Becoming Modern",* similarly creates a model of modern personality, which needs to be independent, active, interested in public policies and cultural matters, open for new experiences, rational and being able to create long-term plans for the future (Inkeles, 1974).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify the five stages of modernisation articulated by Walet Rostow.

3.2 Modernisation theory and political change

Early thought on political change was greatly affected by the modernisation theories in the social sciences, but especially propositions from the economists and sociologists. Modernisation theory is premised on two sets of assumption in the society: a modern society and a traditional society. Many descriptions of conditions of the modern state have been outlined. They tend to include such conditions as greater urbanisation and higher literacy rate as well as economic conditions such as greater industrialisation and productive capacity. More developed political systems are also associated with organisational sophistication (specialisation, differentiation of roles and functions in organisations and government), technological improvement (an increase in means of producing goods and services), and attitudinal differences (modern attitudes are characterised by increased knowledge, rationality, secular values, and individualism) (Bill and Hardgrave Jnr, 1973). These characterisations are used in the specialists literature both to define the state of development and the process through which states must evolve to become developed.

While the modern societies are identified with attributes that are development oriented, the traditional ones had attributes that were said to be anti-development. Moreover, modernisation theory assumes a unilinear, unidirectional movement among societies, which requires less developed countries to follow the same path that western states did earlier if they wish to modernise. They have to accept modern ideas about political processes, education, and the economy. These changes will come about, such theorists argue, if values and structures in these societies can become more like those of the developed countries.

Talcot Parson is a living figure in this train of thought. He has provided the most illustrative pluralisation in distinguishing between modern and traditional societies.

Table 1: Pattern Variable by Talcott Parson

	Action Content	Traditional Society	Modern Society
1	Orientation towards	Prescribed	Innovative

	established socio-political institutions, rules and arrangement		
2	Criteria of role recruitment and allocation	Ascriptive	Achieved
3	Criteria for distribution of rewards	Status or privilege	Skills, goals, contribution, objectives
4	Quality of official relationship: The way occupant of an office relates	Diffuse functions, personal loyalty	Interpersonal relationship
5	Sanction of authority	Divine, sacred	Secular
6	Criteria of membership	Particularistic	Universal

Source: Parson, Talcott (2004) *Action, Situation and Normative Pattern. Germany:* Lidz & Staubmann.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Distinguish between traditional and modern societies as defined by Talcott Parson.

3.3 Modernisation theory and political development

Western or classical economists back up the assumptions of the modernisation theory by arguing that the way for the less developed countries to develop is by imitating the developed countries, and by competing with developed states in worldwide free trade.

In economic terms, development equals economic growth in the sense that it ordinarily means growth in total economic activity of a given society. This was usually measured by per capita Gross National Product (GNP), level of industrialisation and the level of individual welfare (itself measured by such other social indexes such as life expectancy, calories intake, supply of doctor per population figure, literacy levels, and school enrolment). All these indices tends to be 'positive' and higher in the modern developed societies but declined in traditional societies.

Karl Deutsch introduced the concept of social mobilisation in explaining modernisation. According to him, social mobilisation refers to a process by which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are broken down in such a way that people now become available for new patterns of socialisation and behaviour. This requires a change in attitudes, values and expectations identified with the traditional societies such that they now embrace new values that may be described as modern. Such a

change in attitude according to Deutsch is a consequence of literacy, education, increased communication and exposure to mass media and urbanisation.

The foregoing analysis from the modernisation perspective tended to influence early theories of political development. And even for the purposes of theory, it was defended on the basis that politics is derived from the socio-economic and cultural infrastructure of the society. Indeed, to the early theorists, politics was a dependent variable while the others i.e, socio-economic and cultural factors are the independent variables. This was the basic assumption of the early theorists.

The Princeton School, but especially Gabriel Almond, G. Powel, James Coleman and Lucia Pye are notable for adopting the approach to the study of new states based on structural differentiation and cultural secularisation. Lucia Pye focused on three levels to determine political development:
   a) The population as a whole;
   b) Government and general systematic performance and;
   c) The organisation of the polity.

These three levels were in turn measured with the following factors:

   i.   The basis of equality of citizen participation at the different levels of government: The extent to which people are made available and actually get involved in decision making of the polity.

   ii.   The capacity of the system to fulfil necessary functions when functions manifest in the management of public affairs, coping with demands and checking controversy etc., this factor refers to system regulation.

   iii. Structural differentiation- borrowed from structural functionalism. In modern societies, political functions are properly differentiated for carrying out specific functions. They argue that a developed political system is one that is advanced in political equality, in the capacity to perform and is advanced in structural differentiation.

Another important aspect of the modernisation theory is the assumption that all societies are subject to unilinear and unidirectional progression such that all them will arrive at where the West has already arrived

3.4 Criticisms against the modernisation theory

The modernisation perspective has been criticised for its assumption that development can only be unilinear, unidirectional and an imitation of the West, especially a unilinear model of development, which is essentially based on the experiences of Britain and America. Most scholars challenge the idea that the history of states will follow a single, inevitable sequence of stages toward modern development today. In contemporary studies, more attention is paid to key problems in the developmental process and the choices that leaders make to confront these challenges.

The modernisation approach was subjected, as the 1960s unfolded, to increasingly blistering criticism, brought on by the realities of Third World societies, which mocked its excessive optimism. The record of economic growth in developing societies was at best mixed, and what growth occurred appeared to be accompanied by increases in mass poverty and economic inequality. Whereas modernisation theory presumed economic growth that expanded social groups and engendered behavioural changes that favoured the emergence of pluralistic political systems, instability and authoritarian rule appeared to be the norm. Against this backdrop, criticisms centred on the theory's ideological character, its limitations as a conceptual framework, and its contributions to the foreign policy objectives of- especially- the American government. The ethnocentrism of the approach, with its dichotomous constructs like "tradition" and "modern"- transparently, abstractions from vague and generalised images of the nature of changes in Western societies attending the rise of industrialism and the modern nation-state- drew fire. Based on such ideal types, the approach imagined the historically contingent experiences of Western societies as relevant to all societies. Moreover, in implying that "modern" and "traditional" were self-contained, it lacked definitional specificity and was of dubious analytical value, for social structures and relations in all societies were complex, shaped by the interpenetration of traditional and modern attributes, however defined. This was obviously the case in developing societies that had felt the impact of European colonisation.

For conservative critics, such as the political scientist Samuel Huntington, the ethnocentrism and teleology of modernisation theory made it a poor guide to public policy. The conjecture of an unproblematic causal link between economic development and the advance of pluralistic political systems encouraged a moralistic approach to policy toward the developing world, which promoted democracy even if it was not necessarily in the best interest of the United States. The social dislocations caused by economic

development fed political instability; therefore, the creation of political order- the institutionalisation of political authority- was a precondition for economic development and democracy. According to this argument, the main objective of American policy toward the developing world ought to be support of regimes that are capable of maintaining order and amicably disposed toward America's economic and strategic interests.

Radical critics, on the other hand, such as dependency and world system theorists, dismissed modernisation theory as well as its conservative critics as engaged in providing intellectual justification for American imperial designs. In adopting the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis and positing modernisation as a primarily endogenously driven process, they were both guilty of misleading representation of underdevelopment as an "original condition." Capitalism was a hierarchically organised global system, with nations or regions belonging to the core, semi-core, or periphery of the system. The pace and pattern of development of "national" economies were contingent on the manner of incorporation and position of countries or regions within the world capitalist system and its corresponding hierarchy of nation-states. The underdevelopment of peripheral Third World societies followed from their incorporation, through colonialism, as subservient members in the world capitalist system and the shaping of their economies to serve the interests of dominant core states. Their governing elites were not altruistic agents of progressive social change but groups primarily interested in advancing their class interests. This they did in part by the use of state power to create and manage beneficial alliances between themselves and foreign capitalists. For radical critics, then, modernisation theory and its conservative critics were both advocating an approach to development that favoured the expansion of the world capitalist system.

In the 1980s, modernisation theory and its radical alternatives were queried by many influenced by the postmodernist turn in cultural and social analysis. For this new group of critics, variously labelled postmodernist, poststructuralist, or post-development theorists, modernisation theorists and their radical critics had more in common than they dared to admit, for their understanding of development was rooted in the dogma of linear progress. Consequently, they were equally guilty of advocating, in the name of development, policies that fostered the repression and disempowerment of marginalised groups in Third World societies, whose right to determine their own futures they denied. The combined weight of criticisms levelled against it robbed modernisation theory of its allure. But despite the changing conceptual and normative vocabularies at the twentieth

century's end, modernisation theory's goal of a world of receding mass poverty and disease and of social and political interactions marked by civility instead of incessant conflict remains a pivotal concern in development analysis.

The modernisation perspective is highly regarded as being ethnocentric, with Western fixation. It is worthy of mention that this theory is ethnocentric in a way because it practically ignores the possibility of the alternative development of developing countries. Instead, the theory insists that the development of western countries will be the example developing countries, willingly or not, will follow. It does not admit the alternative ways of development of countries of the Third World.

More so, in view of the widespread and persistent economic stagnation, social deprivation and political oppression in the less developed countries, the modernisation theory is accused of leading less developed countries to blind alleys. This is perhaps more noticeable in the structural adjustments introduced in such countries that brought untold hardship on the people.

The modernisation perspective totally fails to explain the impact of the Western world on the underdevelopment of the Third World. Rather, this theory sees underdevelopment in these countries as internal conditions such as the lack of protestant ethics, prebendalism, corruption and weak regulatory frameworks. The dialectical linkage between the development of the metropolis and the underdevelopment of the satellite is easily swept under the carpet.

Critics have also argued that modernisation theory has led to the traditional societies being destroyed without ever gaining the promised advantages because the gap between the advanced societies and the poor nations has increased. The net effect of modernisation for the victims of development is therefore the replacement of traditional poverty by modern misery.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Identify and explain the main weaknesses of the modernisation theory as an approach in political inquiry.

4.0 CONCLUSION
In general, modernisation theorists see two key conditions for successful modernisation: economic growth through industrialisation and modernising elites with the "psycho cultural attributes" to guide their societies through the process. Modernisation of underdeveloped

societies could be realised in a shorter period than had been the case for Western societies. In bequeathing ex-colonies with modern economic enclaves and Westernised elites, colonial rule had laid the foundations for accelerating the process. Interestingly, the narrative of progress that undergirds the approach resonated with the nationalist aspirations of Third World elites. The promise of development of their societies served as a ubiquitous platform for the legitimisation of their power. Although they adopted different ideological positions, modernisation for them was fundamentally about the elaboration of the two projects of economic development through industrialisation and nation-state building.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned about the modernisation theory, its main assumptions and its limitations in contemporary political analysis. We have seen that the conception of development as a process of modernisation gained prominence in the period after World War II, but its popularity ebbed in the 1960s. The theory is concerned with a set of linked assumptions framing analysis of and debates about the nature and challenges of development. In this regard, modernisation was a historically unique type of social change, which was inexorable, transformational in its effects, and progressive in its consequences. Needless to say that modernisation theory, directly or indirectly, was concerned with resolving the problems of underdevelopment by promoting market-based economies and pluralistic political systems. The approach thus appeared to be scholarship guided by and in support of specific Western policy objectives.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

How true is it to say that modernisation is an attack on Marxism? Has it succeeded in this regard?

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Giddens, A. (1991) Modernity and Self-Identity; Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Inglehart, Ronald and Welzel, Christian (2005) *Modernisation, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lerner, D. (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Glencoe ILL.: The Free Press.

Parson, Talcott (2004) *Action, Situation and Normative Pattern. Germany:* Lidz & Staubmann.

Rostow, Walt Walet. (1990) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Scott, Catherine V. (1995) *Gender and development: Rethinking Modernisation and Dependency Theory.* Boulder, Rienner Publishers.

UNIT 3   DEPENDENCY THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction

2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
       3.1   Dependency defined
       3.2   Dependency theory: its major arguments or
              propositions
       3.3   Dependency theory as a challenge to modernisation
       3.4   The structural context of dependency
       3.5   The policy implications of dependency analysis
       3.6   A critique of the dependency theory
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Readings

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, attempt will be made to introduce you to the dependency theory as an approach in political inquiry. The dependency theory which became popular in the 1960s and 1970s was a criticism of modernisation theory (the "stage" hypothesis mentioned in the previous unit), which was falling increasingly out of favour due to continued widespread poverty in much of the world.

The central concern of this unit, therefore, is to discuss the historical development of the dependency theory, the major arguments of the dependency theory, and the strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

The dependency theory has remained a very strong approach in the analysis of global politics. Its main appeal has been its usage as a possible way of explaining the persistent poverty of the poorer countries.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
•   to define dependency as a concept
•   describe the structural context of dependency
•   explain the central propositions of the dependency theory
•   highlight the policy implication of dependency analysis
•   critique the dependency theory
3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Dependency defined
Dependency can be defined as an explanation of the economic development of a state in terms of the external influences- political, economic, and cultural- on national development policies (Osvaldo

Sunkel, 1969:23). Theotonio Dos Santos emphasises the historical dimension of the dependency relationships in his definition:

> Dependency is ...an historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favours some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economics...a situation in which the economy of a certain group of countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, to which their own is subjected.

There are three common features to these definitions which most dependency theorists share. First, dependency characterises the international system as comprised of two sets of states, variously described as dominant/dependent, centre/periphery or metropolitan/satellite. The dominant states are the advanced industrial nations in the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The dependent states are those states of Latin America, Asia, and Africa which have low per capita GNPs and which rely heavily on the export of a single commodity for foreign exchange earnings.

Second, both definitions have in common the assumption that external forces are of singular importance to the economic activities within the dependent states. These external forces include multinational corporations (MNCs), international commodity markets, foreign assistance, communications, and any other means by which the advanced industrialised countries can represent their economic interests abroad.

Third, the definitions of dependency all indicate that the relations between dominant and dependent states are dynamic because the interactions between the two sets of states tend to not only reinforce but also intensify the unequal patterns. Moreover, dependency is a very deep-seated historical process, rooted in the internationalisation of capitalism. In short, dependency theory attempts to explain the present underdeveloped state of many nations in the world by examining the patterns of interactions among nations and by arguing that inequality among nations is an intrinsic part of those interactions.

Dependency theory is defined as a 'body of social science theories predicated on the notion that resources flow from a "periphery" of poor and underdeveloped states to a "core" of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former.' It is a central contention of dependency theory that poor states are impoverished

and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the "world system."

The theory arose around 1960 as a reaction to some earlier theories of development which held that all societies progress through similar stages of development, that today's underdeveloped areas are thus in a similar situation to that of today's developed areas at some time in the past, and that therefore the task in helping the underdeveloped areas out of poverty is to accelerate them along this supposed common path of development, by various means such as investment, technology transfers, and closer integration into the world market. Dependency theory rejected this view, arguing that underdeveloped countries are not merely primitive versions of developed countries, but have unique features and structures of their own; and, importantly, are in the situation of being the weaker members in a world market economy, whereas the developed nations were never in an analogous position; they never had to exist in relation to a bloc of more powerful countries than themselves.

Dependency theorists argued, in opposition to free market economists, that underdeveloped countries needed to reduce their connectedness with the world market so that they can pursue a path more in keeping with their own needs, less dictated by external pressures.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
How would you define dependency theory?

Explain the major aim of dependency theory?

3.2   Dependency theory: its major arguments or propositions
There are a number of propositions, all of which are contestable, which form the core of dependency theory. These propositions include:

1. Underdevelopment is a condition fundamentally different from undevelopment.

The latter term simply refers to a condition in which resources are not being used. For example, the European colonists viewed the North American continent as an undeveloped area: the land was not actively cultivated on a scale consistent with its potential. Underdevelopment refers to a situation in which resources are being actively used, but used in a way which benefits dominant states and not the poorer states in which the resources are found.

2. The distinction between underdevelopment and undevelopment.

The distinction between Underdevelopment and underdevelopment places the poorer countries of the world in a profoundly different historical context. These countries are not "behind" or "catching up" to the richer countries of the world. They are not poor because they lagged behind the scientific transformations or the Enlightenment values of the European states. They are poor because they were coercively integrated into the European economic system only as producers of raw materials or to serve as repositories of cheap labour, and were denied the opportunity to market their resources in any way that competed with dominant states.

3. Dependency theory suggests that alternative uses of resources are preferable to the resource usage patterns imposed by dominant states.

There is no clear definition of what these preferred patterns might be, but some criteria are invoked. For example, one of the dominant state practices most often criticised by dependency theorists is export agriculture. The criticism is that many poor economies experience rather high rates of malnutrition even though they produce great amounts of food for export. Many dependency theorists would argue that those agricultural lands should be used for domestic food production in order to reduce the rates of malnutrition.

4. Dependency theorists rely upon a belief that there exists a clear 'national' economic interest which can and should be articulated for each country.

In this respect, dependency theory actually shares a similar theoretical concern with realism. What distinguishes the dependency perspective is that its proponents believe that this national interest can only be satisfied by addressing the needs of the poor within a society, rather than through the satisfaction of corporate or governmental needs. Trying to determine what is "best" for the poor is a difficult analytical problem over the long run. Dependency theorists have not yet articulated an operational definition of the national economic interest.

5. The diversion of resources over time (and one must remember that dependent relationships have persisted since the European expansion beginning in the fifteenth century) is maintained not only by the power of dominant states, but also through the power of elites in the dependent states. Dependency theorists argue that these elites maintain a dependent relationship because their own private interests coincide with the interests of the dominant states. These elites are typically trained in the dominant states and share similar values and culture with the elites in

dominant states. Thus, in a very real sense, a dependency relationship is a 'voluntary' relationship. One need not argue that the elites in a dependent state are consciously betraying the interests of their poor; the elites sincerely believe that the key to economic development lies in following the prescriptions of liberal economic doctrine.

3.3   Dependency theory as a challenge to modernisation

Until the 1960s, the prevailing theory of economic development, known as modernisation theory, maintained that industrialisation, the introduction of mass media, and the diffusion of Western ideas would transform traditional economies and societies. These influences would place poor countries on a path of development similar to that experienced by Western industrialised nations during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Dependency theory rejects the central assumptions of modernisation theory. In the 1960s, advocates of dependency theory- mostly social scientists from the developing world, particularly Latin America- argued that former colonial nations were underdeveloped because of their dependence on Western industrialised nations in the areas of foreign trade and investment. Rather than benefiting developing nations, these relationships stunted their development. Drawing upon various Marxist ideas, dependency theorists observed that economic development and underdevelopment were not simply different stages in the same linear march toward progress. They argued that colonial domination had produced relationships between the developed and the developing world that were inherently unequal. Dependency theorists believed that without a major restructuring of the international economy, the former colonial countries would find it virtually impossible to escape from their subordinate position and experience true growth and development.

In the 1960s, dependency theorists emphasised that developing nations were adversely affected by unequal trade, especially in the exchange of cheap raw materials from developing nations for the expensive, finished products manufactured by advanced industrial nations. They argued that modernisation theory did not foresee the damaging effect of this unequal exchange on developing nations. Even the achievement of political independence had not enhanced the ability of former colonial nations to demand better prices for their primary exports.

Some developing countries attempted to counter the inequalities in trade by adopting import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) policies. ISI strategies involve the use of tariff barriers and government subsidies to companies in order to build domestic industry.

Advocates of ISI, view industrialisation as the precondition of economic and social progress. However, many developing nations that managed to manufacture their own consumer products continued to remain dependent on imports of capital goods. ISI also encouraged multinational companies with headquarters in the industrialised world to establish manufacturing subsidiaries in the developing world.

Dependency theorists have also focused on how foreign direct investments of multinational corporations distort developing nation economies. In the view of these scholars, distortions include the crowding out of national firms, rising unemployment related to the use of capital-intensive technology, and a marked loss of political sovereignty.

According to Vernengo (2004:5), the 'core of the dependency relation between center and periphery lays the inability of the periphery to develop an autonomous and dynamic process of technological innovation. Technology- the Promethean force unleashed by the Industrial Revolution- is at the center of stage. The Center countries controlled the technology and the systems for generating technology. Foreign capital could not solve the problem, since it only led to limited transmission of technology, but not the process of innovation itself'.

From the perspective of dependency theory, the relationship between developing nations and foreign lending institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), also undermines the sovereignty of developing nations. Prescribing that for the developing nations to come out of poverty, they must follow western path of development and adopt western values, such as liberty, human rights, western institutions and a diffusion of western capital to the developing world. These countries must often agree to harsh conditions- such as budget cuts and interest rate increases- to obtain loans from international agencies. During the 1980s, for example, the foreign debt of many Latin American countries soared. In response to pressure from multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF, these nations enacted financial austerity measures in order to qualify for new loans. In the short term, these economic policies led to higher levels of unemployment and slower economic growth.

However, even as these poor countries have continued to modernise and liberalise their economy, politics and institutions, poverty, overhang debt trap and conflict continue to bedevil these countries.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE

Explain how dependency theory is a challenge to modernisation.

3.4   The structural context of dependency

Most dependency theorists regard international capitalism as the motive force behind dependency relationships. Andre Gunder Frank, one of the earliest dependency theorists, is quite clear on this point:

> "...historical research demonstrates that contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries. Furthermore, these relations are an essential part of the capitalist system on a world scale as a whole".

According to this view, the capitalist system has enforced a rigid international division of labour which is responsible for the underdevelopment of many areas of the world. The dependent states supply cheap minerals, agricultural commodities, and cheap labour, and also serve as the repositories of surplus capital, obsolescent technologies, and manufactured goods. These functions orient the economies of the dependent states toward the outside: money, goods, and services do flow into dependent states, but the allocation of these resources is determined by the economic interests of the dominant states, and not by the economic interests of the dependent state. This division of labour is ultimately the explanation for poverty and there is little question but that capitalism regards the division of labour as a necessary condition for the efficient allocation of resources. The most explicit manifestation of this characteristic is in the doctrine of comparative advantage.

Moreover, to a large extent the dependency models rest upon the assumption that economic and political power are heavily concentrated and centralised in the industrialised countries, an assumption shared with Marxist theories of imperialism. If this assumption is valid, then any distinction between economic and political power is spurious: governments will take whatever steps are necessary to protect private economic interests, such as those held by multinational corporations.

Not all dependency theorists, however, are Marxist and one should clearly distinguish between dependency and a theory of imperialism. The Marxist theory of imperialism explains dominant state expansion while the dependency theory explains underdevelopment. Stated another way, Marxist theories explain the reasons why imperialism occurs, while dependency theories explain the consequences of imperialism. The difference is significant. In many

respects, imperialism is, for a Marxist, part of the process by which the world is transformed and is therefore a process which accelerates the communist revolution. Marx spoke approvingly of British colonialism in India: "England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating- the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia. For the dependency theorists, underdevelopment is a wholly negative condition which offers no possibility of sustained and autonomous economic activity in a dependent state.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly discuss the central assumptions of the dependency theory and its significance in the understanding of underdevelopment in the Third World Countries.

3.5   The policy implications of dependency analysis
If one accepts the analysis of dependency theory, then the questions of how poor economies develop become quite different from the traditional questions concerning comparative advantage, capital accumulation and import/export strategies. Some of the key contemporary issues:

1. The success of the advanced industrial economies does not serve as a model for the currently developing economies. When economic development became a focused area of study, the analytical strategy (and ideological preference) was quite clear: all nations need to emulate the patterns used by the rich countries. Indeed, in the 1950s and 1960s there was a paradigmatic consensus that growth strategies were universally applicable, a consensus best articulated by Walt Rostow in his book, *The Stages of Economic Growth*. Dependency theory suggests that the success of the richer countries was a highly contingent and specific episode in global economic history, one dominated by the highly exploitative colonial relationships of the European powers. They therefore submit that the poor countries may not develop by following this path of development.

 2. Dependency theory repudiates the central distributive mechanism of the neoclassical model, what is usually called 'trickle-down' economics. The neoclassical model of economic growth pays relatively little attention to the question of distribution of wealth. Its primary concern is on efficient production and assumes that the market will allocate the rewards of efficient production in a rational and unbiased manner. This assumption may be valid for a well-integrated, economically fluid economy where people can quickly adjust to economic changes and where consumption patterns are not distorted by non-economic forces such as racial, ethnic, or gender

bias. These conditions are not pervasive in the developing economies, and dependency theorists argue that economic activity is not easily disseminated in poor economies. For these structural reasons, dependency theorists argue that the market alone is not a sufficient distributive mechanism.

3. Since the market only rewards productivity, dependency theorists discount aggregate measures of economic growth such as the GDP or trade indices. Dependency theorists do not deny that economic activity occurs within a dependent state. They do make a very important distinction, however, between economic growth and economic development. For example, there is a greater concern within the dependency framework for whether the economic activity is actually benefiting the nation as a whole. Therefore, far greater attention is paid to indices such as life expectancy, literacy, infant mortality, education, and the like. Dependency theorists clearly emphasize social indicators far more than economic indicators.

4. Dependent states, therefore, should attempt to pursue policies of self-reliance. Contrary to the neo-classical models endorsed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, greater integration into the global economy is not necessarily a good choice for poor countries. Often this policy perspective is viewed as an endorsement of a policy of autarky, and there have been some experiments with such a policy such as China's Great Leap Forward or Tanzania's policy of Ujamaa. The failures of these policies are clear, and the failures suggest that autarky is not a good choice. Rather a policy of self-reliance should be interpreted as endorsing a policy of controlled interactions with the world economy: poor countries should only endorse interactions on terms that promise to improve the social and economic welfare of the larger citizenry.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the major policy implications of dependency analysis?

3.6   A Critique of dependency theory
Both radical and reformist dependency thinking soon encountered strong opposition. While openly hostile to the radical *dependentistas,* mainstream development policy-makers and practitioners increasingly recognized the validity of some of their arguments about the failures of modernisation "solutions" to Third World underdevelopment. Organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and some large government aid agencies responded to this challenge by emphasising the need to pay more attention to basic human needs and poverty. Reassured by the reformist arguments, some mainstream agencies sought to

collaborate with more "reasonable" scholars, such as Cardoso and others who were opposed to delinking and believed in the possibility of working for change within the status quo.

Interestingly, the reformists' focus on the national bourgeoisie and class relations resonated with some of the Marxist critics of the radical *dependentistas.* For example, Ernesto Laclau condemned Frank for focusing on the market rather than class relations, despite his call for a class-based socialist revolution. Bill Warren, in a trenchant, well-researched challenge, questioned the assumption that Third World nations are inevitably caught in a cycle of underdevelopment. Citing various Third World success stories, he argued for a more specific, historical, and class-based analysis of global capitalist relations. Moreover, rather than automatically condemn the national bourgeoisie, he suggested that they could, under the right circumstances, play a crucial role in Third World development. In Africa, some *dependentistas,* such as Colin Leys, retracted their earlier positions and resurrected the national bourgeoisie as a potential instrument for escape from underdevelopment.

Some feminists concerned with development issues have applauded dependency theorists for criticising modernization theory and for grounding their analysis in Southern experiences and problems. However, dependency thinking has paid little attention to gender in general, preferring the broad sweep of global forces. Gender and development analysts have been particularly disturbed by dependency theorists' failure to pay attention to cultural dimensions of domination. This is particularly problematic for those concerned with gender equality issues because cultural attitudes and practices clearly play a crucial role both in reinforcing and strengthening patriarchal power structures. The focus on structures rather than agency and culture are, thus, serious problems for feminists interested in utilising the insights of dependency theory, whether radical or reformist.

Scholars and practitioners concerned with gender, alternative approaches to development, and postcolonial writings argue that in crucial ways dependency thinking has not freed itself from many of the categories of modernisation theory. Development is still conceived largely in terms of economic growth, industrialisation, and liberal democracy, as an evolutionary process to be led by the correct elites, whether socialist leaders or committed national bourgeoisies. The ecological implications of this growth-oriented model have been ignored, along with the voices and concerns of marginalised peoples. Agency and difference disappear in a world

dominated by powerful global forces. The possibility that hegemony is never complete, that the marginal may influence development practice and thinking, is never considered. Moreover, both the discourse and assumptions of dependency theorists focus on national economic plans, with well-developed national targets. Thus, at the level of discourse and practice, dependency perspectives are based on top-down models of development familiar to the most ardent advocates of modernisation.

While there are lessons to be discovered in the writings of dependency theorists, most notably those that pay attention to specific historical forces and their relation to global structures and patterns, the shortcomings of dependency theorists, particularly their inability to move beyond the confines of modernisation theory, remain serious impediments for many who are concerned with development questions in an increasingly global/local world. At the same time, the early twenty-first-century conjuncture inevitably raises questions about global forces and the potential of dependency theory's global perspective for understanding the present. Creative, but critical, analysis, drawing on dependency thinking as well as other strands of development thought, may well be possible. Certainly the global focus of the *dependentistas* has much to say to us as we grapple with financial flows and communication systems of an intensity and speed never envisioned in the past. Perhaps useful syntheses will emerge, and, with them, the possibility of reevaluating and using much of the rich scholarship of the dependency perspective.

4.0   CONCLUSION

I would like to mention in the conclusion that dependency theory was developed in response to the Modernisation theory. However, there are certain similarities between the two. Both theories pay a lot of attention to the gap existing between developed countries and undeveloped ones. Both Modernisation and Dependency theories argue that the relationship between developed and developing countries is unequal and there exist a kind of dependence of developing countries on developed ones, though the views of this dependence vary considerably. Nevertheless, both theories underline the dominant position of Western countries in the modern world. In spite of existing similarities between Modernisation theory and Dependency theory, differences between them are much more substantial. Modernisation theory views the development of the world and relationships between developed and developing countries as the relationships of potentially equal countries which are just at a different stage of development at the moment. To put it more precisely, Modernisation theory stands on the ground that western

countries are well-developed and western way of development is viewed is a model for other less developed countries to emulate. In contrast, Dependency theory underlines that relationships between the developing and developed countries are based not on the growing cooperation between them but rather on the dependence of developing countries on developed ones.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, attempt has been made to introduce you to the theory of dependency. We argued that this theory emerged as a reaction to the modernisation theory. We also mentioned that this theory has three basic premises: first, poor nations provide natural resources, cheap labour, a destination for obsolete technology, and markets to the wealthy nations, without which the latter could not have the standard of living they enjoy. Second, wealthy nations actively perpetuate a state of dependence by various means. This influence may be multifaceted, involving economics, media control, politics, banking and finance, education, culture, sport, and all aspects of human resource development (including recruitment and training of workers). Lastly, wealthy nations actively counter attempts by dependent nations to resist their influences by means of economic sanctions and/or the use of military force.

Dependency theory states that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is not because they are not integrated into the world system, or not 'fully' integrated as is often argued by free market economists, but because of how they are integrated into the system.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

With concrete examples, highlight the arguments made for and against the dependency theory.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Amin, Samir (1976) *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Amin, Samir (1994) *'Re-reading the post-war period: an intellectual itinerary'* Translated by Michael Wolfers. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Bodenheimer, Susanne (1971) "Dependency and Imperialism: The Roots of Latin American Underdevelopment," in K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges (eds) *Readings in U.S. Imperialism*. Boston: Porter Sargent.

Dos Santos, Theotonio (1971) "The Structure of Dependence," in K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges (eds) Readings in U.S. Imperialism. Boston: Porter Sargent.

Frank, Andre Gunder (1972) "The Development of Underdevelopment," in James D. Cockcroft, Andre Gunder Frank, and Dale Johnson, eds., *Dependence and Underdevelopment*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books.

Marx, Karl (1853) "The Future Results of the British Rule in India," New York Daily Tribune, No. 3840, August 8, 1853.

Sunkel, Osvaldo (1969) "National Development Policy and External Dependence in Latin America," *The Journal of Development Studies*, 6 (1).

UNIT 4   THE POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
      3.1   Historical development of political economy approach

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, attempt is made to familiarise you with the fundamentals of the political economy approach as another development-oriented approach in political inquiry. As a methodology, the political economy approach is still in the process of formation. Even though its general thrust is clear enough, there are still areas of considerable confusion and contradiction. This approach has nevertheless received a lot of theoretical inspirations from scholars working in the peripheries, especially in Latin America and Africa.

The concept of political economy as we have now was the name given to the social science discipline now commonly called economics. The nomenclature was firmly established at the beginning of the 19th century. This was more than a change of nomenclature; it entailed some change in the techniques and methodology and some value commitments of the science, changes of a magnitude as to raise some doubt about whether political economy and economics could properly be regarded as different names for the same reason.

The central concern of this unit is to introduce you to the basic tenets of the political economy approach. We will first of all start with the historical and theoretical context of the approach before studying its basic assumptions. We would look at the various scholars that have contributed to the growth of this approach, especially, those few contributions from Africa. We would conclude by critiquing the political economy approach

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
•   define political economy
•   trace the historical development of the approach
•   identify scholars who have contributed to the historical and theoretical growth of the approach
•   state the basic assumptions of the political economy approach

- critique the political economy approach
- highlight the significance of political economy approach in political inquiry

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Historical development of political economy

As a discipline, political economy grew in step with the development of capitalism. In effect, it was a discipline for understanding capitalism and rationalising it. Some believe that the classical political economy started from the mercantilist theories of the 16th and 17th centuries, while others locate it from the age of the Physiocrats, 17th and 18th centuries, especially Quesnay's *Tableau Economique,* in 1758. Yet others date from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations.* Smith was definitely the first political economists of industrial capitalism, for he focused political economy on the study of industrial capitalism, a legacy which endured. Another legacy, which Smith bequeathed to political economy, was the comprehensiveness of view. Because he made the division of labour and exchange such an important organising concept of his analysis, he took a total view of the formation. This was reinforced by his interest in the social relations of production. It was he who correctly identified the emerging classes, capital, labour and land owners. Smith was able to contribute to classical political economy in the areas such as the nature of man, motivation, politics, culture, morality, international economic relations and the evolution of economic institutions.

John Miller, a discipline of Smith took after Smith, and was not merely interested in locating economic ideas in the social context but in the broader context of history. So did Ricardo. David Ricardo, perhaps the greatest of the classical political economists after Simth, was concerned less with production of wealth as with its distribution among social classes. He was concerned with the increased tension between capitalists and wage labourers and he elaborated a theory concerning the tendency of wages to stabilise at the subsistence level. These concerns put him into the realms of history, politics and culture.

As industrial capitalism deepened and its class contradictions deepened, political economy become less concerned with understanding capitalism and more engrossed in justifying it. This phase of political economy is regarded as the vulgar phase, where it restricted "its investigations to superficially studying phenomena as they might appear to the capitalist, instead of probing into the internal connection between them."

By the middle of the 19th century, new tendency was emerging in political economy: the concerns of the disciples were becoming narrower and emphasis was increasingly placed on techniques particularly mathematical techniques. Political economy became more and more engrosses in the refinement of techniques, while the questions that it posed got narrower, more specific, and increasingly unhelpful for understanding the social system. It was at this stage that the nomenclature economics displaced political economy.

The work of Karl Marx emerged in the midst of this contradiction. Marx was able to expose the biases, misrepresentations and sterility of vulgar political economy and proceeded to build a scientific understanding of a theory of capitalism and society in general. Marx returned to the idea of political economy as a comprehensive social science for understanding society in its entirety. This is evident in all his major works especially *Grundrisse* and *Das Kapital*. The very first sentence to the *Preface to Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* is typical of Marx's comprehensive perspective. "I examine the system of bourgeois economy in the following order: capital, landed property, wage-labour, the state, foreign trade, world market."

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly trace the historical development of vulgar political economy approach.

3.3   The political economy approach

The roots of the political economy approach reaches back to the classical political economy, especially the work of Karl Marx. The main inspiration of the approach is to develop the work of Marx with special reference to the elucidation of the global character of capitalism and its application to the periphery. Therefore, the political economy approach has developed in the general context of Marxism and relies a great deal on the conceptual apparatus and analytic framework of Marxism.

Following the pioneering work of Lenin, Baran, Sweezy and Dutt, the political economy approach got its main impetus from scholars working on the periphery especially in Africa and Latin America, and from the 60s when these parts of the world had at last begun to establish a strong presence in international system. As was to be expected, the indigenous scholars from these parts of the world, especially in Latin America played an important role in the development of the political economy approach because of their historical situation. They were progressive, invariably involved in

struggles to understand current reality for which Marxism provided a very rough guide which did not always fit or even direct attention to what seemed like the most crucial questions. But they were also Europeans who were working on the periphery formations; again, these were often people very much committed to ongoing struggles for development and liberation in these parts of the world. Among the works which reflect or have contributed to the development of this approach are: A. G. Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America;* G. Arrighi and J. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa;* I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World System;* M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda;* I. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania;* S. Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale; Unequal development;* W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa;* A. Nnoli, *Paths to Nigerian Development;* A. Claude, *The Political Economy of Africa* among others.

These works are profoundly different in many respects and it will not be surprising in the least if the authors cited here are not self-conscious methodologically or if they feel little mutual affinity. They reflect the divergent and sometimes even contradictory trends and the fluidity of this still evolving methodology. Nonetheless, there are common trends:

  i.   affinity to Marxism and a general disposition to adopt Marxist categories of analysis;

  ii.   rejection of Eurocentric Marxism

  iii. scepticism of the view that the future of capitalism will be determined in Europe;

  iv.   a special interest in the periphery and the global character of capitalism with particular reference to the impact of imperialism and colonialism on periphery formations, and the theory of capitalism and capitalist development in the periphery.

However, it suffices to note that these theories are rather analytical perspectives rather than proper theories. They deal with the nature of capitalism in the non-industrialised world of the possibilities or other wise of development in the context of the dynamics of global capitalism. Both the centre-periphery theories, underdevelopment and dependency theory are interested in the specificities of capitalism in the peripheries.

While this may be the case in Latin America where Marxist scholarship was well established, in Africa, Marxist scholarship was

less established, hence its little contribution underdevelopment theory, centre-periphery theory and dependency theory.

Radical consciousness among African social scientists appears to have gone hand in hand with the growth of nationalism, although Marxism also played a part. Instead of embracing Marxism, African social scientists where influenced by the nationalists and anti-imperialists beginnings of African radical scholarship, and its commitment to finding a way out of underdevelopment. This was initially done by painstaking critiques of western social science to expose its values, ideological biased, and interest disguised free value- free analytic tools and methodologies. This growing radicalism and methodological consciousness of social science scholarship in Africa came together in the development of the political economy approach received considerable impetus to professional associations, such as the Africa Association of Political Science, the Association of Third World Economists, the Southern African Universities Social Science Council and the Nigerian Political Science Association.

3.4   The assumptions of political economy approach

What are the core assumptions of the political economy approach?

  i.   The political economy accepts the basic categories and basic methodological and theoretical commitments of Marxism; to this extent, it may be construes as a variety of Marxism.

 ii.   The approach is singularly interested in the nature of capitalism as a global phenomenon, the nature of relation between the centre and the periphery, and the specificities of periphery capitalism, especially as they illuminate the possibilities of the development of the productive forces. Its development has been conditioned by the limitations of orthodox Marxism and Western social science methodology as a whole in providing these forms of understanding.

iii.   Tendency to assume that imperialism has been and remains a decisive influence on the nature and the possibilities of the periphery. This tendency has led orthodox Marxists to accuse 'political economists' of neglecting the class struggle.

iv.   Tendency to assume that reality is characterised by dynamism arising from the pervasive contradictions of material existence. This is an element from the legacy of Marx, which the approach has singled out for special attention.

v.   Particular interest in the possibilities of development and associated with it, a preference for development analysis of phenomena; a tendency to see reality as a process.

vi.   A commitment to treat social life and material existence in their relatedness, and associated with this, a rejection of the discipline specialisation and preference for the interdisciplinary approach; but an interdisciplinary approach which is conceived not as the simultaneous application of specialised discipline, a social science (or materialist foundations) to replace social sciences.

vii.   Commitment to treating problems concretely rather than abstractly. This is often taken to the point of regarding scholarship as creative praxis, some thing to be guided by experience and reciprocally a guide to scholarship. It insists hat the experience of periphery formations be taken seriously on their own terms, that they may be possibly new or unique things that have else where and which are to be understood by mechanically applying notions that might have illuminated other historical situations.

The political economy approach places emphasis on the material basis of life as a determining factor in the society. In this context, inequalities and domination in a society are viewed with reference to the interaction of the different elements of social life namely: the economic, political and social structures and belief systems. However, it is the economic factor, otherwise known as the 'base' that is the most decisive of all these elements and which largely determines the other character of the others, referred to as the 'supestructure' (Ake, 1981:21). As Karl Marx and his Friend Frederick Engels remarked, the most important aspect of human social life is the material basis of life which influences other aspects like family, politics, education as well as the idea and belief held by the people (Sayer, 1977:13).

The study of political economy helps us to understand society better. Society must generally be understood through the prism of economy. This is because when we understand what material assets and constraints of a society are, how the society produces goods to meet its material needs, what type of socio-relations arise from the organization of production, then we have come a long way in understanding the culture of that society, its laws, its religious systems, political system and even its mode of thought. "

Marxist-Leninist political economy also helps us to understand that economic determinism of inequality in society has history. Society is

not static so also the relations of production. Thus, as the society develops there is one form of inequality and domination or the other in all societies. For example, we have some social, political and economic distinctions between slaves and slave-owners, between Serfs and feudal lords and between bourgeoisie and proletariats. Man used his theory of dialectics and historical materialism to argue that the inequality in capitalism will soon be over since it cannot go on forever.

The productive forces and the relations between people apart from those of production are studied by many sciences, natural, technical and social, but relations of production are studied exclusively by political economy. Political economy thus studies production relations in terms of their interconnection with the development of the productive forces.

Labour process was defined as the conscious purposeful activity of the people directed to modifying and adapting natural objects to their need. In it people employ means of' production.

Marx and Engels clarified the following that has to do with means of production:

Object of labour: This refers to the natural substance on which man acts. An object of labour that has already been subjected to human action and is intended for further processing is a raw material.

Instrument of labour: This refers to what people place between themselves and an object of labour and with the help of which they exert a direct influence on the objects of labour. The most important of these are the instruments of labour. In a broader sense, all material conditions of work, such as land, production building, roads, canals and so on are also instrument of labour According to Marx, the objects and instrument of labour together formed the **means of Production.**

The means of production and the labour power of people setting them in motion constitute the **productive forces** of society. The main productive force is the labourer or workingman. In the labour process, people make conscious use of means of production and human activity as its decisive element. The productive forces reflect the relationship between man and nature. The levels of their development characterize the degree of his mastery of the forces of nature.

Marx argues further that in the production process people inevitably enter into certain relationships with one another i.e. enter into relations of production. In order to produce, they must have means of production, which belong to individual or to groups of people or to society as a whole. Thus, whoever owns the means of production also owns what is produced or the product.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the specific tenets of the political economy approach?

3.5   A critique of the political economy approach

The political economy approach has been seriously criticised by the orthodox Marxists. These critics do not often refer to the political economy approach as such. They are often directed at specific writings that use the approach to or made in the context of underdevelopment theory or dependency theory or other 'neo-Marxist' theories. Emile Katana's comment on Samir Amin is typical of orthodox Marxists critics of the political economy approach. Katana calls Amin's work too fatalistic, condemning the underdevelopment countries to unalterable, deteriorating position, almost irreversibly determined by neo-colonialism. Katana also believe that fatalism cannot offer any tangible prospect for a quick escape from underdevelopment.

The kinds of criticism also made against the underdevelopment and dependency theories and the political economy approach underlie the Eurocentric tendencies against which these models of analysis have found limiting to the development of a scientific understanding of society. The criticisms boil down to the question of deviating from the orthodoxies (for instance, moving from the notion of international division of labour to think of exploiter and exploited social formations) or failing to maximise certain values, for instance proletarian internationalism, belief in the inevitable victory of a revolutionary struggle.

However, the political economy approach has brought into clear relief the problems of the application of Marxism to the historical specificities of the periphery. Not much is gained by arguing abstractly whether the tenets and manner of proceeding of the political economy approach are right or wrong, useful or useless. As a form of consciousness, it can only be fully understood in the context of its 'history', that is, by relating it to the contradictions of material life, which it expresses.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

126

Briefly critique the political economy approach

4.0 CONCLUSION

The political economy approach represents the attempt of scholars working in the periphery countries in elucidating the ideas of Karl Marx. The influence of the theory and methodology of Karl Marx has been so pronounced that there is a considerable confusion as to where Marxism stops and the political economy approach begins. As a methodology, political economy approach is primarily interested in the productive forces (science and technology, human capital, natural resources) and the social relations of production in a society. This approach believes that for us to understand a society, it is important to first of all look at the productive forces in the society. What is the level of the development of productive forces? What is the level of science and technology in the society? What about the corresponding level of social relations of production? A particular level of productive forces produces a corresponding level of social relations of production.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learned about the political economy approach as a perspective in contemporary political inquiry. We said that this approach has received a lot of inspiration from the ideas of Karl Marx. From the Psysiocrats to Adam Smith, classical economists developed what came to be regarded as political economy. However, Marx was able to advance the ideas of classical political economists. Marx saw the link between capitalism and colonialism, the emergence division of labour, but he hardly worried about the implications for globalisation. It was Lenin that established the implications of the globalisation of capital to the periphery. Subsequently, scholars drawing from these insights from Africa and Latin America, and few from Europe who were interested in changing the social conditions in the peripheries have advanced the political economy approach. The approach however, does not represent a unified body of thought. We concluded that the political economy approach is essentially concerned with the analysis of the productive forces and the social relations of production.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1) What are the basic assumptions of the political economy approach?

2) What criticisms have been levelled against the political economy approach?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Afanasyev, L. et al. (1974) *The Political Economy of Capitalism.* Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Ajulor, O . V. (2006) *The Concept, Nature and Scope of Political Economy- Readings in General Studies Education* (Vol. 1), Humanities and Social Sciences. Project T.M.M.E, 76-92.

Ake, C (1981) *Political economy of Africa*. London: Longman.

Ake, C. (1981) *A Political Economy of Africa.* Lagos: Longman Nig. Ltd.

Amin, Samir (1976) *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Amin, Samir (1994) 'Re-reading the post-war period: an intellectual itinerary' Translated by Michael Wolfers. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Bodenheimer, Susanne (1971) "Dependency and Imperialism: The Roots of Latin American Underdevelopment," in K.T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges (eds) Readings in U.S. Imperialism. Boston: Porter Sargent.

Engels, Frederick (1975). On Marx. Perking Foreign Language Press.

Ihonvbere, Julius (1992) "The Political Economy of Crisis and Underdevelopment in Africa". In Claude Ake (ed.) *Selected Works.* Lagos: JAD Publishers.

Katana, Emile (1979) *Studies in Developing Countries*. Budapest: Institute for World Economics.

Sayer, J (1977) *Economy: Capitalism.* In H. G Creighton (ed) Translated into English from Revised Edition. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

MODULE 3   BEHAVIOURALISM AND EMERGING APPROACHES

This module attempts a modest discussion of the behavioural approach in contemporary political analysis and other emerging approaches in political inquiry such as new institutionalism, group theory and the role theory. These topics are loosely grouped together in this module for analytical purposes only.

The first unit examines the behavioural approach in political inquiry. This approach began after World War II as a sort of protest movement by some political scientists against the traditional approach. The general thesis of the approach is to make the study of politics scientific. The second unit considers the new institutionalism approach. This approach critiques the behavioural approach in politics and recognises the role of institutions in shaping political outcomes. The third unit examines the political culture approach and stress that politics "reflect and exemplify society's deepest-held values". The fourth unit examines the role theory. Role theorists believe that the individual located within a social context best captures his/her role in political processes and phenomena. The last unit discusses postmodernism in political science. We would see that postmodernism refers to the use of postmodern ideas in political science. Many situations which are considered political in nature can not be adequately discussed in traditional realist and liberal approaches to political science.

We now turn to an examination of the theories in this module under the following units:

Unit 1   •   Behaviouralism and Post-Behaviouralism

Unit 2   •   New institutionalism approach

Unit 3   •   Political culture approach

Unit 4   •   Role theory

Unit 5   •   Post-modernism

UNIT 1 • BEHAVIOURALISM AND POST-BEHAVIOURALISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to a major approach in political analysis. Behaviouralism which has made an indelible mark in political studies represent a post-World War II revolution and disaffection of Political Science over reliance on contending approaches such as the institutional, historical, legal, sociological, constitutional and philosophical – all these approaches which are subsumed under legal-historical and normative approaches. Behaviouralism became a dominant paradigm in American Political Science in a discontent with the 'old institutionalism', which was preoccupied with the formal structures of government. Discontent with what had gone wrong before was not itself enough to launch a new paradigm. However, the development of probability sampling techniques and a systematic understanding of mass surveys had opened up new areas of research for political science, particularly in the study of what shaped electoral choice (Merkl, 1964:23).

The advocates of the 'persuasion' saw 'themselves as spokesmen for a very broad and deep conviction that the political science discipline should (Ricci 1984:140):

- abandon certain traditional kinds of research;

- execute a more modern sort of inquiry instead, and

- teach new truths based on the findings of these new inquiries.

The behaviouralists argue that new methods could be developed to help political science formulate empirical propositions and theories

of a systematic sort, vested by more direct and more rigorously controlled observations of political events. And as Truman (1951) put it, behavioural political science demands that research must be systematic and must place primary emphasis on empirical methods.

The traditional and the behavioural approaches to the study of politics therefore came to be differentiated by one placing emphasis on values as against the other emphasising facts (empirical). The behavioural methods advocates for the utilisation and development of most precise techniques for observation, verification, quantification and measurement. Thus, this approach places greater emphasis on the use of statistical and quantifiable formulation of data.

2.0 OBJECTIVES
At the successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:
trace the historical emergence of behavioural approach to the study of politics
explain the intellectual foundation stones of behaviouralism
critique behaviouralism
identify the major contribution of behaviouralism in political research

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Emergence of the Behavioural Approach
The term political behaviour refers as often to a set of method of research perspective namely the scientific study of politics as a subject i.e., the study of human behaviour in a political context. As a methodological approach to the study of politics, political behaviour or behaviouralism effectively emerged after the World War II as a kind of protest movement by some political scientists based mainly in the USA against the historical, philosophical and descriptive institutional orientations of traditional political studies. This approach represents a critical reaction against certain features of political studies in the inter World Wars, particularly the concentration of formal political institutions and constitutions and relative neglect of the actual political behaviour and informal political processes.

The normative philosophical approach had several weaknesses which led to the behavioural revolution. The basic criticisms alleged that its practitioners were essentially *parochial* (biased towards Western thought and ideas), *formal-legal* (interested mainly in constitutions and the operations of institutions such as the executives, legislature, courts and bureaucracies), *non-comparative*

(based essentially on the configurative study of single countries), and *unscientific* (concepts, models and theories were rudimentary, or even non-existent). Furthermore, the approach was said to exclude informal politics and therefore ignores a large important source of relevant information (Jackson and Jackson, 2000:32).

The behavioural approach introduced two major elements in the study of politics. The first was the emphasis on the political behaviour of individual person as the central and crucial unit of political analysis and basic building block of political science. David Truman in his book, *The Implication of Political Behaviour Research in Social Science* found agreement with Dahl (1969) and Easton (1953) who located the individual as the critical dictum of political research. Behaviouralists argue that political scientists should study the conditions and consequences of man's political conduct rather than the structures and functions of political institutions. They believe that political science should be concerned primarily with the question: "why do individuals behave politically the way they do?" The behaviouralists argue that although an important aspect of politics, the institutions as a thing in itself is not the actual stuff or substance of politics. This is because, political institutions do not and cannot exist physically apart from the individuals or political actors who inhabit and operate them. Thus, while the traditional institutional approach concentrate on the structures, powers and responsibilities of such political institutions like the Parliament, the Judiciary, the Executive and the Bureaucracy, behaviouralists emphasise the attitudes, value personality and activity of the individuals in this institutions.

The second major idea that this approach introduced to the study of politics was the emphasis on the scientific study of politics. Truman (1951) asserts that research must place emphasis upon empirical methods. Behaviouralists sought to place the study of politics on a more scientific platform and allow for empirical verification of many of its statement as possible through the use of sophisticated research methods. There has thus been an emphasis on the building of sophisticated analytical methods, the use of quantitative techniques or statistical models and the collection of large empirical set of data in political science research.

David Easton said that all behavioural research is directed at the goal of a science of politics, based on the methodological assumptions and procedures of the physical sciences. This political science would be comparable in certainty, sophistication and rigor of physical sciences.

Behaviouralism has therefore been defined succinctly as the scientific study of political behaviour. If one interprets behaviouralism as the scientific study of politics, chances are that the basic empirical unit of analysis of such a study would be individual behaviour.

Robert Dahl has noted six-interrelated factors, which influenced the rise of the behavioural movement. The first was the evolution of the University of Chicago's Department of Political Science under the leadership of Charles Meriam, who in 1925 before the American Political Science Association called for a science of political behaviour … or a science of social behaviour which will do for political science what science has done for the hard core sciences (Meriam, 1926).

The second factor cited by Dahl was the influx of the European Scholars into the United States. These scholars whose backgrounds were in the hard core sciences came to the USA and occupied the chairs in most of the political science departments in American Universities. As a result of their background, they encouraged the use "of sociological and psychological theories for the understanding of politics" (Dahl, 1961). Another factor was World War II. Dahl explained that the outbreak of the War forced many American political scientists to deal with day to day reality of social life and also reveal to them for the first time the "inadequacies of the conventional approaches of political science for describing reality much less for predicting in any given situation what is likely to happen."

The fourth factor was the creation of the Social Science Research Committee and the subsequent creation of an adjunct committee on political behaviour. The evolution of this special committee helped shift the entire focus of the discipline to the behaviour of individuals as the empirical unit of analysis. The fifth factor Dahl pointed out was the development of the "survey" method as a tool in the study of politics. Other factors included the influence of the philanthropic foundations and the nature of the American polity and culture. All the above factors combined created a political culture that was committed to what Dahl referred to as "pragma-tism, fact minded-ness, confidences in sciences" etc. (Dahl, 1961). In addition to the above factors, Truman has noted two other factors: the change in the character of world politics after Potsdam, the break-up of the colonial systems, and the subsequent emergence of the new nations; both factors required a new and broad approach to the study of political institutions (Truman, 1973).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Identify factors that spurred the development of the behavioural approach in politics.

3.2   The intellectual foundation stones of behaviouralism

What was the essence of this new paradigm? In other words, what are the basic tenets of behaviouralism? By combining two classic accounts (Easton, 1965; Somit and Tenehaus, 1967), it is possible to identify eight main claims made for behaviouralism:

i.   Regularities

According to the behaviouralists, there are discoverable regularities in politics which can lead to theories with predictive value. This can be expressed in the generalisation of theories with explanatory and predictive value. A major task of a truly behaviouralists approach would therefore be the imposition of analytical order on the seemingly complex, contradictory or unpredictable processes of political life. An example is the relationship between HIV/AIDS and social cohesion, or the relationship between economic development and democracy.

ii.   Falsifiable /Verification

The behaviouralists also argued that all generalisations and explanations must be testable in principle. This 'proposition was repeatedly restated by behaviouralists … it was fundamental to the point where Easton argued that the vital difference between most pre-World War II political scientists and behaviouralists lay precisely in the latter insistence on testability'. This process of empirical verification is the key criterion for assessing the validity and aids utility of such generalisations.

iii.   Techniques

The acquisition and interpretation of data must be carried out through the use of techniques (sample, survey, statistical measurements and mathematical models) that are rigorously examined, refined and validated. In other words, systemic, accurate, reliable and valid instruments must be developed for observing, recording and analysing empirical political behaviour.

iv.   Quantification

The behaviouralists emphasised that precision or accuracy in the recording of data and statement of findings requires measurement, quantification or maximisation not for their own sake but only where possible relevant and meaningful in the light of other objectives. According to Truman (1973), the political scientists should perform

his research "in quantitative terms if he can and in qualitative term if he must."

v.   Value neutrality

Ethical evaluation and empirical explanation involve two different kinds of propositions that for the sake of clarity should be kept analytically distinct. The behaviouralists argued that empirical political research must be distinguished from ethical or moral philosophy and political advocacy.

vi.   Systematisation

The behaviouralists argue that empirical research must be systematic, i.e. theory oriented and theory directed. In this context, theory and research are closely interconnected component part of any orderly body of knowledge. David Easton puts it 'empirical research untutored or unguided by theory may prove trivial and theory unsupported by empirical data may be fruitless. Oran Young has also warned against the collection of empirical data as an end in itself and without sufficient theoretical guidance to determine appropriate criteria for data selection and interpretation. Thus, the major goal of behavioural movement was to develop a general theoretical framework, within which disparaged research findings can be integrated.

vii.   Pure Science

The behaviouralists contended that political science should become more self-conscious and critical of its methodology. The argued that applied research, i.e. the application of scientific knowledge is as much a part of the scientific enterprise as theoretical understanding. However, scientific explanation of political behaviour must logically proceed and provide the basis for efforts to utilise political knowledge in the solution of urgent practical problems of the society. The scientific understanding of politics is therefore more important to the behaviouralists than policy formulation or practical interventions. In essence, the pursuit of knowledge can be an end in itself and an academic student of political behaviour even if he/she is uncertain about the practical utility of his/her research would require no more than the prospects of finding new insights to justify his/her activities.

viii.   Integration

Finally, Political science should become more interdisciplinary and draw more on the other social sciences. The behavioural approach assumes the unification of the social sciences. It expresses the hope that some day, the interdisciplinary walls that separates political

science from other social sciences will crumble. Although, they indicate the pragmatic divisions of labour, this interdisciplinary boundary does not reflect theoretically or ideologically division of the social sciences sharing a common concern for the totality or the human situation in a social context.

Consequently, political science can ignore the findings of the other social science disciplines only at the risk of undermining the validity and generalisation of its own research. The concern of the behaviouralists with integration was of course also inspired by their impatient with the failure to employ quantitative methods in political studies to the same extent as the other social sciences (by imitating some of the methodologies in sociology and psychology that have been employed).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
List and explain the intellectual foundation stones of behaviouralism

3.3   Criticism against the behavioural movement
It should be stated at this juncture that behaviouralism or the behavioural approach has never been without intellectual or ideological opposition. These arguments also underpin the paradigm's inadequacies in political studies. These criticisms came from both post-behaviouralists and the traditionalists.

First is the criticism against the fundamental, philosophical or epistemological tenets of behaviouralism.   The second area of criticism has to do with its emphasis on quantitative survey. The sociological criticism borders on its conservative assumptions, orientations and values. Lastly, there are objections as to the outcome of specific behaviouralists' research.   The unit shall consider each of these criticisms under these four broad frameworks:

The inability to quantify certain aspects of political behaviour and the inability of political science to deviate itself from the question of values is a serious limitation in political studies. Post–behaviouralists have condemned the merit of quantification which the behaviouralists claimed are very important to political science in terms of research. The post-behaviouralists have asserted that this is not attainable and that political science must not deviate from historical concern for moral and ethical issues even though they can not be scientifically resolved. What this means that there is a thin line of demarcation when we empirically want to distinguish between 'value' and 'fact' in political research. Political issues and the researcher are therefore influenced by a gamut of values, value judgments, and assumptions, which cannot be defended in scientific or behavioural terms. The behaviouralists claim that values can be

136

divorced from facts in the study of politics therefore is blasphemous if not absurdity.

Another limitation of the behaviouralism in the study of politics is obsession with methodology and processes, and its emphasis on integration of disciplines which end up undermining the real substance of politics. The post-behaviouralists have argued that too much adherence to the idea of interdisciplinary approach will undermine the identity of political science. Equally important, the "obsession" of the behaviouralists with methodological approach has also been condemned by the opponents of behaviouralism. They have argued that this obsession has caused a sort of goal displacement as far as inquiry into political phenomena is concerned. They argued that this obsession has generated a tendency to pay more attention to techniques at the expense of content and substance of political events and systems. Moreover, as the behavioural methodologies become increasingly elaborate and complex, the problems seemed to get over more narrow and insignificant. The very demand for precision of method imposed limits on the kinds of subjects that could be dealt with' (Leeds, 1981:2) This kind of criticism acquired additional force as the discipline developed a new interest in the analysis of public policy, stimulated by work such as that of Lowi and Pressman, and Wildausky (cited in Akindele and Adebo, 2005). This criticism borders on the sterile Methodism that stands on the way of scientific research, ignoring important issues in politics while concentrating on trivial issues which are observable, measurable and regular.   Issues such as injustice, racism, nationalism, etc. that are crucial in political science are therefore not addressed. This lend to the criticism that behaviouralism is not only trivial and esoteric but also narrow and apolitical in ensuring axiomatic deductive approach and the search for universal laws governing political behaviour that are supposedly independent of time and circumstances.

A major weakness of the behavioural approach in political studies emanates from findings and limitations of the study. There is a criticism of behaviouralism for having failed to fulfil its own goals. Even in an area such as voting behaviour which is the closest thing to a scientific theory that we have, it has been shown that even a causal review of the findings of voting research shows how unstable these regularities are, and how far short of hard science our efforts to stabilise them must fall' (Ibid). Much of the time political scientists were not observing actual behaviour, but trying to make sense of reports of behaviour. Political scientists were not in the voting booth with the citizens, but undertaking post ad hoc analyses of the accounts voters gave of what they claimed to have done and their reasons for it. This may hardly reflect the reality.

The behaviouralists are limited in their ability to generalize their findings. How accurate are aggregate individual political behaviour reflective of group behaviour? The traditionalist have therefore criticised the behaviouralists for allegedly been too confident of the ability to generalise, to convert problematic statements into causal propositions, and use these propositions to predict behaviour in an area in which things are not predictable; of attributing to abstract models a congruence with reality that they do not have; of avoiding the substantive issues of politics because in the zeal for scientific methods, the behaviouralists has perhaps never mastered those issues in all their complexity of succumbing to a 'fetish to measurement" which ignores critically important qualitative differences among the quantities being measured (Bull 1966:361).

The inadequacy of the behavioural approach in policy making and forecasting has also been evident. Because the approach has divorced itself from issues of 'good' and 'bad'; maintaining a value neutral stand, it can not contribute to the formulation and elaboration of the value hierarchy or priority which characterise the moral phase of policy making. Usually the three components of policy making involve the moral, the empirical and the legislative. While the behaviouralists contribution to policy making is acknowledged in the area of empirical analysis of the likely implications of specific policy options, the behaviouralists is inadequate in the legislative aspect since this phase involves complex circumstances and unpredictable situations. This leads to its inability to provide the basis for the general forecast of the future as distinct from tentative or probabilistic predictions. The behaviouralists can therefore not make unconditional statement of future possibility, which is an important element of scientific research.

Another limitation of behaviouralism is that advanced by the rebirth of institutionalism in a seminal article by March and Olsen (1984). They sought to argue that institutions do matter, that political phenomena could not be simply reduced to the aggregate consequences of individual behaviour; that the organisation of political life makes a difference' (p.747). The choices that people make are to a significant extent shaped by the institutions within which they operate. They sought to revive the traditions within political science that saw political behaviour 'embedded in an institutional structure of rules, norms, expectations and traditions that severely limited the free play of individual will and calculation (March and Olsen, 1984:736)

Lastly, the ferment in American politics associated with the upheavals caused by the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, and later the growth of feminist consciousness, penetrated the

political science profession. In retrospect, the behavioural era in political science appears to be a time of optimism (Ricci, 1984:171) both politically and within the profession. The caucus for a New Political Science set up within the American Political Science Association (APSA) in 1967 attacked the complacency, conservatism and lack of relevance of American political science, rejecting the behaviouralists' paradigm. In his 1969 address to the American Political Science Association, David Easton tried to reconcile the various groups within the APSA by referring to the 'post-behavioural revolution' and calling for more applied research. Post-behaviouralism 'appeared on the political scene as a phenomenon whose name indicated a shared determination to leave something definite behind rather than a common notion of the direction in which the discipline should move forward.

Research, according to the post-behaviouralists, was to be related to urgent social problems and was to be purposive. It was the duty of the political scientist to find out solutions to contemporary problems. His objective could not be mere stability or the maintenance of the status quo. Political science in its tools of research should no longer remain subservient in the task laid down for its conservative politicians, namely of preserving the existing order… the political scientists must play the leading role in acting for the desired social change (Varma, 1975:101).

3.4   Post-Behaviouralism

Based on the inherent weaknesses of the behavioural approach, a number of political scientists began complaining that important happenings were being ignored by the discipline. The critics were labelled by then-APSA president David Easton as "post-behavioralists." These post-behavioralists organised themselves into the Caucus for a New Political Science under the leadership of Christian Bay and Mark Roelofs. Among the political scientists of note who proffered a critical post-behavioral viewpoint were Charles McCoy, Peter Bachrach, James Petras, Sheldon Wolin, and Michael Parenti.

The aforementioned scholars complained that most of the discipline's scholarship was removed from the imperatives of political life and was inaccurate in its depiction of a benevolent democratic pluralism. They also questioned the existence of rigorous determinist laws and the possibility of scientific objectivity in the study of politics. They were concerned with the propriety of the participation of behavioiural Political Science in citizenship education and public affairs, endeavors that made objectivity difficult. The behaviouralists responded by urging, in principle, that

research become more important than civic education. However, the Great Depression and World War II made it difficult to contest the significance of civic responsibility. Thus, when the APSA president William Anderson pronounced in 1943 that the preservation of democracy and "direct service to government" were the foremost obligations of Political Science, he was representing the prevailing view of American political scientists.

As well, the social unrest over the war in Vietnam raised consciousness among political scientists including some of the leading lights of the behavioural revolution, that "behaviourism could be perceived as amoral and irrelevant to the normative concerns governing human lives". For instance, in 1967, the caucus for a New Political Science set up within American Political Science Association (APSA) attacked the complacency, conservatism and lack of relevance of American Political Science, rejecting the behaviouralist paradigm.

Research, according to the post-behaviouralist, was to be related to urgent social problems and was to be purposive. It was the duty of the political scientist to find out solutions to contemporary problems. His objective could not be mere stability or the maintenance of the status quo. Political Science in its tools of research should no longer remain subservient in the task laid down for its conservative politicians, for instance in preserving the existing order...the political scientists must play the leading role in acting for the desired social change (Verma, 1975:101).

4.0 CONCLUSION
The behaviouralists approach to the study of politics faces a lot of limitations. The behaviouralists attempt to separate value judgments from empirical research was doomed to failure. Similarly, their view that 'regularities and generalisations are the only proper objects of scientific political inquiry' came to be seen as 'an unnecessary delimitation of discipline's subject matter' (Akindele and Adebo 2005: 61). Behaviouralism could lead to the neglect of 'the fact that much social and political change has to be explained neither by strong regularities nor by weak regularities, but by accidental conjunctions – by events that have low probability of occurring (Ibid p.39). Indeed, new developments in chaos theory would suggest that very rare events will occur more often than the Gaussian or standard bell-shaped curve model would predict.

The tenets of behaviouralism would probably win acceptance by most political scientists today: that the study of politics should be theory-oriented and directed; that it should be self-conscious about its methodology; and that it should be interdisciplinary. As its worst,

pre-war political science offered low-level descriptions of political reality. Methodology was often unsystematic and rarely discussed. In those respects, despite its limitation, as argued by Dahl to the scantiness of the merit of the approach, behaviouralism did contribute to the development of political science as discipline, and as an approach and methodology, it cannot be whisked away.

In conclusion despite it limitations, this unit concludes with Heinz Eulau statement, "the behavioural penetration of political science has had the effect of vitalizing and improving the older forms of writing and research. It has had a salutary influence on the quality of all political science' (Eulau, 1973).

5.0 SUMMARY

During the last 55 years, political science has been dominated by behaviouralism. In addition to its emphasis on behaviour rather than institutions, this orientation has held out the promise of allowing political science to become scientific. While supported by most contemporary political scientists, behaviouralism has had its share of criticism. Some critics claim that it has not produced as much scientific knowledge as promised. Others argue that in its attempt to be scientific, the behavioural political science has not always studied the important questions, and has ignored fundamental normative issues.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Discuss the major inadequacies of the behavioural revolution in political science?

Highlight the main arguments of the post-behavioural revolution.

The behavioural approach has revolutionalised contemporary political inquiry. Discuss with relevant examples.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

Akindele S. and Adebo A (2005) "A Revisitational Assessment of the Rise of Behavioural Approach in Politics". *Journal of Social Sciences*. 10 (1): 61-64.

Bull, H (1966) "International Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach" *World Politica*, XVIII April: 361.

Dahl, R (1961) "The Behavioural Approach to Political Science: Epitaph to a Movement for a Successful Protest". *American Political Science Review,* 50:50.

Easton, D (1965) *A System of Analysis of Political Life*. New York: Valley.

Eulau, H (1973) "The Behavioural Movement in Political Science: A Personal Document". *Social Sciences Research*, 24-25.

Leeds C. A. (1981) *Political Studies* (3rd ed.) London: Macdonald & Evans ltd.

Meriam, C (1926) Progress in Political Sciences. *American Political Science Review*, xx: 1-13.

Merkl, P. H. (1967) *Political Continuity and Change*. New York: Harper and Row.

Sommit, A. and Tanenhaus J (1920) "The Behavioural-Traditional Debate in Political Science". In Louis D. Hayes and Ronald D. Heldlund (eds) *The Conduct of Political Inquiry. Behavioural Analysis*. Eaglehood Cliff. Prentice Hall, pp.45-55.

Truman, D (1951) The Implications of Political Behavioural Research in Social Research Council. Items, December.

Truman D (1973) "The Impact of Political Science on the Revolution in Behavioural Science". In Heinz Eulau, *Behaviouralism in Political Science*. New York: Lieber-Atherton, pp. 38-67.

Varma, S.P (1975) *Modern Political Theory*. Ghaziabad U. P: India. Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd.

UNIT 2   •   NEW INSTITUTIONALISM

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   What is new institutionalism all about?
        3.2   New institutionalism as a critique of behaviouralism
        3.3   Three Schools of New Institutionalism
                3.3.1   Historical Institutionalism
                3.3.2   Rational Choice Institutionalism
                3.3.3   Sociological Institutionalism
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with new institutionalism as a growing approach in political science. Although the previous unit highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the behavioural revolution in political science, this unit which considers new institutionalism developed in reaction to the behavioural perspectives that were influential during the 1960s and 1970s seeks to elucidate the role that institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes.

We need to be clear about one thing from the beginning. New institutionalism does not constitute a unified body of thought. Instead, there are three different schools, each of which calls itself new institutionalism. They however paint different pictures of the political world.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
critique the behavioural approach using the new institutionalism perspectives
state the assumptions of the three schools of new institutionalism
compare the three schools of new institutionalism
identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the approach

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What is new institutionalism all about?

Traditional approaches to the study of politics were preoccupied with the legal, normative and institutional aspects of politics. This form of approach, regarded as old institutionalism – concerned largely with the study and description of formal institutions such as the legislature, judiciary and the state bureaucracy and informal institutions such as political parties and pressure groups.

With the emergence of the behavioural revolution during the 1960s and 1970s, the old institutionalism was seriously discredited, and therefore receded in importance. In other words, while traditional political theory was institutionalist, subsequent political studies were behaviouralist in orientation. Please note that behavioural theorists contend that formal institution were simply the arenas within which political behaviour, driven by more fundamental factors occurs.

The new institutional approaches to contemporary approaches criticised the behavioural approach as being contextual, reductionist, utilitarian, functional and instrumental (Suberu, 2006). Let us briefly explain the basis of these criticisms.

Contextual

The behavioural approach to political science was regarded as being contextual because it tended to see the causal link between the society and the polity as running from the former to the latter rather than the other way round.

Reductionist

The behaviour approach was reductional because macro-political phenomena was reduced to the micro level or regarded as the end product of micro-behaviour. It was assumed that political phenomena are best understood as the aggregate consequence of behaviour comprehensible at the individual level

Utilitarianism

The behavioural perspective to political science was regarded as being utilitarian because of its tendency to see political action as the product of calculated self-interest or rational choice, and it was less inclined to see political actors as responding to obligations, duties and other institutionalised rituals.

Functionalism

The behaviour perspective was also functionalist because it was inclined to see history as an efficient mechanism for reaching unique appropriate equilibrium and less concerned with the possibilities for mal-adaptation and non-uniqueness in historical development.

Instrumentalism

Behavioural political science was instrumentalist in the sense that it was inclined to define decision-making and the allocation of resources as the central concern of life and it was less attentive to the ways in which political life is organised around the development of meaning, through symbols, rituals and ceremonies. Instead, behaviouralist characteristically portrays all political actions as strategic moves by self-conscious political actors.

The emergence of the new institutionalism around the 1970s was therefore a critique of the behavioural revolution. The new institutionalism approach therefore sought to revive the old institutionalism that assigned importance to institutions. The new approach challenged or modified many theoretical styles and assumptions of the behavioural approach highlighted in the previous unit.

Therefore, the new institutionalism came to emphasise the relative autonomy of political institution or the role that institutions play in determining social and political outcomes. Most of the major actors in modern economic and political systems are formal organisations and the institution of law and bureaucracy occupy a dominant role in contemporary political life. Not surprising, new institutionalism is reflected in the increased attention paid in political science literature to governance and such issues line legislature budget, public policy making, local government and political elites.

However, you are reminded that the old institutionalism and the new institutionalism are not exactly identical, rather the latter blends elements of the old institutionalism with the non-institutionalist styles of more recent theories of politics.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
"Behavioural political science was anti-institutionalist in the sense that it was contextual, reductionist, utilitarian, functionist and instrumentalist". Discuss.

3.2   New institutionalism as a critique of behaviouralism
There has emerged five distinct critique of the behavioural approach to political science from new institutionalism theorists.

1) Relative autonomy or causal importance of institutions

Whereas behaviouralism emphasised the dependence of the policy on society, the new institutionalism highlighted the interdependence between relative autonomous social context of politics. This means that the state is not only affected by society but also affect the society. As Suberu (2006) notes, political democracy depend not only on economic and social condition but also on the design of political institutions. Thus, we can argue that the bureaucracy, the legislature, judiciary and other institutions are more than arenas for contending social forces or simple mirrors of these forces but instead are also political actors in their own right and they also affect the flow of history.

2) Casual complexity of history and the limits of reductionism

Behavioural political science tended to adopt a micro approach in which macro phenomena of large entities such as states are decomposable or reduced into small units such as individuals or groups and comprehensible at the micro level. On the other hand, the new institutionalism stresses the institutional complexity of modern state and identified a rather complicated relationship between institutions individuals and events.

3) Social structures/norms and the limits of utilitarianism

In contrast to behaviouralist assumptions of utilitarian new institutionalism emphasised that politics is filled with behaviour that is difficult to fit into a simple utilitarian mode. Although self-interest undoubtedly defines politics, this is often based more on discovering the normatively appropriate behaviour than on calculating the returns expected from alternative choices. As a consequence, political behaviour like other behaviour can be described not only in terms of self-interest but also in terms of duties, obligations, notes and rules. Here too, behaviour is not always dictated by self-interest but in often constrained by cultural dictates and social norms, which are mediated by institutions.

4) Historical inefficiency and the limits of functionalism

While both the behaviouralists and functionalist theorists emphasise the efficiency of historical processes or the way in which history moves quickly and inexorably to a unique normal in some sense of optimum, the new institutionalism on the other hand specify how historical processes are affected by specific characteristics of political motivation, and provides greater theoretical understanding of the inefficiencies of history.

5) Social rituals or processes and the limits of instrumentalism

The new institutionalism theorists have also challenged the instrumentalist preoccupation of behavioural political science with outcomes or an outcome orientation conception of collective choice. For these theorists, empirically, the process of politics may be more central than outcomes. Again, politics and governance are valued in themselves as important social rituals and interpretations of life rather than as an effort to make collective authoritative decisions (Suberu, 2006; Hall and Taylor, 1996:926-957).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
What do you consider as the basic criticisms levelled against behaviouralism by new institutionalism theorists?

3.3 Three Schools of New Institutionalism

We have already mentioned that the new institutionalism does not constitute a unified body of thought, but rather have three different analytical approaches: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. What we attempt below is to identify the features of each of these approaches.

3.3.1 Historical Institutionalism

This approach developed in response to the group theories of policies and structural-functionalism prominent in political science during the 1960s and 1970s (see for instance Steinmo et al, 1992). While it borrowed from both approaches, it sought to go beyond them. The basic features of new institutionalism include the following:

i.   Historical institutionalists tend to conceptualise the relationship between institutions and individual behaviour in relatively broad terms. They combine both the calculus approach and cultural approach in explaining how institutions affect the behaviours of individuals. While the cultural approach focuses on those aspects of human behaviour that are instrumental and based on strategic calculation, behaviour of others, enforcement mechanism for agreement, penalties for defection etc., the cultural approach stresses the degree to which behaviour is not fully strategic but bounded by an individuals world view and see institutions in this context as providing moral and cognitive template for interpreting an action.

Historical institutionalists use both approaches to specify the relationship between institution and actions. They suggest

that the strategies induced by a given institution may fade away overtime into non-rational worldviews or myths, which are propagated by formal organisation and ultimately shaped even the self-images and basic preferences of the actors involved in them.

ii.   Historical institutionalists give a prominent role of power in analysing the operation and development of institutions. They have been concerned with the way in which institution distribute power unevenly across social groups.

iii.   Historical institutionalists have a view of institutional development that emphasises path dependence and unintended consequences. Their image of path dependence and unintended consequence means that they reject the traditional postulates that the same operative social forces will generate the same results everywhere in favour of the view that the contextual features of a given situation often inherited from the past will mediate the effect of such forces.

iv.   Historical institutionalists are especially concerned with integrating institutional analysis with the contribution of other kinds of factors such as ideas, can make to political outcomes. Even though they draw attention to the role of institutions in political life, these theorists rarely insist that institutions are the only causal force in politics. They typically seek to locate institutions in a causal chain that accommodates a role for other factors, notably socio-economic development and the diffusion of ideas.

3.3.2 Rational choice institutionalism

This approach developed at the same time with new institutionalism, but in relative isolation from it. Initially, rational choice institutionalism arose from the study of American congressional behaviour.

The features of the rational choice institutionalism include the following:

i.   Rational choice institutionalists argue that actors have a fix set of preferences or tastes behave extinct instrumentally so as to maximise the attainment of these preferences in a highly strategic manner that presumes extensive calculations

ii.   Rational choice institutionalism theorists promote a distinctive image of politics that sees it as a series of collective action or coordination dilemmas. These dilemmas

can be defined as instances when individuals acting to maximize their own preferences are likely to produce an outcome that is collectively sub-optimal (in the sense that another outcome could be found that will make at least one of the actors better off without making any of the others worse). Typically, what prevents the actors from taking a collectively superior course of action is the absence of institutional arrangements that would guarantee complementary behaviour by others. Example: the 'prisoner's dilemma' and the 'tragedy of the commons' and the political situations present a variety of such problem.

iii.   One of the great contributions of rational choice institutionalism has been to emphasise the role of strategic interaction in the determination of political outcomes. In other words, they postulate first, that an actor's behaviour is likely to driven, not by impersonal historical forces, but by a strategic calculus and, second that this calculus will be deeply affected by the actors expectations about how others are likely to behave as well. Institutions structure such interactions by affecting the range and sequence of the alternatives of the choice agenda or by providing information and enforcement mechanisms that reduce uncertainty about the corresponding behaviour of others and allows gains from exchanges thereby leading actors toward particular calculations and potentially better outcomes.

iv.   Finally, rational choice institutionalists have also develops a distinctive approach to the problem of explaining how institutions originate. Typically, they begin by using deduction to arrived at an abstract specification of the function an institution performs. They then explain the existence of the institution by reference to the value those functions have for the actors affected by the institution. This formulation assumes that the actors create the institutions in order to realize this value which is most often conceptualized in terms of games from cooperation or coordination. Thus, the process of institutional creation usually revolves around voluntary agreement by the relevant actors; and an institution survives primarily because it provides more benefit to the relevant actors than alternative institutional forms.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Identify the basic features of the rational choice institutionalism.

3.3.3 Sociological Institutionalism

Sociological institutionalism arose primarily within the sub field of organisational theory. The movement dates roughly to the end of the 1970s when some sociologists began to challenge the distinction traditionally drawn from those parts of the social world said to display diverse set of practices associated with culture.

Hall and Taylor (1996: 946) argue that since Weber, many sociologists has seen the bureaucratic structures that dominate the modern landscape, in government departments, firms, schools, interest organisations and the like, as the product of an intensive effort to devise ever-more efficient structures for performing the tasks associated with modern societies. Against this, the new institutionalism in sociology began to argue that many of the institutional forms and procedures used by modern organisations were not adopted simply because they were most efficient for the tasks at hand, in line with 'rationalist'. Instead, they argued that many of these forms and procedures should be seen as culturally – specific practices, akin to the myths and ceremonies devised by many societies, and assimilated into organisations, not necessarily to enhance their formal means ends efficiency, but as a result of the kind of processes associated with the transmission of cultural practices more generally. Thus, they argued even the most seemingly bureaucratic of practices have to be explained in cultural terms.

The following are the features of sociological institutionalism:

i.   The sociological institutionalists tend to define institutions much broader than political scientists to include not visit formal rules, procedures or norms but the symbolic systems cognitive scripts and moral templates that provides the "frame of meaning" guiding human action. Such a definition breaks down the conceptual divide between institutions and culture. This approach has redefined culture as institutions.

ii. The sociological institutionalists also have a distinctive understanding of the relationship between institutions and undivided action, which follows the cultural approach. They argue that institution do not simply affect the strategic calculation of individuals (as rational choice, institutionalist content) but also their most basic preference and very identify- if rational choice institutionalist often posit a world of individuals or organisations seeking to maximize their maternal well being, sociological institutionalist frequently posit a world of individuals or organisations seeking to define and express their identity in socially appropriate ways. In

other words, sociological institutionalist stress the degree to which behaviour is not fully strategic but bounded by an individuals world view with institutions providing cognitive templates for interaction and action.

iii.   Finally, in explaining how institutional practices originate and changes, sociological institutionalist argue that organisations often adopt a new institutionalism practice not because it advances the means-end of efficiency of the organisation but because it enhances the social legitimacy of the organisation or the participants.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Identify the assumptions of the sociological institutionalism approach.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In the field of political science today, three new institutionalism have been identified. Fundamentally, these literatures seem to reveal different and genuine dimension of human behaviour and of the effects, institutions can have on behaviour. However, you must note that none of these literatures appears to be wrong-headed or substantially untrue. More often, each seems to be providing a partial account of the forces at work in a given situation or capturing different dimensions of the human action and institutional impact present there.

For instance, an actors behaviour may be influenced both by strategic calculation about the likely strategies of others and by reference to a familiar set of moral or cognitive templates, each of which may depend on the configuration of existing institutions. In addition, it would not be difficult for proponents of the calculus and cultural approaches to acknowledge that a good deal of behaviour is goal-oriented or strategic but that the range of options canvassed by a strategic actor is likely to be circumscribed by a culturally specific sense of appropriate action.

5.0   SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been introduced to new institutionalism as an approach to contemporary political inquiry. We argued that it developed in reaction to be behavioural perspective, which was considered contextual, reductionist, utilitarian, functionalist and instrumentalist. You also learnt about the three variants of the approach: historical, rational choice, and sociological new institutionalisms. We concluded that both perspectives provide a partial account of the forces at work in a given situation or capturing

different dimensions of the human action and the impact of institutions.

6.0   TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Compare the historical and sociological versions of the new institutionalism in political analysis

What do you consider as the basic criticisms levelled against behaviouralism by new institutionalism theorists?

In what ways do institutions aid our understanding of politics and governance?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Almond, G and Verba S (1986) *The Civil Culture.* Boston MA, Little Brown.

Calvert, L. R (1955) "The Rational Choice Theory of Social Institution", in Jeffrey S. Banks and Eric A. Hanushek (eds) *Modern Political Economy.* New York, NY, Cambridge University Press.

Hall, A. Peter and Taylor, C. R. Rosemary (1996) "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalism". *Political Studies* XLIV, 936-957

Steinmo, Sven et al (1992) *Structuring Politics. Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*. New York NY Cambridge University Press.

Suberu, R (2006) "Contemporary Political Analysis". Unpublished Lecture Notes. Department of Political Science. University of Ibadan.

UNIT 3   •   POLITICAL CULTURE APPROACH

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
     3.1   Political culture: meanings and types
     3.2   The development of the political culture approach
     3.3   Basic assumptions of the political culture approach
     3.4   Survey research and political culture approach
     3.5   Limitations of the political culture approach
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The previous unit sought to introduce you to the new institutionalism as an emerging approach in contemporary political analysis. In this unit, you will again be introduced to another interesting approach in contemporary political analysis: the political culture approach. This unit will begin with a typical definition of what is referred to as political culture. You will also be introduced to the basic assumptions of the approach and its weaknesses. As you will soon see, although culture has been used as an explanatory variable for as long as humans have been studying politics, the scientific field of "political culture" itself is relatively new and was not established under that name until the 1950s when it was introduced in the United States. Until that time, one common form of study, linking values and attitudes to behaviour, was the "national character" study, which was typically conducted by various forms of observation within a single country. These studies generally offered such crude and impressionistic blanket descriptions as Asians are "inscrutable," German's are "authoritarian," Americans are "rugged individualists," and Canadians are "peaceful, honest and boring" (Jackson and Jackson, 2000:115).

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
•   define the concept of political culture
•   explain the concept of thick and thin culture as one of the categories of political culture

- trace the emergence of the political culture approach
- identify the assumptions of the political culture approach
- highlight the limitations of the political culture approach.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT
3.1   Political culture: meanings and types

Meaning of political culture
Various scholars have defined the concept of political culture in a great many ways. Our definition here is influenced by Verba (1965:51) and Almond and Bingham (1966:50) who defined political culture as the "broad pattern of values and attitudes that individuals and societies hold toward political objects". These objects include institutions, such as the executive, legislature, bureaucracy, judiciary, political parties, pressure groups, and also the individual's view of him-or herself as a political actor, and in relation to others. Political culture is one of the most powerful influences that shape a political system. It creates norms- beliefs about how people should behave- and those norms influence social behaviour.

Again, Jackson and Jackson (2000:115) argue that politics always reflects the culture of a certain time and place. Political acts are embedded in the wider culture of a society and can be understood only in that context. Almond and Verba (1963:267) also show that political acts "reflect and exemplify society's deepest-held values. For you to understand political action, you are expected to understand political culture. The rationale behind politics is not always self-evident, because politics is not largely conducted in a language that is easily understood, and possesses symbolic behaviour.

The political culture of a state is an amalgam of values and attitudes which pertain to its political system. These provide an invisible, overarching bond that unifies its citizens. That bond include ideologies, values, traditions, customs, beliefs, myths, and symbols- all of which influence the political life of a country- and "are part of the particular pattern of orientations to political objects in which a political system is embedded." A political culture is transmitted from one generation to another through various forms of socialisation, and thereby lends to cohesion and continuity to politics and institutions.

As an approach in contemporary political analysis, political culture refers to the collective opinions, attitudes and values of individuals about politics. There are two traditional approaches to the study of political culture. The "individualistic" approach examines the values

154

and attitudes of individuals, frequently through the use of surveys. Because political culture cannot be directly measured, respondents are asked questions designed to illuminate their views about political culture. Unfortunately, there is always the possibility that the questions asked do not adequately represent the feelings of the population and may not properly measure the concepts being tested.

The "institutional" approach involves the analysis of documents to discern the collective behaviour of political institutions. This approach has been applied in three different ways. First, academics attempt to describe a political culture by observing and analysing political behaviour as reflected by a constitution and by legislation and the structure of government. Second, the geographic, demographic and socioeconomic features of a society are analysed; and third, the historical underpinnings, which have determined a political system, are sometimes examined.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Define the term political culture, and explain why politics "reflect and exemplify society's deepest-held values".

Types of political culture
The concept of culture as borrowed from anthropology emphasised culture's aggregate and holistic nature, its rootedness in history, its connectedness to society and ethnicity, its stability and resistance to change, its coherent structure as a network of meanings, its deductive character, and its exogenous nature as a determinant of both political structure and behaviour. Adapted to political science over the years, the concept has increasingly emphasised individual or micro-level character of culture, the divisibility and the even the independence of parts, its diversity both within and across societies and groups, its dynamism and susceptibility to change, its ambivalence and heterogeneity, its inductive character, and its fundamental endogenous nature.

Political culture as used in political science may be seen as either thick or thin. The essential idea of thick culture is that societies are distinguished and structures (and individual behaviour) are fundamentally conditioned by primordial force, unseen but highly palpable, which contains the genetic code of all that is collectively important and meaningful in that society. A classic definition of thick culture regards it as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities that habits acquired by man as a member of society.'

Thin culture is also an ideal type that may not manifest in any specific 'real world.' Thin culture does not exist independently of thick culture. Rather, thin culture is defined in contradistinction to thick culture. It is an idea that has been cultivated overtime by political scientists who on theoretical or empirical grounds reject one or more of the basic assumptions of the classical conceptions. Thin culture can be thought of as a product of a series of 'saving moves' by political scientists eager to retain as much of the political culture concept as they can while diluting or discarding various aspects of the thick culture which are perceived to be incompatible with theory or inconsistent with observation.

Efforts at 'thinning' the concept of political culture have a long history in the social sciences, but systematic efforts in political science can be traced back to the behavioural movement in the 1950s and 1960s and, specifically, to the efforts of Gabriel Almond (1956) and the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council. This concept of thin culture has come to be adapted for "comparing and classifying political systems in terms that are relevant for understanding the character of political development and change… an approach which can exploit the richness of the separate traditions of country and area studies while keeping attention focused on universal problems and processes basic to the human condition".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
How important is the twin concepts of thick and thick culture in understanding the political culture approach?

3.3   The development of the political culture approach

As an approach to contemporary political inquiry, political culture has gone through three distinctive stages:
   a) Introductory phase of the political culture approach;
   b) Declining stage of the approach and;
   c) Current and flourishing stage of the approach.

The introductory phase refers to the period political culture approach came to be adopted as an explanatory variable of political event and behaviour. In the first several decades of the 20th century, a culture of Personality School emerged out of a synthesis of psychoanalytic ideals and cultural anthropology. This School which had such scholars like Harold Laswell, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Eric Fromm, sought to explain recruitment to political roles, aggression, warfare, authoritarianism, ethnocentrisms, fascism and alike in terms of the socialisation of the children. For example, infant

nursing and toilet training patterns, parental disciplinary patterns and family structure and similar routines and patterns of early childhood.

This School was most influential during the Second World War when studies were made of the national character of nations embroiled in the war. However, this effort to account for the political organisation and policy tendencies of major nations by means of hypotheses drawn from observations of children rearing patterns in the village and tribal studies of anthropologists and the clinical insights of psychiatrists drawn from the treatment of individual patients, proved unconvincing to the mainstream social science discipline as they rapidly expanded and professionalised in the decades after the War.

In reaction against this psychological and anthropological cynicism, the study of political culture developed in the 1950-70 period adopting a more rigorous methodological posture requiring statistical sampling of large populations, the sophisticated construction and analysis of interview schedules, content analysis of the media and other materials and similar quantitative and scientific procedures.

This period of rigorous political culture research had rigorous political culture research such as the investigations of the University of Michigan American Election Studies (which were replicated in Europe and elsewhere), the Princeton/Stanford Civic Culture Five-nation Study, and the Harvard Six-Developing Countries Study. This major investigation stimulated many other small-scale survey research studies as well as secondary analysis of the growing collections of public opinion data. However, the older tradition of culture-personality research also continued largely in the form of psycho-biographical studies of political leaders. Nevertheless the radical movements of the 1960's and 70s challenged the legitimacy of political culture research on the grounds that political and social attitudes were   reflections of class or socio-economic status or elsewhere the 'false consciousness' implanted by such institutions as schools, universities and the media. If so-called political culture was simply capitalist ideology, there was no point in researching it other than to expose it for what it was and to bring to the surface the true socialist political culture that will lead to and sustain an equitable society and polity.

This view received tremendous support within the university community and particularly in the social sciences and Third World area studies to bring into question the validity of research that attributed some autonomous explanatory power to political attitudes and values. Thus, while political culture research continued, it was

besieged and heavily challenged by neo-Marxist and the dependency theorists.

A significant effort at this time in discrediting political culture studies was the attack from the discipline of Economics and the introduction into political studies of market and bargaining models. The movement began at the end of the 1950s with the publication of Anthony Down's (1959) *Economic Theory of Democracy*, followed by Wiliam Riker's (1962) *Theory of Political Coalitions.*

In the next decade, there was an abundance of "rational choice", "public choice" and "positive political theory" studies of voting behaviour, the formation of cabinet, coalition and decision making in war and diplomacy etc,. These studies were interested in proving that political phenomenon could be explained by the simple assumption that voters, politicians, diplomats and military leaders were rational short-run interest maximisers. Rational choice theorists asserted that this assumption of short-run interest of the political actors came sufficiently close to reality to predict political behaviour accurately. Consequently the study of political culture was largely unnecessary and a waste of resources because one could get sufficient explanatory power simply by assuming self interested short-run rationality.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, this "public choice" School in political science became the cutting edge of the discipline dominating the learned journals and the political science personnel market. Yet this radical and rationalists challenges to the political culture approach were in turn weakened and discredited in the course of time. Social democratic Marxism was already already being questioned in the late 1970s. The increasingly heavy tax transfer and regulatory policies of the welfare state were being widely recognised as contributory to inflationary tendencies and serious problems of productivity.

Although insights into political culture have been part of political reflection since classical antiquity, two developments in the context of the French Revolution laid the groundwork for modern understandings. First, when members of the Third Estate declared "We are the people," they were overturning centuries of thought about political power, captured most succinctly by Louis XIV's infamous definition of absolutism: "L'etat, c'est moi " ("I am the State"). Henceforth, sovereignty was seen to reside in society rather than in the monarch and his divine rights. A century later, Max Weber turned this political claim into a scientific one when he defined legitimacy as that which is considered to be legitimate—not

158

only by elites but by the population in general; to understand the political power of the state, social science must therefore attend to its reception and sources in society. Second, when Jean-Jacques Rousseau re-theorised the social contract as one in which individual interests were taken up in an overarching "General Will" of the collectivity, he raised the question of how social solidarity could be maintained in the absence of recourse to divine right. His answer was "civil religion," symbols and rituals that establish and dramatise the sense of collective belonging and purpose. A century later, Émile Durkheim took up these themes when he questioned whether modern, complex societies could generate sufficient solidarity to function in a stable manner. Durkheim's interest in what he called collective effervescence (generated in and through communal rituals) and collective representations (embodied in symbols as well as more abstractly in "collective conscience") extended Rousseau's concerns and has underwritten con-temporary analyses of political culture as the sets of symbols and meanings involved in securing and exercising political power.

Contemporary work on political culture, however, dates more directly to the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the United States. In the wake of World War II (1939-1945), social scientists were motivated to explain why some nations had turned to authoritarianism while others supported democratic institutions. Before and during the war, anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict were proponents of a "culture and personality" approach, which asserted that members of different societies develop different modal personalities, which in turn can explain support for different kinds of political programs and institutions. In a somewhat different vein, the German exile philosopher Theodor Adorno and colleagues undertook a massive study during the war into what they called, in the title of their 1950 work, The Authoritarian Personality, continuing earlier research by critical theorists into the structure of authority in families, which they believed had led Germans to support authoritarian politics and social prejudice. In a similar vein, Harold Laswell described a set of personality traits shared by "democrats," including an "open ego," a combination of value-orientations, and generalised trust.

Perhaps the most important work on political culture in this period was Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's 1963 The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, which combined Lasswell's description of the democratic personality with at least two strands of social science theory at the time. First, the predominant sociological theory in the United States was that of Talcott Parsons, who explained social order in terms of institutions that inculcated individuals with coherent sets of norms, values, and

attitudes- what Parsons called culture-, which in turn sustained those institutions through time. In contrast, the so-called behavioural revolution in political science argued that such accounts neglected extra-institutional variables as sources of social order (a concern that could be traced back to Montesquieu in the mid-eighteenth century, who sought external factors- in his case climate- to explain the different forms of law in history); in Parsons, moreover, critics charged that norms, values, and attitudes were more often simply assumed as necessary integrative features of social systems rather than measured empirically (hence the appeal to behaviourism, which in psychology held observability to be the only relevant criterion for science).

The major point of Almond and Verba's comparative study was to address the role of subjective values and attitudes of national populations in the stability of democratic regimes. This fit clearly within the behavioural revolution because it turned to extra-institutional variables (norms, values, and attitudes) to explain political outcomes.

Nonetheless, the work was presented as a study of political culture, defined as the aggregate pattern of subjective political dispositions in the populace, thus incorporating and, indeed, operationalising, the Parsonsian concept of culture. On the basis of extensive survey research, The Civic Culture theorized three basic orientations toward political institutions and outcomes: parochial, where politics is not differentiated as a distinct sphere of life and is of relatively little interest; subject, in which individuals are aware of the political system and its outcomes but are relatively passive; and participant, where citizens have a strong sense of their role in politics and responsibility for it. The Civic Culture rated five countries on these qualities, finding Italy and Mexico to be relatively parochial, Germany to be subject, and the United States and the United Kingdom to be participant political cultures.

Subsequent work in this tradition by Ronald Ingelhart and others has shown that the effect of basic satisfaction with political life and high levels of interpersonal trust (what would later be called "social capital") are analytically distinct from economic affluence, thus arguing forcefully that democracy depends on cultural as well as economic factors. Contemporary authors such as Samuel Huntington have extended this kind of argument about norms, values, and attitudes to the world stage, where they describe a "clash of civilisations" in terms of basic "cultural" differences understood in this way.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly trace the development of the political culture approach. What are its major arguments?

3.4   Criticisms against the political culture approach

There have been many criticisms of the approach developed by Almond and Verba and their colleagues. These ranged from methodological concerns about the survey instruments to the claim that the approach normatively privileged American-style democracy as the model against which all others must be judged.

Still others argued that political culture was being used as a residual category for all that cannot be explained by other theories, and thus has no theoretically defensible conceptual ground of its own. Most trenchant, however, were charges that the way Almond and Verba defined political culture, in terms of subjectivity, eviscerates the importance of culture as symbols and meanings: Without a richer understanding of symbols, meanings, rituals, and the like, critics charged, political culture could not be distinguished conceptually from political psychology: "What 'theory' may be found in anyone's head is not," one set of critics charged, "culture. Culture is interpersonal, covering a range of such theory.… Political culture is the property of a collectivity" (Elkins and Simeon 1979: 128-129).

Indeed, since the 1970s, political culture theory has been radically transformed by a more general cultural turn in social science, brought about by such influences as the symbolic anthropology of Clifford Geertz and the rise of semiotics, structuralism, and post-structuralism in European anthropology and literary theory. In contrast to older subjectivism, as well as to those who ignore culture altogether, newer work on political culture in the 1980s and 1990s argued that, in Geertz's words, "culture is public because meaning is" (Geertz 1973: 12). This work reformulated political culture as a system of meanings sui generis, as "a form of structure in its own right, constituted autonomously through series of relationships among cultural elements" (Somers 1995: 131), or as "codes," which could be either manifest or "deep." In this view, political culture can be measured only crudely by survey analysis; instead, it must be excavated, observed, and interpreted in its own terms as an objective structure, on the analogy of language.

However, the rise of various structuralisms in political culture analysis- emphasising the Rousseau-Durkheim more than the Montesquieu-Weber axis- has required some modifications since the 1990s, when structuralists approaches in general have fallen somewhat out of favour. More recently, many historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have embraced a "practice"

approach that emphasises meaning making rather than meaning systems.

While in no way a return to the earlier subjectivism in political culture theory, the practice approach recognises the limitations of structuralism, in which agents seem to drop out of the picture, or serve only as enactors or carriers of structure. Instead, recent work has emphasised "the activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce competing claims they make upon one another and upon the whole. Political culture is, in this sense, the set of discourses or symbolic practices by which these claims are made" (Baker, 1990: 4).

In sum, political culture theory makes empirical sense out of the French Revolution's claim that sovereignty derives from society rather than the state. One temptation with this recognition, however, is to assume that while states are about power, societies are about meaning and the reception of power. One solution, inspired by Michel Foucault, among others, has been to declare society the true locus of power. The problem is that this misses the ways in which states do indeed set agendas for societies. Recent analyses have thus returned to the political culture of the state (e.g., Bonnell, 1997). But they do so without supposing that societies are mere recipients of such productions.

In contrast to much work in political sociology, which has drawn a facile distinction between "merely" symbolic politics and "real" politics, recent political culture theory has thus demonstrated that social life is an ongoing reproductive process. New political culture analysts in particular have focused not only on how political acts succeed or fail to obtain some material advantage but also on how in doing so they produce, reproduce, or change identities. The struggle for position that constitutes politics, we now stand, is always simultaneously strategic and constitutive: As Lynn Hunt has written, "Political symbols and rituals were not metaphors of power; they were the means and ends of power itself" (Hunt, 1984: 54). Interpreting them and understanding how they are generated and how they work is thus of paramount importance.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, you should see that the development of the political culture approach has gone through three interrelated stages. The first stage refers to the introductory phase; the second stage is the declining stage of the approach and; the current and flourishing stage of the approach. With this development, the ground has been

reopened for a scholarship aspiring to objectivity and that is methodologically eclectic and ecumenical. Several varieties of political culture studies that have been forced underground or marginalised are now back in operation. Although you will notice that none of them had completely gone out of business, rigorous survey research, historical and descriptive studies and important theoretical work on political culture are now generally acknowledged to be contributing to our understanding of political and social phenomena including economic growth and democratisation. This processes or phenomena are now understood as having significant psychological and cultural dimensions for the understanding of which of the various methodologies of political culture are essential.

5.0 SUMMARY
In this unit, you have learned about the political culture approach. We have mentioned that as an approach in contemporary political analysis, political culture refers to the collective opinions, attitudes and values of individuals about politics. You also learned that theye are two traditional approaches to the study of political culture. The "individualistic" approach, which examines the values and attitudes of individuals through surveys, and the "institutional" approach which involves the analysis of documents to discern the collective behaviour of political institutions. You also learnt that as an approach in contemporary political analysis, political culture has evolved through three stages: the introductory phase; the second the declining stage and; the current and flourishing stage of the approach. We concluded with penetrating criticisms levelled against the theory.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)
Briefly review the significance of political culture approach in contemporary political analysis.

How true is it that politics "reflect and exemplify society's deepest-held values?"

Discuss the main weaknesses of the political culture approach.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

Almond, Gabriel and Verba Sidney (1986) *The Civil Culture Boston.* MA, Little Brown.

Baker, Keith M. (1990) *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bonnell, Victoria E. (1997) *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Elkins, David J., and Richard E. B. Simeon (1979) "A Cause in Search of its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?" *Comparative Politics* 11 (2): 127–145.

Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Hunt, Lynn (1984) *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jackson, J. Robert and Jackson, Doreen (2000) *An Introduction to Political Science: Comparative and World Politics* (3rd Ed.) Ontario: Prentice Hall, Canada.

Leo, K (1975) *Race, Science and Society*. Paris: The UNESCO Press.

Preben Kaarsholm (ed) (2006) *Violence, Political Culture and Development in Africa*. London: James Currey

Somers, Margaret (1995) "What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation." *Sociological Theory* 13 (2): 113-144.

Tylor, Edward (1970) *Primitive Culture.* Lucester: Peter Smith.

UNIT 4   •   ROLE THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
   3.1   Role theory
   3.2   Basic assumptions of role theory
   3.3   The uses of role theory
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we discussed the political culture approach, with its assumption that politics always reflects the culture of a certain time and place; and that political acts are embedded in the wider culture of a society and can be understood only in that context. We learnt that political acts reflect and exemplify society's deepest-held values. In this unit, which is the last in this module, you will learn about role theory: its assumptions in political analysis; its usage; and the criticisms levelled against the theory. It is imperative for you to understand that role theorists posit that the individual located within a social context best mirrors his/her role in political processes and phenomena. Such scholars argue that political behaviour is always conducted in the performance of a political role. They similarly believe that political scientists will never develop sound explanations of political phenomena if they view political actors only as individuals, and even as individual members of groups.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- identify the basic assumptions of the role theory
- explain the uses of role theory
- highlight the criticisms levelled against the role theory

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Role theory
Role theory assumes that the individual located within a social context best captures his/her role in political processes and

165

phenomena. As Heinz Eulau puts it "political behaviour …is always conduct in the performance of a political role (1963:40). The strong implication is that political scientists will never develop sound explanations of political phenomena if they view political actors only as individuals, and even as individual members of groups. Role theorists, therefore, are of the contention that political behaviour is largely the result of the demands and expectations of the role or roles that a political actor happens to be filling. For example, the personality and attitudes of President Goodluck Jonathan may influence his decisions, but the decisions are made as he fills a role or set of roles as the President, and this fact, the role theorist argues, is of primary importance.

In the literature on role theory in contemporary political analysis, there is almost a consensus on the difficulties inherent in purely individualists approach to politics, and hence the strength of the theory.

John Wahlke, in the introductory essay of an *application of role theory to legislative behaviour* has argued, "No legislature or other institution could be seen by the analyst if the human actors did not exhibit behaviour in conformity to at least some nominal extent, with the norms of behaviour constituting their roles" (Wahlke, 1962:10). Thus, Isaak (1985: 254) writes, "one attractive feature of role theory is its attempt to place political activity in a social context; that is, a conceptual framework is provided that views the individual as some one who depends upon and reacts to the behaviour of others".

Yet, role theorists are reputed for their ability to describe institutions behaviourally. To these theorists, a political institution is seen as a set of behaviour patterns associated with roles. Again, Wahlke (1962:9) writes "The chief utility of the role-theory model of the legislative actor is that, unlike other models, it pinpoints those aspects of legislators' behaviour which make the legislature an institution. An institution is in this context described in a number of interrelated roles. Role theory help us by bridging the gap between individualistic and group approaches. While one can still talk about an individual behaviour, this can only be considered in terms of their roles, which are the basic components of institutions.

Role theory begins with the basic assumption that political actors find themselves in various positions, from President to voters, with certain behaviour patterns associated with them. There are certain expectations about how some are in a particular position is supposed to behave. These expectations are what we label as role or roles.

The literature on role theory has identified two kinds of sources of expectation. The first category is those that "outsiders" have. A society has certain notions about what the President should and should not do. The 'notions of society' include the expectations of the private citizens, of groups, and of government officials, and they are manifested in the constitution, legislative statutes, public opinion, and deeply ingrained cultural norms. Since the office holder is aware of these expectations, they in turn influence the behaviour of any one filing a particular role. Thus, there is a two-way psychological relationship in any role.

In a diametrical position, are the perceptions the "insider" has of the outsider's expectations. Using President Shehu Musa Yar'Adua as our example again, he knows there are legal restrictions on his power, and if he is an astute politician, he also realises the various publics, including other professional politicians, conceive of the president's role in terms of particular duties, responsibilities and sanctions. The accuracy of the President's reading of these expectations is one important ingredient of presidential effectiveness.

Therefore, the first kind of influence proposed in role theory stems from the relationship between the expectation of those outside the role and the perception of these expectations of those filling the role. This suggests a second kind of influence. It is the way role occupants' (insiders), interpret their role; that is their own expectation about what should and should not, can and cannot be done. A good example here is James L. Gibson's study on *"Judges, Role Orientation, Attitudes and Decisions: An Interactive Model"* (Gibson, 1978: 911- 24).

The example of President Yar'Adua continues: he considers the expectations of outsiders, but he also comes to the office with his own ideas about the role he must play. These ideas largely reflect attitudes, ideology and personality traits developed before his movement into the role. But in addition, they would be conditioned by the expectations of outsiders. As earlier mentioned, the role occupant is conscious of such expectations and in fact considers them.

The outside expectation influences his own interpretation of the role. It is a case of learning (Isaak, 1985:255). The President for instance considers what other politicians think he should be doing, and adjust his behaviour accordingly. However, there is also a strong possibility that he will begin to adopt some of these ideas and attitudes as his own. He will learn through association or reinforcement, to have a particular interpretation of the role of the president.

While for purpose of analysis, role theory can make a distinction between outside expectations and internal interpretation of a role, they are closely interviewed; the difference between considering outside expectations and having your own interpretation shaped by these expectations is often difficult to see. What you need to understand at this moment is that, in either case, behaviour is affected by the role. It is also important to understand that a role does not exist in isolation. Role theorists use the concept "role network" to describe the relationships among roles. The example from Heinz Eulau graphically captures this network.

> A legislature is "colleague" to his fellow legislators, "representative" to his constituents, "friend" (or enemy) to lobbyists, "follower" to his party leaders… Whatever role is taken, simultaneously or seriatim, what emerges is a very intricate structure of relations in which one role is implicated in several others roles (Eulau, 1963: 41).

Isaak (1985:256) has stressed that role theory deals with complex social situations. Any conceptual scheme or model that is developed from the approach will have to simplify the situation, in emphasising a particular set of relationships and de-emphasising others.

A second implication cited by Isaak is that many of the most visible roles are really made up of a number of subroles. The President for instance is also a citizen. Some roles include many subroles that are ambiguous and nearly indeterminate. There is also the problem of sorting out of political role networks. Legislators perform a number of political roles, but at the same time these are probably tied to role that we would identify as social or economic. In addition to being a representative and colleague, a senator might be a father, a church elder and a union member.

This leads to another important phenomena identified by role theory. This phenomenon is regarded as role conflict. More often that not, a political actor may have two or more political roles that may conflict. In some circumstances, actors' political roles may conflict with their social or economic role. An example of the first would be the dilemma faced by a member of House of Representative who, to satisfy his constituency (who favour extensive federal spending on education), must work against the party's policy of cutting such spending, or vice versa. An example of the second would be the problem faced by the conscientious senator – father who believes his children should be back in the home state rather than in Abuja where the Senator can be of most use to his state and his country. In another example, consider a Senator who sponsors a bill for children of all political office holders not to study abroad while his children

are studying abroad. Here, his/her political roles are seen as conflicting with his/her family roles. In both situations, the expectations attached to the several roles have consequences. How the role occupant resolves the dilemma is regarded as an important question for role theory.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
With necessary examples, state the basic assumptions of the role theory.

3.3 The uses of role theory

What do you consider to be the main use of the role theory in contemporary political analysis? This is the main concern of this section.

a) Explaining and prediction of political behaviour

Role theory is used to explain and predict political behaviour. Knowledge of the expectations attached to a role by a society provides us with the basis for predicting the behaviour of a particular occupant of a role. We might say that President Goodluck Jonathan is more concerned about the issue power supply than the former Heads of State because this is expected of a democratic president; it is part of his role.

b) Role conflict

Role conflict is also useful to political scientists. It might explain for instance, the seemingly erratic behaviour of some government officials. The discovery of conflict between several roles could suggest hypotheses relating to conflict and resulting behaviour designed o resolve the conflict. As the number of roles increases, the likelihood of developing accurate generalization decreases. But even in the situations, the assumptions of the approach that political actors fill roles and that, because they often fill several roles, conflict is possible have focused the political scientist attention on certain kinds of potentially relevant phenomena.

c) Framework for analysing institutions in behavioural terms

According to the role theory, institutions are neither group of individuals nor rigid structures, but systems of interrelated roles. This gives the role theorists the ability to treat an institution such as House of Assembly or the Bureaucracy as dynamic process that has some continuity. There is some stability in roles; all modern legislators have filled the same set of roles, and yet, because role

expectations change and different individual occupy different roles, there is also a change in the nature of the role.

d) An Approach to the study of political recruitment

If a role has certain expectations attached to it, then it seems reasonable to assume that individuals meeting the requirements proposed by these expectations will be more likely to fill the role than those who do not. The limits of this kind of analysis are obvious; we might predict that certain types will not be recruited into certain roles, but it is much more difficult to predict who the occupant will be because other factors are involved. Furthermore, role expectations may change, and the competitions for the position may be instrumental in changing them. This is another kind of role learning by the outsiders.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain the usefulness of role theory to political analysis.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Role theory is described as an approach to social and political analysis, which assumes that political actors are greatly influenced by the positions they fill. While not disregarding the individual as the dictum of scientific research, role theory also focuses on the social context in which individuals find themselves and operate. Consequently, the theory posits, "political behaviour…is always conduct in the performance of political role (Eulau, 1963:40). There are certain expectations (both "outside" and "within") that structures how someone in a particular position is supposed to behave..

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, attention ahs been given to role theory as an approach in contemporary political analysis. You learnt that the role theory, while looking at the individual does so within a social context. You also saw that the theory assumes that political actors find themselves in various positions with certain behaviour patterns associated with them. There are therefore certain expectations (both "within" and "outside") that condition the behaviour of political actors.

We were also reminded that a role does not exist in isolation, hence the concept of "role network". We also saw that most primary roles are also made up of adjunct roles; and what role conflict implies. This unit further considered the uses of the role theory for explaining and predicting political behaviour; for the identification of role conflict; as a framework for analysing institutions in behavioural terms and as an approach to the study of political recruitment.

We concluded by noting that given the complexity of most role network, can the roles in a particular situation be reduced to a manageable number that still describes with some accuracy the behaviour involved? Are there some other kinds of non-role variables that might influence behaviour and that cannot be included within a role approach? In other words, can the role theory do the job by itself?

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

What do you consider as the main strengths and weaknesses of the role theory?

Itemise the uses of role theory as an approach in contemporary political analysis.

With relevant examples, discuss role conflict.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Biddle, Bruce and Thomas, Edwin (eds) (1966) *Role Theory: Concepts and Research.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Eulav, Heinz (1963) The Behavioural Persuasion in Politics. New York: Random House.

Gibson, L. James (1978) "Judges Role Orientation, Attitude and Decisions: An Interactive Model", *American Political Science Review*, 72: 911-24.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry (4th Edition).* Pacific Grove, California: Brooks Cole Publishing Company.

Wahlke, J. Eulau, H., Buchanan, W. and Ferguson, C. Le Roy (1962) *The Legislative System*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

UNIT 5   POST-MODERNISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Post-modernism offers a revolutionary approach to the study of society: in questioning the validity of modern science and the notion of objective knowledge, this movement discards history, rejects humanism, and resists any truth claims. Post-modernism, which has its origins in the humanities, is today being applied to, and are restructuring, the social sciences. The post-modern challenge to reason and rational organisation radiates across academic fields. For example, in psychology it questions the conscious, logical, coherent subject; in public administration it encourages a retreat from central planning and from reliance on specialists; in political science it calls into question the authority of hierarchical, bureaucratic decision-making structures that function in carefully defined spheres; in anthropology it inspires the protection of local, primitive cultures from First World attempts to reorganise them. In all of the social sciences, post-modernism repudiates representative democracy and plays havoc with the very meaning of "left-wing" and "right-wing."

The main thrust of thus unit, is to introduce you to the basic tenets of post-modernism as an emerging approach in political science. We also hope to understand the strengths and weaknesses of this approach in political analysis.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the successful completion of this unit, you are expected to:
- define post-modernism
- describe the development of post-modernism
- explain the basic tenets of post-modernism

- highlight the strengths of the post-modernism approach
- highlight the weaknesses of the post-modernism approach

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What does post-modernism entail?
Postmodernism is the belief that:

(a) Most theoretical concepts are defined by their role in the conjectured theoretical network (a subset is 'operationally' defined by a fairly direct tie to observations).

(b) The theoretical network is incomplete.

(c) It follows that theoretical concepts are 'open', or what logicians call 'partially interpreted'. Research continues precisely because they are open; the research task is to 'close' them, although never completely.

Postmodernism in political science refers to the use of postmodern ideas in political science. Many situations which are considered political in nature can not be adequately discussed in traditional realist and liberal approaches to political science. Brief examples include the situation of a "draft-age youth whose identity is claimed in national narratives of 'national security' and the universalising narratives of the 'rights of man,'" of "the woman whose very womb is claimed by the irresolvable contesting narratives of 'church,' 'paternity,' 'economy,' and 'liberal polity.' In these cases, there are no fixed categories, stable sets of values, or common sense meanings to be understood in their scholarly exploration. Liberal approaches do not aid in understanding these types of situations; there is no individual or social or institutional structure whose values can impose a meaning or interpretive narrative.

In these margins, people resist realist concepts of power which is repressive, in order to maintain a claim on their own identity. What makes this resistance significant is that among the aspects of power resisted is that which forces individuals to take a single identity or to be subject to a particular interpretation. Meaning and interpretation in these types of situations is always uncertain; arbitrary in fact. The power in effect here is not that of oppression, but that of the cultural and social implications around them, which creates the framework within which they see themselves, which creates the boundaries of their possible courses of action.

Postmodern political scientists, such as Richard Ashley, claim that in these marginal sites it is impossible to construct a coherent narrative, or story, about what is really taking place without including contesting and contradicting narratives, and still have a "true" story from the perspective of a "sovereign subject," who can dictate the values pertinent to the "meaning" of the situation. In fact, it is possible here to deconstruct the idea of meaning. Ashley attempts to reveal the ambiguity of texts, especially Western texts, how the texts themselves can be seen as "sites of conflict" within a given culture or worldview. By regarding them in this way, deconstructive readings attempt to uncover evidence of ancient cultural biases, conflicts, lies, tyrannies, and power structures, such as the tensions and ambiguity between peace and war, lord and subject male and female, which serve as further examples of Derrida's binary oppositions in which the first element is privileged, or considered prior to and more authentic, in relation to the second. Examples of postmodern political scientists include post-colonial writers such as Frantz Fanon, feminist writers such as Cynthia Enloe, and postpositive theorists such as Ashley and James Der Derian.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Explain what is meant as post-modernism.

3.2   The development of post-modernism
The term "postmodern" came into the philosophical lexicon with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984), where he employs Wittgenstein's model of language games (see Wittgenstein, 1953) and concepts taken from speech act theory to account for what he calls a transformation of the game rules for science, art, and literature since the end of the nineteenth century. He describes his text as a combination of two very different language games, that of the philosopher and that of the expert. Where the expert knows what he knows and what he does not know, the philosopher knows neither, but poses questions. In light of this ambiguity, Lyotard states that his portrayal of the state of knowledge "makes no claims to being original or even true," and that his hypotheses "should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised" (Lyotard, 1984: 7).

The term "modernity" refers to that period - nearly a century - beginning well before World War II and ending well after it, in which science established facts, political theory established the social state, secularism overcame religious opinion, and the notion of shame was denied or explained away with various social

174

conventions. It was an era dominated by the thought of Freud and Marx. Its tendency was toward the legitimacy of the social welfare state. Sweden represents its culmination.

"Post Modern" embraces a period from about 1980 to the present, characterised by the emergence of the postindustrial information economy, replacing the previous classes of aristocracy, middle class, and working class with the new paradigm: information elite, middle class, and underclass. The phrase also implies a nation-state challenged by new world views: feminism, multiculturalism, environmentalism, etc; old scientific certainties called into question; the replacement of mechanical metaphors with cybernetic ones.

Postmodernism rejects the modernist ideals of rationality, virility, artistic genius, and individualism, in favour of being anti-capitalist, contemptuous of traditional morality, and committed to radical egalitarianism. The most recent feature of Postmodernism is the rise of Political Correctness and the attempt to purge dissenting opinion from the ranks of the academic/artistic/professional brahmin caste, together with a systematic attack on excellence in all fields. Postmodernism is an anti-Enlightenment position wherein adherents believe that what has gone before, as "Modernism", is inappropriately dependent on *reason*, *rationalism*, and *wisdom*, and is, furthermore, inherently elitist, non-multicultural and therefore *oppressive.*

Finding fertile ground in academic departments of literature (particularly literary criticism), art history, and sociology - and more recently in history and political science, its origin can be traced to the French academy of the 1970's whose proponents are now called "deconstructionists", the essence of which is that in any literary creation (any "text"), the actual *meaning* of the screed is to be found in the reader, not in the author. That is to say, it is futile to try and know what an author *meant* by what is written, but what you *Can* know is what you interpret from what you have read and *That* becomes the true meaning. Such a Text, the postmodernist insists, is "ultimately self-contradictory", unless if written by a postmodernist.

In the sense that the Enlightenment encapsulated an acquired series of rational observations into Truths, and then wove those Truths into a coherent philosophy of the world, general laws which apply to it, and the consequences of such laws to its inhabitants, the postmodernists reject the notion that anything can be resolved to be True. Everything is in the mind of the beholder: relative, forever shifting; and anything perceived to be a "fact" is the mere disillusionment of a cultural bias. With such a philosophy, adherents

can move beyond the critique of *books* to the critique of anything, even science, about which they tend to be supremely ignorant. But in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is King, and in postmodernism, the man in best possession of obscurantist jargonism is a Professor.

Postmodernism is the unifying philosophy of the academic left which has replaced the discredited Marxism. It might also be claimed that Marxism has morphed into postmodernism. Like all academic exercises, it has an argot of jargon, tropes and incoherent phraseology recapitulated continuously by the cognoscenti. It distills, ultimately, to mere *posturing* as a substitute for intellectual fervor. Although nothing, according to the postmodernist, can be determined to be "true", postmodernism itself is, of course, True.

Paying homage at the postmodernist altar are all sorts of new *academic disciplines*, chief of which are "women's studies", "black studies", and "interdisciplinary studies", and others such as environmental activists such as those interested in "global warming".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Trace the historical development of post-modernism

3.3 Basic tenets of postmodernism
The current postmodern belief is that a correct description of *Reality* is impossible. This extreme skepticism, assumes that:

a. All truth is limited, approximate, and is constantly evolving (Nietzsche, Kuhn, Popper)
b. No theory can ever be proved true - we can only show that a theory is false (Popper)
c. No theory can ever explain all things consistently (Godel's incompleteness theorem)
d. There is always a separation between our mind & ideas of things and the thing in itself (Kant)
e. Physical reality is not deterministic (Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics, Bohr)
f. Science concepts are mental constructs (logical positivism, Mach, Carnap)
g. Metaphysics is empty of content.
h. Thus absolute and certain truth that explains all things is unobtainable.

According to Rosenau, postmodernists can be divided into two very broad camps, Skeptics and Affirmatives:

Skeptical Postmodernists are those that are extremely critical of the modern subject. They consider the subject to be a "linguistic convention" (Rosenau, 1992:43). They also reject any understanding of time because for them the modern understanding of time is oppressive in that it controls and measures individuals. They reject Theory because theories are abundant, and no theory is considered more correct that any other. They feel that "theory conceals, distorts, and obfuscates, it is alienated, disparate, dissonant, it means to exclude, order, and control rival powers" (Rosenau, 1992: 81).

Affirmative Postmodernists also reject Theory by denying claims of truth. They do not, however, feel that Theory needs to be abolished but merely transformed. Affirmatives are less rigid than Skeptics. They support movements organised around peace, environment, and feminism (Rosenau 1993: 42).

One of the essential elements of Postmodernism is that it constitutes **an attack against theory and methodology**. In a sense proponents claim to relinquish all attempts to create new knowledge in a systematic fashion, but substitutes an "anti-rules" fashion of discourse (Rosenau: 1992: 117). Despite this claim, however, there are two methodologies characteristic of Postmodernism. These methodologies are interdependent in that Interpretation is inherent in Deconstruction. "Post-modern methodology is post-positivist or anti-positivist. As substitutes for the scientific method the affirmatives look to feelings and personal experience.....the skeptical post modernists most of the substitutes for method because they argue we can never really know anything (Rosenau 1993:117).

Deconstruction: Deconstruction emphasises negative critical capacity. Deconstruction involves demystifying a text to reveal internal arbitrary hierarchies and presuppositions. By examining the margins of a text, the effort of deconstruction examines what it represses, what it does not say, and its incongruities. It does not solely unmask error, but redefines the text by undoing and reversing polar opposites. Deconstruction does not resolve inconsistencies, but rather exposes hierarchies involved for the distillation of information.

Rosenau's Guidelines for Deconstruction Analysis:
- Find an exception to a generalisation in a text and push it to the limit so that this generalisation appears absurd. Use the exception to undermine the principle.
- Interpret the arguments in a text being deconstructed in their most extreme form.

- Avoid absolute statements and cultivate intellectual excitement by making statements that are both startling and sensational.
- Deny the legitimacy of dichotomies because there are always a few exceptions.
- Nothing is to be accepted, nothing is to be rejected. It is extremely difficult to criticize a deconstructive argument if no clear viewpoint is expressed.
- Write so as to permit the greatest number of interpretations possible.....Obscurity may "protect from serious scrutiny". The idea is "to create a text without finality or completion, one with which the reader can never be finished".
- Employ new and unusual terminology in order that "familiar positions may not seem too familiar and otherwise obvious scholarship may not seem so obviously relevant".
- "Never consent to a change of terminology and always insist that the wording of the deconstructive argument is sacrosanct." More familiar formulations undermine any sense that the deconstructive position is unique (Rosenau 1993:121).

Intuitive Interpretation
"Postmodern interpretation is introspective and anti-objectivist and a form of individualised understanding. It is more of a vision than data observation. Interpretation gravitates toward narrative and centers on listening to and talking with the other" (Rosenau 1993:119). For postmodernists, there are an endless number of interpretations. Foucault argues that everything is interpretation (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:106).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Differentiate between sceptical and affirmative postmodernists.

3.4 Concepts relevant in understanding postmodernism

Modernity: Modernity came into being with the Renaissance. Modernity implies "the progressive economic and administrative rationalisation and differentiation of the social world" (Sarup, 1993). In essence this term emerged in the context of the development of the capitalist state. The fundamental act of modernity is to question the foundations of past knowledge.

Postmodernity: Logically *post*modernism literally means "after modernity. It refers to the incipient or actual dissolution of those social forms associated with modernity". Postmodernity concentrates on the tensions of difference and similarity erupting from processes

of globalisation: the accelerating circulation of people, the increasingly dense and frequent cross-cultural interactions, and the unavoidable intersections of local and global knowledge.

Modernisation: "This term is often used to refer to the stages of social development which are based upon industrialisation. Modernisation is a diverse unity of socio-economic changes generated by scientific and technological discoveries and innovations.

Modernism: Modernism is an experiment in finding the inner truths of a situation. It can be characterised by self-consciousness and reflexiveness. This is very closely related to Postmodernism (Sarup, 1993).

3.5 Other concepts associated with postmodernism

The concept of "modernity" has its root from the Latin name "modo," meaning "just now". The postmodern, then literally means "after just now" (Appignanesi and Garratt, 1995). There are other points of reaction from within postmodernism that are associated with other "posts." Let us consider the following: postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and postprocessualism.

Postcolonialism

This concept is defined in three different, but somewhat related ways:
  i.   a description of institutional conditions in formerly colonial societies;
  ii. an abstract representation of the global situation after the colonial period;
  iii. a description of discourses informed by psychological and epistemological orientations.

Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) represents discourse analysis and postcolonial theory as tools for rethinking forms of knowledge and the social identities of postcolonial systems. An important feature of postcolonialist thought is its assertion that modernism and modernity are part of the colonial project of domination.

Debates about Postcolonialism are unresolved, yet issues raised in Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a critique of Western descriptions of Non-Euro-American Others, suggest that colonialism as a discourse is based on the ability of Westerners to examine other societies in order to produce knowledge and use it as a form of power deployed against the very subjects of inquiry. As should be readily apparent,

the issues of postcolonialism are uncomfortably relevant to contemporary political analysis.

Poststructuralism

In reaction to the abstraction of cultural data characteristic of model building, cultural relativists argue that model building hindered understanding of thought and action. From this claim arose poststructuralist concepts. Post structuralists like Bourdieu are concerned with reflexivity and the search for logical practice. By doing so, accounts of the participants' behavior and meanings are not objectified by the observer.

Postprocessualism

Unlike Postcolonialism and Poststructuralism, which are trends among cultural anthropologists, Postprocessualism is a trend among archaeologists. Postprocessualists "use deconstructionist skeptical arguments to conclude that there is no objective past and that our representations of the past are only texts that we produce on the basis of our socio-political standpoints. In effect, they argue that there is no objective past and that our representations of the past are only texts that we produce on the basis of our socio-political standpoints" (Harris, 1999).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Differentiate between the following concepts (a) postcolonialism (b) postconstructuralism, and (c) Postprocessualism.

Critique of postmodernism

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of postmodernism is the focus upon uncovering and criticising the epistemological and ideological motivations in the social sciences. This has been referred to in political science.

Another major strength of postmodernism is its ability to critically examine ethnographic explanations. The unrelenting re-examination of the nature of ethnography inevitably leads to a questioning of ethnography itself as a mode of cultural analysis. Postmodernism adamantly insists that political scientists must consider the role of their own culture in the explanation of the "other" cultures being studied. Postmodernist theory has led to a heightened sensitivity within anthropology and the social sciences to the collection of data.

However, many criticisms have been leveled against the postmodern approach. First, postmodernism definition of objectivity and subjectivity and subjectivity has been questioned by examining the moral nature of their models. D'Andrade (1931) in the article "Moral

Models in Anthropology" argued that these moral models are purely subjective that despite the fact that utterly value-free objectivity is impossible, it is the goal of the researcher to get as close as possible to that ideal. He argues that there must be a separation between moral and objective models because "they are counterproductive in discovering how the world works.

Patricia M. Greenfield believes that postmodernism's complete lack of objectivity, and its tendency to push political agenda, makes it virtually useless in any scientific investigation (Greenfield, 2005). She suggests using resources in the field of psychology to help Anthropologists gain a better grasp on cultural relativism, while still maintaining their objectivity.

Rosenau (1993) identified seven contradictions in Postmodernism:

a. First, its anti-theoretical position is essentially a theoretical stand;
b. Second, while Postmodernism stresses the irrational, instruments of reason are freely employed to advance its perspective;
c. Third, the Postmodern prescription to focus on the marginal is itself an evaluative emphasis of precisely the sort that it otherwise attacks;
d. Fourth, Postmodernism stress intertextuality but often treats texts in isolation;
e. Fifth, by adamantly rejecting modern criteria for assessing theory, Postmodernists cannot argue that there are no valid criteria for judgment;
f. Sixth, Postmodernism criticises the inconsistency of modernism, but refuses to be held to norms of consistency itself;
g. Seventh, Postmodernists contradict themselves by relinquishing truth claims in their own writings.

Habermas' argues that postmodernism contradicts itself through self-reference, and notes that postmodernists presuppose concepts they otherwise seek to undermine, e.g., freedom, subjectivity, or creativity. On his view, postmodernism is an illicit aestheticisation of knowledge and public discourse. Against this, Habermas seeks to rehabilitate modern reason as a system of procedural rules for achieving consensus and agreement among communicating subjects. Insofar as postmodernism introduces aesthetic playfulness and subversion into science and politics, he resists it in the name of a modernity moving toward completion rather than self-transformation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Critically examine the main weaknesses of Postmodernism.

4.0 CONCLUSION
The concept of Postmodernism has been given various theoretical interpretations as its scope permeates various disciplines. Postmodernism is a general and wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism, politics, among others. Postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. In essence, it stems from a recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality.

For this reason, postmodernism is highly skeptical of explanations which claim to be valid for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races, and instead focuses on the relative truths of each person. In the postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism relies on concrete experience over abstract principles, knowing always that the outcome of one's own experience will necessarily be fallible and relative, rather than certain and universal.

Postmodernism is "post" because it is denies the existence of any ultimate principles, and it lacks the optimism of there being a scientific, philosophical, or religious truth which will explain everything for everybody - a characteristic of the so-called "modern" mind.

5.0   SUMMARY
In this unit, we have been introduced to postmodernism as an approach in political analysis. Modernism is an experiment in finding the inner truths of a situation. It can be characterised by self-consciousness and reflexiveness. In political science, postmodernism refers to the use of postmodern ideas in political science. We have traced the historical development of this approach, and have learned about other relevant concepts associated with postmodernism. Finally, we have examined the main strengths and weaknesses of this approach. The paradox of the postmodern position is that, in placing all principles under the scrutiny of its skepticism, it must realise that even its own principles are not beyond questioning. As the philosopher Richard Tarnas states, postmodernism "cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various

metaphysical overviews against which the postmodern mind has defined itself."

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS
Critically examine the arguments made against and for postmodernism.

How can the main arguments of post-modernism aid our understanding of Nigerian government and politics?

How is the concept of deconstruction essential in post-modernism analysis of politics?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING
Appignanesi, Richard and Chris Garratt (1995) *Introducing Postmodernism.* New York: Totem Books.

D' Andrade, Roy (1995) "Moral Models in Anthropology". *Current Anthropology*, 36(3): 399-407.

Dreyfus, Hubert and Paul Rabinow (1983) *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. 2nd. ed Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Greenfield, P. (2000) "What Psychology can do for anthropology, or why anthropology took postmodernism on the chin". *American Anthropologist*, *102*(3), 564-576.

Habermas, Jurgen (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Frederick Lawrence (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harris, Marvin. (1999). *Theories of Culture in Postmodern Times*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Said, Edward (1978) Orientalism. New York: Routledge.

Sarup, Madan (1993) *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*. Atlanta: University of Georgia Press.

MODULE 4   POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND POWER APPROACHES

This module will first focus on two of the most popular methods of organising thought in social science, systems theory and structural functional analysis. The latter is an offshoot of the former, and so they are placed in the same methodological category. The basic point is that functional analysis assumes the existence of a system, and it is reasonable to begin with brief considerations of systems theory.

The last two units are regarded as theories of power distribution. Each of the two concentrate on the question: How is power distributed? This concern is at the heart of politics. Who gets what, implies that the answer to the question must begin with power. If politics is the process by which values are distributed, then the main factor affecting the distribution is power. While all distributive models begin with the assumption that power is at the heart of the political process, they differ concerning how power is typically distributed in a political system

The learning outcomes of the module for you include:
- Know the main assumptions of the systems approach
- Understand the contributions of various scholars to structural systems analysis
- Explain the distribution of power within the political system
- Highlight the differences between group theory and elite theory
- Be able to advance informed opinion on relevance of elite theory to contemporary political analysis
- Have a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between systems approach and structural-functional approach

We now turn to an elucidation of the concepts under the following units:

Unit 1   •   Systems theory

Unit 2   •   Structural Functional Analysis

Unit 3   •   Group Theory

Unit 4   •   Elite Theory

UNIT 1   •   SYSTEMS THEORY

CONTENTS
1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
      3.1   The systems approach
      3.2   Characteristics of a system
      3.3   Concepts in systems theory
      3.4   The uses of systems theory
      3.5   Strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of systems
            theory in explaining politics
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The systems approach to political analysis represents a macro approach to political inquiry. The approach enables us to selectively identify and organise what is political when we look at the whole society. The concept of political system was popularised by David Easton in his bold attempt to make the study of politics scientific. It is a concept that has been borrowed from the biological sciences and adopted for the study of political science. The various issues that will be examined in this unit are the definitions, characteristics of systems, uses and limitations of the systems approach to contemporary political inquiry.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
highlight the basic characteristics of systems
describe the interrelatedness and interdependence of the major parts of the political system
explain the main assumptions of the systems theory
explicate David Easton's input-output model
discuss the strengths and limitations of the systems theory

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The systems approach
Let us first start by explaining what is meant by a system: A system is an abstract construct to represent what goes on in the real world for purposes of analysis. It is a pattern of stable relationship among the parts, which make it up.

185

The next question here is what is meant by systems theory? A system theory is an approach to political science which operates on the macro level and assumes that political decisions can be understood only of the entire system is examined.

Political systems theorists assume that political phenomena can best be analysed by viewing them as part of systematic whole. In politics, David Easton is popular in applying the systems theory to municipal politics. In the same area of politics, we noted Morton Kaplan analysis in international politics. Kaplan, one of the foremost users of systems theory in the study of international politics, asserts "a scientific politics can develop only if the materials of politics are treated in terms of systems of action" (Kaplan, 1957:4). Even though non-systems theorists may object to this claim, they might admit the utility of a rudimentary notion of a system as a starting point for theory construction in political science.

The best-known original general systems theorists are Ludwig Bertalanffy and J. G. Miller. Bentanlanffy was the first to accept that systems are isomorphic (similar) in nature. This means that systems at a micro or macro level are the same. J. G. Miller on his part introduced the idea of living systems. What Miller meant was that a system that has no function to carryout must be dead.

We must therefore appreciate that systems range from a micro organisation to international organisation; but that each system must have a decider, otherwise known as the nucleus. Without this according to Miller, a system cannot survive. In the case of a political system, we are specifically talking of a pattern of political behaviour that is connected and expressed within a clearly defined analytical boundary. This suggests the following:

   i.   A political system implies interrelatedness

   ii.   The attributes of the political system is reciprocity. The different parts depend, rely, and benefit from each other

   iii. All the different interrelated parts usually looks for a situation of equilibrium

   iv.   A political system usually has certain needs that must be satisfied or else such a system is bound to die.

All these attributes summarise a political system as a system of interactions that are related to the authoritative allocation of values in the society (Easton, 1957).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In your own words, explain what is meant as a political system?

3.2 Characteristics of a system

Scholars have offered a list of characteristics features by which systems can be identified:

a) A system is composed of a set of units that are interrelated and identical. A system consists of units, which are sufficiently alike to form a set, and these parts must be sufficiently inter-dependent in such a way that a change in one causes a change in the other.

b) Each of these parts performs important functions, which sustain the system, and ensures its survival.

c) The units of the system operate within a boundary and this boundary is what marks out the transactions within the system and between the system and its environment. Of course, emphasis here is on systems, which are common i.e. open systems, which relate with their environment. It is in the process of interaction with the environment that the idea of growth and adaptation becomes associated with a system.

d) A system shows a structure, which is a pattern of relationship between component units. This relationship too is subject to adjustment as a result of the changing state of inter-unit transactions. For example, if one part of a system is affected, other parts are also affected and therefore, there is a tendency for other parts to adjust.

e) A system has a goal towards which it works; the commonest been self-preservation or resistance.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List five basic characteristics of systems theory.

3.2 Easton's Input-Output Model

The major concepts in systems theory are represented by David Easton's input-output model in figure.

Teaching politics: political system (Easton)
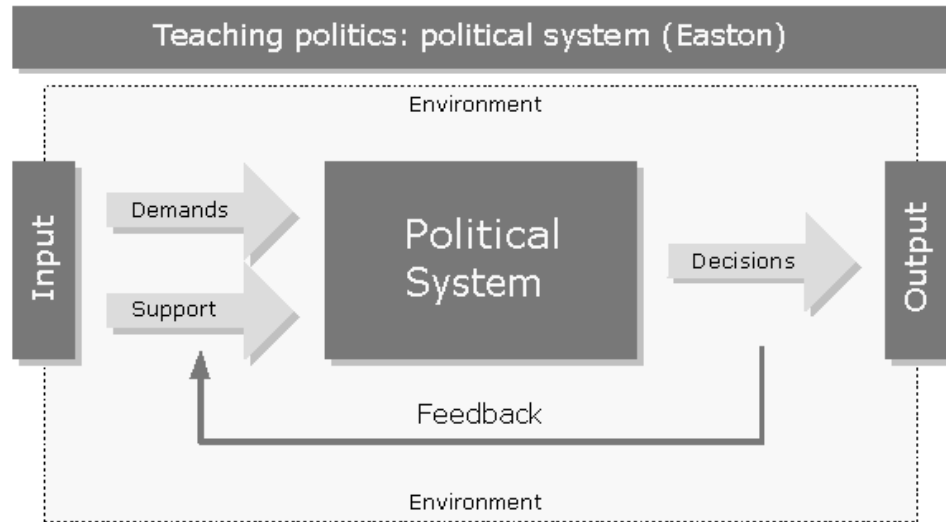
This input-output model identifies the major parts of the political system to include the total environment, the inputs the structures of the political system concerned with the authoritative allocation of values, output, and the feedback process. All these parts are themselves interrelated and interdependent, as the directions in figure 1 indicate. Let us consider each of these interrelated parts.

i.   *The boundary* refers to the limit or dividing line within which political activities take place.

ii. *The total environment* on the other hand refers to the totality of the society in which we live and how its nature determines what we want, what we do, and so on. As Osaghae (1988) notes, this environment will include both internal and international elements because the entire world has become one integrated mass in which what happens in "China" would likely affect what goes on in Nigeria (emphasis mine). From the environment, come the i*nputs*, which consist of *demands* and *supports*. This is what adds some substance to the political systems framework. Inputs include demands – indications from the political system's environment of what is waited, needed and required – and supports – the extent to which the society is willing to consider the system and its leaders legitimate. Legitimacy is thus one of the most significant concepts to flow from the systems approach. If suggests that political leaders and their government can lose authority, that is, the mass public acceptance of their right to rule, if they are unresponsive to the demands of the people. Demands may be articulated in a peaceful way through voting, writing to official or lobbying them, or in violent ways through riots, kidnapping, strikes, or even civil war.

iii.   *The inputs* are transmitted to the conversion process where they are processed and converted into authoritative allocation of values as outputs. These outputs in figure are simplified according to the three major organs of government, namely rule making, by the legislature, rule adjudication by the judiciary and rule application by the executive. Basically, outputs are the policies formulated by the decision makers. These concepts are significant because they describe how a system model accounts for linkage between the system and its environment, or between systems.

iv.   *The feedback* refers to the influence of outputs on inputs and ultimately on decisions. An interest group for instance makes demands (inputs) on the National Assembly, asking for the passage of a particular bill. There will be a feedback resulting finally in reaction to the interest group to the National Assembly. There will probably be new inputs, perhaps even the withholding of political support, including civil disobedience. The National Assembly then learns of the results of its decision through the change in inputs, and perhaps may modify its behaviour.

According to Isaak (1985: 276), feedback is important to systems theory because it provides a kind of continuity. It builds into the approach a method for handling the two-way relationship between inputs and outputs.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Outline and explain basic concepts of a political system as identified in Easton's input-output model.

3.3 Uses of the systems theory
One of the major goals of the systems approach is to account for how a given political systems survives overtime. It focuses on factors, which make for stability and instability in a political system by examining how they are able to manage demands, threats and supports directed towards them in such a way as to maintain their existence.

Osaghae (1988:34) has summed up the basic features of the systems approach into three. First, it is concerned with how order is maintained, because it suggests that the maintenance of the system depends on its ability to maintain order. Second, it recognises that change is inevitable as it is interested in how political systems survive overtime. Third, it draws attention to the importance of goal-realisation, and highlights that no political system can survive for long without articulating and pursuing identifiable goals.

With all these features of the systems theory, political scientists who adopt this approach view it primarily as a way of looking at phenomena. The commitment is made to concentrate on the system and its behaviour, including the interaction of its elements but not the characteristics of the elements. The approach is placed in the category of the macro as against micro approaches to politics. It also seems to be of heuristic, not explanatory value. Thus the label "theory" is a misnomer; it is much more accurate to think of the systems approach as a conceptual scheme.

3.4 Strengths and limitations of the arguments of the systems theory
The systems theory has some identifiable strength in political analysis:

1) **A framework for comparing political systems**: Theoretically, the systems approach is not limited to nation-states alone, as there are political systems in unions, clubs and other organized associations in society. It provides a standardized set of concepts such as inputs, outputs, and feedback to describe the activities, which takes in all political systems. This enables us to compare political systems.

2) **An approach to change:** The approach also takes cognisance of the inevitability of change and addresses itself to how the system can adapt itself and survive when faced with changes. This is particularly relevant for studying African, Asian and Latin American societies, which continuously undergo rapid changes resulting from the process of development. As you will soon learn in the limitations of this approach, its concern about change is superficial.

3) **Analysis of international political system:** By drawing attention to the external environment of every political system, it is a useful approach for analyzing the international political system especially the linkage between the domestic and the international environment.

The systems theory has also received a dosage of criticisms:

i. **Abstraction from the concrete:** The first major criticism of systems theory is that it is only an abstraction of social reality. In this context, it is sometimes difficult to apply it at certain levels. For instance, when we say Nigeria is a system, one can easily comprehend because the country has a boundary, a nucleus, interrelated parts etc. At an

international level for instance, it may be difficult to employ boundaries, especially when we are talking of organization like the G7, G8 and G77. Again, international system lacks the authoritative allocation of values.

ii. **Neglect of the role of morals in politics**: The systems theory has been criticised for totally ignoring the issue of morals in politics. This means that whether a political system is a democracy, dictatorship, communist etc is immaterial. However, you are reminded here that each system pursues certain goals.

iii. **Too mechanical:** Systems are seen by others as been too mechanistic. Thus, talking about inputs, outputs, conversion process, feedback, environment without figures and facts is irrelevant. Besides, considered irrelevant by this model. Given this situation, system theory does not offer any great prospect for empirical study of politics. In other words, a theory should avail itself of empirical research.

iv. **Orientation towards the status quo:** Another popular criticism of this approach is that it is ideologically oriented towards retaining the status quo. By placing emphasis on order and systems maintenance, the approach is not well suited to studying revolutionary changes. In fact, some authors have argued that the approach seeks, from a Western ideological standpoint, to be an alternative approach to Marxism which suggests that only revolutionary changes can bring about desired changes in society.

v. **Dichotomy between political and social interaction:** This approach fails to give a clear definition of what is political, and what differentiates political interactions from other types of social interactions. It is more inclined to argue assume that all political interactions are directed towards the "authoritative allocation of values". Such emphasis seems to imply that politics only take place in national political system.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained that a system is an abstract construct to represent what goes on in the real world for purposes of analysis. The conceptual scheme enables us to differentiate between political and

non-political system. Thus allowing us to know when a behaviour that is abnitio not political end up becoming political.

However, you must be aware that the main concern about this theory is how a political system is able to persist and survive overtime. It has thus been dubbed as the ideological endorsement of the status quo.

4.0 SUMMARY
In this unit, we have dealt with the meaning of a system and systems theory. We have also identified various systems theorists such as Morton Kaplan, J. G. Miller, Ludiwig Bentanlanffy, David Easton, Karl Deutsch and others who have contributed to the development of the systems theory in political inquiry. In addition, you have learnt about the basic features of the system theory; the uses of the theory and a critique of the theory. The stage can now be said to have been prepared for you to learn about the derivative of systems theory; the structural functional analysis.

5.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
   i.   Critically evaluate the systems approach to political analysis.

   ii.   Using the systems approach in political science analyse the Goodluck Jonathan's government and its politics.

   iii. The systems theory has been seriously criticised. Discuss

6.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Easton, David (1965) *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Easton, David (1957) "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems". *World Politics* 9: 383-400

Easton, David (1956) *A Framework for Political Analysis.* Eaglewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice Hall

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science. An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Groove: California: The Dorsey Press

Kaplan Morton (1957) *Systems and Processes in International Politics.* New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Osaghae, E. (1988) *Political Analysis* (POS 211). Ibadan: UI External Studies Programme.

Wiseman, H. V. (1966) *Political Systems: Some Sociology Approaches.* New York: Praeger Publishers.

UNIT 2   •   SRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about systems theory as an approach of organising thought in social science. Functional analysis, structuralism, functionalism, structural-functional system approach or structural-functional analysis, as it is variously called is an offshoot of the systems approach and can be placed in the same methodological category. It can therefore be placed within the category of macro as opposed to micro approaches to political inquiry.

The central concern of this unit is to explain the basic assumptions of the structural functional analysis and how it is related to systems theory. Attention would also centre on functions performed by political structures. As the unit shows, a set of values is the force behind the creation of institutions. Thus, politics or political behaviour informed by a set of values is responsible for the creation of institutions. The unit further demonstrate that certain functions must be performed in every society, even though their manifestation may vary from place to place.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- state the   basic assumptions of the structural-functional approach
- establish the linkage between systems approach and structural-functionalism
- identify the analytical goals and structural-functional analysis
- explain the three functional categories of political structure
- explain the criticism levelled against structural-functional approach

194

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The emergence of structural-functionalism in politics
Structural-functionalism, a sociological concept with fountainhead of Malinowsky, emerged from the effort of scholars like Talcott Parson, David Easton, Gabriel Almond, Bingham Powell, and James Coleman to develop a comprehensive framework within which political system, past and present as well as Western and non-Western could be analysed as a basic for scientific study of comparative politics.

The proponents of the structural-functional approach sought to develop a common scientific framework for the comparative analysis of all political systems.

This approach has four related analytical goals with the acronyms CRIP:

  i.   Comprehensiveness: The inclusion of Western and non-Western cases

  ii.   Realism: The analysis of the actual behaviour, rather than formal rules

  iii. Intellectual order: The creation of a unified theory of politics which will bring together the fields of comparative government, political theory and international relations

  iv.   Precision: The application of scientific and quantitative techniques in the study of political behaviour and phenomenon.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Briefly explain the analytical goals of the structural-functional analysis.

3.2 Basic assumptions of structural-functionalism

The core assumption of the structural-functional approach is that a universal set of political functions could be defined and associated with different structures in different political systems. In other words, all political systems perform the same core set of functions, although these functions may be performed by different structures from one society to another.

Political system here refers to a set of interactions, institutions and agencies concerned with formulating and implementing collective goals of a society by employment or threat of employment of more

or less legitimate physical compulsion. It exists in both domestic and international environment shaping, these environments and being shaped by the environment.

The literature on structural-functional analysis has identified five types of political structures located within the modern political system: political parties, interest groups, legislature, executives/ bureaucracies, and the courts.

In existing Western systems, political parties are largely but by no means exclusively associated with interest aggregation; interest groups with interest articulation, legislate with rule making or policy formulation, executives and bureaucracies with rule application or policy implementation and courts with rule adjudication.

In addition, two other structural components of the political system are the mass media and the range of other social institutions (e.g. the families, schools and churches) that play a key role along with more obviously political institutions such as parties in maintaining or adapting the political system especially by performing the functions of political socialisation, communication, recruitment etc. The inclusion of these social institutions within the political system should suggest to you that the boundaries between the political system and other social systems are not physical but behavioural.

While the seven structures mentioned above are found in almost all-modern political system, it is possible that these structures may perform different functions or may be organized differently across political systems.

Table 2 Structural-Functional System Approach

S/N	Structures	Functions
1	Pressure/interest groups	Interest aggregation
2	Political parties	Interest aggregation/recruitment
3	Legislature	Rule/policy formulation/making
4	Executive	Rule/policy application/ implementation
5	Judiciary	Rule/policy adjudication/ interpretation
6	Mass media	Political communication
7	Family, Church, Media and Work place	Political socialisation/ recruitment

3.3 Functions performed by political structures

.

a) Process Functions

The process function includes interest articulation, interest aggregation, policymaking, policy implementation and rule adjudication. These are called process functions because they play a direct and necessary role in the process of making policy. These functions are performed by such political structures as parties, legislatures, executives, bureaucracies and courts.

The structural-functional system approach stresses the fact that while a particular institution such as the legislature may have a special relationship to a particular function such as rule making; it does not have a monopoly of those functions. For example, both the President and Governors may perform legislative functions. The executive may also exercise veto powers to the higher courts through judicial review of legislations.

b) System Functions

The system functions include political socialisation, recruitment and communication. These functions are systemic because they determine whether the system will be maintained or changed. For example, they determine whether policymaking will continue to be dominated by a single authoritarian party or military council or whether competitive parties or legislatures will replace them. As Suberu (2006) notes, these three system functions underpin and permeates all parts of the political process:

i. *Political Socialisation*, involves families, schools, mass media, churches and all the various political structures that develops, reinforce and transform attitudes of political significance in the society.

ii. *Political recruitment* refers to the selection of people for political activities and government offices.

iii. *Political communication* refers to the flow of information through the society and through the various structure that make up the political system

c) Policy Functions

These functions relates to the output of the political system and their substantive impacts on the society, the economy and culture. As the end product of the political process, the policy functions are synonymous with the performance of the political system.

David Easton has described the workings of a typical western political system in the following cyclical movement.

Interests develop from the general populace or the grassroots→ Interest groups are then formed to articulate those interests → Political parties aggregates these group articulated interests into manageable packages or coalitions → The government responds to this party-aggregated interests by making, implementing, and/or adjudicating public policy → The public policy then feeds back to change the nature or interests developing from within the general populace or the grassroots and the whole circle begins again.
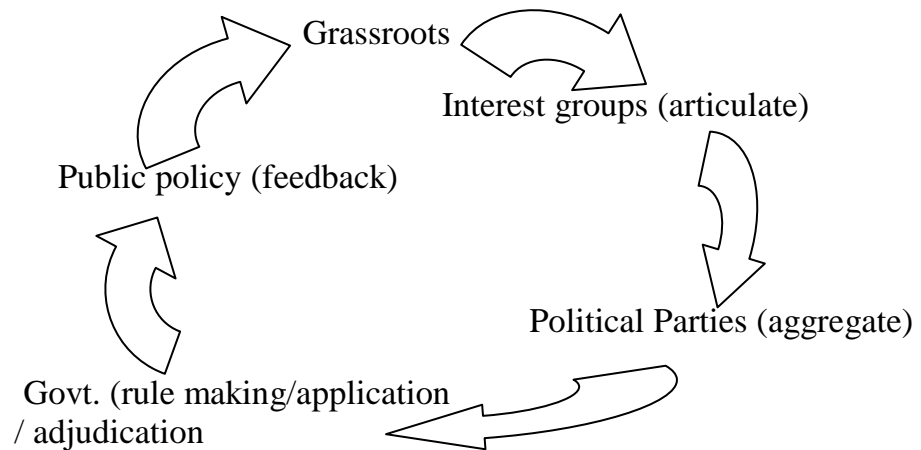
The structural-functional approach describes the activities carried out in any society regardless of how its system is organised or what kind of policies it produces.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Distinguish between policy functions and systems functions.

3.4 Criticisms against the structural-functional approach
    a) Structures can be identified on the one hand and functions on the other. However, the attempt to neatly connect them is not realistic because structures as institutions may not necessarily carryout the formal functions associated with them. In other words, functions in a political system may even be distributed or dispersed even though structures may be identified for carrying them out. Besides, the existence of certain structures in a political system may be deceptive in the sense that they may no longer be functionally useful in such a society.

    b) Many scholars have also argued that the structural-functional approach is conservative in its methodology. This is because the approach focuses on describing a set of political

institutions at a particular time and despite all pretentious and revision is less concerned about why a political system function the way it does and it might evolve change overtime.

c) The structural-functional approach was at its weakest point when dealing with transitional or developing political systems. Precisely because it was derived from the logic of advanced capitalist societies, the structural-functional system approach failed to recognise and address key specific elements such as crises and challenges of politics in transitional societies. These challenges involved the crises of nation building, state building, participation and distribution. This weakness led Almond and Powell (1966) to formulate a developmental version of the structural-functional systems approach in their book *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. This book introduced the idea of the responsive capabilities of political systems vis-à-vis their domestic and foreign environment and the development of this system overtime. This version of the structural-functional approach identified the function of political socialisation and recruitment as development processes and it defined the remaining six functions (interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule making, political communication) as conversion functions because they covert inputs from the environment to outputs.

The developmental version of structural-functionalism also posited that political development of transitions politics was dependent on the attainment of a greater degree of structural differentiation and cultural secularization (you should please note that these two concepts really underscore the ethnocentrisms of the structural-functional approach).

In essence, the developmental version of the structural approach suffered from all the ethnocentricities of the original theory and it was widely attached for its inability to produce explanations for change, its extraordinarily pretentious and cumbersome use of jargon and its lack of operationalisation in terms of specific hypotheses.

d) Despite its commitment to developing a universal model of politics, the structural-functional system approach is heavily criticised for its ethnocentric fixation with Western and specifically United States and Britain political institutions. The ethnocentricity of the structural-functional approach is further underscored by the suggestion of its proponents that for the efficient performance of their functions, all political

systems required specific types of differentiating; relatively autonomous western – style institutions such as associational rather than primordial interest groups, secular or pragmatic rather than ideological or parochial, political parties and free and neutral rather than partisan media.

Thus structural-functional approach came to appear less and less like a universal standard for comparison and more and more like a rather parochial projection of Anglo-American value and the Anglo-American political system into the rest of the world.

e) This approach appears too ambitious and consequently, too schematic and simplistic to be a theoretical framework. The approach therefore seems to be of heuristic rather than explanatory value. It is a general conceptual framework that may serve as a basic for a more specialised political research. Nevertheless, as a theoretical framework of analysis, structural-functionalism has not succeeded and has been displaced by more rigorous and specialised paradigms like the institutional, cultural and comparative historical approaches.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
What are the arguments made against the structural-functional approach to political inquiry?

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained that the functional analysis is a derivative of systems theory. While not yet the major school of thought in political science that it is in sociology and anthropology, functionalism has nevertheless come into its own as an important approach to analysing political phenomena.

Functional analyses are used to generate hypotheses and organise existing knowledge of the political system, and at times a functional explanation is proposed to account for political phenomena. This approach is concerned with system maintenance – how political systems survive overtime. This is how functionalism ties in with the more general systems approach.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned about the basic assumptions of the functional approach framework. These assumptions states that a universal set of political functions are associated with different structures in different political system. We also mentioned that the functional approach has four analytic goals defined in the context of comprehensiveness, realism, intellectual order and precision. The

unit also discussed functions that are performed by political structures: process, system and policy functions. It concluded with the main weaknesses of the structural-functional approach to political analysis.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Critically evaluate the merits and demerits of the structural approach to political analysis.

Describe the three broad functions performed by political structures.

How useful is the structural-functional analysis in analysing Nigerian government and politics?

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Almond, Gabriel (1960) "Introduction: A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics". In Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman *The Politics of Developing Areas*. Princeton N. J., Princeton University Press 3-64

Almond, Gabriel and Powell G. Bingham (1966) *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Easton, David (1957) *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Flanigan, William and Figelman, Edwin (1967) "Functional Analysis". In James C. Charlesworth (ed) *Contemporary Political Analysis.* New York: Free Press. 72 – 73.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove: California: The Dorsey Press

Nagel, Ernest (1961) *The Structure of Science*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovonorich

Parsons, Talcott (1959) "Voting and the Equilibrium of the American Political System". In Eugene Burdick and Arthur Brodbeck (eds) *American Voting Behaviour.* New York: Free Press

Parsons, Talcott (1951) *The Social System*. New York: Free Press.

Suberu, Rotimi (2006) "Contemporary Political Analysis". Unpublished Lecture Notes, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan.

Wiseman, H. V. (1966) *Political Systems: Some Sociological Approaches.* Pacific Grove: California: The Dorsey Press.

UNIT 3   GROUP THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   What is group theory all about?
        3.2   The interest-group theory
        3.3   Criticisms against the Group theory
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Group theory was developed in the United States of America, as a politics of the action of groups. The theory contends that neither individuals nor whole societies are significant political actors. The actions of groups in pursuit of their various interests are the sources of policy and the substance of politics. Group theory is thus a special type of pluralism.

Group theory, in political science is largely associated with Arthur Bentley and, in various reformulations, with writers on pluralism. The central concern of this unit is to introduce you to group theory as an approach in contemporary political inquiry. Emphasis in this unit will be placed on the assumptions of group theory especially its variant, the interest-group theory. We would also provide relevant illustrations to enable you capture the rich assumptions of this theory.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
define group theory
state the basic assumptions of group theory
explain the contributions of Arthur Bentley to group theory
state the basic assumptions of group theory
highlight the thesis of the interest-group theory
critique the group theory

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 What is group theory all about?

The group theory in political science, largely associated with Bentley argues that societies consists of a large number of social, ethnic or economic groups, more or less well-organised in political competition with each other to put pressure on the government into producing the policies favourable to the relevant groups.

Versions of the theory can either claim that it is entirely compatible with the aims of democracy, and that group representation satisfies democratic norms, as well as being empirically realistic, or can alternatively be used to argue that all societies have the same true structures, whatever their surface ideology and characteristics. Other branches of political science have taken the nature and multiplicity of groups as vital elements in determining political stability or indeed the liberalness or otherwise of the society.

In political analysis, group theory presupposes the fact that an inquiry into the political behaviour and phenomenon should be sought in the interactions and relationships between groups as they make claims on each other for the values of society.

Arthur Bentley (1870-1957) was an influential political scientist of the inter-war period. Methodologically, he was the precursor of the behavioural movement of the post-war period, while theoretically; he was the founder of pluralism. His main contribution to the analysis of political systems was his group theory.

Bentley held that the traditional distinctions in political science between democratic and dictatorial systems were largely superficial. He argued that all political systems really consisted of a number of separate groups competing with one another for influence over policy. The role of the government was essentially that of political broker, responding to the demands and influence of the different groups and distributing "goods" (in form of policies) in response. In many respects, this approach represented a development of ideas expressed by the European School of Elitism, and resembled modifications of earlier ideas made by people such as Schumpeter. Like many earlier theories of its period, Bentley's was largely intended to strip away what he saw as an artificial shell of respectability surrounding democratic theory, many elements within which he regarded as more than myths.

The question we should ask at this point is "what is meant as a 'group'? There is somehow a consensus among political scientists about what they mean as group. Most agree that a political group

exists when men with shared interests organise, interact, and seek goals through the political process. The key notions here are "interaction" or "relationships", "interest", and "process" or "activity". David Truman, reinterpreting Bentley has argued that such interactions are the group (Truman, 1971:24).

The next thing for us is to ask, what is the significance of the group in the political system? How useful is group theory to the study of politics? Let us answer these questions by placing them in two categories.

First, there is a School of group theory that believes group activity is politics. This includes people like Arthur Bentley. He argues,

> when the groups are adequately stated, everything is stated. When I say everything, I mean everything. The complete description will mean the complete science, in the study of social phenomena, as in any field" (Bentley, 1908:208-9).

In this context, a description of group activity is a description of politics. An approach to the study of politics must be based on the concept of group; hence the indispensability of groups in politics.

The second School of thought is less parochial in characterising his approach. Although these theorists retain the basic assumption that group behaviour is at the centre of politics, they nevertheless do not view a description of groups as a description of political groups as equivalent to the description of all politics. For instance, David Truman wrote,

> We have argued, in fact, that the behaviours that constitute the process of government cannot be adequately understood apart from the groups, especially the organised and potential interest groups, which are operatives at any time (Truman, 1971:502).

However, he does not completely dismiss the significance of the individual in political life. To him, "We do not wish…to deny that individual differences exist or that there is evidence to support the notion of individuality" (Ibid).

Another way to look at the difference between interpretations of group theory is in the terms of individualistic-holistic controversy. Truman is regarded as an individualist in that he does not view the properties of groups as emergent. A political group is made up of individuals and of relationships between individuals. The philosophical position that a group is no more than the sum of its

parts is compatible with the research strategy that views group behaviour as the most useful unit of analysis.

The position of that of Bentley and others, is closer to the holistic position and represents those group theorists who view the group as the stuff of politics both philosophically, methodologically and strategically.

In the literature on group theory, the major question that often pops up is, "how do group behave in the political system?" Since politics is ultimately explained in terms of relationships between groups as they make claims on each other and compete for the values of the society, only the characteristics of groups that are relevant to this kind of activity are studied.

In trying to answer this question, group theorists take two diametric position. The first, spearheaded by Bentley, claims that government is a mere register of group pressure. He writes, "The official procedures of government are techniques through which interest groups operate rather than independent forces in the political process". Thus, groups compete; pursue their interests, and government rings up the result indicating who has won and who has lost. This perspective downplays the significance of government.

The diametrically opposed deportment argues that the government is as much a group as an interest group; each part of the competitive political process. The Senate for instance is not merely a political cash register; it also has its interests. It is not an inert mechanical computer recording the interests of other groups or the balance of power among them. Government instead take an active role in tipping the balance.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
Explain the significance of groups in the study of politics.

3.2 The interest group theory
The interest group theory of regulation and government has been in the literature of economics and political science for a long time. The thrust of the theory is about how the organised "few" win favour from the government at the expense of the unorganised "many".

In the past thirty-five years, however, the interest group theory has grown from an intuitive but loose idea about how government works into a rigorous theory of government with testable implications that are not nearly so obvious as the "few" versus "many" logic would seem to suggest. Two group theorists in the field of economics paved the way for these developments.

Olson (1965), first explored the important question of how interest groups overcome free-riding behaviour, with respect to the "public good", provided by lobbying in order to organise for collective action. In other words, how do interest-groups form and how large are they?

The key idea of the theory has been explained as follows: government activities are viewed as a process in which wealth or utility is redistributed among individuals or groups. Some individuals or groups are effective at organising and engaging in collective action such that they are able, for example, to organise for less resources to obtain more wealth or services. Such groups are known as net demanders of transfers. The second group organise with more resources to get less   services. This group are known as net suppliers of transfers. The institutional framework of representative democracy and its agents represents the means of facilitating wealth transfer, that is, of pairing demanders and suppliers effectively. There exists an equilibrium level of transfers in this theory, with deviations being mitigated through elections.

In the interest-group theory, consumer and producer interests are traded-off against one another. However, much economic regulation is driven by a different set of combatants. Competitor versus competitor interests fuels much regulation. The most obvious example of this type of regulation is where the producers of butter obtain a regulation raising the price of margarine. However, this is not what is meant here; what is meant is competitor versus competitor in the same industry, that is, some butter producers against others.

Let us consider a graphic illustration of what we have been discussing above. Firms in an industry are heterogeneous with respect to costs; the industry supply curve is upward sloping. This opens the door to possible regulations which impose relatively greater costs on higher-costs, marginal firms, causing some of them to leave the industry. All firms face higher costs as a result of direct regulation, but the exit of the higher-cost firms' raises market price in the industry. Depending upon relevant elasticity, the increase in price can outweigh the increase in costs for the lower-cost producers. If so, the regulation increases their wealth at the expense of both consumers and the higher-cost firms, which had to leave the industry.

Marvel (1979) used this theory to explain the origin of the British Factory Acts in the 1830s. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that such laws were in the political interest because they limited the working hours of women and children, Marvel argues that the regulation of hours favoured steam-mill over water-mill owners. The

latter could only operate when streams were high. According to Marvel's estimates, the resulting rise in the textile prices transferred a significant amount of wealth to steam-mill owners, who operate on a regular basis.

Several points are worth noting. First, do not confuse the interest group theory to Marxism. Simple minded Marxism suggests that Capital always win over Labour in the legislative process. The interest-group theory stresses the cost and benefits of organisation and lobbying. Any group can win benefits from the state in the interest-group theory. Moreover, there is ample evidence that Labour, students, the elderly, businessmen and so on benefit from regulation. Nor is it always small groups that win at the expense of unorganised individuals. They are many quite large interest groups.

Second, the bourgeoning literature on social costs of rent seeking (Tullock, 1967) forms the normative backdrop for the interest group theory of government. The interest group theory of government is about lobbying; and the theory of rent seeking is about the costs of lobbying.

Third and lastly, none of the forgoing is meant to convey the idea or attitude that the interest-group theory is complete or settled. There are many issues yet to be satisfactorily addressed, not the least of which is how does the theory explain regulation, privatisation, and the role of the government in regulation and the allocation of resources? However, the progress made by the interest group theorists over the last thirty years has been remarkable, and undoubtedly, scholarship will continue to be robust in this area.

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the essence of interest group theory.

3.3   Criticisms against the group theory

While group theory seems a useful approach to the study of politics, i.e. by suggesting hypothesis, this approach is not without criticisms. According to critics of this theory, it omits one important set of variables, namely, the characteristics of individuals. As earlier mentioned, the political scientist does not have to be a holist assuming the existence of emergent group properties to base a study of politics on the group. Most group theorists do not reject the importance, let alone the existence, of individuals in politics. They only state that it is a wise strategy to stay at the group level. This criticism therefore misses the mark. Secondly, by focusing attention by those groups operating only in contact with the government, group theory fails to acknowledge the fact that other groups such as the economic, social, and religious groups, in fact interest groups are also political groups. For they also structure the processes and functions of government institutions. Thirdly, group theory assumes

that groups are rational actors, who are committed to maximising their utility. The evidence on the ground differs from this claim, as groups sometimes behave in ways that can hardly be considered as rational.

The last criticism is that group approach is wrong and misleading in not considering the nation, the state, or society. This criticism argues that group theory studies a limited range of political phenomena. This has made its critics to argue that this theory cannot properly handle the notion of "public" or "national interest".

SELF-ASSESMENT EXERCISE

Attempt a critique of the group theory.

What is the significance of the group in the political system?

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is worth stating in the conclusion that the government as an institution also has interests as groups in the society. This cannot be whisked away. The government is not just a referee, but also an important participant in the game that groups compete. However, David Truman views government and interest groups as significantly different: "An interest group is a shared-attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society. If and when it makes its claims through or upon any of the institutions of government it becomes a political interest group (Truman, 1971:37)."

A political group is characterised by its contact with government. This implies that not all groups are political. A labour union bargaining with industry is not political until it leaves the bargaining table and appeals to the National Assembly. Thus, we can say that a group theorists like Truman limits the scope of political science to group activity occurring around the official institutions of government. This is broader than it might seem, for two of the institutions that groups work through are elections and public opinion. But some group activities lie outside politics.

Government institutions are groups of a special kind. They are groups because they have interests and compete with other groups. Government regulates the group struggle and determines the balance of power within the system. But government also formulates the rules that somewhat determine the shape of the struggle. This all assumes that governmental decisions result from the interplay of the

demands and objectives of interest groups and governmental institutions (Isaak, 1985:2680).

The assumptions of group theory go hand in glove with those of a broader model and ideology of politics, i.e. pluralism. Pluralism is used as both a description of certain political systems and as a recommendation about how others ought to be structured. The theory of pluralism argues that some plural systems, like United States, are made up of a number of competing groups, each representing a significant political, social, or economic interest. In a pluralist system, power is widely distributed and political decisions are the result of give and take.

5.0 SUMMARY

The group theory is a very interesting approach in political inquiry. The theory believes that the action of groups as advocated by Arthur Bentley is a variant of pluralism. You have also seen the various divide in the group theory: those who claim that group activity is politics and the second School which even though agreeing with the assumptions of the former, nevertheless do not view a description of political groups as equivalent to the description of politics. The theory also takes a diametric position about the role of government. The first School believes that the government is a mere register of group pressure whereas the other believes that the government is much a group as an interest group; and in fact compete with the groups. Lastly, you learned that this theory is limited in a number of ways including its neglect of the characteristics of individuals; its definition of political groups as only those operating in contact with the government; its assumptions of the rationality of groups and its less analytical utility to the state, the nation or the society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGMENT (TMA)

How does the group theory explain the dynamics of the present conflict in the oil-rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria?

What are the main weaknesses of the group theory in contemporary political analysis?

In what ways has Arthur Bentley (1870-1957) contributed to development of the group theory?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Bentley, Arthur (1968) *The Process of Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove: California; The Dorsey Press.

Mc Cormick, R. E. and Tollison, R. D. (1981) *Politicians, Legislation and the Economy: An Inquiry into the Interest-Group Theory of Government*. Boston: Martinus-Nijhoff.

Marvel, H. P. (1977) "Factory Regulation: A Reinterpretation of Early English Experience". *Journal of Law and Economics*, 20: 379-402.

Olson, M (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action*. New York: Shocker Books.

Peltzman, S (1976) "Toward a More General Theory of Regulation". *Journal of Law and Economics*, 19:211-40.

Posner, R. A. (1974) "The Theories of Economic Regulation", *Bell Journal of Economics & Management Science*, 5: 355-58.

Stigler, G.J. (1971) "The Theory of Economic Regulation". *Bell Journal of Economics & Management Science,* 4: 254-68.

Tollison, R. D (1988) "Public Choice and Legislation". *Virginia Law Review*, 74: 339-71.

Tollison, R. D. (1988b) "The Interest Group Theory of Government". *The Locke Luminary*, 1(1):1-5

Truman, David (1971) *The Governmental Process* (2nd ed). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

UNIT 4   ELITE THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt that the group theory has at its heart, the concept of power and how power is distributed in a political system. This unit, which is among the theories of power distribution, will focus on elite theory. However, while all distributive models begin with the assumption that power is at the heart of the political process, they differ concerning how power is typically distributed within the political system. While the group theory and its close relative, pluralism assumes that power is widely distributed throughout many societies and tends to be centred in groups, the elite theory which is to be discussed next claims that power is always concentrated in the hands of a small minority, the elite. Elite theorists posit that a small, cohesive minority controls every human organisation. Power is therefore not only distributed unevenly but very unevenly. These theorists also agree that the development of elites is inevitable, and that pluralism is a myth as power can never be widely distributed.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:
- define the concept "elite"
- describe the basic assumptions of the classical elite theory
- explain the concept of representation in elite theory
- evaluate the autonomy of elites
- critique the elite theory

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Elite Defined
Elite (also spelled Élite) is taken from the Latin, eligere, "to elect". In sociology as in general usage, the élite is a relatively small dominant group within a larger society, which enjoys a privileged status which is upheld by individuals of lower social status within the structure of a group. When applied to an individual, as in the phrase "many elites come from this squad," the usage quite economically both refers to an individual within that class and establishes the speaker as non-elite.

Elite is the result of economic and political forces within a social structure. Upon formation, societies have often had the tendency to stratify due to a combination of politics and ability. The position of an elite at the top of the social strata almost invariably puts it in a position of leadership and often subjects the holders of elite status to pressure to maintain their position as part of the elite. However, in spite of the pressures borne by its members, the existence of the elite as a social stratum is usually unchanged.

The concept of elite comes from the French. Arslan (1995:3) explains that, "elite" originally derived from the Latin "eligre" which means select, shares a common basis with "electa" that means elected or the best. The term "elite" was used to describe commodities of particular excellence in the seventeenth century. The usage was later extended to refer to superior social groups, such as prestigious military units or higher ranks of the nobility. However, it was not widely used in social and political studies until the late nineteenth century. The elite concept acquired worldwide popularity in social science as a result of the writings of Italian sociologists Vilfredo Pareto (1968) and Gaetano Mosca (1939) in the nineteenth century, after which it became popular in Britain and America in the 1930s.

Theoretically, elites can be defined as those people who hold institutionalised power, control the social resources (include not only the wealth, prestige and status but also the personal resources of charisma, time, motivation and energy) and have a serious influence (either actively or potentially) on the decision-making process. They can realise their own will in spite of opposition.

According to this theoretical definition, the term elite does not necessarily involve only the occupier of the top strata. It may comprise both those people who are at the top, bottom or outside the organisations. In addition, it may include the people in the capitalist, middle or working class. Power, control and influence are major

212

words in this definition. If the people have power actively or potentially, they have a direct or indirect effect on the decision-making process and are controlling the social resources they can be identified as the elite.

According to Etzioni-Halevy (1993:29), the term elite refers to "those who wield power and influence on the basis of their active control of a disproportionate share of society's resources.

Elite theory is one of the major theories, which aims to analyse and explain the power structure and power relations. It investigates power and control and aims to analyse elite and non-elite (mass, public) differentiation. Elite theorists are concerned almost exclusively with on inequalities based on power or lack thereof. This distinguishes elite theory from class theory. Power in turn, is based on other resources (such as economic assets and organisational strength) and for its part may give rise to control over other resources as well. However, as Etzioni (1993:19) stressed, elite theory is concerned primarily with the other resources, which are related to it.

Elite theory distrusts class analysis and the idea that class struggle would entail the liberation of the working class, and thereby of society as a whole. According to Pareto (1968), the most important of these are the struggles between rising and falling elite groups. History is not history of class struggle as maintained by Marx, but the struggles between elites over social domination. This cyclical movement of elites according to Vilfredo Pareto is known as the circulation of elites, or what in French is referred to as *circulation des élites*. He envisioned in any polity two strata in a population: (1) A lower stratum, the non-élite, and then (2) a higher stratum, the *élite*, which is divided into two: (a) a governing *élite*; (b) a non-governing *élite.* The manner in which the various groups in a population intermix, bringing with it certain inclinations, sentiments, attitudes, that they have acquired in the group from which they come, and that circumstances, Pareto argued, cannot be ignored. To this mixing, in particular case in which only two groups, the *élite* and the *non-élite* are envisaged, the term "circulation of elite" has been applied (Pareto, 1935: 1422-1432).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
How would you define the concept of 'elite'? What does elite theory entails?

3.2   Classical elite theory

The essence of classical elite theory can be reduced to an assertion by Gaetano Mosca (1939:50): there are two classes of people in all societies; the class which rules, and the class which is ruled. In other words, in every society, there is a small minority of people, which make the important decisions. However, the existence of the elite cannot be attested by the fact that power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of people that takes care of day-to-day decision-making. In fact, this is the prevailing situation in practically all modern societies. The essential criterion for the existence of an elite is that it constitutes a cohesive, unitary and self-conscious group. These characteristics can be found in almost all elite definitions, and theories of elites and empirical research have typically described a closed elite by reference to the three 3Cs (Meisel 1958, 361): group consciousness, coherence, conspiracy, the last-mentioned term meaning a common will for action rather than secret machinations (Parry 1969:31-32). These characteristics of the elite reinforce its privilege status vis-à-vis other groups in society. According to classical elite theorists, power is a cumulative phenomenon, i.e. power generates more power. This statement is fundamentally contradictory to the basic statements of pluralism and hence, it is seen as antidemocratic.

Studies by Mosca and Pareto were able to pull down the myth of democracy (Parry 1969, 141). Not all elite theorists, however, share this negative conclusion but argue that the co-existence of elites and democracy is possible. This approach has been labelled a competitive theory of democracy or a theory of democratic elitism, which has been subscribed to, for instance, by Weber (1978), Schumpeter (1959) and Sartori (1962). Democratic elitism has two essential propositions. Firstly, Robert Michels' (1966) iron law of oligarchy ("who says organisations, says oligarchy") is as valid in the sense that direct democracy is possible only in the simplest and smallest organisations.

According to Robert Michels, all societies tend to obey the iron law of oligarchy. In every organisation including democracies, the demand for leadership inevitably creates an oligarchy. Robert Michel's argued that they are two main factors responsible for this phenomenon:

a) The factor of mass mind: Michel's admits that in every society, majority of the members are lazy, indolent, apathetic and therefore slavish. Because of this mass mind, any person who proves capable or shows any difference to take care of the mass would control the group.

b) The opportunistic attitude of those who lead: Michel also argued that because of the mass mind, those who have the capability of self rule now take advantage and rule over the masses by employing oratory, persuasion and appeal to sentiments.

However, the existence of several competitive elites eliminates antidemocratic consequences, which were seen as unavoidable by classical elite theorists. The existence of elections and several elites circumscribes the elites' power and enables the expulsion of elites from power by the masses if the elites are not responsive to the wishes of the masses.

Secondly, democratic elite theory argues that classical elite theorists applied unrealistic criteria for democracy when they claimed that democracy is impossible in modern society. Classical elite theory maintained that it had proven democracy an illusion when it had managed to prove that direct democracy was impossible. According to democratic elitists, they employed false criteria. The fact that the masses can make a choice between different elites fulfils all standards of democracy. On the other hand, it is a necessary and sufficient condition for democratic system that the masses decide at regular intervals which one of the elites rules (Schwartsmantel, 1987:94-95).

3.3 Elites and power distribution

The elite theory has been criticised for operating with a simple dichotomy between the elite and the mass in which the former is powerful and the latter has no power. In an information society where most citizens are educated and have professional skills there are good reasons to doubt the powerlessness of the people proposed a century ago by classical elite theory. Moreover, we cannot assume that the elite is inevitably powerful and the people have no power after the collapse of the power structures, e.g. in Eastern Europe. According to Etzioni-Halevy (1993:29), for instance, there is no eternal obligation for elite theory to work with a simple division between elite and the rest of society. While elite theory has most commonly worked with this division, it is not inherent in the theory. This theory can work equally well with a more complex conceptualisation of the hierarchy of power, best exemplified in the theory of C. Wright Mills (1956). Wright posits that in all societies, there is a hierarchical division of power between the ruling elite, non ruling elite and the masses or the rest of the society.

Etzioni-Halevy (1993:29) has analysed the division of social power and influence structures into three echelons: elites, sub-elites, and the public. The elites are those who are located at the very top of the

power and influence structures. Sub-elites come next, and occupy the middle ranks of power structures. The public occupies the lowest rank in this constellation. The public, however, is by no means powerless. Moreover, elites do not consist solely of those people at the top or of the most advantaged, but also of the most active men and women among the disadvantaged. Elites therefore include those who are the most active in preserving inegalitarian, elitist structures, that is, the status quo, but also those who are anti-elitist and struggle for change towards greater equality. Elites are also leaders and activists of social movements who challenge and wish to change those who sit atop established organisational power structures.

To be specific, sub-elites include backbench or rank-and-file members of legislatures and leaders of sizeable, interest groups. In the economic sphere, they include the middle management of large enterprises and the top ownership/management of somewhat smaller ones. Furthermore, they include those occupying the middle echelons of the bureaucracy, the military and the police. Leaders of smaller social movements, middle-ranking or even junior judicial, media and academic positions, and officials and activists, not only leaders of labour unions and social movements. (Ibid:95-96). However, it remains unclear how elites can ultimately be differentiated from sub-elites, especially when they may include sub-categories.

The structures of elites and power are not necessarily dichotomous, or trichotomous. Ruostetsaari (1992) has delineated power structures with the metaphor of a dartboard where bull's eye or the core of power is encircled by several rings symbolizing diminishing power and influence. The segments of the dartboard symbolise different sectors of society which are divided into different strata of power and influence. Deciding on a cut-off point between the elite and the non-elite is a matter of judgement as Putnam (1976, 812) has informed us. The definition of the circle or stratum where the elite begin and end cannot be deduced from elite theory but is an empirical question and depends on the premises of individual studies.

Overall, Etzioni-Halevy's elite definition is useful but extremely all-embracing. We may ask, that if elites are characterised by the wielding of power based on the resources they control, how can the disadvantaged also be included in the elites? Etzioni-Halevy (Ibid. 202) herself admits that the elites of most social movements may not be very powerful, even, if occasionally the elites of major movements may become quite significant. In fact, her definition of the elite has a Paretian tinge: an elite refers to the top-ranked or even best-ranked of any sector of society, whereupon the concept of elite

has a loose connection to the pivotal basis of elite theory, i.e. the wielding of power. Hence, social movements are best excluded from the elite category if they are not entrusted with important resources of power such as assets and personnel or established channels of interaction with the elite groups.

3.5   The autonomy of elites

Elite autonomy has been an important element of democratic elitism. According to Joseph Schumpeter (1959), the most influential theorist of the doctrine, political leaders should have significant autonomy. Having once been elected by the people, they should be left alone to fulfil their policies. The electorate must exercise "democratic self-control", which is a necessary condition for a stable, well functioning political system. The substance of the democratic self-control is that the constituency must respect the division of labour between them and the politicians they have elected. After elections the political action is the business of those elected, not of the constituents. Political leaders should have freedom of action: when they are in power they should not be confined by a strict control of responsibility. The same idea can also be found in Max Weber's writings.

For Etzioni-Halevy, too, the mutual autonomy of elites is a crucial criterion of democracy. The autonomy of elites can never be absolute but is always relative and imperfect. "An elite or sub-elite will thus be regarded as relatively autonomous when, although its resources are controlled from the outside, it still has significant resources that cannot be controlled, or can only marginally be controlled from outside its own boundaries". According to her, older theories of pluralism as well as pluralist elite theories have put the main emphasis on the plurality of power groups, besides competitive elections, rather than on the relatively self sustaining power of even a few such groups, as the main mechanism sustaining democracy (Etzioni-Halevy 1993, 99, 78.) Her theory, however, has been criticised for virtually failing to rationalize the origin and basis of the elite autonomy (Burton & Higley 2001:184).

The relative elite autonomy is manifest externally in the manner it uses its resources. For instance, an elite may show its independence from others through the generation and use of symbolic resources. It may do so by elaborating conceptions or ideologies which do not promote subservience to those others, or even ideologies which undermine those others' legitimation. It may manifest its independence by revealing damaging information about those others and thereby causing political scandals, or by publicly criticizing and vilifying them. Some degree of elite cohesion is a necessary

requirement of relative autonomy, but this also means that some degree of uncoupling, or isolation is unavoidable and even necessary. In brief, the relative autonomy of elites is usually manifest in absence of symbolic subservience to others, and frequently, though not always, in friction with others. According to Etzioni-Halevy (Ibid: 100). elite confrontation may thus serve as a useful, though not the sole, indicator of relative elite autonomy.

What makes the difference between democratic and non-democratic elites is their relative autonomy. Without it, the principles of democracy can neither exist nor persist. The relative autonomy goes both ways. In order to be relatively autonomous, an elite has to be autonomous not only vis-á-vis other elites and the state, but also in relation to the groups or classes it represents. The representation of groups by the elites requires that elites are relatively autonomous vis-á-vis groups; otherwise there can be no relation of representation. (Bagn & Dyrberg 2001:30-31.) Later on, however, Etzioni-Halevy (1993) highlighted the problems caused by the mutual elite autonomy and isolation of elites from the people: the close mutual coupling of elites leads to their isolation from the disadvantaged. And this "elite desertion", i.e. abandonment of the disadvantaged promotes socio-economic inequality, and detracts from the quality of democracy. In other words, when elites couple with disadvantaged classes and groups of people, i.e. they derive their power and influence from promotion their interests; this helps decrease socio-economic inequalities and works in favour of democracy.

According to Etzioni-Halevy (1993:107), relative elite autonomy and the democratic role of the public go hand in hand. Only where free elections give the public the ability to vote the elite of the government in and out of office, where the power of the opposition thus hinges on public electoral support, can an opposition be independent from the government in its resources. Moreover, only where the government can be voted out of office by the public, and only where an independent public opinion arises, is there any real significance in the media and other elites asserting their independence by acting as watchdogs of the government.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Explain what is meant by elite autonomy.

3.3 Elite theory as an alternative to pluralism
Elite approach developed as an alternative paradigm to pluralism. The elite approach rejects the pluralist view concerning the distribution of power in society. In the alternative, Elite theory points to the concentration of political power in the hands of a

minority group which, according to Mosca, "performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings..." (Mosca, 1939).

Elite approach investigates power and control and aims to analyse elite and non-elite (mass, public) differentiation. Elite theorists are concerned almost exclusively with inequalities based on power or lack thereof. This distinguishes elite theory from class theory. Power in turn, is based on other resources (such as economic assets and organizational strength) and for its part may give rise to control over other resources as well. But, as Etzioni (1993:19) stressed, elite theory is concerned primarily with the other resources which are related to it.

From the perspective of elite theory, public policy may be viewed as the values and preferences of governing elite. The assumptions of elite theory are captured by Thomas Dye and Harmon Zeigle (cf. Sambo, 1999: 294) as follows:

i.   Society is divided into the few who have power and the many who do not. Only a small number of persons allocate values for society; the masses do not decide public policy. The few who govern are not typical of the masses who are governed. Elites are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society.

ii. The movement of non-elites to elite positions must be slow and continuous to maintain stability and avoid revolution. Only non-elites who have accepted the basic elite consensus can be admitted to governing circles.

iii. Elites share a consensus on the basic values of the social system and the preservation of the system. Public policy does not reflect demands of the masses but rather the prevailing values of the elite. Changes in public policy will be incremental rather than revolutionary.

iv. Active elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from apathetic masses. Elite influence masses more than masses influence elites.

Therefore, the elite approach has made a significant contribution to political analysis by drawing our attention to the fact that it is the elites who make public policies. Consequently, when they do, they tend to reflect their values and preferences and that it is only a matter of coincidence if the policy decisions of the elite reflect the interests of the masses, as they sometimes do.

3.4 Criticism against the Elite theory

First, elite approach assumes a conspiratorial character and is to that extent a provocative theory of public policy and the political process. It is conspiratorial because of the underlying premise about elite consensus on fundamental norms of the social system which limits the choice of policy alternatives to only those which fall within the shared consensus. The theory is provocative because of the characterisation of the masses as passive, apathetic and ill informed and the consequential relegation of their role in policy making (Sambo, 1999). For instance, Pareto (1968) and Mosca (1939), drew a sharp distinction between the elites and the masses and argued that the competence and energy of the elites made it possible for them to rule the unenterprising masses. Marger (1983) also renders the masses passive in their relationship with the elites when she stated that the elites "are able to impose on society as a whole their explanation and justification for the dominant political and economic systems." However, these views of the elites and the masses are far from the reality. For instance, as Key reminded us in his book *The Responsible Electorate*, there is a degree even if relatively low of correspondence between the voter's policy preferences and his reported presidential votes. He concludes that the voter is not so irrational a fellow after all.

Secondly, the classical elite theories have been criticised for their distrust for democracy and their insistence that democracy is a myth (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1968), and of the possibility to maintain democratic institutions (Michels, 1959). However, the attractiveness of the elite approach in this version faded during the second half of the twentieth century as democracy, albeit in its imperfect versions became the dominant mode of governance in most worlds. Recent elite studies therefore interpret elites within the democratic framework. Seen from these studies, elites and democracy are not incompatible. In fact elite groups may even be instrumental to the establishment of democracy as they have done in the last three years (See for instance, Burton and Higley, 1987).

It is now becoming real that the replacement of autocratic forms of government by democracy requires that various elite group see it in their interest to relinquish immediate power and elaborate elite compromises. Thus to be preserved in the long run, democracy depends simultaneously on well- functioning elite network and popular support. As a consequence, studies of modern elites are simultaneously studies of social and political tensions between democratic ideals and top-down decision making, between various sector of the elites as well as between elites and citizens (Engelstad, 2007).

220

In other words, elites do not disappear in democracy, but they acquire a new meaning. In more recent elite approach, Lijphart 1969; Putnam 1976; Higley and Burton 2006) elites are described as institutionally distinct, socially disparate and politically diverse groups of national leaders. Mutual accommodation, compromises and consensus between these elite groups are seen as preconditions for the continuance and stability of democracies.

The significance of the elites in a democracy is that their ability to strike stable compromises, depends not only on their internal relationship, but also on the relationship between elites and the population at large. If the elites attempt to preserve or change the model independently of the opinions of the citizens, it may create mass level reactions which may curtail or abort the actions of the elites. Relatively open processes of recruitment to the elites may bring the attitudes and opinions of the elites more in line with those of the population.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, you should be aware that in most elite studies, elites have been characterised by the three 3Cs, or in other words, by the concepts of exclusiveness, cohesion and unanimity. The first dimension of the typology is the openness of the elite structure, which may vary from low, with the elites recruited from one single social stratum, to high in which case elites are not dominated by any single stratum. In the latter case the share of elite members recruited, for instance, from the upper class is about the same as the share of that class among the citizens. Moreover, the degree of openness refers also to the circulation of elites, which is vital for both their renewal from the people and the implementation of stable and effective decision-making. The second dimension, i.e. the degree of coherence combines the variables of cohesion and unanimity. The coherence of elites which has also been termed elite integration in elite studies has two elements, i.e. interactive and normative. The elite structure is highly coherent if its members have close interaction with each other and if they share the same opinions, attitudes and values. Moreover, elite coherence is also contributed by the weak vertical contacts of elites to the people because demands and control from below cannot undermine the mutual cohesion of elites by creating conflicts between them and playing them off against each other.

The elite structure may be termed exclusive if is recruited from one social stratum and if is very coherent, i.e. if its members have close contact (cooperation) with each other and they share the same social views. The elite structure is segmented if it is recruited mainly from one social stratum but its members have little interaction and its

members do not share the same opinions, attitudes and values. The inclusive elite structure refers to cases where an elite is recruited from several social strata but is nevertheless coherent, i.e. there is close interaction among elite members and their views are more or less similar. The fragmentary elite structure applies when elites are recruited from many different social strata and when they show little or no coherence (Ruostetsaari 1993: 332).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
List and explain the elite structures in the society.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learned what the main assumptions of the elite theory. We have agued that this theory has become a framework of discussion and understanding of the society. mainly through the efforts of two great Italians Wilfred Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. Others in this class include Roberto Michels and Amitai Etzioni. We learnt that the first assumptions of the elite theory are that every society has a small ruling minority. These minority posses the qualities that afford it access to full social and political power. However, we must state here that elite theory soon became controversial on ideological ground. For the democracies, the theory seem to suggest that even they (democracies) were not doing well; dictatorship been inevitable could be justified. Thus it was the West that became more alarmed by the argument of elite theory. Schumpeter and other elite theorists in America therefore sought to modify the elite theory. They submitted that there was plurality of elite in America rather than elite society. It became fashionable to argue that political parties were for instance was formed based on plurality. However, you must note that the original meaning of elite seems to be distorted. This can also be said of the idea of democracy (democracy is not simply a competition of elites as Schumpeter has posited but also about the masses) democracy simply as the competition of elite. The submission of Schumpeter is also an indirect way of accepting the weaknesses of Western democracy.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Explain the contribution of Eva Etzioni-Halevy to the development of elite theory in political analysis.

Discuss the relevance of the elite theory to contemporary political analysis.

Explain the weaknesses of the elite theory in political analysis.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READINGS

Arslan, D. Ali (2006) The Turkish Power Elite. *Human Sciences*, 3 (1): 1-19

Bacharach, Peter (1967) *The Theory of Democratic Elitism. A Critique.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Birch, Anthony (2001) *Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy.* (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.

Burton, Michael and Higley, John (2001) 'The Study of Political Elite Transformations' *International Review of Sociology*, 11 (2):181-199.

Darendorf, Ralf (1967) *Society and Democracy in Germany*. New York; Doubleday.

Dogan, Matei and Higley, John (eds.) (1998) *Elites, Crises and the Origins of Regimes*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Eisenstadt, Samuel N. (1966) *Modernisation: Protest and Change*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Etzioni-Halevy, Eva (1993) *The Elite Connection. Problems and Potential of Western Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Etzioni-Halevy, Eva (1997) *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratisation*. New York & London: Garland.

Etzioni-Halevy, Eva (1999),'Elites, Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in Ultramodern Society'. *International Review of Sociology*, 9 (2): 239-250.

Higley, John and Lengyel, György (eds.) (2000) *Elites after State Socialism. Theories and Analysis.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Higley, John and Moore, Gwen (1981) 'Elite integration in the United States and Australia'. *American Political Science Review* 75: 581-597.

Higley, John & Moore, Gwen (2001) 'Political Elite Studies at the Year 2000: Introduction'. *International Review of Sociology* 11 (2): 175-180.

Meisel, James (1958) *The Myth of the Ruling Class. Gaetano Mosca and the 'Elite'.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Michels, Robert (1966) *Political Parties*. New York: The Free Press (1911).

Mills, C. Wright (1956) *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mosca, Gaetano (1939) *The Ruling Class*. New York & London: McGraw-Hill (1896).

Parry, Geraint (1969) *Political Elites*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Pareto, Vilfredo (1935) (trans.) *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology*. New York: Dover Publications Inc.

Putnam, Robert D. (1976) *The Comparative Study of Elites*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Ruostetsaari, Ilkka (1993) "The Anatomy of Finnish Power Elite" *Scandinavian Political Studies,* 16 (4): 305-337.

Sartori, Giovanni (1962) *Democratic Theory*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Schwarzmantel, J. J (1987) *Structures of Power. An Introduction to Politics*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.

Schumpeter, Joseph A (1959) *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Eight Impression. Allen & Unwin. London.

Weber, Max (1968) *Economy and Society*. (Vol.2). New York: Bedminister Press.

MODULE 5   RATIONAL   AND   INTENTIONAL APPROACHES

This module concludes the course by considering the rational-intentional approaches in contemporary political analysis. These approaches lay prominence on the rational, egoistic and intentional behaviour of political actors. In the first unit, you will be introduced to the game theory- an approach that will help you understand social, political and strategic interactions between individuals, groups and countries. The unit will also help us to explain the nature of choices made by strategic interactions among two or more participants. The theory also models the potential for, and risks associated with cooperative behaviour. The second unit deals with the rational choice theory. We have argued that rational choice theory adopts a methodological individualist position and attempts to explain all social phenomena in terms of the rational calculations made by self-interested individuals. This theory sees social interaction as social exchange modelled on economic action. People are motivated by the rewards and costs of actions and by the profits that they can make.

The decision-making theory which comes up in unit three is the most highly developed model of political analysis. The theory also has heuristic value. Here, you will be introduced to the systematic factors influencing the decision maker: internal setting, external setting and the decision-making setting. The module and the course concludes with communications theory as an approach to social and political analysis which emphasise the communication process, and asserts that the most crucial aspect of any political system is how information is received and processed. The main thrust of this theory is that "the task of steering and coordinating human efforts towards attainment of goals is essentially a communication process".

The fifth module is made up of four units which are arranged as follows:

Unit 1   •   Game theory

Unit 2   •   Rational choice theory

Unit 3   •   Decision making theory

Unit 4   •   Communication theory

UNIT 1   •   GAME THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The concern of this unit is to introduce the student of political science to a thorough and careful understanding of the essential ideas of game theory without requiring an extensive mathematical background. Game theory is a micro theory that hinges on rationality of human actions. There are models in political science that do not invoke the concept of rationality. Game theory, however, requires the assumption of rationality, an assumption quite familiar to economists, somewhat familiar to political scientists and psychologists, and probably alien to most sociologists and others. We assume that people have goals that they attempt to realise through their actions. The focus here is on how individuals attempt to achieve their goals are constrained (or assisted) by one another's actions and the structure of the game. The great mathematician, John von Neumann, founded game theory. The first important book on the subject was *The Theory of Game and Economic Behaviour*, which Neumann wrote in collaboration with the great mathematical economist, Oskar Morgenstern.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

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

explain what is meant by game theory

identify various examples of game theory

identify the elements of the games

describe the application of game theory in political analysis

highlight the weaknesses of game theory

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   What is game theory?
Game theory provides analytical tools for examining strategic interactions among two or more participants. By using simple, often numerical models to study complex social relations, game theory can illustrate the potential for, and risks associated with, cooperative behaviour among distrustful participants.

According to Rapaport (1974:1), games used to simulate real-life situations typically include five elements:
   i.   **Players** or decision makers;
   ii.   **Strategies** available to each player;
   iii. **Rules** governing players behaviour;
   iv.   **Outcomes,** each of which is a result of particular choices made by players at any given point in the game; and
   v.   **Payoffs** accrued by each player as a result of each possible outcome.
These games assume that each player will pursue strategies that help him or her achieve the most profitable outcome in every situation.

Real life is full of situations in which people intentionally or unintentionally pursue their own interests at the expense of others, leading to conflict or competition. Games used to illustrate these relationships often place the interests of two players in direct opposition: the greater the payoff (benefit) for one player, the less for the other. In other to achieve a mutually productive outcome, the players must coordinate their strategies, because if each player pursues his or her greatest potential payoffs, the shared outcome is unproductive.

Games therefore illustrate the potential for cooperation to produce mutually beneficial outcomes. However, you must note that games also highlight the difficulties of obtaining cooperation among distrustful participants, because each player is tempted to pursue his or her individual interest. Cooperation requires that both players compromise, and forgo their maximum payoffs. Yet, in compromising, each player risks complete loss if the opponent decides to seek his or her own maximum payoff. Rather than risking total loss, players tend to prefer the less productive outcome.

Game theory, utility theory and probability theory are closely related and intertwined. Game theory is based on utility theory, a simple mathematical theory for representing decisions. In utility theory, we

assume that actors are faced with choices from a set of available actions. Each action provides a probability of producing each possible outcome. Utility is a measure of an actor's preferences over the outcomes that reflect his or her willingness to take risks to achieve desired outcomes and avoid undesirable outcomes. The probabilities of obtaining each outcome after taking an action represent uncertainty about the exact consequences of that action.

We calculate an expected utility for an action by multiplying the utility of each possible outcome by the probability that it will occur if the action is chosen, and then summing across all possible outcomes. Utilities for outcomes are chosen so that the magnitudes of expected utilities are preferred. Given the probabilities that actions produce outcomes and preferences over actions, we can calculate utilities over outcomes so that actions with larger expected utilities are preferred.

Utility theory is closely tied to probability theory and is almost as old. As in the case of probability theory, the rigorous analysis of gambling problems drove the early development of the utility theory. Daniel Bernoulli first worked on utility theory to explain the attractiveness of gambles did not necessarily equals gamblers monetary expectation. After this initial observation, Jeremy Bentham advanced utilitarianism as a philosophy in the 1880s. Bentham's utility theory was, mathematically speaking, quite sloppy and is not useful for developing a rigorous theory of decisions. Consequently, utility was rejected as a useful concept until the middle of the twentieth century.

Von Neumann and Morgenstern revived utility theory by providing a firm mathematical foundation for the concept in an appendix to the Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour ([1943] 1953). Several rigorous versions of utility were produced after the publication of that book. Since then, economists have reformulated economic theory using utility theory and game theory as a description of individual behaviour.

3.2   Rationality and Game Theory

Game theory assumes rational behaviour. But what do we mean by rationality? In every day parlance, rational behaviour can mean anything from reasonable, thoughtful, or reflective behaviour to wise, just, or sane actions. We generally do not think that some one who drives one hundred and twenty kilometres per hour on narrow side streets is rational. But rational behaviour for our purposes means much less than the common meaning of the term. Put simply, rational behaviour means choosing the best means to gain a

predetermined set of ends. It is an evaluation of the consistency of choices and not of the thought process, of implementation of fixed goals and not of morality of those goals.

Since the work of John Neumann, "games" have been a scientific metaphor for a wide range of human interactions in which the outcome depend on the interactive strategies of two or more persons, who have opposed or at best mixed motives. Among the issues discussed in game theory are:

i.   What does it mean to choose strategies "rationally" when outcomes depend on the strategies chosen by others and when information is complete?

ii.   In "games" that allow mutual gain (or mutual loss), is it "rational" to cooperate to realise the mutual gain (or avoid the mutual loss) or is it "rational" to act aggressively in seeking the individual gain regardless of mutual loss?

iii. If the answer to (ii) is "some times", in what circumstances is aggression rational and in what circumstances is cooperation rational?

iv.   In particular, do ongoing relationships differ from one-off encounters in this connection?

v.   Can moral rules of cooperation emerge spontaneously from the interactions of rational egoists?

vi.   How does real human behaviour correspond to "rational" behaviour in these cases?

vii. If it differs, in what direction? Are people more cooperative than would be "rational"? More aggressive? Both?

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

Game theory as advanced by economists was a theory of economic and strategic behaviour when people interact directly, rather than

"through the market". Game theory is about serious interactions as market competition, arms races, environmental pollution etc. that are addressed using the metaphor of a game. In these serious interactions, the individual's choice is essentially a choice of strategy, and the outcome of the interaction depends on the strategies chosen by each participant.

In neoclassical economic theory, to choose rationally is to maximise one's rewards. From one point of view, this is a problem in mathematics: choose the activity that maximises rewards in given circumstances. Thus, we may talk of rational economic choices as the "solution" to a problem of mathematics. In game theory, the case is more complex, since the outcome depends not only on your strategies and on the "market conditions", but also directly on the strategies chosen by others.

Recent developments in game theory, especially the award of the Nobel Memorial Prize in 1994 to three theorists and the death of A. W. Tucker, in January 1995, at 89, have renewed the memory of its beginnings. Although the history of game theory can be traced back earlier, the key period of emergence of game theory was the decade of 1940s. The publication of *The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* was particularly an important step. However, in some ways, Tucker's invention of the Prisoner's Dilemma came to influence social sciences.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
"Game theory is hinged on the concept of Rationality'. Discuss

3.3 Misconceptions about the notion of rationality
Because the game-theoretic definition of rationality is narrower than the intuitive one, it frequently misunderstood. Some of the common misinterpretations and the proper responses are as follows:

First, we do not assume the decision process is a series of literal calculations. Instead people make choices that reflect both their underlying goals and the constraints of the situation, and we can create a utility function that represents their actions given those logical constraints. We use the abstract model of choice here to represents individuals choices in political settings. Strategic logic is quite complex even with this model of cognition. Therefore, rational choice model helps us to simplify away from the complexity of actual contagion.

Second, rationality tells us nothing about an actor's preferences over outcomes- only about its choices given those preferences and the

situation that confronts it. The classic example here is of Adolf Hitler; according to the common idea of rationality, he was crazy. He pursued abhorrent goals and took immense political risks that eventually led to his own destruction and that of the Nazi Germany. But from the perspective of utility theory, his behaviour can be explained rationally. He consistently pursued German nationalists' expansion and responded to the environment he faced and the opportunities it presented him. In many ways, Hitler understood the international climate of the 1930s better than any other leader did.

Third, rational actors may not probably and will not all reach the same decision when faced with the same situation. Rational actors can differ in their preferences over the outcomes. A chess master playing with his or her child is unlikely to play purely to win the game. Instead, he or she strives to make the game enjoyable for the child to play purely to win the game. Moreover, even if two actors have the same ordinal preferences, they can have different reactions to risk and uncertainty that lead them to evaluate the availability actions differently.

Fourth, rational actors make errors, that is, achieve undesirable outcomes, for three reasons. Rationality does not mean error-free decisions. First, situations are risky. Second, the information available to actors is limited. Third, actors may hold incorrect beliefs about the consequences of their actions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXCERCISE
What are the common misconceptions of the notion of rationality?

3.4   Examples of game theory
There are several examples of Game theory. Game theory can roughly be divided into two broad areas: non-cooperative (or strategic) games and cooperative (coalitional) games. The meaning of these terms are self-evident, although John Nash claimed that one should be able to reduce all cooperative games to non-cooperative form. In this section, you will be introduced into the Prisoner's dilemma, the zero-sum game, and the n-person game.

3.4.1 The prisoner's dilemma
The Prisoner's Dilemma is one of the best-known models in game theory. It illustrates the paradoxical nature of interaction between mutually suspicious participants with opposing interests.

In a general hypothetical situation as shown in Figure 1, two accomplices to a crime are imprisoned and they forge a pact not to betray one another and not to confess to the crime. The severity of

the punishment that each receives is determined not only by his or her behaviour, but also by the behaviour of his or her accomplice. The two prisoners are separated and cannot communicate with each other. Each is told that there are four possible outcomes.

i.   If one confesses to the crime and turns in the accomplice (defecting from a pact with the accomplice), his sentence will be reduced.

ii.   If one confesses while the accomplice does not (i.e. the accomplice cooperates with the pact not to betray each other), the first can strike a deal with the police, and will be set free. But the information he provides will be used to incriminate his accomplice, who will receive the maximum sentence.

iii. If both prisoners confess to the crime (i.e. both defect from their pact), then each receives a reduced sentence, but neither is set free.

iv.   If neither confesses to the crime (i.e. they cooperate), then each receives the maximum sentence for lack of evidence. The option may not be as attractive to either individual as the option of striking a deal with the police and being set free at the expense of one's partner. Since the prisoners cannot communicate with each other, the question of whether to "trust" the other not to confess is the critical aspect of this game.

Figure 1

		Nom	
		confess	do not
Mimi	Confess	10, 10	0, 20
	do not	20, 0	1, 1

The table is read like this: Each prisoner chooses one of the two strategies. In effect, **Nom** chooses a column and **Mimi** chooses a row. The two numbers in each cell tell the outcomes for the two prisoners when the corresponding pair of strategies is chosen. The number to the left of the column tells the payoff to the person who chooses the row (Mimi) while the number to the right of the column tells the payoff to the person who chooses the columns (Nom). Thus (reading down the first column), if both confess, each gets 10 years, but if **Nom** confesses and **Mimi** does not, **Mimi** gets 20 and **Nom** goes free.

So: how can you solve this game? What strategies are "rational" if both men want to minimise the time they spend in jail. **Nom** might

reason as follows: "Two things will happen: **Mimi** can confess or **Nom** can keep quiet. Suppose **Mimi** confesses, then I get 20 years if I do not confess, 10 years if I do, so in that case it is better to confess. On the other hand, if Mimi does not confess, and I do not either, I get a year; but in that case, if I confess I can go free. Either way, it is best to confess. Therefore, I will confess".

However, **Mimi** can and presumably will reason in the Nom's way, so that they both confess and go to prison for 10 years each. Yet, if they had acted "irrationally", and kept quiet, they each would have gotten off with one year each.

The prisoner's dilemma presented above is an example of a non-cooperative game. A number of issues can be raised with the Prisoner's Dilemma, and each of these issues is intended to broaden your mind on the heuristic nature of "games".

a) The Prisoner's Dilemma is a two-person game, but many of the applications of the idea are really many-persons interactions.

b) We have assumed that there is no connection between the two prisoners. If they could communicate and commit themselves to coordinated strategies, we would expect a different outcome.

c) In the Prisoner's Dilemma, the two prisoners interact only once. Repetition of the interactions might lead to quite different results.

d) Compelling as the reasoning that leads to the dominant strategy equilibrium may be, it is not the only way this problem might be reasoned out. Perhaps it is not really the most rational answer after all.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How true is it that, in real world situations, the assumptions of the Prisoner's Dilemma can easily be faulted?

3.4.2 Zero-Sum Game

A zero-sum game is a game in which one player's winnings equal the other player's losses. You would notice that the definition requires a zero sum for every set of strategies. If there is even one strategy set for which the sum differs from zero, then the game is not zero-sum. If we add up the wins and losses in a game, treating losses as negatives, and we find that the sum is zero for each set of strategies chosen, then the game is a "zero-sum game".

For example, consider the Children's game of "Marching Pennies". In this game, the two players agree that one will be "even" and the other will be "odd". Each one then shows a penny. The pennies are shown either as head or as a tail. If both show the Mimie side, the "even" wins the penny from "odd"; or if they show different sides, "odd" wins the penny from "even". Figure 2 is the payoff table of the game.

Figure 2

		Odd	
		Head	Tail
Even	Head	1, -1	-1, 1
	Tail	-1, 1	1, -1

If we add up the payoffs in each cell, we find 1-1=0. This is a "zero-sum game".

Let us consider another example of a zero-sum game. Let us think of two companies that sell sachet water. Each company has a fixed cost of ₦5000 per period, regardless whether they sell anything or not. We will call the companies **Amusan** and **Dot**, just to take two names at random. The companies are competing for the Mimie market and each firm must choose a high price (₦ 2 per sachet) or a low price (₦ 1 per sachet). Here are the rules of the game.

  i.   At a price of ₦ 2, 5000 sachets can be sold for a total revenue of ₦ 10,000;
 ii.   At a price of ₦ 1, 10000 sachets can be sold for a total revenue of ₦ 10,000;
iii.   If both companies charge the Mimie price, they split the sales evenly between them;
 iv.   If one company charges a higher price, the company with the lower price sells the whole amount and the company with the higher price sells nothing;
  v.   Payoffs are profits- revenue minus the ₦ 5000 fixed costs.

Figure 3 is the payoff table for the two companies.

Figure 3

		Amusan	
		Price = ₦ 1	Price = ₦ 2
Dot	Price = ₦ 1	0, 0	5000, -5000
	Price = ₦ 2	-5000, 5000	0, 0

Verify for yourself that this is a zero-sum game. For two-person zero- sum game, there is a clear concept of the solution. The solution to the game is the maximin criterion; that is, each player chooses the strategy that maximises her minimum payoff. In this game, **Dot's** minimum payoff at a price of ₦1 is zero, and at the price of ₦2 is -5000, so the ₦1 price maximises the minimum payoff. The Mimie reasoning applies to **Amusan**, so both will choose the ₦1 price. Here is the reasoning behind the maximin solution: **Dot** knows that whatever he losses, **Amusan** gains; so whatever strategy he chooses, **Amusan** will choose the strategy that gives the minimum payoff for the row. Again, **Amusan** reasons conversely.

Please, note that for the maxima criterion for a two-person, zero-sum game, it is rational for each player to choose the strategy that maximises the minimum payoff, and the pair of strategies and payoffs such that each player maximises her minimum payoff is the "solution to the game".

3.4.3 The N-Person Game

An n-person game in strategic form is an n-dimensional array of all the players pure strategies with each of the array filled with the players' utilities for the outcome (which could be a probability distribution of outcomes) that results from the combination of strategies.

For example, to find the strategic form of Matching Pennies, we specify each player's pure strategies. Each player has one information set with two possible moves. Thus each player can have only two possible strategies, heads or tails. These two strategies create a two-by-two table shown in Figure 4. To find the outcomes that result from each pair of players' strategies, we trace out the result of the game if the players play those strategies. In the upper left-hand cell, Player 1 plays head and Player 2 also plays heads. According to the rules of the game Player 1 wins both pennies, and Player 1 and 2 have payoffs 1 and -1 respectively, for this outcome. Figure 4 gives the strategic form.

Figure 4

		Player 2	
		H	T
Player 1	H	1, -1	-1, 1
	T	-1, 1	1, -1

3.5   Limitations of game theory

Game theory is hinged on the assumption that humans are essentially rational beings, and self-interest motivated in their every day actions. The notion that individuals tend to behave as rational actors also include assumptions that their actions are predominantly intentional (not unconscious), as they have a stable and relatively consistent set of preferences. The emphasis on rationality however remains the main weakness of this theory.

First, by hinging its stand on rationality, intentionality and egoistic motives of actors, Game theory has been described as being tautological, as it leads to post-hoc type of reasoning. In other words, game theorists conceive their task as demonstrating the fact that all social actions are actually rational including practices that are apparently prima-facie irrational. The theory thus seems to rationalise events in expo facto manner and is therefore deficient.

Second, by overstretching the notion of rationality, game theory ends up with findings with little explanatory variable relevance or with all but identifiable explanations for all social phenomena.

Third, game theory often ignores the cultural aspect of individual choices. Rational as well as actors choices are always far from being culturally free.

Fourth and lastly, game theorists not only neglect culture, values and ideology but also politics. In other words, game theory analysis reduces political actors to the economic levels. Perceiving social actions only in terms of individualism or individual maximisation or optimisation, game theorists are unable to account for non-economic and non-material sources of individual motives, but for collective actions.

3.6   Applications of game theory in political science

Game theory can be used to examine both simple and complex strategic issues such as ethnic conflicts and arm races. If two antagonistic countries uncontrollably build up their armaments, they increase the potential of mutual loss and destruction. For each

country, the value or arming itself is decreased because of the costs of not doing so- financial costs, heightened security tensions, greater mutual destructive capabilities etc provides few advantages over the opponent, resulting in an unproductive outcome (1 to 1 in Figure 1). Each country has a choice: cooperate to control arms development, with the goal of achieving mutual benefits, or defect from the pact, and develop armaments.

The dilemma stems from the realisation that if one side arms itself (defects) and the other does not (cooperates), the participants who develops armaments will be considered stronger and will win the game (the 20 to 0) outcome. If both cooperate, the possible outcome is a tie (10 to 10). This is better than the payoff from mutual defection and an arms race (1 to 1), but is not as attractive as winning, and so the temptation to out-arm one's opponent is always present. The fear that one's opponent will give in to such temptations often drives both players to arm; not doing so risks total loss, and the benefits of not can only be realised if one's opponent overcomes his or her temptation to win. Such trusts is often lacking in the international environment.

During the Cold War, the United States-Soviet relations were a good example of this dynamic. For a long time, the two countries did not trust each other at all. Each armed itself to the hilt, fearing that the other was doing so, and not wanting to risk being vulnerable. Yet the cost of the arms race was so high that it eventually bankrupted the Soviet Union. Had the Soviets being willing to trust the US, more, and vice versa, much of the arms race could have been prevented, as tremendous financial and security savings for both nations, and indeed the rest of the world.

Another application of game theory could be the one-shot game of international conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon. Let there be just two strategies **c** and **d**:

   c: try a solution by negotiating a compromise with out resorting to military threat (cooperation) or

   d: mobilise the use of military forces to extort a solution to the one's advantage from the opponent by aggression (defection).

Given these two strategic options available for the Bakassi Peninsula, it is not difficult to identify the well-known prisoners' dilemma in this game. If both countries choose the cooperative strategy, **c**, both can realise a payoff R (reward) which is higher than the payoff P (punishment) obtained in the armed conflict when both choose the defective strategy **d**. If however, only one country is cooperative while the other defects and prepares for a military

solution, the country relying on **c** becomes vulnerable to blackmailing politics or even to open aggression and faces the worst possible outcome **S** (Sucker's Pay-off). The other country, having chosen **d** with the opponent not mobilised, gains a position of strength, which it can use to squeeze out the highest possible pay-off **T** (temptation) from its opponent. Thus **T>R>P>S.** This means that temptation is greater than reward, which is greater than the punishment and which is greater than the suckers pay-off.

As you must have learned, in the prisoner's dilemma game, defection is the dominant strategy. Rationality dictates that both countries choose this strategy so that conflicts, whenever they occur, would be settled in one, and only one way, namely by military confrontation. Even though each country would actually prefer conflicts to be solved peacefully by the opponents, international relations would always remain in a state of anarchy.

4.0 CONCLUSION
In this unit, you have learned that game theory is an approach that will help us understand social, political and strategic interactions between individuals, groups and countries. It also helps us to explain the nature of choices made by strategic interactions among two or more participants. The theory also models the potential for, and risks associated with cooperative behaviour.

A key assumption of game theory is the concept of rationality, introduced by neoclassical economists which regard each participant as being a rational being and egoistic in the pursuit of strategic goals. This incidentally forms the Achilles heel of the theory.

5.0 SUMMARY
This unit has focused on the game theory as a theoretical concept in strategic studies. You have learned about the elements of games; types of games; and the major thrust of game theory- rationality. You have also learned about the weaknesses of the theory, which largely derive from the fact that a significant proportion of political behaviour is not rational. Apart from the few applications of the theory identified in the unit, you may wish to consider real world situations in the application of game theory to domestic and international politics

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)
How can you place American War in Iran in a game theoretical framework?

Is the Prisoner's Dilemma a real world political event?

Identify the main shortcomings of the game theoretical framework.

7.0 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

Morrow, D. James (1994) *Game Theory for Political Scientists*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Schelling, T. C. (1960) *The Strategy of Conflict*. MA: Harvard Unity Press.

Rapoport, A. (ed.). (1974) *Game Theory as a Theory of Conflict Resolution*. MI: University of Michigan Press.

Rapoport, A. (1974) *Fights, Games, and Debates*. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Press.

Robert, P. (1994) "Multilateral Cooperation in an Integrated Prisoner's Dilemma". *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 38:2

UNIT 2   •   THE RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Rational choice theory
        3.2   The development of rational choice approach
        3.3   Basic features of the rational choice approach
        3.4   Application of the rational approach in politics
        3.5   Criticisms of the rational choice approach
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the rational choice model in contemporary political analysis. A rational explanation has the form: "X because Y is rational, or bringing out its nomological nature, "X because Y is rational and in situation S, a rational man does X". Most definitions also talk about behaviour or action: thus, people are rational insofar as they behave rationally. Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom have stated what seems to be the consensus definition of rational behaviour: "An action is rational to the extent that it is correctly designed to maximise goals achievement, given the goal in question and the real world as it exists (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953:38).

Developments in economics have offered the possibility of an approach through what came to be known as rational of public choice, drawing on the methodology of economics rather than the sociological and psychological approaches favoured by behaviouralism. William Riker and his collaborators at Rochester played a key role in introducing this approach to American Political Science, and it has arguably become the dominant approach to the political science at least in the United States. The central concern of this unit is to take a critical look at the basic assumptions of the rational choice approach in contemporary political inquiry, its strengths and weaknesses and how it can be applied in the analysis of politics.

2.0   OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- explain what is meant as the rational choice theory
- explain the basic assumptions of the rational choice model
- apply the rational choice model in political analysis
- critique the rational choice approach

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Rational choice theory

Rational choice theory, also known as rational action theory, is a framework for understanding and often formally modelling social and economic behaviour. It is the dominant theoretical paradigm in microeconomics. It is also central to modern political science and is used by scholars in other disciplines such as sociology and philosophy.

It is important to stress from the onset that the "rationality" described by rational choice theory is different from the philosophical uses of rationality. In Rational Choice Theory "rationality" simply means that a person reasons before taking an action. A person balances costs against benefits before taking any action. In rational choice theory, it is assumed that all decisions, are arrived at by a "rational" process of weighing costs against benefits.

Rational Choice Theory was greatly impulsed by Gary Becker, who won the 1992 Nobel Prize in Economics for his views on the rationality of human behaviour. Although models used in rational choice theory are diverse, all assume individuals choose the best action according to stable preference functions and constraints facing them. Most models have additional assumptions. Proponents of rational choice models do not claim that a model's assumptions are a full description of reality, only that good models can aid reasoning and provide help in formulating falsifiable hypotheses, whether intuitive or not. Successful hypotheses are those that survive empirical tests.

Models that rely on rational choice theory often adopt methodological individualism, the assumption that social situations or collective behaviours are the result of individual actions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Discuss the major emphasis of rational choice theory?

3.2 The development of rational choice approach

The discipline of economics is regarded as the most successful of the social sciences. It has assumed that people are motivated by money and by the possibility of making a profit, and this has allowed it to

construct formal, and often predictive, models of human behaviour. This apparent success has led many other social scientists to cast envious eyes in its direction. They have thought that if they could only follow the methods of economics they could achieve similar successes in their own studies. These sociologists and political scientists have tried to build theories around the idea that all action is fundamentally "rational" in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do. This approach to theory is known as rational choice theory, and its application to social interaction takes the form of exchange theory.

The fact that people act rationally has, of course, been recognised by many political scientists and sociologists, but they have seen rational actions alongside other forms of action, seeing human action as involving both rational and non-rational elements. Such views of action recognise traditional or habitual action, emotional or affectual action, and various forms of value-oriented action alongside the purely rational types of action. Max Weber (1920), for example, built an influential typology of action around just such concepts. His ideas were taken up by Talcott Parsons (1937) and became a part of the sociological mainstream. In a similar way, the social anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) and Marcel Mauss (1925) looked at how social exchange was embedded in structures of reciprocity and social obligation. What distinguishes rational choice theory from these other forms of theory is that it denies the existence of any kinds of action other than the purely rational and calculative. All social action, it is argued, can be seen as rationally motivated, as instrumental action, however much it may appear to be irrational or non-rational.

The rational choice approach has its philosophical fountainheads from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke's theory of social contract, Jeremy Bentham and Wright Mill's utilitarianism as well as the view of human nature as being intrinsically selfish, greedy and largely unchangeable. Its economic and mathematical origins can be traced to Adams Smith and neoclassical economics.

Rational choice theorists have become increasingly mathematical in orientation, converging more closely with trends in micro economics. Indeed, some economists have attempted to colonise areas occupied by other social scientists. This trend towards formal, mathematical models of rational action was apparent in such diverse areas as theories of voting and coalition formation in political science and explanations of ethnic minority relations and, in a less rigorously mathematical form, social mobility and class reproduction. A particularly striking trend of recent years has been the work of those Marxists who have seen rational choice theory as

242

the basis of a Marxist theory of class and exploitation (Wright 1985; 1989).

3.3 Basic features of rational choice approach

The rational choice approach analysis social phenomena by reducing them to individual actions and properties. Unlike the structural-functional systems approach where the elementary unit of analysis is the collective social system, in the rational choice approach the basic unit of analysis is the individual.

In the traditional choice between macro and micro approaches therefore, the rational choice theory clearly belongs to the micro level of analysis. In other words, rational choice theorists are essentially methodologically individualistic. Rational choice draws its explanations from the central assumption of individual's rationality, intentionality and egoistic behaviour.

Dahl and Lindblom (1953) argue that rational choice theory is based on the simple assumption that human beings are rational and self-interest motivated in their every day actions. The notion that individuals tend to behave as rational actors is also hinged on the assumption that their actions are predominantly intentional (not unconscious) as well as a stable and relatively consistent set of preferences. It is argued that although the actions of actors may be restricted by their experiences and social norms, their behaviour can largely be explained in reference to their need to try to maximise their advantages.

Basic to all forms of rational choice theory is the assumption that complex social phenomena can be explained in terms of the elementary individual actions of which they are composed. This standpoint, called methodological individualism, holds that: The elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals.

Where economic theories have been concerned with the ways in which the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services is organised through money and the market mechanism, rational choice theorists have argued that the Prisoners dilemma general principles can be used to understand interactions in which such resources as power, time, information, approval, and prestige are involved.

In rational choice theories, individuals are seen as motivated by the wants or goals that express their "preferences". They act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of the information that

they have about the conditions under which they are acting. At its simplest, the relationship between preferences and constraints can be seen in the purely technical terms of the relationship of a means to an end. As it is not possible for individuals to achieve all of the various things that they want, they must also make choices in relation to both their goals and the means for attaining these goals. Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Coleman 1973).

The methodological individualism of rational choice theorists leads them to start out from the actions of individuals and to see all other social phenomena as reducible to these individual actions. This position was justified on the grounds that the principles of rational choice and social exchange were simply expressions of the basic principles of behavioural psychology.

The idea of rational choice, where people compare the costs and benefits of certain actions, is easy to see in economic theory. Since people want to get the most useful products at the lowest price, they will judge the benefits of a certain object compared to similar objects. Then they will compare prices. In general, people will choose the object that provides the greatest reward at the lowest cost.

Rational decision making entails choosing an action given one's preferences, the actions one could take, and expectations about the outcomes of those actions. Actions are often expressed as a set, for example a set of j <u>exhaustive</u> and <u>exclusive</u> actions:

$$A = \{a_1, \ldots, a_i, \ldots, a_j\}$$

For example, if a person is to vote for either Kater or Verse or to abstain, their set of possible voting actions is:

A = {Kater, Verse, abstain}

Individuals can also have similar sets of possible outcomes.

Rational choice theory makes two assumptions about individuals' preferences for actions:

  a) Completeness: all actions can be ranked in an order of preference (indifference between two or more is possible)

  b) Transitivity: if action a1 is preferred to a2, and action a2 is preferred to a3, then a1 is preferred to a3.

Together these assumptions form the result that given a set of exhaustive and exclusive actions to choose from, an individual can rank them in terms of his preferences, and that his preferences are consistent.

Another basic feature of this theory is the concept of utility maximisation. Again, this concept is core to the economic discipline. Often preferences are described by their utility function or payoff function. This is an ordinal number an individual assigns over the available actions, such as:

$$u\left(a_i\right) > u\left(a_j\right)$$

The individual's preferences are then expressed as the relation between these ordinal assignments. For example, if an individual prefers the candidate Kater over Verse over abstaining, their preferences would have the relation:

μ (kater) > μ (verse) > μ (abstain)

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
State the basic assumptions of the rational choice approach

3.4 Application of the rational choice theory
Rational choice theory has been used to analyse a wide range of political situations involving conflict and competition between, among and within groups. A particularly compelling application of the rational choice theory has involved ethnicity or ethnic conflict. The theory contends that people will generally tend to use their ethnic membership in order to achieve some individual gains.

Robert Bates for instance notes that ethnic groups represent essentially coalitions which have been formed as part of rational efforts to secure benefits created by forces of modernisation (Bates, 1983). In essence, therefore, ethnicity is not a primordial or static feature but rather a dynamic changing process that is to be analysed in terms of fixed cultural contents. Behind the ethnic solidarity, we find no more than individuals motivated by self-interest who rely on their ethnic markers (ethnic identity instruments- language, religion, geographic territory) to maximise their advantage. Hence, ethnic mobilisation, separatism, rivalry, xenophobia, war and nepotism are all explained as the best available situational constraints for a rational individual. Fearson (1999) has asked why ethnic politics centred around the distribution of "pork" often go together, and conjectures informally that allocating pork according to ethnicity (or other features that are not easily chosen or changed by individuals) is

a way of preventing political losers from attempting to enter the winning team.

The importance of this approach in analysing ethnic relations is its ability show that ethnicity is not a primordial or fixed identity but a category that can change or be manipulated in line with cost-benefit calculations of individuals.

The most important contribution of rational choice theory has been in the study of ethnic relations, especially its ability to demystify ethnic irrationality. Rational choice theorists have elaborately shown that phenomenon such as racism, ethnicity or nationalism can be based on very rational motives. In market situations and market-oriented societies, competition over jobs, housing and education possibilities may develop into ethnic struggles if ethnicity is available to be used as an advantage.

The theory has also been used to illustrate the collective action of coordination dilemmas that characterise many political situations. This collective action dilemmas occur when all important interests in a particular area have objectives but because of lack of information, trust or organisation, the parties involved have trouble coordinating their activities. Consequently they prefer to betray each other for short-term advantages leading to some optimal or costly outcomes for all interest in the long run.

In his seminal article on the *Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law* (Weingast, 1997), Barry Weingast has used a game theoretic approach which is the most highly developed model of rational choice approach in politics to show that the resolution of the coordination dilemma through the creation of effective or self-enforcing political institutions is the foundation of the rule of law, for ensuring that political officials are responsible for the rights of citizens and for sustaining democratic stability in plural societies.

For Weingast, institutions are self-enforcing when it is in the interest of all concerned to respect the constraints or rules imposed by such institutions. According to him, the survival of democracy and the rule of law require that state officials have incentives to honour a range of limits on their behaviour. However, citizens can enforce such limits or police state officials only if they react in concert to violations of fundamental rights and the rule of law by withdrawing their support from the political officials. However, the natural diversity of interest and experiences hinder the ability of citizens in concert, making it possible for officials to continue to transgress rights of citizens often by directly exploiting this diversity. In the face of this problem, the successful transition to stable democracy

requires the construction of a coordination device that specifies widely accepted and unambiguous limits on the state. By allowing citizens to react to violations in concert such a device makes limits on political officials self-enforcing unfortunately, establishing such a coordination device is not easy because a situation where the state officials and their supporters benefit from the transgression against other citizens is itself a stable equilibrium. Breaking this equilibrium often requires a catastrophic political crises or system transforming economic and demographic changes.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
How is the rational choice approach useful in understanding ethnic mobilisation in Nigeria?

3.5 Criticisms against the Rational Choice Approach
The rational choice approach to contemporary political analysis has been criticised on almost every aspect including:

   i.   methodological individualism;

   ii.   micro level of analysis;

   iii. economic deterministic approach;

   iv.   neglect of the affective sphere of human action, the lack of attention to structural foundations behaviour and its neglect of culture; and

   v.   tautological axiom of individual optimisation.

Let us briefly consider these weaknesses:

1.   Secularity and empty propositions

The rational choice model often collapses into the secular empty propositions that people do what they do because what they do is the best or most rational choice. This unthinking attribution of rationality to every one leads to dead ends. If we assume that every individual action is rational and motivated self interest, then what is the point of analysis when we already know what our research results will be.

In the rational choice model, the explanatory factors are the assumed rationality, intentionality and egoistic motives of actors. This tautological activity leads of post-hoc type of reasoning. Here, all social actions are assumed to be rational including practices that are apparently prima facie. This secular form of reasoning and analysis only tries to rationalise events in an expo facto manner and is therefore deficient.

2.   Explanatory Irrelevance

By overstretching the notion of rationality and intentionality, rational choice theorists end with findings with little explanatory relevance or with all but identified explanations for all social phenomena. The overstretched notion of rationality can not allow us to discriminate between subtly of various ethnic situations and thus undermine the deeper internal and situational understanding of the processes involved in ethnic relations. Similarly, by stating that ethnic membership is not different from other coalitions or alignment of individual, the rational choice model is unable to explain the simple question "Why do ethnic attachments regularly prove to be more potent than any other form of membership"? "Why are so many people for example, ready to die or kill for their ethnic kith and kin and so few for their trade union or golf club?

3.   Neglect of Culture

The rational choice theorists often ignore the cultural aspects of individuals choices. Rationality as well as actors choices are always far from being culturally free. Although most rational choice theorists assume that preferences are stable across cultures, numerous ethnographic studies demonstrate that this view could be far from the truth. Despite some universal features of human rationality, a great deal of social action is shaped by specificities of individual cultures, which may not fit utilitarian measures. For instance, individuals can be motivated by other categories such as glory, fame, altruism, social justice or simple hard work without any material benefit as their intrinsic psychological needs.

4.   Neglect of Politics

The rational choice model not only neglects culture, values and ideology but also politics. In other words, the theory reduces political actors to the economic level. Perceiving social actions only in terms of competitive individualism or individual maximisation or optimisation, the rational choice model is unable not only to account for non-economic and non-materialists sources of individual motives, but for structural determinacy of collective actions. In this context, the basic limitation of the rational choice approach is that a significant proportion of political behaviour is not rational. Consequently, the formulation and verification of national theories does not guarantee that all significant political phenomena will be accounted for because a lot of political behaviour cannot be included within the concept of strict rationality.

5.   The Problem of Collective Action

Rational choice theorists have incorporated collective action into their theories by requiring that the actions of groups and organisations be reducible to statements about the actions of individuals. Trades unions, political parties, business enterprises, and other organisations may, then, all figure as actors in rational choice theories. Whenever it is possible to demonstrate the existence of a decision-making apparatus through which individual intentions are aggregated and an agreed policy formulated, it is legitimate to speak of collective actors.

The problem that these theories face, however, is that of showing how such organisations come to be formed in the first place. It is possible to show that rational individuals would join organisations that are likely to bring them benefits that outweigh the costs of membership and involvement, but why should individuals join or support organisations that provide benefits that they will gain even if they do not join the organisation? Why, for example, should someone join a trades union if they will receive any negotiated wage increases in any case? Why will they join a professional association that works on behalf of all members of the profession, regardless of whether they are members of the association? This is the problem of the so-called 'free rider'. Rational actors have no individual incentive to support collective action. They will calculate that the costs of membership are high and that their participation can have no significant effect on the organisation's bargaining power, and so they will conclude that they have nothing to gain from membership. Each potential member of a trades union, for example, will judge that the sheer size of its membership gives it the necessary bargaining power, one extra member will make no difference. This leads to a paradox: if each potential member makes this Mimie calculation, as rational choice theory expects them to do, then no one would ever join the union. The union would have little or no bargaining power, and so no one will receive any negotiated pay rises or improved conditions of work.

The fact that people do join organisations and do become active in them must mean that there is something missing from the simple rational action model. Olson (1965) has suggested that collective action is sustained through what he calls 'selective incentives'. Unions might attract members, for example, if they can ensure that only their members will benefit from what they are able to negotiate. Selective incentives alter the rewards and costs in such a way as to make support for collective action profitable. Union membership is a rational choice for individuals if a 'closed shop' can be enforced, if pay rises are restricted to union members, or if unions can offer advantageous insurance or legal advice to their members. Hechter (1987) has generalised this point into the claim that associations are

formed if it is possible for them to monopolise a resource and to exclude non-members. A fundamental problem remains, however. Organisations and associations that do not act in this way still do manage to attract members and, often, to thrive.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Explain briefly the major weaknesses of the rational choice approach to contemporary political analysis.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The rational choice theory, like other approaches in political science that have been borrowed from other disciplines is inherently with weaknesses. Describing the decisions made by individuals as rational and utility maximizing may seem to be a tautological explanation of their behaviour that provided very little new information. Similarly, utility maximising individuals might find that 'their goals can be achieved more effectively through institutions, and that their behaviour shaped by institutions. Rational choice analysts have begun to incorporate 'culture' or 'beliefs' into their work to explain why actors move towards one outcome when a conventional analysis specifies many possible equilibrium outcomes'. While there may be many reasons for a rational choice theory approach, two are important for the social sciences. First, assuming humans make decisions in a rational, rather than stochastic manner implies that their behaviour can be modelled and thus predictions can be made about future actions. Second, the mathematical formality of rational choice theory models allows social scientists to derive results from their models that may have otherwise not been seen.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to rational choice approach to the analysis of politics. I have argued that:

- Rational choice theory adopts a methodological individualist position and attempts to explain all social phenomena in terms of the rational calculations made by self-interested individuals.

- Rational choice theory sees social interaction as social exchange modelled on economic action. People are motivated by the rewards and costs of actions and by the profits that they can make.

- Rational choice theory has been in the study of ethnic relations, especially its ability to demystify ethnic

irrationality. This is particularly an interesting issue in multiethnic societies like Nigeria.

- The theory has also been used to illustrate the collective action of coordination dilemmas that characterise many political situations

- The problem of collective action poses great difficulties for rational choice theory, which cannot explain why individuals join many kinds of groups and associations, or why many people will fight for their ethnic kith and kin but few for their trade unions or sport club.

- Criticisms levelled against the rational choice theory bother on methodological individualism, micro level of analysis, economic determinism, neglect of affective sphere, neglect of values and culture, and its tautological stance.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Discuss the major assumptions of the rational choice theory in contemporary political inquiry.

Highlight the main criticisms of the rational choice approach.

How useful is the rational choice approach in explaining the intensity and scope of ethnic mobilisation in Nigeria?

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Bates, H. Robert (1983) "Modernisation, Ethnic Cooperation and the Rationality of Politics in Contemporary Africa" in Donald Rothchild and Victor, A. Olunsoro (eds.) *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemma*. Boulder: Boulder View Press.

Bicchieri, Cristina (2003) "Rationality and Game Theory", in *The Handbook of Rationality*. The Oxford Reference Library of Philosophy, Oxford University Press.

Coleman, J. (1973) *The Mathematics of Collective Action*. London: Heinemann.

Dahl, Robert and Lindblom Charles (1953) *Politics, Economics and Welfare*. New York: Harper and Row.

Fearson, James (1999) *Why Ethnic Politics and "Pork" tend to go together*". Unpublished Paper, Stanford University.

Green, Donald P.; Shapiro, Ian. (1994) *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science*. Yale, Yale University Press.

Heath, A. (1976) *Rational Choice and Social Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hechter, M. (1987) *Principles of Group Solidarity*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Malinowski, B. (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mauss, M. (1925) *The Gift*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966.

Olson, M. (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Parsons, T. (1937) *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Schram, Sanford F. and Brian Caterino, (eds). (2006) *Making Political Science Matter: Debating Knowledge, Research, and Method*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Weingast, Barry (1997) The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law. *American Political Science Review* 91 (2): 245-263.

Wright, E. O. (1985) *Classes*. London: Verso.

Wright, E. O. (1989) "Rethinking the Concept of Class Structure" in E.O. Wright et al (eds) *The Debate on Classes*. London: Verso.

UNIT 3   DECISION MAKING THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Objectives
3.0   Main Content
        3.1   Basic assumptions of the decision making approach
        3.2   Systematic factors influencing the decision maker
        3.3   Decision making theory in explaining policy options
        3.4   A critique of decision-making approach
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment (TMA)
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The decision-making theory is the most highly developed model of intentional political behaviour. Used heuristically, an intentional approach to politics can be suggestive. More than other approaches, the intentional approach seems to make political phenomena meaningful and thus susceptible to coherent analysis. However, when the political scientist begins visualising the intentional approach as a potential explanation and predictive theory of politics, certain limitations must be remembered:

- Not all intentions are acted upon
- Intentions which are acted upon do not always realise successful completion
- Or, the result of intentional behaviour are not always intended
- Much political behaviour is the result of unconscious decisions.

Even with these basic limitations, there is a grain of a tradition in political thought that views political phenomena as explainable largely in terms of human intentions. For instance, Thomas Hobbes bases much of his political philosophy upon the egoistic (intentional) nature of man. From this assumption, the political system is viewed as a result of intentional behaviour. John Locke argues that men leave the State of Nature to find more effective methods of protecting their natural rights. Jeremy Bentham utilitarian calculus assumes that political behaviour is ultimately a conscious calculation of needs and wants and means of satisfying those needs and wants.

The aim of this unit is to describe the most developed model of intentional political behaviour. The brief analysis of the decision-making theory will help you understand the general nature of the

intentional approach, while indicating what can be done by suggesting and explaining when the basic assumption of intentionality are worked to a systematic model.

2.0   OBJECTIVES
At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- identify the systemic factors influencing the decision maker
- highlight the strengths of the decision-making approach
- highlight the weakness of the decision-making model
- describe how decision-making theory can be used to explain political phenomena
- describe the various contributions of scholars to the decision making approach

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Basic assumptions of the decision making approach
Decision-making theory focuses upon the decision maker as the fundamental unit of political analysis. The basic assumption is not that every political act is intentional, an assumption has that already been discarded but that ultimately, politics involves making decisions that are judgments about how to gain a particular objective in a given situation. As Isaac (1984:230) notes, the decision-making theorist does not claim that the model accounts for all political phenomena; rather, it is assumed that decision-making is the most important aspect of the political system and is of primary interest to the political scientist.

The decision making though used for the explanation of domestic policies is more popular to the study of foreign policy. Its central argument is that policies can be understood as decision-making behaviour. However, the theory proceeds from the following two questions:

a) What informs public decision-making behaviour or what informs decision making in public policy?
b) How are decisions arrived at?

These two questions are fundamental to the process of political activity. It is common however to have statesmen and political scientists alike talk about state actions or decisions of government. But to talk about a state acting or doing something is rather abstract. When we talk about a state or government taking decision or acting, we are referring to individuals or officials deciding or acting on behalf of such a state or a government. Therefore, understanding

decision making will open your eyes to political conduct and its process in a given place.

The submission of Richard W. Snyder, H. W. Bruck and Burton Sapin in their *"Motivational Analysis of Foreign Policy Decision Making"* though meant to explain international politics especially foreign policy provides sufficient evidence in the explanation of politics by the decision making model. The salient feature of their submission is what I undertake to explain here.

The authors defined decision as choices made by public officers between several alternatives aimed at achieving a particular result (Snyder, Bruck and Sapin, 1961:247 – 53). This involves choosing between values regarding:

a) Who becomes involved in a decision?
b) How and when is essential to an explanation of why the decision makers decided the way they did?
c) What the decision maker wants to achieve?
d) How the decision maker is going about to achieve it?

Going by this explanation, it implies therefore that decision-making is a study in the pursuit of public policy. However, it also clearly links us to the fact that individual value judgments are carried out on behalf of the state or its government.

While the decision maker is the focal point, he is not viewed as operating within a vacuum. His environment, the situation he finds himself is recognised as an important, factor, both as a shape of the objectives that he is trying to achieve and as a set of limits that help determine what he can and cannot do in seeking his goals. Many approaches to decision making leave the impression that the decision making process is isolated from its environment. Others argue that the process must be linked to other factors and approaches. The latter position leads to the impression that decision-making theory lacks the preciseness of some models, especially its close cousin, game theory. You will notice that such an impression may give rise to a dilemma. The more the central concept of decision-making is linked to the environment, the harder it is to isolate, yet, if decision-making is to function as a useful model, it must be simplified.

Decision making theory according to Isaac (1984:230) now becomes a refined version of the general intentional approach. The decision maker's disposition can be included in the model, although as political scientists use decision-making theory, they are sometimes de-emphasised. Thus, even though President Shehu Musa Yar'adua may have his objective in mind, his decision about how to achieve it

may be coloured by his attitudes, opinions, beliefs and personality and this later kind of influence will probably operate without his being aware of it. In short, therefore, political decision makers are no less subject to the influence of their disposition than other people.

3.2 Systematic factors influencing the decision maker

The decision-making theory has heuristic value to approach in political inquiry. In focusing upon the decision maker and his activity, the researcher has his attention directed toward those factors that might be related to the focal points. The model thus provides an overall framework for analysing basic aspects of politics and is therefore a foundation for a potential theory of politics (Rosenau, 1967:189-211).

The decision maker is seen as acting within a framework of three systemic factors:

i.   The Internal Setting

This refers to the domestic policies of the state. It comprises all non-human environment and the human forces with the social environment, including the culture of the people. The internal setting also includes all the social institutions and physical institutions on the ground; all the values that influences behaviour on the ground and the pattern of social orientation with all of them producing various groups that may each exert influence on the decision maker.

ii.   The External Setting

The external setting refers to the non-human environment of other societies and their cultures, values, social organisation and the actions of their government.

iii.   The Decision Making Setting

The decision-making setting refers to issues of bureaucratic demands, the importance of the goal, precedents/past convention, the timing, and the personality of the decision maker. All these variables are very important under the decision-making setting.

It is no wonder that because these factors have universal value and may apply to any State that, decision-making theorists see decision making in this context as representing State X as an actor in a situation.

In what follows, you will be introduced to a skeletal examination of the dominant theoretical approaches to foreign policy analysis. First, the decision-making framework developed in 1954 by Richard Snyder, H. B. Bruck and Burton Sapin. Second, James Rosenau's

pre-theory of foreign policy and finally, Graham Allison's models developed to explain the Cuban missile crisis.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
"The decision maker is seen as operating within a framework of systematic factors." Briefly discuss.

Synder, Bruck and Sapin's decision making

This model considers decision-makers as participants in a system of action. Accordingly, "the key to explaining why the State behaves the way it does lies in the way its decision makers as actors define their situation".

Synder, Bruck and Sapin (1962:86) define situation as:

> An analytical concept pointing to a pattern of relationships among events, objects, conditions, and other actors organised around a focus, which is the centre of interest for the decision-makers… In turn, the situation is related to a larger setting from which it has been abstracted by the actors, including other situations and the broader relationships surrounding them too.

In their view, the foreign policy decision-making process could be conceptualised in terms of linkages among the action, reaction and interactions of variables categorised under headings of internal and external setting and societal structure and behaviour. Their approach views decision-making in an organisational context, focusing on the objectives of the decisional unit and its members. The emphasis on the decisional unit reflects their view that answering the question "who becomes involved in a decision, how, and why is essential to an explanation of why the decision-makers decided the way they did. In order to analyse the of actions of decision makers, the behaviour of the state should be considered against three factors:

Sphere of competence: i.e. actors' role or patterns of action that contribute to the attainment of organisation's goals.

Communication and information: both inform and provide feedback on decision-making.

Motivation: provides insight into why states behave as they do. What informs the behaviour of Actor 'A' towards 'B'.

While the Synder, Bruck and Sapin model provides a framework for analysing the foreign policy of a country, it does not specify how the

variables relate to each other and their relative importance. Therein lays the weakness of this theoretical framework.

Application of Rosenau's pre-theory of foreign policy in political inquiry

Rosenau's pre-theory of foreign policy is an exercise in the application of decision making theory in political inquiry. A major influence on theorising about foreign policy decision making was a 1966 article by James Rosenau in which he articulated a pre-theory of foreign policy. By pre-theory, Rosenau meant "the need to develop an explicit conception of where causation is located in international affairs" and as "both an early step toward explanation of specific empirical events and a general orientation toward all events". An important stimulus was his observation that the largely historical and single-country case study orientation then prevalent in foreign policy research reflected the absence of both cross-national testable generalisations and a general theory of foreign policy. In this context, Rosenau urged the development of "if – then" propositions with which to conduct meaningful comparisons of the behaviour of countries.

Two pillars buttress Rosenau's pre-theory. First, a set of key variables to explain the external behaviour of societies which he labelled **idiosyncratic**, **role**, **governmental**, **societal** and **systemic**. The idiosyncratic variable refers to aspects unique to the foreign policy decision maker such as their values, skills and prior experiences that distinguish their foreign policy choices or behaviour from counterparts. The second variable concerns the external behaviour of officials associated with their role, while those aspects of a government's structure that constrain or expand the foreign policy choices made by decision-makers fail within the third variable, governmental. Non-governmental aspects of a society that influence its external behaviour constitute the fourth variable, labelled societal. They include factors such as societal values, degree of national unity and cohesion and the extent of industrialization. Finally, systemic variable encompass any non-human aspects of a society's external environment or any actions occurring abroad that influence the decisions and actions of foreign policy officials. Geopolitical considerations and ideological challenges from potential aggressors are two examples cited by Rosenau (1966:43).

The second pillar is ranking the different variables in terms of their relative contribution to external behaviour. The objective is to provide a comparative estimate of the principal sources of behaviour rather than a precise accounting of the share of each variable. Integrating the two pillars produces a crude pre-theory of foreign policy. Specifically, the ranked five variables, are examined in terms

of distinctions between large and small countries (reflecting a country's size), between developed and underdeveloped economies (indicating level of economic development), and between open and closed political system (reflecting political structure and accountability).

Rosenau's pre-theory has also been criticised. The pre-theory is data intensive and focuses on the extremes of each pole: large and small countries, developed and under-developed economies, open and closed political systems. Time series data are not always available for countries of interest, nor may it have been collected initially for the purposes, which the foreign policy analyst uses it. The pre-theory does not capture the spectrum of possible cases, for example, newly industrializing economies such as Taiwan, semi-democracies such as Malaysia and Middle-sized countries. More broadly by labelling it a "pre-theory", the implication was that a comprehensive theory would follow. By the 1980's it was clear this was not to be the case.

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

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

The model assumes that a nation's actions are in response to strategic threats and opportunities in the international environment. In selecting a response, a process of rational choice is employed based on identifying objectives and goals, usually expressed in terms of national security and national interests; proposing options for the attainment of the objectives; evaluating the cost and benefit of each option against the defined objectives; and selecting the option that ranks highest in achieving desired outcomes.

The second model, Organisational Behaviour, considers the basic unit of analysis as governmental action. The focus is on the "outputs of large organisation's functioning according to standard pattern of behaviour. Alison and Zelikow (1999) identified seven characteristics of this model. First, the actor is not a monolithic nation or government but rather a collective or bureaucratic organisations, atop of which sit government leaders. They may also be sub-units within large organisations with their own set of procedures and rules. Second, parts of a foreign policy issue may be distributed among different bureaucratic organisations in accordance with their respective specialization, while specialist attention is devoted to particular aspects of an issue; the trade-off is that there is little control over "what an organisation attends to, and how organisational responses are programmed".

The fourth is the set of beliefs about how a mission should be carried out and the requirement necessary to do so. "Action as organisational output is the fifth characteristics, based on the view that organisational activity is reflective or pre-set routines. The sixth characteristic is central coordination and control. The last characteristic is related to the political arena, where leaders may change governmental behaviour by deciding "what organisations will play out which programmes where".

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

Governmental (bureaucratic) politics is the final model. Here, an organisation's leaders are themselves players in a competitive game. The model also assumes that decisions/policies are made in an organisational context. However, whereas the organisational model emphasises the element of coalition and coherence in the creation and choice of policy options, the bureaucratic politics model emphasise the role of competition. It assumes that organisations are by virtue of their segmentation and functional differentiations, places where people hold diverse opinions, have competing perceptions as well as incompatible strategies and objectives. Decision making in such a context is, therefore, not the process of agreeing to a common objective but the process of competing for primacy in the choice of policy objectives.

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

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

The governmental (bureaucratic) politics model has been criticised for ignoring hierarchy in decision-making and for being imprecise. Its assumption that policy making necessarily proceeds by a process of bargaining has also been criticised.

The decision's unit approach
A deficiency and common thread that runs through all the approaches reviewed so far is their inability to differentiate core actors in the foreign policy decision making process from peripheral ones. The decision unit's approach places emphasis on those actors 'at the apex of foreign policy decision making in all governments or

ruling parties'.   This narrows the field of inquiry to those in all governments who exercise ultimate decision-making power and authority on a specific foreign policy issues.

Decision unit's approach enables a cross-national analysis of foreign policy, is applicable to different types of political regimes and by implication dissimilar foreign policy decision making process; provides a means for focusing on the key actors within a government involved in foreign policy making, and facilitates the comparison and contrast between different types of decision units.   These strengths make the approach a more accessible unit of analysis in the study of comparative foreign policy.

There are three types of decision unit: the predominant leader, the single and multiple autonomous actors.   What follows is a description of each.

A decision unit based on a predominant leader is a single individual who exercises:

> The authority to commit the resources of a nation in response to a particular problem and others cannot reverse his or her decision…   In effect, the leader has the power to make the choice concerning how the government is going to respond to the problem (Hermann, 1993:79).

Personal characteristics of the predominant leader assume high importance because they shape his instincts about an issue and his 'style' in evaluating advisors, inputs, reacting to information from the external environment and assessing the political risks of different actions.   The extent to which a predominant leader's personality is important in a nation's foreign policy behaviour relates to their sensitivity to information from the political environment.

There are basically two different conceptions about the role of individuals in politics. The first conception believes that individuals do not matter, or are largely inconsequential in politics because of the greater importance of the international system, domestic politics and institutional interactions. Adherents to this view suggest it is too difficult to generalise from the actions of individuals, so that analysis of this unit yields little theoretical value. Accordingly, the analyst does not need to know anything about the leaders of a state; they will behave the same no matter who they are.

A diametrically opposed view believes that leaders do matter in politics. Not only do their personalities differ, making an assumption of homogeneity in behaviour problematic, but also their motivations and interest in international affairs varies. In addition, leaders serve as bridge between officials and the public.

The next type of decision unit in politics is the Single group. Even when one person has the authority to commit a government's resources to a policy issue, he or she may nonetheless seek to involve others in the decision-making process. The reason for doing so relates to three factors:

(i)   help strengthen a decision's legitimacy
(ii)   help lower the psychological strain of decision making
(iii)   empirical evidence suggests that foreign policy decision-making is frequently a group activity.

In a decision unit based on a single group, "all the individuals necessary for allocation decisions participate in the group and the group makes decisions through an interactive process among its members". The promptness with which the group can reach consensus on a policy problem is the cornerstone to understanding a government's behaviour under this type of decision unit. Factors that facilitate consensus include information derived from a single source, its sharing among the group and its common interpretation by members. In addition, the group's membership should be small, the overriding loyalty of members should be to the group and there should be a strong but not predominant leader.

The last decision making unit refers to multiple autonomous actors. Under this decision unit type, individuals, groups or coalitions can act for the government only if some or all of the actors agree. Each individually lacks the authority to decide and to ensure compliance by the others. An actor can neutralise the actions of another by invoking a formal veto power, by threatening to withdraw from a coalition, by withholding resources necessary for action or denying approval for their use or by launching response measures that can damage the other actors or their objectives. In order for multiple autonomous actors to be labelled the decision unit, no other group or individual can independently resolve disputes among the members or reverse a decision reached collectively. Examples of this decision unit exist in parliamentary, presidential and authoritarian regimes.

3.3 Decision making theory in explaining policy options
Decision making theory can be used in explaining policy options from the decision maker. In this sub-section, you will learn through an example from the literature of political science how decision-making theory can be used to explain a particular policy or event.

Richard C. Snyder and Glenn D. Paige have provided an explanation of the decision of the United States to resist the invasion of South Korea by North Korea Forces (Snyder and Paige 1967:189-211). From decision making theory comes their basic assumption: "Acts of

a nation-State result from more or less deliberate and conscious choices by someone at some time, and a course of action is followed to serve certain purposes."

Snyder and Paige argue that the decision to resist aggression in Korea was made by the US decision makers because of several basic objectives, including protecting their national security and avoiding World War III. While admitting the influence of other factors – environmental condition, and the like – their argument boils down to the following: The United States intervened in Korea because President David Truman and his advisers decided that certain basic values were worth protecting and these objectives have to be related to the military intervention by generalisations. Perhaps the most appropriate law would be: "If a national leader wishes to preserve his or her nation's security he or she will intervene in any conflict that threatens this security. Other factors – beliefs and capabilities, for instance – would have to be included.

Snyder and Paige show that the specific objective– values are variation on the theme of national security and so included in the generalisation. The result is an explanation using laws that relate to goals and action taken. In other words, an explanation is generated by the principles of decision-making theory. The assumption of intentionality is especially important, for it suggests the other relationship that might be significant. Assuming that President Truman has objective A and aims to achieve it, and given that action X was taken, what other factors would have to be present if X is to lead to A.

3.4   Critique of the decision making approach

As a model, decision-making approach has much potential. It might be useful in studying foreign policy but for the understanding of domestic politics, this model appears too ambitious. In this context, it may not be able to explain some of the detailed political processes.

As a model, it may not be suitable for the explanation of change in politics. However, the value of its submission is that, it reminds you what is responsible for actions of actors involved in politics.

You are however cautioned that reasons for decisions may be more varied than what has been identified. Students of political analysis are therefore called upon to dig deeper to expose or discover more of the forces that may be acting on the decision maker at a particular time, which brings us to the warning that the rational actor model may be over assumed in talking of the decision maker because his/her decisions may not always be rational.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
How true it is that the decision making approach in contemporary political analysis appears too ambitious?

4.0 CONCLUSION
You have now learnt about the decision making approach as a model that purport to help us analyse political phenomena. The arguments of this theory are best appreciated when placed under the intentional/rational nature of human behaviour including also the decision maker.

However, it is obvious that this is also the Achilles Heel of the theory. If all decision makers act in rational means, their behaviour can be easily predictable, however, decision makers do not operate in a vacuum but are influenced by a series of environmental factors – culture, socialisation, values, beliefs, and itinerancies – that condition the way they make decision.

5.0 SUMMARY
In this unit, you have learned about the decision-making approach in political analysis. You have seen that the theory is the most highly developed model of political analysis. The theory also has heuristic value. You have also been introduced to the systematic factors influencing the decision maker: internal setting, external setting and the decision-making setting. An example of the decision of the United States to resist the invasion of South Korea by North Korea forces has been cited as the application of decision-making approach to political inquiry. Finally, the main strengths and weaknesses of the approach have been provided. Since different types of decision making models have their weaknesses and strengths, you are expected to bring out their strengths and weaknesses as spelt out above.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT
Clearly explain the assumptions of the decision-making theory to contemporary political analysis.

The decision making approach in contemporary political analysis appears too ambitious. Discuss.

"The decision maker is seen as operating within a framework of systematic factors." Briefly discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Allison, T. G. and Zelikow, D. P. (1999) *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crises* (2nd ed.) New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc.

Isaac, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Inquiry.* Pacific Grove. California: The Dorsey Press.

Kegley, W. C. Jnr. and Wittkopf, R. E (1997) *World Politics: Trend and Transformation* (6th ed.). New York: St. Martins press.

Otubanjo, Femi (2001) Foreign Policy Analysis. Post Graduate Lecture Notes. Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan (unpublished).

Rosenau N. James (1967) "The Premises and Promises of Decision-Making Theory", in James C. Charlesworth (ed.) *Contemporary Political Analysis.* New York: Free Press. Pp. 189-211.

Rosenau, N.J. (1966) "Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy". In R. Barry Farrell (ed.) *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Synder, W. Richard and Paige D. Glenn (1967) "The United States Decision to Resist Aggression in Korea: The Application of an Analytical Scheme" in James C. Charlesworth (ed) *Contemporary Political Analysis*. New York: Free Press pp. 193 – 208.

Synder W. Richard, Bruck H. W. and Sapin Burton (1962) "Decision making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics". In Richard W. Synder, H. W. Bruck and Burton, Sapin (eds.) *Foreign Policy Decision Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics.* Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe.

Synder W. Richard, Bruck, H. W., and Sapin Burton (1961) "Motivational Analysis of Foreign Policy Decision-Making", in James N. Rosenau (ed) *International Politics and Foreign Policy.* New York: Free Press pp 247-53.

UNIT 4   •   COMMUNICATIONS THEORY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Communications theory is an approach to social and political analysis, which emphasises the communications process, and asserts that the most crucial aspect of any political system is how information is received and processed (Isaac, 1985: 289).

This model has become common in many disciplines. Its usage in social sciences merely follows after the Engineering discipline especially Cybernetics, which itself connotes that the movement of a stimulus connected to another stimulus helps for free movement. The literature in this area argues that even though communication is an important ingredient of the political process, it is more often than not ignored in the theoretical literature of political science. Several political scientists have therefore set out to correct this anomaly, by developing models of politics based on this "missing ingredient". Prominent among these scholars are Karl Deutsch, the leading proponent of a communications approach to the study of politics, who pointed out that cybernetics, the science of communications and control, "represents a shift in the centre of interest from drives to steering" (Deutsch, 1963:76). When applied to politics, this means an emphasis on decisions, control and communications, rather than power, which has without a doubt been at the heart of politics, and at exclusive interest of political science.

However, communications theorists do not claim that communication is the only topic that should interest political scientists. However, quoting Deutsch once again, "it is communication, that is, the ability to transmit messages and to react to them that makes organisations (Deutsch, 1963:77), any thorough analysis of political organisations and systems must at least include consideration of the role of communication. The central concern of this unit is to describe the basic assumptions of communications theory and how the theory can be applied to integration.

2.0   OBJECTIVES
At the end of this unit, you should be able to:
- define what is communications theory
- define what is cybernetics
- highlight the basic assumptions of communications theory
- explain how communications theory is an integrative theory
- analyse the significance of communications theory
- identify the uses of communications theory
- critique the communications approach.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   The model of communications theory
The introductory section of this unit noted that communications, though important in political processes and activity is oftentimes forgotten, as political scientists more often than not concentrate exclusively on power. However, the ultimate significance of a communications approach does not lie in its concentration on communication but rather on the ability to describe and explain the behaviour of political systems that follows from such concentration.

More specifically, Ulmer (1962:397) sees communication as vital in implementing man's control of his environment. This view from Ulmer remains the key point and the main contribution of the communications approach to the study of politics. Just like in the systems approach, it is through communication that inputs are received and acted upon, and outputs are generated by a system; in short, the effectiveness of a system- how effective it handles the demands of its environment- can be measured in terms of its ability to accurately analyse messages from the environment and effectively transmit messages that express reactions.

As Isaac (1985: 290) notes, it is through communication that a political system relates to and cope with its environment. A system is constantly bombarded with messages. It must be able to read them and react to them. This is the manner a system achieve its goals. Without communications, there cannot be politics. A modern nation – state may be viewed essentially as a decision and control system which relies upon the exchanges of messages in both its domestic affairs and foreign relations (North, 1967: 301).

North's conception of politics and its emphasis on communications should not be of any surprise to you when one realises that its major impetus comes from the already mentioned science of cybernetics. As conceived by its major developer, mathematician Robert Wiener, cybernetics is the study of communication and control in all types of organisations from machines to large-scale organisations (Weiner, 1950:1961).

Cybernetics can be viewed as the attempt to apply knowledge gained of the workings of such self-monitoring devices as antiaircraft guns, thermostats, and electronic computers to analogues social systems. Communication theory in political science can be viewed as the application of the general approach to the cybernetic of political situations.

3.2 Concepts of communications theory

The communications approach to the study of politics assumes that the behaviour and survival of political systems can best be analysed in terms of communication. The main concepts of the theory can broadly be grouped into two:

   i.   ideas relating to the operative structures through which the process is carried out

   ii.   ideas explaining the flows and processing of information movement

Knowledge of the meaning and interrelationships of these concepts are essential for understanding the strengths and the weaknesses of communication theory. Let us consider these concepts.

3.2.1 Information
The first assumption of a formal theory of communications is that communication transfer's information. Karl Deutsch has defined information as "patterned relationship between events (1963: 86). This becomes the basic unit of analysis. Information, which is what flows through the channels of communication, is received, analysed, and reacted to.

3.2.2 Load

All political systems receive information about how its environment is changing relative to the system's goals. In other words, the environment places stress on the system. This is called load. Communication theory suggests several hypotheses at this point. For instance, ceteris paribus, the greater the load, let us say demand for increase in derivation from oil producing areas in the Niger Delta, or demand for the institutionalisation of Sharia in the northern states, the more difficult it is for the system to adjust and meet the load.

3.2.3 Lag

When there is demand on the system, the system must adjust to meet the load. This is the point in the heart of communication theory, for now the system must cope with the load of its environment. The system receives the information, translates and interprets it, and then decides how to react. The time between the reception of the information (the realization of the load) and the reaction to it is called lag. Here too, hypotheses are suggested. The greater the lag, the less efficient a system is, and the less able it is to cope with its environment.

In this context, the fact that a political system takes years to process information about basic demands from its environment might be indicative of its inability to maintain itself. On the other hand, some systems may overreact; make a decision too rapidly before sufficient information is received. Both insufficient lag and too much lag can be dangerous to a political system. Two factors are implicated for lag: the clearness of the meaning of the load and the ability of the system to process load information quickly and accurately.

3.2.4 Distortion

Robert Wiener has argued that "in control and communication we are always fighting nature's tendency to degrade the organized and to destroy the meaningful". More specifically, the concept of distortion refers to the changes that occur in information between the time it is received and the time it is reacted to. If a system allows or produces much distortion it is in trouble, for it is not reacting to the actual situation, but to a distorted impression about it. One measure of a capable system is the amount of distortion produced in the reception and transmission of information.

3.2.5 Gain

When a system reacts to a load, it is referred to as a gain. Gain can be defined as the amount of change a system makes as a result of load. If the information is effectively processed, then the gain will be enough to meet the stress of the environment. If the change is insufficient, then the gain has been too small; if the change is more

than needed, the gain has been too large. Both under and overreactions are possible.

3.2.6 Feedback

When a political system receives information about how successful its reaction has been; i.e. whether the gain was sufficient or not, this kind of information is called feedback. If the system is at all self-monitoring or self adjusting, it will make adjustments in its behaviour when it next reacts to stress. This is what thermostat does when an oven to maintain a particular temperature.

3.2.7 Learn

In addition to connecting its reaction to the immediate load, the system will file away information about the success or failure of its reaction, in other words, it will learn. The information will be stored and used when a similar situation arises. It is this notion of learning that allows us to talk about a political system keeping up with the changes in its environment.

3.2.8 Lead

Isaak (1985: 293) also talks about a system being able to react to stress as it occurs, making satisfactory adjustments as it goes, so to speak. Thus, the thermostat on a furnace is able to keep the temperature at the desires level through this simple react pattern of behaviour. But a social organization such as a political system, faces more complex kind of stress. If it reacts only to the present load, the environment will probably be at least one-step ahead. It will become increasingly difficult for the system to catch up. Thus, the concept of lead is very important as it refers to the ability of organization to predict future states of the environment so as to, in effect, make or anticipate the necessary adjustments in advance. Obviously, a system that can generate this kind of prediction is in the long run going to be more affective in realising goals, including survival, than the other that plays by the ear.

For Karl Deutsch, the most important feature of a political system therefore, is its capacity to keep up with a changing environment through innovation. Both the concepts of "learning" and "lead" does not presuppose a static environment. Thus, a static system has no chance of surviving. While too many models of politics have emphasised the concept of "power", which Deutsch equates with not having to learn or change, communications theory, on the other hand, emphasise learning and change.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE
Briefly explain relevant concepts in communications theory.

3.3 Communications theory as an integrative theory

Karl Deutsch's link of communications to integration theory is what makes his own model distinct from the typical engineering concepts of cybernetics as explained by Norbert Wiener.

Similarly, his idea of integration set him aside from Talcott Parson's General Systems Model. However, the seed of communication concept of integration was indeed sown by Wiener who noted that communication is the cement of all organisations; it is what hold all organizations together. It is communication, which enables a group to think together, see together and act together.

Proceeding from this premise, Deutsch (1963:36) held that communities cannot be built without communication and he argued, "the building of political units depends upon the flow of communication within the unit as well as between the unit and the outside world." According to Karl Deutsch, countries are merely a cluster of population united only be grid of communication system and transport system, which are separated by thinly settled nearly empty territories. Therefore, boundaries can only be classified or defined as areas where communication sharply declines.

When we talk about countries, we are referring to a group of persons who are highly involved in different types of communication on different topics. This group of people who are so involved in communication naturally develop a high sense of interdependence. This interdependence may be called integration.

Karl Deutsch thus concludes that were you to encounter immediate interdependence, in all spheres of life, but not just in one or two specialised goods or services, you may be actually dealing with a country.

Deutsch has gone ahead to employ this model for the study of integration or community building in northern America. He came up with two types of communities on the basis of his analysis.

- Amalgamated Security Community: The best example being the present United States of America and

- Pluralistic Security Communities: Examples are Canada and America.

Perhaps someday, the European Union, which is a pluralistic security community, may also achieve the states of an amalgamated security community.

In this context, Karl Deutsch, has offered an exception. Communication must be positive. It must be such that it fulfils the need of all parties in order to achieve integration. However, if communication calls up unfavourable memories, such communication may engender conflict and disintegration and therefore the system may collapse.

3.4 A critique of the communication approach

Communication approach to political analysis has proved very useful in the sense that it is easily adaptable to quantitative method in research. In other words, this model is a useful theory in behavioural research and indeed, it has been used practically.

However, the same problem that befell all systems model affect this one too. This is because attention is focused on structures and processes without due regard to the quality of goals. Communications theory is also complex. The theory therefore fails another test of model building. Models are meant to simplify but because communication models follow too closely the engineering process in explaining social behaviour or social processes, it ends up been too complex, thereby failing the test of simplification.

Related to the above, the communications approach to contemporary political analysis is too mechanistic, and as such may not properly fit the explanation of social system.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES
State and discuss three weaknesses of communication theory.

How is communications theory useful in understanding regional integration?

What are the relevant concepts in communications theory.

4.0 CONCLUSION
We have explained that communications theory is an approach to social and political analysis, which emphasise the communication process, and asserts that the most crucial aspect of any political system is how information is received and processed. The main thrust of this theory is that "the task of steering and coordinating human efforts towards attainment of goals is essentially a communication process. Decisions however are the mechanisms through which the communication takes place. For students of political analysis, you are called upon to focus, on the flow of information, which links up steering with movement.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have dealt with the meaning and assumptions of the communication theory, by looking at basic concept such as information, load, lag, distortion, gain, feedback, learn and lead. You have also seen that what distinguishes communication as used in Engineering and in the social and political analysis is the fact that theory explains integration. Finally, you have learnt about the weaknesses and strength of communication theory.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Critically evaluate Karl Deutsch's conception of communication theory as an integrative theory.

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Deutsch, Karl (1963) *The Nerves of Government*. New York: Free Press

Isaak, C. Alan (1985) *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political Inquiry*. Pacific Grove: California: The Dorsey Press

North C. Robert (1967) "The Analytical Prospects of Communication Theory" in James C. Charlesworth, (ed) *Contemporary Political Analysis*. New York: Free Press.

Ulmer, Sidney (1962) *Introductory Readings to Political Behaviour*. Skokie, Illinois: Read McNally.

Wiener, Robert (1950) *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Weiner, Robert (1961) *Cybernetics* (2nd ed) New York: John Wiley and Sons.