



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: POL 214**

**COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

**COURSE  
GUIDE**

**POL 214  
INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

**Course Team** Eyene Okpanachi (Developer/Writer) – UI  
Abdulrahoof Bello(Coordinator) – NOUN



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

National Open University of Nigeria  
Headquarters  
14/16 Ahmadu Bello Way  
Victoria Island, Lagos

Abuja Office  
No. 5 Dar es Salaam Street  
Off Aminu Kano Crescent  
Wuse II, Abuja

e-mail: [centralinfo@nou.edu.ng](mailto:centralinfo@nou.edu.ng)  
URL: [www.nou.edu.ng](http://www.nou.edu.ng)

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## INTRODUCTION

**POL 214:** Introduction to Political Analysis which is a three- credit unit course offered for students of the undergraduate degree programme in Political Science. There are 21 Study Units in this course. The prerequisite for studying this course is POL 111: Introduction to Political Science. It has been developed with appropriate local and international examples suitable for a student of politics.

This course guide is for distance learners enrolled in the B.Sc Political Science programme of the National Open University of Nigeria. This guide is one of the several resource tools available to help you successfully complete this course and ultimately your programme.

In this guide you will find very useful information about the course aims and objectives, what the course is about, what course materials you will be using; available services to support your learning; information on assignments and examination. It also offers you guidelines on how to plan your time for study; the amount of time you are likely to spend on each study unit; your tutor-marked assignment.

I strongly recommend that you go through this course guide and complete the feedback form at the end before you begin your study of the course. The feedback form must be submitted to your tutorial facilitator along with your first assignment. This guide also provides answers to several of your questions.

However, do not hesitate to contact your study centre if you have further questions. I wish you all the best in your learning experience and successful completion of this course.

## COURSE AIM

The major purpose of this seminar is to provide a broad overview of the nature of inquiry and explanation in political science. The aim of this course is to provide students with an introduction to some of the key approaches and theories currently popular in the study of politics, and in particular those approaches which form the foundation for political analysis.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

There are objectives to be achieved in each study unit of the course. You should read them before studying each unit. Generally, on completion of this course you should be able to:

- explain the nature of politics
- identify the approaches of political analysis
- explain the history and development of political science
- describe the scientific quest in political science
- explain the nature of the political science discipline as an intellectual enterprise
- identify main activities and issues of a political system
- evaluate the goals, methods, and problems of government and politics, and become critically alert to bias and to simplified panaceas.
- identify political systems and structure of government
- describe some of the key processes and activities in a political system.
- acquire competence and skills in analysing various political systems and structure, and functions of modern government
- identify the range of analytic procedures or approaches that can be employed in the search for knowledge about politics.

The course ends with a look at the special features of contemporary politics at the international arena.

## **WORKING THROUGH THIS 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 political analysis. Also, make a habit of noting down any questions 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**

**POL 211: Introduction to Political Analysis** is a 200 level course for undergraduate Political science students. There are four modules in this course, each module is made up of five units, apart from the third module which is made up of six units. Thus, you will find twenty one units in the whole text. Some units may be longer and/or more in-depth

than others, depending on the scope of the course that is in focus. The four modules in the course are as follows:

**Module 1 The Essence of Politics**

- Unit 1 Conceptions of Politics
- Unit 2 The Importance and Nature of Political Analysis
- Unit 3 The Language of Inquiry in Political Science Analysis
- Unit 4 Is Political Science a Science?
- Unit 5 The Evolution of Political Science as a Discipline

**Module 2 Approaches to the Study of Politics**

- Unit 1 Traditional Approaches
- Unit 2 The Behavioral Approach
- Unit 3 Approaches to the Study of Political Systems: Systems approach and Structural-Functionalist approach
- Unit 4 Political Processes Approaches: Class Approach, Pluralism (Groups Approach), and Elite Approach.
- Unit 5 Rational Choice Institutionalism

**Module 3 Political Systems, Political Process and Political Action.**

- Unit 1 Power, Authority and Legitimacy
- Unit 2 Political Culture
- Unit 3 Political Socialisation
- Unit 4 Political Participation
- Unit 5 Political Representation
- Unit 6 Political Parties and Interest Groups

**Module 4 Typology of Political Systems**

- Unit 1 Form of Rule
- Unit 2 Political System and Organs of Government
- Unit 3 Political Systems and Distribution of Power
- Unit 4 The Federal System of Government in Nigeria
- Unit 5 The International Political System and Globalisation

Each module is preceded with a listing of the units contained in it, and a table of contents, introduction, 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 materials which you may 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 to cultivate the habit of consulting as many relevant materials as you are able to within the time available to you. In particular, be sure to consult whatever material you are advised to consult before attempting any exercise.

Your course material is the main text for this course. However, you are encouraged to consult other sources as provided for you in the list of references and further reading below:

Ansell, C. (2006). "Network Institutionalism." In Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. 23-38.

Boix, C. (2007). "The Emergence of Political Parties and Party Systems." In Boix and Stokes. (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.499-522.

Dubois, H. & Fattore, G. (2009). "Definitions and Typologies in Public Administration Research: The Case of Decentralization" in *International Journal of Public Administration*: (328): pp. 704-727.

Farr, J. (2003). "Political Science." In *The Cambridge History of Science: The Modern Social Sciences*. (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Porter, T. and Ross, D. (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

March, J. & Olsen, J. (2006) "Elaborating the "New Institutionalism" In Rhodes, Binder and Rockman (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. 3-21.

Geddes, B. (2007). "What Cause Democratization?" In Boix and Stokes. (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 317-339.

Hagopian, F. (2007). "Parties and Voters and Emerging Democracies." In Boix & Stokes. (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 582-603.



- Laitin, D. (2002). "Comparative Politics: The State of the Sub discipline." In Katsnelson & Milner, ed. *Political Science: State of the Discipline III*. New York and London: W.W. Norton.
- Munck, G. (2007). Rejoinder: Visions of Comparative Politics: A Reply to Mahoney & Wibbels. *Comparative Political Studies*. 40(1) 45-47.
- Przeworski, A. (2007). "Is the Science of Comparative Politics Possible?" In Boix & Stokes. Eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.147-171.
- Nettle, J. & Robertson. R. (1968). **International Systems and the Modernization of Societies**. New York: Basic.
- Rosenau J. (1990). *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 5 – 13, 36,
- Roskin, M.; Cord, R.; Medeiros, J. & Jones, W. (2006). *Political Science: An Introduction* (9th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Sabetti, F. (2007). "Democracy and Civic Culture." In Boix & Stokes. Eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 340-362.
- Salmon, G. (2002). *The Tools of Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## ASSESSMENT

Two types of assessment are used in the course: the self-assessment exercises (SAEs), and the tutor-marked assessment (TMA). 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. TMAs 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 (TMA) which you should answer as instructed and put in your assignment file for submission. However, this Course Guide does not

contain any TMA question. The TMA questions are provided from Unit 1 of Module 1 to Unit 5 of Module 4.

## FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination for POL211 last for three hours and attracts 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 time between completion of the last unit and revising the entire course, to prepare for your exams. You will certainly find it helpful also to review both your SAEs and TMAs before the examination.

## COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The following table shows how the actual course marking is broken down:.

| Assessment  | Marks  |
|---|--|
| Four assignments (The best 4 of all assignments submitted for marking). | 4 assignments, each carrying 10%, but highest scoring three selected, thus totalling 30% |
| Final Examination   | 70% of overall course score  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100% of course score</b>  |

## COURSE OVERVIEW PRESENTATION SCHEME

### Study Plan

This table is a presentation of the course and how long it should take you to complete each study unit and the accompanying assignments.

| Units  | Title of Work   | Weeks/<br>Activity | Assignment<br>(End-of-<br>Unit) |
|--|---|--------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Course Guide  |                    |                                 |
| <b>Module 1 The Essence and Nature of Politics</b> |   |                    |                                 |
| 1  | Conceptions of Politics                               | 1                  | Assignment                      |
| 2  | The Importance and Nature of Political Analysis       | 1                  | Assignment                      |
| 3  | The Language of Inquiry in Political Science Analysis | 2                  | Assignment                      |
| 4  | Is Political Science a Science?                       | 2                  | Assignment                      |
| 5  | The Evolution of Political Science as a Discipline    | 3                  | Assignment                      |
| <b>Module 2 Approaches to Political Analysis</b>   |   |                    |                                 |
| 1  | Traditional Approaches                                | 4                  | Assignment                      |
| 2  | Behavioural Approach                                  | 5                  | Assignment                      |

|   |  |                 |            |
|---|--|-----------------|------------|
| 3   | Approaches to the Study of Political Systems: Systems Approach and Structural-Functionalist Approach | 6               | Assignment |
| 4   | Political Processes Approaches: Class Approach, Pluralism (Groups Approach), and Elite Approach      | 7               | Assignment |
| 5   | Rational Choice Institutionalism   | 8               | Assignment |
| <b>Module 3 Political Systems, Political Processes and Political Action</b> |  |                 |            |
| 1   | Power, Authority and Legitimacy  | 9               | Assignment |
| 2   | Political Culture  | 9               | Assignment |
| 3   | Political Socialisation  | 10              | Assignment |
| 4   | Political Participation  | 10              | Assignment |
| 5   | political Representation   | 11              | Assignment |
| 6   | Political Parties and Interest Groups.   | 11              | Assignment |
| <b>Module 4 Typologies of Political Systems</b>                             |  |                 |            |
| 1   | Form of Rule or Political Regimes  | 12              | Assignment |
| 2   | Political System and Organs of Government  | 12              | Assignment |
| 3   | Political Systems and Distribution of Power  | 13              | Assignment |
| 4   | The Federal System of Government in Nigeria  | 14              | Assignment |
| 5   | The International Political System and Globalization   | 15              | Assignment |
|   | Revision   | 16              |            |
|   | Examination  | 17              |            |
|   | <b>Total</b>   | <b>17 weeks</b> |            |

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

Introduction to Political Analysis provides you with the opportunity to gain a mastery and indepth understanding of approaches in political inquiry. Module 1 introduces you to the topic of politics and the whole essence of studying it. Module 2 examines the different approaches to the study of politics and the relationship between them. Module 3 examines some of the key processes and activities that take place in a political system and the implications of these for regime legitimacy and efficiency. Module 4 examines the typologies (or classification) of political systems according to the form of rule, organization of government and distribution of power. It also examines the Nigeria political system through the prism of the country's federal system of government. The module ends with an examination of the international system and the concept of globalisation. Each study unit consists of one week's work and should take you about three hours to complete. It

includes specific objectives, guidance for study, reading material, and Self Assessment Exercises. Together with tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual Study Units and of the course.

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THE COURSE**

First, it will be of immense help to you if you try to review what you studied at 100 levels in the course *Introduction to Political Science* to refresh your mind about what politics is about. Second, you may need to purchase one or two recommended texts that are important for the 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.

## **FACILITATORS/TUTORS AND TUTORIALS**

There are fifteen (15) hours of tutorials provided in support of the course. You will be notified of the dates and locations 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. You must also keep a close watch on your progress. Be sure to send in your TMAs promptly, and feel free to contact your tutor in case of any difficulty with your SAEs, TMAs or the grading of an assignment. In any case, I advise you to attend tutorials regularly and punctually. Always take a list of such prepared questions to the tutorials and participate actively in the discussions.

## **CONCLUSION**

This is a theory course but you will get the best out of it if you cultivate the habit of relating to political issues in domestic and international arenas.

## **SUMMARY**

This course guide has been designed to furnish the information you need for a fruitful experience in the course. In the final analysis, how much you get from the course depends on how much you put into it in terms of time, efforts and planning.

I wish you success in POL214programme!

| <b>MAIN COURSE</b> |  |             |
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## **MODULE 1 THE NATURE AND ESSENCE OF POLITICS**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Unit 1 | Conceptions of Politics                               |
| Unit 2 | The Importance and Nature of Political Analysis       |
| Unit 3 | The Language of Inquiry in Political Science Analysis |
| Unit 4 | Is Political Science a Science?                       |
| Unit 5 | The Evolution of Political Science as a Discipline    |

### **UNIT 1 CONCEPTIONS OF POLITICS**

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#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

“Man is by nature a political animal.” This famous aphorism by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, implies that it is in the character of man to associate with others and to live in society. We may also deduce from this saying that man has engaged in politics and reflected on political issues over a long period of time. The situation is not different today. In fact in today’s world, politics seems to have grown in intensity. As Deutsch (1970:3) pointed out, we live in an age of growing politicisation where the water we drink, the air we breathe, marriage and divorce, the neighbourhood we live in the education of the young, the cost of petrol, the care for the elderly and the aspirations and fears of minority groups all fall within the purview of politics. But what exactly is politics?

Political scientists hold on to different, sometimes conflicting, conceptions of their subject and these conceptions shape the questions researchers put to politics, as well as the assumptions on which they make their inquiries. In fact, there are many definitions as there are authors. For instance, Tom Donahue (2009) has identified what he calls

“46 ½ conceptions of politics” which he found in the scholarly literature. These 46 ½ conceptions of politics comprise of 44 full conceptions, and five “half conceptions” (half because they are conceptions not explicitly stated by the authors to whom they are attributed, but to which the authors are committed to.

Based on the above, the word politics is an elastic one that means different things to different scholars. As Heywood (1994) comments:

Most academic study starts with a discussion of what the subject matter itself is about, usually provoked by asking a question such as ‘What is Physics?’, ‘What is History?’ or ‘What is Economics?’ Such discussions have the virtue of letting students know what they are in for: what they are about to study and what issues and topics are going to be raised. Unfortunately for the student of politics, however, the question ‘What is Politics?’ is more likely to generate confusion than bring comfort or reassurance. The problem with politics is that debate, controversies and disagreements lie at its very heart, and the definition of ‘the political’ is no exception (Cf. Stoker, 1995: 4).

In this unit, you will be introduced to the meaning of politics. We shall do this by examining the various conceptions of politics. While there are many definitions of politics as noted above, attempt is made here to synchronise the various definitions into major themes or classes based on the kinds of activity or relations that the various authors take politics to consist in. These different conceptions are: (i) politics as collective decision and action; (ii) Politics as the peaceful resolution of societal struggle and conflict (iii) Politics as the Relations and conflicts among classes (IV) politics as the operation of the state. I will elaborate more on these themes and point out there shortcomings.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- explain the conception of politics as:
- the collective decision and action
- the peaceful resolution of societal struggles and conflicts
- the conflicts among classes
- the operation of the state.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Politics as Collective Decision and Action

One of the conceptions 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 individual rational people try to make collective actions 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. The implication of this assumption is that people 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 (Laswell, 1951), to be about ‘Who Gets What, When and How?’ 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 within 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 a just decision one 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 are most anxious to produce is a moral character in his fellow citizens, namely a disposition of virtue and the performance of virtuous action".

Although profound changes have occurred since the times of Plato and Aristotle, some political philosophers still define politics in terms of moral beliefs and the moral ends of the state. Notable among these are John Rawls (1971) who has formulated a theory of justice whose ends are liberty and equality, and Martin Luther King Jr. who also voiced a concept of justice as involving the equality of all men irrespective of race and other circumstances of births (Skott-King, 1969). Jeremy Bentham was more explicit about the moral ends of the state when he stated that politics exists for the "greatest happiness of the greater number of people" (cf. Baradat, 1997).

However, other scholars have argued that the conception of politics as serving the public interest is false because public interest is a myth which is usually employed by political leaders to rationalise private interest. This is the view held by Wolin (2004) when he argued that "politics is the activity of seeking competitive advantage over other groups, individuals, or societies, such that the seeking produces consequences of such magnitude that they affect in a significant way the whole society or a substantial part of it." Perhaps, it is in recognition of this double-edged role of politics (the fact that political decisions can be in the public interest or benefiting a few) that Barber (2004) argues that:

Politics is those actions or omissions undertaken by a public, intended to have public consequences, where the public's not taking an action will have serious consequences, where the public takes such actions after some deliberation leading to a public choice, where the public tries to make the choice reasonable, where there is some conflict over whether the action should be taken, and where there is no wide consensus on whether the reasons for which the action was taken are good reasons that are worthy of acceptance.

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 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 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 him/herself, and to obtain peace and order, men and women agreed to form a society. Men and women 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 (ed.), 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 especially as 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 recognise the right of the rulers to exercise power. In effect, converting power into authority, then, should be the goal of any set of rulers.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Examine the conception of politics as collective decision and action.

### **3.2 Politics as the Peaceful Resolution of Societal Struggles and 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. However, if this fails and military conflict or any kind of violence erupts as a consequence, then politics can be said to have been rejected or failed. Bernard 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 (1962:5). 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 given share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community (Crick, 2004). Crick argues that appeasement 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 make peace with 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 was put forward by Gerry Stoker. Stoker (2006: 7) argues that politics not only expresses 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.’

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 (Echevarria, 2007). As Stoker himself noted, ‘not all politics results in compromise and consensus. Sometimes the conflict is so sharp that violence, civil wars and revolution become political instruments. This is in relation to the circumstances when the relatively orderly pursuit of politics gives way to more chaotic and brutal forms. In effect, therefore, when studying everyday politics, its latent potential to take more violent and dramatic forms should not be forgotten (Stoker, 1995:6-7). Stoker further argues that much of the present discontent about democratic politics is misplaced because our expectations are too high. Thus, rather than judging it by exacting standards it should be recognised that politics, by its very nature, is messy, muddled and, in a very real sense, ‘designed to disappoint’ (Stoker, 2006: 10).

### **3.3 Politics as the Conflicts among 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; these constitute the class of oppressors, and the ‘have nots’ who belong to the class of the oppressed. In other words, political activity centers on the struggle between these two antagonistic classes for supremacy.

Karl 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. This in other words is one in which politics and the state may not necessary. Politics, for Marx then, is seen in negative terms. It is about class conflict, and political power. This contention Marx and Engels insist in the Communist Manifesto (2002)

is 'merely the organised power of one class oppressing another'. It logically follows therefore from this that once conflict is ended through the overthrow of capitalism, expectedly there will be no competing classes and by implication no politics.

Important as it is, the Marxian conception of politics ignores the fact that politics is also a process of cooperation and that most human interactions are not always conflictual. This is in the sense that the conception downplays other identities such as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, which, in addition to class, influence political behaviour of individuals and groups (Osaghae, 1988).

### **3.4 Politics as the Operation of the State**

We have seen that politics is premised on the differences that human beings have, and how these differences, in interests and values, can be managed in a world where scarcity is inevitable. However, this definition does not address the problem of the arena of politics let alone the controversy surrounding politics especially as it relates to boundary problems. To this end, it becomes pertinent to ask: 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 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: 77–8). Such authority, according to Bodin (1955) is tantamount to sovereignty.

The state is sovereign in the sense that it is the supreme law-making body within a particular territory. The implication of the supremacy of the state is that it has absolute and perpetual power in its domestic use of power and authority over all persons and things within its territory. In other words, sovereignty means that the state has a general power of

lawmaking and of the enforcement of laws. The state operates through the government machinery which consists of not just political offices but also bureaucratic institutions such as the judiciary, military, police and security services with which the authority of the state is exercised.

Without doubt, it is apparent that the activities of the state are necessary in the study of politics. This is especially so as 'politics encompasses the entire sphere of collective social activity, formal (the legislative, executive, and judicial functions) and informal (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 which provide linkages between the individual and the state"' (Hay: 2002: 3; Leftwich: 1984). Also, the term governance 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. This indeed is in consonance with everyday discourse about politics taking place in business Organisations, town unions, universities, churches, entertainment industry, and even in the family.

Secondly, the conception of politics includes 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 Commission, 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 is placing increasing constraints on what individual 'sovereign' states can do on their own.

Thirdly, although the state/government is a key player in the use of physical force however, cases abound where some states/government does not have a monopoly of coercion as we see from a country such as Somalia where various war lords are pitched against one another and also against the state.

Flowing from the above, the distinctiveness of politics lies not in the arena within which it takes place but in 'the emphasis it places on the political aspect (the 'distribution, exercise and consequences of power) of social relations'. In effect, politics is a phenomenon found in and between all groups, institutions (formal and informal) and societies, cutting across public and private life. It is involved in all the relations, institutions and structures which are implicated in the activities of production and reproduction in the life of societies . . . it is about power; about the forces which influence and reflect its distribution and use; and

about the effect of this on resource use and distribution . . . it is not about Government or government alone' (Held and Leftwich; 1984).

In sum, 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) which is the distinctive mark of the discipline of political science.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss how central the state is to the understanding of politics.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit has sought to discuss politics variously as well as some themes current within the concept of politics. The difficulty of studying politics, because of the lack of consensus on its meaning, has been an age-long dilemma. However, it is suggested here that having an open mind to what is 'political' prevents undue emphasis on watertight definition which would miss much of what is important in the real world. While the term politics can be an elusive one, at its core are issues about the exercise of power and influence - who should have power in a society and for what ends should power be used. Politics is a process that involves conflict and co-operation and it takes place within the public and private arenas or realms. As a process of conflict and co-operation over the resources necessary to the production and reproduction of lives, politics is a ubiquitous activity meaning that 'politics is everywhere'. However as Hay (2002: 75) cautions, 'nothing is exhaustively political'. In other words, people 'experience many relationships other than power and authority: love, respect, dedication, shared beliefs and so on' (Dahl, 1991: 4). The political is just a key part of this human activity.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have examined four different conceptions of politics which Political scientists employ in their efforts to understand political phenomena. While the conceptions sometimes look conflicting however, they overlap given that politics can be conceived as collective decision and action, peaceful resolution of societal struggle, as conflict relations and conflicts among classes, and as operation of the state. The unit also examined core issues of politics such as the exercise of power and influence i.e who should have power in a society and for what ends should power be used. In sum, politics is a process that involves conflict

and co-operation which takes place within the public and private realms although the main emphasis of political scientists is the politics that takes place in the public realm, especially the realms of the state. It should be recalled that the emphasis is because the state is central to any understanding of the concept of politics because it is a sovereign entity seeking and exercising dominance and authority over a defined territory, its people and institutions.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is politics?
2. Is politics synonymous with the state?
3. In what way does politics constitute conflict among classes?

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## **UNIT 2 THE IMPORTANCE AND TYPES OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Importance of Studying Political Science and Political Analysis
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  - 3.4 The Quality of Normative Analysis
  - 3.5 Empirical Analysis and its Nature
  - 3.6 Semantic Analysis
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  - 3.8 Relationship between the Types of Political Analysis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having introduced you to the various conceptions of politics in Unit 1, the purpose in this Unit 2 is to provide a justification for the entire course by drawing your attention to the importance and nature of political analysis. In any case, if ideally as Unit 1 has proved that politics is indispensable and unavoidable, hence it becomes pertinent that an understanding of it is necessary to enable us analyse political problem as they arise, to advise governments on good policies, and to suggest ways of making life better. To be able to do these, we need certain basic skills in political analysis which this unit intends to introduce to you.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- develop the importance of studying political science and political analysis
- identify the types of political analysis
- determine the relationship between the types of political analysis.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Importance of Studying Political Science and Political Analysis**

Studying political science has the following values:

1. studying political science may be valued as an intellectual activity in its own right and part of the growth of and development of civilisation;
2. studying political science may be of value in terms of changing interpretations of society at a time of rapid and continual change;
3. studying political science may have value as a socially applicable area of study so as to aid in the achievement of desired outcomes.

Political analysis is the major task undertaken by Political Scientists. According to Osaghae (1988), political analysis has three main goals:

1. To know what is important in politics, i.e. those things that influence or determine the outcome of events.
2. To know what is valuable, i.e. the difference every political outcome makes to our desires, both individually and collectively; and
3. To know what is real or true by systematically subjecting our guesses, impressions, popular belief, even rumors, to verification.

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

What values does the study of political science and political analysis have for politics?

#### **3.2 Types of Political Analysis**

##### **Normative Analysis**

This type of political analysis 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.

According to Hurka (2009), “the course of normative ethics in the 20th century was a roller-coaster ride, from a period of skilled and confident theorising in the first third of the century, through a virtual disappearance in the face of various forms of skepticism in the middle third, to a partial revival, though shadowed by remnants of that skepticism, in the final third.”

For much of the twentieth century therefore, normative analysis was underutilised. In academia, a great deal of emphasis was placed upon empirical political science and also upon ‘analytical’ political philosophy, in which the meaning of concepts and the relation between them was considered. This was known as the ‘behavioural’ revolution in which quantification, particularly in relation to the study of electoral behaviour, was the standard. In this climate, judgments on what kind of society and polity we ought to have—the basis of normative analysis—was regarded as, at best, unnecessary and, at worst, meaningless.

A variety of intellectual and practical political reasons have been put forward to explain what Peter Lasslett (1956: vii) described as the ‘death of political philosophy’, ranging from the growth of secularism (Dahl, 1991: 120), to the emergence, in the West at least, of consensus politics—whereby there was widespread agreement on the fundamental political principles. In the academic world, the decline of normative analysis was partly a product of the rise in status of positivism, an approach that seeks to apply the scientific methods of the natural sciences to social phenomena (see language of politics in the preceding unit)

Normative political analysis philosophy began to make a comeback in the 1960s and 1970s, partly as a result of the decline in consensus politics, and partly because of the emergence of new and innovative works of political philosophers, most notably Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*. Despite this, however, it should be recognised that a great deal of contemporary political analysis philosophy is much more cautious and tentative than the grand narratives of the past. This is partly in recognition that normative questions present problems of a peculiar nature for the political philosopher. As we shall see below, empirical facts can play a part in the resolution of normative questions. However, for most scholars it still remains impossible to derive normative statements merely from empirical facts. These scholars were all moral realists, believing that moral judgments were objectively true or false. More importantly, they were non-naturalist realists, believing, as anti-realists also can, that moral judgments form a separate category of judgments, neither reducible to nor derivable from other judgments. For them, the property of goodness is not identical to any physical or natural property, and no “ought” can be derived from an “is”. They, therefore,

accepted a realist version of the autonomy of ethics: which at the level of fundamental principles made moral judgments independent of all other judgments (Hurka, 2009).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What type of value questions values does normative analysis seek to resolve?

### **3.3 The Quality of Normative Analysis**

Here, we are interested in finding a criterion or set of criteria for evaluating the quality of normative analysis in the same way that predictability does for empirical analysis. Since normative analysis entails what ought to be, we require standards of value, or criteria for judging which course of action is good, best or right. According to Osaghae (1988), the view points which provide the criteria for evaluating the quality of normative analysis include:

#### **Naturalism**

This viewpoint holds that there are certain moral values or principles which are true and useful criteria because they are descriptions of the true property of man. Thus, for example, knowing that we will all seek happiness, any decision which promotes happiness is necessarily good. This viewpoint is highly useful because it closes the gap between value judgments and factual judgments. As it were, anything that is good (value judgment) is factual because it has been observed to be true. This was the view of philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham who argued that the reason for the existence of the state is for it (the state) to fulfill “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” (cf. Baradat, 1997). The greatest happiness principle supplies a standard, a touchstone with which states action can be judged. It can be used to judge state actions by the results they produce, by their fruitfulness in pleasure and the extent to which this pleasure actually finds expression in the lives and experience of the individual.

#### **Intuition**

According to this view, although the quality of goodness cannot be perceived by the ordinary senses, every man is endowed with a special capacity for knowing what is good. For some intuitionists like St. Augustine, the knowledge of God leads to the discovery of moral truths and goodness. For instance when one raises the question about why obedience should be secured for the state or why must we obey the state? An answer can be based on religious belief. Here, obedience is

secured because God has commanded it. For others like Plato and Rousseau, goodness is not necessarily from God, but one that is discoverable through knowledge of the structure of the universe. Then, there is St. Thomas Aquinas who believes that moral truths can be discovered through reasoning like mathematics and logic (Dahl, 1976, cf. Osaghae, 1988). In the same vein, Immanuel Kant talked of a "categorical imperative" which requires everyone to "act only according to that maxim by which at the same time should become a universal law" (cf. Richard, 1985).

### **Noncognitivism or subjectivism**

According to this view, intrinsic values, unlike factual assertions, cannot be shown to be true or false. Whatever, we say is true or good is an assertion of our belief: "They may reveal one's orientations or intentions toward the world and towards one's fellow creatures but unlike factual judgments, they lack the cognitive status of objective propositions: hence the name noncognitivism" (Dahl, 1976, cf. Osaghae, 1988).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Normative analysis is as important today as before. Do you agree? Give reasons for your opinion.

### **3.4 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. For instance, to attempt an answer to the hypothesis that democracy requires the free market and private ownership, it is necessary to engage in a comparative examination of different regimes so that the relationship between political and economic

variables can be better understood. Another example is the proposition that electoral systems, using a form of proportional representation tending towards producing political and economic instability can be tested by comparing their use with regimes using alternatives such as the first-past-the-post system. By adopting the comparative approach, new fields of research have been developed. Areas that have benefited from comparative studies include comparative studies of political elites in two countries or more, political violence, and political corruption; political socialisation, political culture, political parties and interest groups.

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 proves 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 cf. Osaghae, 1988). However, we need to recognise the unpredictable nature of man and society because often times, predictions which will otherwise be correct may turn out to be false because human conditions and dispositions have changed. Because of this, much of the predictive knowledge used in making political decisions are in the absence of total information, probabilistic statements or at a low level of reliability. Nevertheless, the quality of empirical analysis continues to be important because, as much as possible we seek to capture the real world as it exists (Osaghae, 1988).

By nature the empirical analysis of politics is divided into deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. Both approaches effectively move politics away from the formalistic and legalistic study of institution particularly, constitutions.

**Inductive approaches** to politics start with empirical observation from which explanatory generalisations are generated while for **deductive approaches**, theory is first deduced from principles before being tested.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How true is the fact that empirical analysis seeks to identify observable phenomena in the real world with a view to establishing what is, rather than what ought to be?

### **3.5 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.

For instance, if you want to define freedom you may say that it means a very low degree of government intervention in the lives of individuals that can be ascertained from indices like whether or not human rights are guaranteed, whether or not opposition is suppressed, whether or not the rule of law prevails, and so on. The major advantage in this kind of definition is that even if people do not agree with your definition, they can at least see things from your point of view. In essence, either of the two ways of semantic analysis one may choose would, of course, depend on the nature of what one intends to analyse, be it what is already known about or the particular elements you may wish to emphasise.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain how semantic/conceptual analysis can be carried out.

### **3.6 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. For example, if we desire the eradication of youth militancy in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, many options are open to us. We may combat the menace with the use of physical force of the military, we may create jobs for the youths, we may accelerate and expand on development programmes in the region etc. 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. For instance, if we perceive the issue mainly as a security problem, we will choose the military option. If we consider it a developmental problem, then accelerating the development of the region will be our option to stemming the problem. If we adopt the military approach, we will have to consider not just the benefit but the relative cost as well. For example, we would want to know the cost with regard to civilian casualties and displacement. We will also want to know whether the economic cost of military action in relation to the disruption of oil and gas exploration in the region will be more than the youth militancy that we want to stem. In addition, the government will want to know the damage a full scale military assault in the Niger Delta will do to the its reputation, both domestically and internationally.

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.

Policy making is a complex activity involving a pattern of action, extending over time and involving many decisions. A policy is not synonymous with a single decision. As a course of action, it is useful to conceive of policy making as a process activity involving a series of distinct stages which has been referred to as the policy cycle (Sambo, 1999). The policy cycle corresponds to what in conventional usage is referred to as the policy process. The policy process is characterised by distinct stages which include agenda setting, formulation, adoption, Implementation and evaluation. The policy agenda is the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time. Agenda setting refers to the stage in the policy process when officials attempt to narrow the number of subjects which come to their attention to the set which will actually become the focus of their attention. The policy formulation stage is the stage at which the alternatives for dealing with a public problem are developed. The policy adoption stage is the stage when an authoritative choice among specified alternatives is made by governmental officials. At the implementation stage, administrators carry out policies that have been adopted by formal political office-holders. Finally, during the evaluation stage of the policy process, the concern is with the estimation, assessment, or appraisal of policy, including its content, implementation, and effects.

Policy outcomes complete the policy cycle. Policy outcomes are the consequences for society,-intended or unintended, that flow from action

or inaction by government. Concern with policy outcomes directs our attention to the impact of public policies, namely, whether policies meet the original goals which led to their enactment.

The policy process is characterised by distinct stages which each command. Elected officials and their appointees command a set of institutional as well as Organisational resources with which they dominate the public's attention. Through these enormous resources, these officials are well-positioned to set the policy agenda. Professional staffers as well as academic researchers and consultants, on the other hand, dominate the alternative specification stage by invoking their reservoir of special skills (Sambo, 1999).

There is no unanimity in the role of the political scientist in policy making. While some political scientists would want to use their skills to contribute to the betterment of society through the policy process, Webb (1995) has argued that the best that the academic can contribute is an academic and not as a surrogate or pseudo decision maker. In other words, although the social scientist does have a role in the policy process, it is a role constrained by the nature of the academic profession and is best performed from the political process of policy-making. The world of practice and the world of scholarship are two different worlds, and each will benefit from the other if they remain relatively disengaged and loyal to their own roles.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Are policies solutions which expectedly should bring desired and satisfactory results?

### **3.7 Relationship among the Four Types of Political Analysis**

In reality, the four forms of political analysis described above are not used independently of each other. As Wolff (1996: 3) succinctly points out, 'studying how things are helps to explain how things can be, and studying how they can be is indispensable for assessing how they ought to be'. Studying how things ought to be in turn is important in their actual applicability or implementation. Thus, in the first place, normative claims are, at least partly, based on empirical knowledge. In other words, normative analysis itself requires prior empirical knowledge: to know what ought to be, we require knowing what is. In the case of Hobbes, to give one example, the normative claim that we ought to rely on an all-powerful sovereign to protect us derives from the largely empirical assumption that human nature is so brutally competitive that there is a great risk to our security without the protection of the so-called 'Leviathan' (see Curtis, 2009). Conversely, a

great deal of empirical analysis presupposes some normative assumptions. This can be seen, in particular, in our choice of investigation. Thus, students of politics choose, say, to investigate conflict and violence because it is assumed that conflict and violence are undesirable and therefore we should try to eliminate them. Policy analysis makes use of both empirical and normative analysis because, in a sense, it attempts to bridge the gap between what is and what ought to be. Furthermore, normative assumptions provide us the criteria for evaluating policies. However, underlying all analysis is, of course, semantic analysis, without which few analyses can be made (Osaghae, 1988). In the example of tackling youth militancy in the Niger Delta given above, the policy analysis could benefit from moral considerations such as issues related to human rights and the general issue of human security.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

The different types of political analysis are not mutually exclusive. Discuss.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The four types of political analysis such as semantic, normative, empirical and policy analysis were extensively examined. While each of these types of analysis can stand alone, they are but not mutually exclusive. On one hand, normative analysis requires empirical knowledge: to know what ought to be, we require knowing what is. Conversely, a great deal of empirical analysis presupposes some normative assumptions. On the other hand, policy analysis makes use of both empirical and normative analysis because, in a sense, it attempts to bridge the gap between what is and what ought to be. Furthermore, normative assumptions provide us the criteria for evaluating policies. However, underlying all analysis is, of course, semantic analysis which involves the clarification of the concepts we want to use in our analysis.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt the purpose for the study of political science and the reason why we should embark on political analysis. You have also learnt the four different types of political analysis viz: semantic, empirical, normative and policy analyses. You have also learnt that even though the types of analysis are distinct, they are mutually reinforcing.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is political analysis, and how is it related to political science?
2. The different types of political analysis are not mutually exclusive". Discuss.
3. List and explain three (3) criteria for evaluating normative analysis.

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## **UNIT 3 THE LANGUAGE OF INQUIRY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Understanding Concept
  - 3.2 Necessary Concepts for Political Analysis
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

According to Webb (1995: 48), language has always been a matter of prime concern in social sciences and in recent years has become an even more contested area. At one end of the spectrum is the school of thought that believes that by precise definition and classification social science can build rigorous and useful models and theories about the world. At this end of the spectrum, there would tend to be a close identification of social science with natural science. At the other end of the spectrum are those who see language as infinite, flexible and precise meaning as forever unobtainable. According to this view, any attempt to 'capture' the world theoretically is doomed to failure.

Definitions generally, are neither right nor wrong. There are various types of definitions however, of all these definitions; the most important is the one which gives a special meaning in order to increase the precision of the use. All fields of discipline develop specific meanings, whether we are talking about sport, business or academic disciplines. Consequently, those desiring to join that specialist field will often have to undergo a lengthy period of socialisation in order to learn the range of special meanings. Without such a vocabulary, the students would be incapable of taking part in the disciplinary discourse (Webb, *ibid*: 51-52).

In this unit, we are going to introduce you to the language; some would say vocabulary, often used in political science inquiry. However, it should be pointed out that some of these terms are social science terms and they are heavily influenced by the general debate on the question of whether a science of social reality is possible which we shall treat in the next unit. Thus in concrete terms, it means that this unit discusses the terms and problems related to making knowledge claims about social

and political phenomena. These terms are not restricted to political science but are generally used in the debate about knowledge, research and method in the social sciences. So you should not be surprised see any of these concepts in your other lectures in the social sciences.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- explain the language/vocabulary often used in political science inquiry
- describe the terms and problems related to making knowledge claims about social and political phenomena.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Understanding Concepts**

A concept is an abstraction or general notion that may serve as a unit of a theory. Concepts are the generally accepted bundle of meanings or characteristics associated with certain events, processes, conditions, behavior (actions) and situations (Cooper & Schindler, 2001: 39 cf. Paki & Inokoba, 2006: 94). Like any other field of scientific inquiry, Political Science is replete with a lot of concepts that form part of the building blocks of the discipline. Popular concepts in Political Science include democracy, development, state, etc. Some concepts can be powerful thinking tools even when they are not at all fully understood. Perhaps most concepts are components of theories or explanations. At least they seem (though not always correctly) to give fairly direct insight into the nature of things.

As earlier stated in our discussion on the meaning of politics, there is a lack of agreement among scholars on the basic concepts of Political Science. Each scholar's position on any given concept is largely informed by his ideological orientation, academic tradition and the context of experience. As such, concepts may be more or less clear, and a major part of research is devoted to clarifying them. This can be extremely difficult. In political analysis, concept clarity and concision are important. To achieve such clarity and concision, political scientists precisely define any terms or concepts that are important to the arguments that they make. This precision often requires that they "operationalise" key terms or concepts, which simply means that they define them so that they can be measured or tested through scientific investigation.



To give you an example of the kind of “rigor” and “objectivity” political scientists aim for in their writing, let's examine how someone might operationalise a concept. For example, we are all familiar with the concept “democracy” If you were asked to define the term, you might make a statement like the following: “Democracy is government by the people.” You would, of course, be correct- democracy is government by the people. But, in order to evaluate whether or not a particular government is fully democratic or is more or less democratic when compared with other governments, we would need to have more precise criteria with which to measure or assess democracy. Most political scientists agree that these criteria should include the following rights and freedoms for citizens:

1. freedom to form and join organisations
2. freedom of expression
3. right to vote
4. eligibility for public office
5. right of political leaders to compete for support
6. right of political leaders to compete for votes
7. alternative sources of information
8. free and fair elections
9. institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

By adopting these nine criteria, we now have a definition that will allow us to measure democracy. Thus, if you want to determine whether or not Nigeria is less democratic than the United States of America (USA), you can evaluate each country in terms of the degree to which they fulfill the above criteria.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How does operationalisation of concepts help measuring in political Analysis?

## **3.2 Concepts Necessary in Political Analysis**

### **Generalisation**

These are statements which describe general conditions or properties of the things we are interested in. They are usually stated in law-like terms which are testable. It is often argued that it is the business of social science to be a generalising activity, so that the propositions it makes about people or political systems have relevance beyond a particular system. Hence a generalisation such as ‘bi-cameral legislatures are found under federalism’ would as a social scientific statement be held to

be applicable in all federal countries whether we are talking of Nigeria or Belgium. However, the point should be stated that in the social sciences, it is difficult to have generalisations that are laws which give no exceptions. Given that societies and events sufficiently differ in their essentials across time and place (Webb, 1995), generalisation in the social sciences can at best be probabilistic rather than law-like statements.

## Hypotheses

Hypotheses are tentative explanations, suppositions, or assertions that are formulated to be tested and, when extensively tested and confirmed, either 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 per cent at the time of the election, presidential incumbents are not reelected.”

## Variables

A variable is a property that takes on different values or assumes different characteristics. Take democracy for instance. Democracy can mean free and fair elections, freedom of the press, or freedom of association. There are two types of variables. First, there is the dependent variable, which is what is to be explained by another variable. Second, there is the independent variable, which is the variable which explains the dependent variable. An explanation therefore involves identifying the independent variables which account for the dependent variable, and takes the form “if A, then B” However, the connections we draw between variables must be such that they provide reasons for the occurrence of a particular event rather than other occurrences. This means that “if A then B” is a more acceptable explanation than “If A, B, C, D” (Osaghae, 1988).

However, the independent and dependent variables are not the only variables present in many research. In some cases, **extraneous variables** may also play a role. This type of variable is one that may have an impact on the relationship between the independent and dependent

variables. In such cases, the researcher will note the values of these extraneous variables so that impacts on the results can be controlled.

### **Theories**

Theories are those 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).

Specifically, theories perform the following roles in political analysis. First, theories are intended as descriptive models for understanding political phenomena. Second, theories are also intensely prescriptive. That is, they are normative specifications of what and how policies ought to be.

The role of theory in political analysis is to give direction to inquiry. Theories provide needed guidelines for focusing our effort in weaving through and making sense of the mass of data political researchers unearth and to try and identify and explain relationships between them. Theories are useful in political analysis because they simplify and clarify our thinking about politics and the political process; help us to identify important aspects of policy problems; help us to communicate with each other by focusing on essential features of political life; direct our efforts to understanding political process better by suggesting what is important and what is unimportant; and suggest explanations for political process and actions and predict their consequences.

Generally, the theories we use in political science could be empirical (based on what is) or normative (based on what ought to be). For scientific purpose however, empirical theories are more useful for explanation because they can be tested and retested in a variety of cases. Normative theories are not usually open to such tests (see Unit 2 for more on the normative, empirical and the other types of political analysis).

### **Scientific Laws**

Scientific laws are statements of universal uniformity used as explanatory characters and as predictive statements? A law talks of absolute properties which have no exceptions. The unpredictable nature of human behaviours makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop laws in the social sciences. For example, it is difficult, to say that “the fundamental cause of violent conflict is poverty”, because we would

certainly find countries or states where the rate of poverty is high but where violent conflict has not taken place. At the same time, we will also find countries or states where poverty is low but where violent conflict takes place often.

### **Classification**

Classification may be considered as the activity of grouping objects with perceived similarities or attributes into two or more named classes. Classification rests basically on the recognition of similarities and differences and the ability to group these into sets. Classification involves definition and is itself an extended form of definition. Every classification schema involves at least an implied definition of each class within the schema plus a definition along which the classified phenomena are ranged (Webb, 1995). For instance, we can classify societies into developed, developing, and underdeveloped societies. However, the dimensions of classifications and the nature of the classes within a dimension have the ability to structure the way we see the world, and changes in the nature of classes have the ability to restructure our perceptions with effects that stretched far beyond a mere linguistic change (Webb, 1995: 57).

### **Verifiability**

A proposition is said to be verified when it has been checked or tested by many specialists in the relevant field of study and when they all agree that other scientists and the general public can believe it to be true. However, there are no certainties in anything but probabilities. The probability that some propositions will hold true, is so great that they can be treated as certainties, but in the social sciences, this is not the case. If scientific knowledge is to be verifiable, science must be empirical, that is, scientific statements must be descriptive of the empirical world. Similarly, if scientific knowledge is to be verifiable, the desire for reliability and, ultimately, for verifiability has been the chief factor leading to the adoption of quantitative methods.

### **Systematic**

Knowledge is said to be systematic when it is organised into an intelligible pattern, or structure, with significant relationships made clear. To achieve a system, scientists seek out similarities and differences of political events or phenomena. While looking for similarities and differences, scientists also look for relationship, whether correlational or causal relations. In effect, concern for systematic knowledge means that scientists want to proceed from particular towards

general facts, from knowledge of isolated facts towards knowledge of connections between facts.

### **Positivism**

This refers to an approach that seeks to apply the scientific methodology of the natural sciences to social phenomena. Positivism holds that science must limit itself to those things that are observable, thereby insisting upon a clear separation between fact and value. At the extreme, positivism—in the form of the doctrine known as logical positivism—holds that only those statements that can be investigated by observation, and those that can be examined semantically, are worthwhile. Normative questions are regarded as more or less meaningless. This approach was associated in particular with the French social scientist Auguste Comte, who argued that the scientific stage of history now upon us would dominate (Webb, 1995).

An extreme version of positivism was a school of thought known as logical positivism, centering on a group of philosophers known as the ‘Vienna Circle’ (see Ayer, 1971). For logical positivists, only statements which are empirically verifiable and those which sought to say something about the meaning of concepts and the relations between them are legitimate. Normative statements, seeking to make claims of value are regarded as meaningless.

### **Explanations**

This is one of the major aims of the scientific method. Explanations may in general be defined as ‘the reduction of the unfamiliar to the familiar’ (Webb, 1995). Scientific explanation involves an appeal to laws or generalisations which specify relationship among variables, in addition to the conditions present in the explanatory situation. In other words, we can explain an event by deducing it from one or more statements of individual fact in conjunction with one or more generalisations or laws. Thus, a particular event A explains another, B, only if there is some generalisation or law that justifies the inference from A to B. The major problem here is that in social science there are no ‘laws’ in the way that there are in natural science, although there are generalisations.

### **Prediction**

This is the other goal of science. Prediction basically has the same logical form as explanation but, unlike explanation, it involves inferring (predicting) future unknown occurrences from particular facts and laws that are already known. When we predict, we specify conditions under which a future event is likely to occur. This is quite close to

explanations. The major difference is that in explanation, we specify conditions under which events which have already taken place occurred while in prediction, we project into the future by stating that certain types of events are likely to occur given certain conditions. For instance in the case of violent conflict, we may predict that if the human needs of American citizens are deprived, they are likely to resort to violence.

By their nature, predictions can either be reliable or unreliable. Of course, the reliability depends on how factual or true to life the conditions we specify are. This is a major problem in the social sciences where, because of the unpredictability of man's actions and behaviour, our predictions cannot be absolutely certain, no matter how adequate our explanations on which such predictions are based may be. To this extent, in political science, we talk of the probabilities of events actually taking place. For example, we may say that if the human needs of American citizens are deprived, there is a high probability that they will resort to violence. Words like "most likely", "tend to" and "most probably" convey the probabilistic nature of predictions in political science.

### **Falsification**

The doctrine of falsification is a doctrine of science that claims that there is no way we can know what is true among competing explanations of the world. Rather we can know what is false. The process of science, therefore, is the progressive elimination of what is false, with what is left un-falsified representing that which is nearer the truth (Popper, 1979). According to Karl Popper, one of the famous proponents of this doctrine, this is an 'evolutionary' theory of knowledge, which sees human knowledge as developing through trial and error, conjecture and refutation, although the evolution may not be perfect. Seen from this perspective, the essence of a scientific theory, then, is its potential for falsification (Popper, 1974). A theory which is not falsifiable may be a perfectly good theory, but it is not a scientific theory.

### **Induction**

This is the practice of inferring generalisations from past occurrences which then shape expectations for the future. Induction has been defined as "the process by which the scientist forms a theory to explain the observed facts" (Kemeny, 1959. p. 53). It is an extrapolation from the past to the future in the expectation that the future will continue to behave in the same manner as in the past. Induction starts with empirical observation from which explanatory generalisations are generated. A classic version of induction is an approach known as behaviouralism. The problem with deductive reasoning is that it tends to focus more on

gathering empirical data than it does on the generation of theory. Another weakness of the inductive method is that the type of hypotheses generated by inductive tends not to be explanatory—in the sense of offering a casual link between generalisations. Rather, they tend to be merely patterns of statistical correlation (Hay, 2002: 79). Finding correlations between phenomena is not the same as the one explaining the other. To give an example, the identification of a statistical correlation between, say, social class and voting behaviour does not, by itself, explain why this correlation exists.

### **Deduction**

For deductive reasoning, theory is deduced first from principles before being tested. The deductive reasoning is strong on theory but not so much on empirical testing,

### **Paradigms**

A paradigm is a concept for understanding the framing and structuring of knowledge production in the natural sciences proposed by Thomas Kuhn (1970) in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. According to Kuhn, a scientific discipline is characterised by agreement on the fundamentals of that discipline. When such agreement pertains, the discipline is enjoying a period of normal as opposed to extraordinary or revolutionary science. The activity of the scientist is constrained to work within the framework of the paradigm and to engage in the activity of problem-solving; the paradigm is largely unquestioned and a research failure is the consequence of a lack of creativity on the part of the individual scientist. Through the process of developing (and amending) the paradigms, increasing complexity occurs. As the paradigm is developed into new areas and used to solve new problems, an increasing number of *ad hoc* hypotheses become incorporated as measures to 'save' the paradigm. It thus becomes increasingly inevitable that an alternative perspective, which is marked by greater simplicity, in the sense that what were problems or anomalies in the old paradigm are expectations within the new. A period of revolutionary science ensues, where there is conflict between the adherents of the old and new. The period of revolutionary science ends with the establishment of a new paradigm as the unquestioned framework within which problem-solving occurs.

However, others have argued that social science knowledge is ideally better seen as tentative rather than as organised by one paradigm or another in the strict sense of the term. As Schram (2003) argued, the idea of paradigm has no relevance to social science except as its own form of imitation. Definitive research is what natural scientists do.

Given the lack of consensus on concepts used in the social sciences, the complexity of human behaviour (in contrast to the more predictable nature of non-living things) ideally should not be seen as amenable to being organised as paradigms in any strict sense of the term. The argument here is that given the subject matter, there ideally should be no normal science in any one of the social sciences. Regardless of the fact that both natural and social science are forms of learning in context that produce value-laden facts, social life, as opposed to the objects of natural scientific inquiry, involves multiple interpretive lenses offering a cacophony of competing perspectives emanating from its origins in conscious, thinking human beings. Under these conditions, no one form of disciplined study of social life should be organised definitely to exclude the consideration of multiple perspectives (Schram, 2003).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

List and explain the various concepts in the social science necessary for empirical research?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit examined the language or vocabulary for empirical research in political science in particular and the social sciences in general. In effect, a few of the issues and debates about what we can know about the world and causal relations were also examined.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you considered some specific terms that are important to political science analysis. You also learnt that some of these terms and debates are raised within the broader issue of social science research and the unending question with regards to whether or not the scientific study of social phenomena is desirable.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. What is a paradigm? At what stage does social science find itself in the pattern of scientific progress envisioned by Thomas Kuhn in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*?
2. Discuss the following itemised concept: (a) variables (b) hypothesis (c) prediction.
3. In what way is the operationalisation of concepts important for political and social scientific inquiry?



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## UNIT 4 IS POLITICAL SCIENCE A SCIENCE?

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Aims of the Scientific Method
  - 3.2 Can Politics be a Science?
  - 3.3 Is Political Science a Science? An Unending Debate
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall consider the question often posed about whether political science is a 'science' or whether the scientific study of politics is actually possible. You will recall that at the beginning of Unit 3, most of the vocabularies used by political science are used to describe the discipline as scientific. But it is often asked whether social sciences, such as politics, can be, or ought to aim to be scientific.

The debate about whether or not political science is or can be a 'science' has been part of a broad dispute about methodology in social sciences. According to Ryan (1981), 'there is only one methodological question about the social sciences, and that is whether they are sciences at all.' For Political Science, this debate is a 'complex, voluminous and multi-faceted' one (Hay, 2002: 75), and we can only touch upon its major themes here.

The major aim in this unit therefore, is to present the two sides of the arguments about a science of politics. We shall begin the unit by highlighting the key aims of the scientific method. Thereafter, we shall examine whether or not political science is a 'science' or whether or not the scientific study of politics is actually possible.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the aims of scientific method
- contribute to the question of whether politics can be a science
- contribute to the unending debate about whether political science is a 'Science'.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 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.

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 generalisation, deduce what it implies for the next case and observe whether the prediction succeeds. If it does, no consequent action is needed; if it does not, then either discard the generalisation or amend it and test the fresh predictions (cf. Marsh and Furlong, 2002).

Although, some of the features and aims of science have been listed in our preceding lecture however, it is pertinent to reiterate “in specific terms the important goals which science aims at” (Osaghae, 1988). These are:

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, personal likes and dislike, interest or values must be kept out of any analysis.
2. **Empirical Analysis:** This analysis is concerned with ‘what is’ rather than ‘what ought to be’. It focuses its emphasis on direct observation to discover things as they really are as well as 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:** This takes the same logical form as explanation, but it is different because it is forward-looking, and involves specifying conditions under which certain occurrences are likely to take place. 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. For example, we may say that if human beings are deprived of the satisfaction of their basic needs, there is a high probability that they will resort to violence. Words like "most likely", "tend to" and "most probably" convey the probabilistic nature of predictions in political science (Osaghae, 1988).
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.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Highlight some of the features and aims of science?

### 3.2 Can Politics be a 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 employs 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. 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/she is ever-changing, and his/her environment is difficult to control. From these perspectives, the major reasons why politics is not and can never be a science are given below (Appadorai, 1975).

### **Difficulty of Value-Free Analysis**

Some political scientists believe that it is difficult, if not impossible, for political analysis to be value-free. We impose our own assumptions and norms on our work from the very start of a research project, the choice of which is imbued with our own sense of its importance and values (Webb, 1995). For instance, a student of politics may have certain personal reasons for deciding to study local government administration rather than say, electoral behaviour. You may believe for example that elections are not free and fair, and so, do not require analysis. Once you have selected your topic, it becomes difficult for your values to be eliminated from your analysis because you are an interested part of what you study. This is why you normally find that people's analysis of the same event differ, some times so markedly, that you find it difficult to believe that they are analysing the same thing.

The other problem is, is it desirable for the political analyst to be objective for its own sake? After knowing things as they are (assuming that he/she is value-free), should the political analyst not go ahead to tell us what ought to be? Without doubt, political scientists do have a responsibility to society as they are involved in the search for a better society and this responsibility involves values and norms. To attempt to exclude them is to miss much of what is valuable in a study of the political. As Webb (1995) has argued, "a social science that attempts to exclude intention and purpose cannot meaningfully interpret human behaviour since most human behaviour is purposive with respect to

goals. It is the larger normative and metaphysical questions that give meaning to social science and to attempt to exclude such questions in favour of a purely factual social science would render that activity arid and ultimately meaningless.”

### **Uncertainties and unpredictability in human life**

The other essential reason is that the scientific method –explanation and predictions which are based on theories and laws – may be summarised by saying that they all rely on observed regularities in particular occurrences. In other words, they rely on consistent patterns of occurrences to be able to explain and predict. This is where a science of politics is particularly handicapped. Man’s behaviour remains uncertain and unpredictable, no matter how much we know about him. Consequently, it is difficult to formulate universal or general theories, much less ‘laws’ because there would always be exceptions to observed regularities. As long as this cannot be overcome, explanations and predictions in political science will remain incomplete and inadequate.

The argument here is that because of the uncertainties and unpredictability in human life it is difficult to say why man behaves in a particular way. In studying man therefore, political scientists mostly depend on what he/she tells them and this may not be reliable because man is capable of lying. This is different from the hard facts in say Physics or Chemistry which can be described in purely physical terms based on observation. In politics, even such a simple action like voting can not be described as a purely physical activity.

If direct observation and hard facts are difficult then quantitative analysis is more difficult. First, we cannot subject men to the same laboratory conditions under which natural scientists carry out their analysis. As a result, if we really seek to be scientific, we would have to concentrate on political phenomena which can be directly observed and are quantitatively analysed.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Examine the reasons given why political science is not a ‘science’.

### **3.3 Is Political Science a Science? An Unending Debate**

The debate over whether a science of politics is possible or desirable is not likely to be completely resolved. To a certain extent, the answer to the question depends upon whether we adopt a loose or rigid definition of science. A more rigid definition would involve applying the methodology of the natural sciences such as physics and chemistry to

the political realm, as is attempted in the behavioural approach. Here, an appropriate definition of science might be 'the ability to generate neutral, dispassionate and objective knowledge claims' (Hay, 2002: 87). The attractions of developing a value-free and objective account of politics where we can identify the 'truth' about political phenomena are obvious. However, the claims about a science of politics at this more rigid level can be challenged on two main grounds. In the first place, one can question whether the methods of natural science can be transferred to a social science such as politics. At a second, more fundamental, level, one can question whether the whole scientific enterprise, in both natural and social settings, is a valid and useful exercise. I will elaborate further.

At the first level, it is the social element of politics which is the key. Human beings, as stated earlier, are unpredictable and are not amenable to unbending scientific laws in the way that, say, the workings of molecules are in the natural sciences. In other words, as Hay (2002: 50) points out, what makes the social sciences qualitatively different from the natural sciences is that the 'former must deal with conscious and reflexive subjects, capable of acting differently under the same stimuli, whereas the units which comprise the latter can be assumed inanimate, unreflexive and hence entirely predictable in response to external stimuli'. The argument here is that there are obvious differences between social and physical or natural phenomena that make social 'science' impossible. Stoker and March (2002) elaborates further:

First, social structures, unlike natural structures, do not exist independently of the activities they shape. The experiences of agents affect their understanding of the social world and also helps change it. Second, and related, social structures, unlike natural structures, do not exist independently of agents' views of what they are doing in the activity. People are reflexive; they reflect on what they are doing and often change their actions in the light of that reflection. This leads us to the third difference. Social structures, unlike natural structures, change as a result of the action of agents; in most cases the social world varies across time and space.

Because political scientists deal with large numbers of people in an uncontrolled setting where each individual has many behavioural options open to him, it is near impossible to make generalisation on observed facts. The unpredictability of human beings not only leads us to question the application of the 'scientific' method to the field of social studies, it also reminds us that social researchers often face ethical dilemmas in their work. We cannot treat human subjects with the same

detachment that natural sciences treat inanimate objects. Humans can feel emotional and physical distress that researchers have to take into account. The understanding we seek of human beings must appreciate their individual uniqueness and freedom of will; understanding people is based on our ability to see events from their point of view.

Moreover, the prescriptions that might emanate from social research, or that might be derived from it by others, can have important ethical dimensions. An example here would be the implications of social research that led to claims being made about the importance of race, or gender, in determining intelligence and therefore political worth.

Seen from the perspectives of the difficulty of achieving a value-free analysis and also the uncertainties and unpredictability in human life, many have argued that political science and the social sciences are not 'science', and become merely narrow and sterile if they attempt to copy the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences.

At a more fundamental level however, the core assumption of the scientific project itself has been challenged. The criticism here is that it is unfair to criticise politics for not being a 'science' because there is no true value-free science in the first place. We should therefore question the claim that there can be a value-free exercise to which we can attach the label 'science', rather than solely questioning the scientific merits of politics. As Hay (2002: 87) remarks, the natural scientist, just like the social scientist, is 'socially and politically embedded within a complex and densely structured institutional and cultural landscape which they cannot simply escape by climbing the ivory tower of academe to look down with scientific dispassion and disinterest on all they survey'. Webb (1995) agrees with this view when he writes:

If one leaves aside religious belief and revelation, the only thing which we are left with is human understandings that will vary in time and space. There can be nothing else. Often social science is contrasted with natural science in that natural science is believed to have discovered natural laws that are invariable in time and space. Natural science however refers to how much humans can construct as any other mental production and as such is subject to change and revision. Similarly with social sciences, the theories and models we use to understand and describe 'reality' are human constructs and can only be evaluated according to criteria that we know to be contentious and imperfect.



This idea that ‘scientific’ knowledge is in part at least socially constructed is the basis of the contemporary, so-called, ‘interpretist’ approach which has emerged to challenge positivism (see Bevir and Rhodes, 2002). Scholars writing from this view-point argue that the adoption of science by the social scientists was naive in that it was based on the supposition that there is a ‘thing’ called the scientific method and that in many ways, science is like social science. But science itself is not like science in the way imagined by many social scientists; rather social science is like science in the sense that it is marked by constant debate and dispute over fact, theory, and method (Webb, 1995). The consequence of this understanding is that science itself is not determined by the absolute requirements of its discourse (the idea that the universe is regular, law-governed, for instance), but is structured by the societies in which it operates. Thus, the natural science has no more claims to be a science than the social science.

Seen from this perspective, political science has claim to the title ‘science’ not because the notion of explanation extant in the natural science is a model (Webb, 1995) for it but because political science, just like the natural science, is an example of a more general model of explanation that “rests its claim on the tenet that all knowledge is public and subject to challenge. There are no hidden truths and no purveyors of truth that can never be wrong. Political science demands from its practitioners that they produce arguments and evidence that will convince others” (Stoker, 1995). In other words:

Political science demands logical coherence. This implies precise and clear definitions of key concepts and justified derivations. Arguments should be constructed in a way that avoids inconsistencies and vagueness. Political science also demands a commitment to assessing whether the evidence assembled to support a proposition is adequate to the task (Stoker, 1995).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

It is unfair to criticise politics for not being a ‘science’ because there is no true value-free science in the first place. Explain.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit brought to fore the fact that although political scientists are prone to debates and disagreements, majority view the discipline as a genuine 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 "hard" sciences (e.g.,

biology, chemistry, and physics) so as to be able to reveal the relationships underlying political events and conditions. And in accordance to conforming to the rigor, objectivity, and logical consistency of the sciences political scientists' try to be conceptually precise, free from bias, and empirical in their attempt to construct general principles about the way the world of politics works. In other words, 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 political scientists persuade through their command of the facts and their ability to relate those facts to theories that can withstand the test of empirical investigation.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the debate about whether a science of politics is possible or desirable. We have seen that for some, there is and can be a science of politics. For these scholars, political science like other social sciences has a scientific character because of the scientific method and the scientific tools it employs in examining phenomena. We have also seen that for others, political science is not and cannot be, and is not a science. Reasons adduced by the scholars who take this position relate to the difficulty of value-free analysis uncertainties and unpredictability in human life.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. With the application of some of the features and aims of science, will the science of politics be possible?
2. "A value-free politics is not achievable." Discuss
3. The uncertainties and unpredictability in human life renders the scientific quest of politics futile.

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## **UNIT 5      EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AS A DISCIPLINE**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Political Science from Early Beginnings to Modern Developments
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  - 3.3 Contributing Factors to the Emergence of the Behaviouralism
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  - 3.5 Criticisms of the Behaviouralism
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  - 3.7 The Evolution of Political Science Discipline: Continuity in Changes
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- 5.0 Summary
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

According to the eminent political scientist David Easton, "Political Science in mid-twentieth century is a discipline in search of its identity. Through the efforts to solve this identity crisis, it has begun to show evidence of emerging as an autonomous and independent discipline with a systematic structure of its own" (quoted in US History Encyclopedia, 2009). However, the search for identity in political science was not just restricted to the mid-twentieth century. It has been a characteristic feature of the discipline from the beginning.

This unit aims at providing an introduction to the evolution of the political science discipline. It highlights the discipline's initial attempt at demarcating its intellectual boundaries and severing its organisational ties from other academic fields, particularly history, and the subsequent rapid advance of the discipline in the course of the second half of the twentieth century as well as the challenges which it had to confront. It is scarcely exaggerated to say that, before 1945, political science was still in a rudimentary state, despite the fact that a number of the discipline's 'founding fathers' had, in the previous two to three thousand years, shown the need to study political activity and had begun to do so in what was, however, an elementary manner. Rather suddenly -and especially as a result of the events of the 1930s and 1940s -a burgeoning

of ideas occurred after World War 2. This resulted into a ‘breakthrough’ on the theoretical, methodological and empirical planes giving political science the basis from which it could be the recognised discipline which it has become today (Boyer, 2001). Yet at the same time, right from the beginning when the discipline has been characterised -and sometimes sharply divided –over goals, methods, and appropriate subject matter as political scientists tried to resolve the often conflicting objectives of its four main scholarly traditions: (1) legalism, or constitutionalism; (2) activism and reform; (3) philosophy, or the history of political ideas; and (4) science (US History Encyclopedia, 2009).

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- trace the evolution of political science from early beginnings to modern developments
- explain what the behavioural revolution or behaviouralism means
- identify the Factors which contributed to the emergence of behaviouralism
- state the Main Features of the Behaviouralism
- state the Criticisms of the Behaviouralism
- explain what we mean by the “Perestroika” Movement.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 Political Science from Early Beginnings to Modern Developments**

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 Encyclopedia, 2009).

The antecedent of 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 as well as observing 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 world politics.

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century's, 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 [britannica.com](http://britannica.com)) 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.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

The antecedent of Western politics can trace their roots back to Plato (427–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC). Explain.

### **3.2 The Behavioural Revolution or Behaviouralism**

As noted above, the method of studying political science before the World War II was largely unscientific and largely descriptive. According to Truman, political science as a discipline before behaviouralism was characterised by six features:

1. A lack of concern with political system as such, including the American Political System which amounted in most cases to taking their properties and requirements for granted.
2. The absence of an explicit conception of political change and development that was blindly optimistic and unreflectively reformist.
3. The almost total neglect of theory in any meaningful sense of the term.
4. The consequent enthusiasm for a conception of science that rarely went beyond raw empiricism.
5. A strongly parochial preoccupation with things American that stunted the development of an effective comparative method, and
6. The establishment of a continuity commitment to concrete description (Truman, 1951).

This was how most American Political Scientists viewed the method of studying the subject before World War II. However, the events and the consequence of World War II acted as a wakeup call that made American Political Scientists more critical of political science methodology as their research methodology could not find answers to

most of the emerging problems thrown up by the War (Boyer, 2001). According to Davies and Lewis (1971) there was a great dissatisfaction with methods of investigation with the working of the political system; characteristic mainly of British and European Political Scientist. Particularly, there was little concern with what is now called the political system but more with the study of the State. And the study of the state meant analyses of the articles of constitutions, legislations passed by Governments and the institutions to which the constitutions made provision. The emphasis on the analysis of the State, law and constitution relegated the study of the general social framework of the state to the background.

One problem which is associated with the concentration of the study on the state and its institutions is that such institutions may be outdated, but the study may not reflect such changes. Furthermore, the emphasis on the state and its institution may not provide an objective criterion for comparing different states. The problems which necessitated the re-orientation of the study of Political Science include according to Davies and Lewis (1971):

1. The need to explain the failure of democracy and the emergence of authoritarian political institutions in Germany and Italy before and during the War.
2. The need to explain the political processes of the post-colonial states in Africa and Asia.
3. The need to develop a theoretical analysis of politics which could explain the development of different kinds of political institutions.
4. The need to develop models which could be used in comparative politics.

According to Somit & Tenehaus (1982), the problems with the traditional approach in America were centred on five major issues:

1. The discovery that the talents and skills of political scientists were not highly valued by government bureaucrat or officials.
2. The inability of traditional political science to account for the rise of Fascism, National Socialism (Nazisism) and Communism.
3. A growing sensitivity to and unhappiness with the basically descriptive nature of the discipline.
4. The knowledge of advances in other social sciences.
5. The fear that political science was lagging behind its sister professions and disciplines.

Thus behaviourism carried with it a critique of the manner in which political science was then done; the established traditional, legalistic,



historical modes of analysis were criticised for their loose relationship between facts and theory, the low level of generality achieved and the low level of comparability. 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) (Eulau, 1969). The behavioural methods advocates for the utilisation and development of most precise techniques for observation, verification, quantification and measurement, and the “need to separate political science from political philosophy, so that factual research will not continue to be the step-child of normative reflections” (Hoffman, 1959, cf. Webb, 1995). Thus greater emphasis is placed on the use of statistical and quantifiable formulation of data.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What were the features of political science during the pre-behavioural period?

### **3.3 Factors Which Contributed to the Emergence of the Behaviouralism in Political Science**

According to Webb (1988), “it is often the case that the impetus for change within a discipline is as much due to factors external to that discipline as to factors within the discipline.” Robert Dahl has noted six-interrelated factors, which influenced the rise of the behavioural movement (Dahl, 1961). The first was the evolution of the University of Chicago's Department of Political Science under the leadership of Charles Merriam, who in 1921 in an article titled "The Present State of the Study of Politics" in the *American Political Science Review* called for "a new science of politics" characterised by the formulation of testable hypotheses (provable by means of precise evidence) to complement the dominant historical-comparative and legalistic approaches) (cf. US History Encyclopedia, 2009). He later restated this position in 1925 before the American Political Science Association when he 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 (Merriam, 1926). Merriam's work led to the formation of the APSA's Committee on Political Research and to three national conferences on the science of politics. Merriam was joined in his effort by William B. Munro and G. E. G. Catlin—the three being considered the era's leading proponents of the "new science" movement. With Wesley C. Mitchell, Merriam was instrumental in creating the Social Science Research Council in 1923. Other pioneering personalities in the Chicago School included Harold Lasswell, V. O. Key Jr., David Truman, Herbert Simon and Gabriel Almond and others (Boyer, 2001; US History Encyclopedia, 2009).

The second factor cited by Dahl was the influx of the European Scholars into the United States. The policies pursued by the Nazi Government in Germany made many German Scholars to migrate to the US during the War. Scholars from other European Universities also moved to America during and after the War. These scholars arrived in America with intellectual techniques/methods, which helped behaviouralism to develop as a methodology. These scholars whose backgrounds were in the hard core sciences came to the US and occupied the chairs in most of the political science departments in American Universities. As a result of their background, these scholars encouraged the use "of sociological and psychological theories for the understanding of politics" (Dahl, 1961).

The third 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" (Dahl, *ibid*).

The fourth factor was the creation of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) 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 that Dahl (1961) pointed out was the development of the "survey" method as a tool in the study of politics especially at the Survey Research Centre of the University of Michigan and the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University.

The 16<sup>th</sup> factor included the influence of the philanthropic foundations which provide funds for research such as the Ford, the Rockefeller and the Carnegie Foundations. All the above factors combined created a political culture that was committed to what Dahl referred to as "pragmatism, fact minded-ness, confidences in sciences" (Dahl, 1961).

In addition to the above factors, Truman noted two other factors that necessitated the change in the character of world politics such as: the breakup of the colonial systems and the subsequent emergence of the new nations. Both factors require a new and broad approach to the study of political institutions (Truman, 1973). A further thrust towards a scientific mode of analysis came through a fusion of the enlightenment belief in progress and rationality together with the needs of the emerging and centralising nation-state for instruments of coordination. The growth

and bureaucratisation of the nation-state led to a massive growth of new kinds of data which could not be dealt with by the traditional forms of analysis.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3**

Enumerate the factors that contributed to the emergence of behaviouralism in political science.

### **3.4 The Main Features of the Behavioural Approach**

We shall discuss the main features of the behavioural approach in Unit 7 where focus on the approach will be extensive. For now however, the following features are pertinent:

1. The emergence of the individual as the fundamental unit of analysis; the individual was a fact and all else merely a derivation.
2. Emphasis on the scientific to make the study of political science scientific thus capable of explanations and predictions.
2. The focus of study on observable behaviour of actors in the political process.
4. The use of quantitative method and statistical techniques such as multivariate analysis, sample surveys, mathematical models and simulation aimed at developing theories which could provide acceptable explanation for political behaviour.
5. A focus on inter-disciplinarity, embracing other social sciences.

With the increasing use of the behavioural approach in Political Science, major changes were noticed in the vocabulary of politics. Such words includes boundary maintenance, bargaining, conceptual framework, decision-making, functionalism, factor analysis, feedback, model, game theory, input/output, political socialisation, political culture, political system, etc. This behaviouralism has made political science an interdisciplinary subject and fully integrated it into other social sciences.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the main features of the Behavioural approach.

### 3.5 Criticism of the Behaviouralism

The main contentions of the critics of the Behaviouralism were that:

1. Political science is not, nor is it ever likely to become a science in any realistic sense of the term. Overt political behaviour tells only part of the story. Different individuals may perform the same act for quite different reasons. To understand what they do, one must go beyond or behind observable behaviour. The anti-behaviouralist holds that the larger part of political life lies beneath the surface of human action and cannot be directly apprehended. Because political behaviour is not quantifiable whatever the theoretical merits of quantification, it cannot make political science scientific. At best, it has led to the proliferation of concepts which cannot be operationalised. Significant political issues involve moral and ethical issues.
2. Political science has historically been, and must continue to be more concerned with questions of right and wrong even if these cannot be scientifically resolved.
3. There has been indiscriminate borrowing of concepts and techniques which are simply inappropriate for political inquiry. As for scientific objectivity, there is almost universal skepticism among the anti-behaviouralist that it is attainable and considerable doubt that it is inherently desirable (see Bay, 1965; Kim, 1965; McCoy and Playford, 1967; Somit and Tanenhaus, 1982).

#### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the main contentions of the critics of the behaviouralism?

### 3.6 The “Perestroika” Movement

The Perestroika Movement in political science is a “protest” movement within political science that some political scientists signed on to challenge the dominance of research that assumes that political behavior can be predicted according to theories of rationality and that such predictions underwrite cumulative explanations that constitute the growth of political knowledge. The movement is against what it sees as dominance for quantitative and mathematical methodology in political science. Such dominance, according to the Movement, breeds academic isolation and poor quality in scholarship (Schram & Caterino, 2006).

The Perestroika Movement began in October 2000 with an anonymous e-mail message sent by one “Mr. Perestroika” to the editors of the

American Political Science Review calling for "a dismantling of the Orwellian system that we have in APSA" (Wikipedia, 2008). The message went to seventeen recipients who quickly forwarded it to others, and within weeks the Perestroika Movement became a force calling for change in the American political science community (Monroe 2005). In the years that followed, the Perestroika Movement established itself with its own literature, conferences, websites, and blogs.

The anger of the Perestroikans (as members of the 'revolt' are now called) was initially directed at the American Political Science Association and *the American Political Science Review*, the flagship journal of the Association. An open letter signed by 222 persons claimed a 1998 survey of APSA members "reportedly found that a very large portion of APSA members, to say nothing of scholars who have given up on APSA, were critical of the current condition of the *APSR*" (*Political Studies*, 2000, 735). An accompanying letter from Gregory Kasza, who emerged as a spokesperson for the "Perestroika 'revolt'" (Kaymak, 2001), offered several ways to increase the "representativeness of APSA and its journals" (Kasza, 2000: 737). According to Kasza, "to assure the representativeness of the APSA leadership, which is the real issue behind the Perestroika protest, there should be competitive, membership-wide elections to the top posts" (Kasza, *ibid*).

However, a substantive part of the grievances of the Perestroikans was also focused on Political Science as a discipline. A loose collection of political scientists, from graduate students to senior scholars, Perestroikans do not always themselves agree on which features of the dominant approach they want to critique—some focus on the overly abstract nature of much of the research done today, some on the lack of nuance in decontextualised, large sample empirical studies, others on the inhumanness of thinking about social relations in causal terms, and still others on the ways in which contemporary social science all too often fails to produce the kind of knowledge that can meaningfully inform social life. As a group, the Perestroika Movement, however, has championed methodological pluralism, charging that exclusionary practices have made graduate education less hospitable to historical and field research, qualitative case studies, interpretive and critical analysis, and a variety of context-sensitive approaches to the study of politics (Schram, 2003).

At its best, the Perestroikan impulse creates the possibility to question the idea that political science research exists as a unitary enterprise dedicated to the accumulation of an expanding knowledge base of universal, decontextualised generalisations about politics. In its place, Perestroika would put a more pluralistic emphasis on allowing for the

blossoming of more contextual, contingent, and multiple political truths that involve a greater tie between theory and practice and a greater connection between thought and action in specific settings. Perestroika lays open the possibility that political science could actually be a very different sort of discipline, one less obsessed with proving it is a “science” and one more connected to providing delimited, contextualised, even local knowledge that might serve people within specific settings (Schram, *ibid.*).

According to its proponents, this alternative political science would also be less preoccupied with perfecting method or pursuing research strictly for knowledge’s sake. As Rogers Smith has underscored, “knowledge does not have a sake; all knowledge is tied to serving particular values” (cf. Schram, *ibid.*). Therefore, this new political science would not be one that is dedicated to replacing one method with another. Instead, such a discipline, if that word is still appropriate, would encourage scholars to draw on a wide variety of methods from a diversity of theoretical perspectives, combining theory and empirical work in different and creative ways, all in dialogue with political actors in specific contexts. Problem driven research would replace method-driven research.

The goal of the movement is to bring about “a political science that forgoes the dream of a science of politics in order to dedicate itself to enhancing the critical capacity of people to practice a politics” and to “enhance the capacity to challenge power from below” (Schram, 2003).

Charges that political science is trivial, “out of touch with real-world concerns” and has in fact, “become nothing more than statistical analysis of volumes of data” are frequently made by Perestroikans. Critics such as Mark Kremer (2001) and Therese Gunawardena-Vaughn (2000), attribute political science’s disconnection from the “great political issues” and the “real world” to researchers’ “fixation on quantitative tools” while John J. Mearsheimer refers to it as “the mathematicisation of political science” (Miller, 2001).

What kind of political science do the Perestroikans favor? According to Kasza (2001), Perestroikans reject the attempt to achieve “hegemony” in political science by the “hard sciences.” Kasza offers three reasons for rejecting “the hegemonic project of hard science.” First, “hard science” in political science “threatens academic freedom,” because “hard scientists don’t realise the damage they do to young scholars.” Second, “normal [i.e., hard] science makes for bad science in the study of politics”. Third, “hard science” “is increasingly irrelevant to the normative and practical problems of real politics”.

For a reform of political science, Perestroikan offers some proposals. According to Kaszah (2001: 598–99), these are:

1. The restoration of restore political philosophy to “a central place in political studies so that the ends of political life once again become our common focus.”
2. “Qualitative research methods” in graduate schools’ training.
3. The reorganisation of research “around the study of substantive problems,”
4. The revision of the “decline of policy studies,”
5. The revamping of “our professional associations and journals to emphasise political substance and Catholicism with respect to methods and approaches.”
6. The renewal of the “commitment to study the politics of different parts of the world” instead of most parochial of areas—American politics” that currently dominates the study, and
7. Finally, the promotion of interdisciplinary research.

### **3.6.1 Evolution of Political Science Discipline: Continuity in Changes**

While the changes taking place in Political Science are different in time and space, some similar trends run through them. For instance, some of the behavioral movement’s founders used essentially the same claim that the perestroikan movement now use to justify their “revolt” against traditional political science (Dahl, 1961; Easton 1953). Dissatisfaction with the “state of the discipline,” and especially with the disconnection between traditional political science and political “reality,” was a primary factor in the behavioral movement’s emergence after World War II (Somit & Tanenhaus, 1982). It did not take long for the same charge to be leveled against behavioralists by post-behaviouralists (Bay, 1965; McCoy & Playford, 1967; Storing, 1962). In some ways, the perestroikan movement has merely reinforced these criticisms against behavioralists. On the other hand, some of the proposals of the perestroikan movement are not new. For instance, the call for methodological pluralism within the social sciences was one goal of the behavioral movement which ironically, the perestroikans claim has distorted the discipline.

What all these point to is that political science is a discipline in a state of a flux and that there will always be tension between “ancient” and “modern” approaches in political science (see Eulau, 1969). It also supports the fact that there is no one single approach to political research. This is what Anckar and Berndtson (1987) meant when they argued that political science ‘appears fragmented and directed towards a great variety of objectives.’

Yet as it has been noted, it is this “disunity” through diversity and debate ‘which gives strength’ to the political science discipline (US History Encyclopedia, 2009). Indeed as Webb (1995) stated, this disciplinary disunity is a distinctive hallmark of the social sciences:

In all the social sciences there are debates which are sometimes referred to as theoretical disputes, sometimes as paradigmatic differences, sometimes as competing perspectives or research programmes. There is no social science discipline that is not marked by divisions of this kind. The legitimacy of challenge is a characteristic of the discipline *per se*; to be a social scientist is to necessarily engage in debate.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Political science continues to question its identity, and to reflect on appropriate research methodology; methodological pluralism continues to reign. The field's continued self-examination reflects two independent axes. One embodies the extremes of considering either groups or individuals as the key to analysis; and a third is represented by the belief that a normative stance is unavoidable at one extreme, and by a firm commitment to the possibility of objectivity at the other extreme. In the midst of the variety of approaches and methods structuring political science, we have concluded as did the US History Encyclopedia (2009) that “it is no longer possible for a single individual to master the entire field.”

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, we have learnt that Political Science itself is a relatively young academic discipline, but inquiry into the nature of political life has been going on since the beginning of recorded history. This unit has traced the history of political science from the early political thinkers and the political principles implicit in their writings to the behaviouralist revolution in the 1950s. The unit has also reviewed contemporary development in the field since 2000 reflected in the ‘perestroika movement’ that took place in the USA. What all these developments point to is that political science is a discipline in a state of a flux and that there will always be tension between “ancient” and “modern” approaches in political science. It also supports the fact that there is no one single approach to political research (as we shall discover in the next five units on approaches to the study of politics).



## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Attempt a critique of the behavioural movement
2. What have been the major historical debates among political scientists?
3. In recent years there has emerged a movement, dubbed the Perestroika movement, which is critical of the current state of political science. What are the primary arguments raised by the Perestroikans
4. Is the Perestroika movement, in fact, old wine in new wineskins, or is there something new in the issues raised by the Perestroikans?

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## **MODULE 2      APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICS**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Unit 1 | Traditional Approaches  |
| Unit 2 | The Behavioural Approach  |
| Unit 3 | Approaches to the Study of Political Systems: Systems Approach and Structural- Functionalist Approach |
| Unit 4 | Political Processes Approaches: Class Approach, Pluralism (Groups Approach), and Elite Approach       |
| Unit 5 | Rational Choice Approach  |

### **UNIT 1      TRADITIONAL APPROACHES**

#### **CONTENTS**

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.0 | Introduction                                     |
| 2.0 | Objectives                                       |
| 3.0 | Main Content                                     |
| 3.1 | Normative Approach                               |
| 3.2 | The Institutional Approaches                     |
| 3.3 | Features of the Classical Institutional Approach |
| 3.4 | Varieties of Institutionalism                    |
| 3.5 | Criticism of the Traditional Approaches          |
| 4.0 | Conclusion                                       |
| 5.0 | Summary  |
| 6.0 | Tutor-Marked Assignment                          |
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#### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

From Module 1, we learnt that political science as a discipline is diverse. Its diversity is further buttressed by Gerry Stoker and David Marsh (2002:3) who reiterated that there are ‘many distinct approaches and ways of undertaking political science’. This is because political scientists “display deep conflicts over appropriate assumptions, foci and methods of analysis, and they offer hypotheses and theories that directly contradict one another. They frequently describe the same phenomenon but offer very different analyses of it. In other words they observe the world in different ways (Zuckerman, 1991:13).

The next five units shall be devoted to the examination of the approaches of studying politics. In this first unit, we shall discuss the traditional approach which encompasses the normative and institutional approaches.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the normative approach to the study of politics
- identify the institutional approaches to the study of politics  
state the features of the classical institutional approach
- identify the varieties of institutionalism or the institutional approach
- state the criticism of the traditional approaches.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Normative Approach

Normative Political approach is concerned with the discovery and application of moral notions in the sphere of political relations and practice (Stoker, 1995). 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?

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.

## 3.2 The Institutional Approach

The institutional approach to the study of political process is concerned with the rules, procedures and formal organisations of the political system and their impact on political practice (Stoker, 1995). Historically, the strength of the institutional approach in political science reflects the influence of law, philosophy and historical studies in its development as an autonomous field of study. The study of political institutions is central to the identity of the discipline of political science. Eckstein (1963:10-11) points out that “political science emerged . . . as a separate autonomous field of study divorced from philosophy, political economy, and even sociology [which] may have created a tendency to emphasize the study of formal-legal arrangements”. If there is any subject matter at all that political scientists can claim exclusively for their own, a subject matter that does not require acquisition of the analytical tools of sister fields and that sustains their claim to autonomous existence, it is, of course, formal-legal political structure.

## 3.3 Features of the Classical Institutional Approach

According to Stoker (1995: 43), the traditional or classical institutional approach has the following features: descriptive–inductive, formal-legal, historical-comparative, and political values. We shall discuss these in turn.

### 3.3.1 Descriptive –Inductive

The hallmark of the descriptive-inductive approach is “hyperfactualism” or “reverence for facts” (Easton, 1971). In other words, in carrying out political analysis, “the fact stood paramount” (Landau, 1979, p. 133 cf. Stoker 1995). The great virtue of institutions was that:

They appeared as real. They were concrete; they could be pointed to, observed, touched. They could be examined for their operations. . . And what could, be more logical, more natural, than to turn to the concreteness of institutions, the facts of their existence, the character of their actions and the exercise of their power (Landau, 1979:181 cf. Stoker, 1995).

As we stated earlier in our lecture on the language of social science research, induction is the practice of inferring generalizations from past occurrences which then shape expectations for the future. Induction has been defined as “the process by which the scientist forms a theory to explain the observed facts” (Kemeny, 1959:53). It is an extrapolation from the past to the future in the expectation that the future will continue

to behave in the same manner as in the past. Induction starts with empirical observation from which explanatory generalisations are generated.

The approach is inductive because we draw inferences from repeated actions. The key points are that the study of political institutions displays a preference for “letting the facts speak for themselves matched by its distaste for theory, especially modern social and political, which was seen as secondary - even dangerous” (Landau, 1979, cf. Stoker, 1995).

### 3.3.2 Formal-Legal

According to Eckstein (1972), formal legal inquiry involves two phases. “One is the study of public law: hence the term *legal*. The other involves the study of formal governmental organs: hence *formal*. These phases coalesce in the study of public laws that concerns formal governmental organisations—in the study of constitutional structure” (Cf. Stoker, 1995: 44). We shall discuss these two aspects of the formal-legal inquiry in turn.

#### A) The Study of Public Law

The study of public law is an essential ingredient in the analysis of constitution and formal organisations (Stoker, 1995). It deals with the following:

##### i) The Concept of Rule of Law

Underlying the study of public law is the concept of rule of law, which refers to the supremacy of the law. According to Professor A.V. Dicey in his book *Introduction to the Law of the Constitution*, “those entrusted with administration of a country should rule or exercise their authority in accordance with the established laws of the land; and such established laws should be regarded as supreme” (Dicey, 1885, cf. Fasuba, 1976). Dicey ascribed three meanings to the idea. These are:

**Absence of Arbitrary Power:** The first of Dicey's three meanings of the rule of law is "absence of arbitrary power." "It means in the first place, the absolute supremacy or predominance of regular law as opposed to the influence of arbitrary power, and excludes the existence of arbitrariness, of prerogative, or even of wide discretionary authority on the part of the government."

This means that before a person can be punished, his/her offence must first be ascertained and proved by the ordinary court of the land. This

idea can be contrasted with a situation in which persons in authority have wide and discretionary powers to deal with offences.

**Equality before the Law:** Dicey was of the opinion that the rule of law "means, again, equality before the law or the equal subjection of all classes to the ordinary law of the land administered by the ordinary law courts." This postulates that no man should be above the law; that government functionaries as, indeed, private citizens should obey the same laws, that there should be no administrative courts which adjudicate cases between private citizens and the state or its officials. However, Dicey's principle of rule of law which presses for equality before the law needs to be thoroughly examined. In the modern system of government some persons are totally or partially immune. This implies that such people are wholly free or partially free from any offence they might commit. For example the Crown - The Queen of England - is wholly immune, except that by the Crown Proceeding Act of 1947 a number of the Crown's immunity has been removed. And at the same time the ambassadors and foreign diplomat are immune from court action. Furthermore, some government officials are immune from persecution while in office. For instance, the 1999 constitution grants immunity to the president and governors.

**The Rights of Individuals:** Dicey's third meaning of the rule of law is that the rights of the individuals actually give meaning to the constitution. This means that the constitution cannot be regarded as the source of the rights of the individuals but that the constitution itself is based on the rights of individual. In other words, legal rights of individual citizen-his/her freedom of action and speech, are inherent and not acquired by guaranteed rights proclaimed in formal codes-so that anybody who tampered with the operation of these liberties will face the ordinary remedies of private law available against those who unlawfully interfere with the liberty of action whether they be officials or private citizens. Accordingly to Dicey, the constitution is more than an ordinary code. It is the result of the ordinary law of the land.

## ii) Legal Protections of Rights

Political rights enjoyed by the people in a democratic country/society and enshrined in the constitution are usually protected by certain legal devices such as:

The Right to Fair Hearing (*Audi alteram Parterm*)  
The Rule against Bias (*Nemo judex in Causa Sua*).



### iii) Legal Remedies

It is inconceivable to think of legal rights without legal remedies. Thus, if a person has a legal right and the right is violated, then such a person should be entitled to some remedy. A remedy is therefore a compensation for the violation of legal rights. Remedies reverse wrong decisions and make appropriate decisions to correct legal injustices.

These remedies include:

- a) The Order of Habeas Corpus
- b) The Writ of Prohibitions
- c) The Writ of Mandamus
- d) The Writ of Injunctions

In addition to the Constitutional Law, there are other legal instruments that influence the political process in a particular country. These include laws made by the Legislative Assembly and the System of Courts. Every state/country has its legal system which is made up of both the substantive and procedural laws and judicial organisational structure.

For example, in Nigeria, we have the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Sharia Laws, the Customary Laws and other enactment by the National Assembly. Also in Nigeria, we have various grades of Courts - Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Federal High Court, the State High Courts, Magistrate Courts and Customary Courts.

Other features of the Nigeria legal system which are more or less political in nature include the Public Complaint Commission, The Code of Conduct Bureau, the Independent corrupt practices and other related offences tribunal (ICPC), The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Public Tribunals, etc.

### B) The Study of Constitutional Structure

The formal legal-approach covers the study of written constitutional documents. A constitution is the body of basic laws, principles, conventions, rules and regulations which govern a country. A constitution shows the basic duties of the country's leaders and citizens. It specifies the types and characteristics of government, and the limits of, as well as relationships between, various institutions and organs of government. For example, in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the following political institutions were created:

- Chapter 4 - The Legislature (National Assembly)
- Chapter 5 - The Executive
- Chapter 6 - The Judiciary

Political Rights also derive their source from the Constitution. For instance, Chapters 33 to 42 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees the following Rights:

- Chapter 33 - Right to life.
- Chapter 34 - Right to dignity of human person.
- Chapter 35 - Right to personal liberty
- Chapter 36 - Right to fair hearing.
- Chapter 37 - Right to private life.
- Chapter 38 - Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Chapter 39 - Right to freedom of expression and press.
- Chapter 40 - Right to peaceful assembly and association.
- Chapter 41 - Right to freedom of movement.
- Chapter 42 - Right to freedom from discrimination.

The Constitutional structure seeks to ask the questions: How are constitutions made? What type of constitution should a country adopt? Should it be written or unwritten? Should it be federal, unitary, or confederal? What is the procedure for the amendment of the constitution? Should it be rigid or flexible? How are conflicts between the various branches of government—Legislature, Executive, and Judicial—resolved? What are the sources of the constitution? What sources should be given preeminent consideration in framing the constitution? How do constitutions affect the operation of government, and how do the operations of government affect the development of the constitution? What are the rights of citizens under the law?

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

Discuss the features of rule of law.

### **3.3.3 Historical-Comparative**

A key element of the institutional approach is the historical - comparative method. Here, political analyst seeks to develop testable generalisations by examining political phenomena across different political systems or historically within the same political system. Thus, in carrying out comparative analysis, political scientists examine history, especially the evolution of the institutions they are studying.

The origins of the comparative approach can be traced to Aristotle's classification of governments based on the governments of 158 Greek city states. Aristotle distinguished governments by one, few and the many. In each category rulers could govern in the common interest (the genuine form) or their own interest (the perverted form).

**Table 1: Aristotle's Classificatory Scheme**

|      |           | RULE BY  |             |           |
|------|-----------|----------|-------------|-----------|
|      |           | One      | Few         | Many      |
| FORM | Genuine   | Kingship | Aristocracy | Polity    |
|      | Perverted | Tyranny  | Oligarchy   | Democracy |

Aristotle's scheme yields six types of government—kingship, aristocracy, polity, tyranny, oligarchy, democracy. Building on this scheme, Aristotle identified the social character of rulers in the four types with more than one leader. Oligarchy is ruled by the rich, an aristocracy by the virtuous, democracy is government by the poor. Aristotle's ideal form of government is broadly equated with middle-class rule (Aristotle, 1962).

Comparative method has the following advantage. First, it enables us to test hypotheses about politics, it enables us to make meaning of the diversity or differences within political systems, it helps us to improve our classifications of political processes and institutions, and it gives us some potential for prediction (Almond, G., Powell, B., Strom, K. & Dalton, R., 2007). For instance, to attempt an answer to the hypothesis posed- that democracy requires the free market and private ownership-it is necessary to engage in a comparative examination of different regimes so that the relationship between political and economic variables can be better understood. Furthermore, if we find that the hypotheses to be true, we can then predict that wherever free market and private ownership exists, democracy is likely to thrive.

### 3.3.4 Political Value

Even though 'hyperfactualism' or 'reverence for facts' is paramount in the study of political institutions, it also has a strong normative emphasis. The normative elements, or values, most commonly espoused by this approach are those of liberal democracy, especially the American and British models of representative democracy. Consequently, the study of political institutions was biased in favour of the institutions of these countries including federalism, such as the USA.

### **3.4 Varieties of Institutionalism**

There are three varieties of institutionalism. These are:

#### **3.4.1 Constitutional Studies**

As stated above, earlier works on constitutional studies were devoted to issues relating to the basic duties of the country's leaders and citizens, the types and characteristics of government, and the limits of, as well as relationships between, various institutions and organs of government. In recent times, Constitutional studies remain a prime example of formal legal methods in the study of political institutions and its adoption in emerging democracies or post conflict countries such as Iraq, and reforms of existing defects in the constitution to enhance good governance including the accountability of government, its effectiveness and the status of citizenship. For example, in Nigeria there is an ongoing attempt to reform the 1999 constitution which many believed was bequeathed with defects by the departing military government. Aspects of the constitution considered for reforms include, electoral reforms, the reform of the federal system, and state creation.

#### **3.4.2 Public Administration**

Public administration is a major sub-field within political science. Definitions invariably include such phrases as the study of the institutional arrangements for the provision of public services or study of public bureaucracies (cf. Stoker, 1995). It concentrated attention on the authorities engaged in public administration, analysed their history, structure, powers and relationships. It enquired how they worked and the degree of effectiveness they achieved.

Organisational theory is a firmly-established part of the intellectual history of public administration and, from the 1950s onwards, it developed many schools of thought. The classics include Max Weber and the study of bureaucracy, and Frederick Taylor and scientific management. However, this stress on structure was criticised strongly by proponents of the human relations approach who emphasized the importance of informal organisation especially group behaviour in the workplace. After the Second World the emphasis shifted to the study of organisational decision-making to organisations as systems interacting with a larger environment.

During the 1960s, there was great international optimism concerning the future of organisation theory. There were competing voices, but the rational-instrumental conception of formal organisations had a strong position. organisations then were seen as instruments for making and

implementing rational decisions – a conception celebrating the will, understanding and control of organisational actors, or rather, of organisational leaders.

Formal organisations were portrayed as a special type of organised context, different from other forms of social organisation, such as families, neighborhoods, social groups and classes. More often than not, ‘organisation’ meant a Weberian bureaucracy and a key concern was to improve the understanding of how organisational structures and processes contributed to performance. Two ideas were of special importance:

- ‘The formal structure of the organisation is the single most important key to its functioning’ (Perrow, 1986: 260).
- ... formal organisations are malleable instruments for leaders, ‘consciously planned, deliberately constructed and restructured (Etzioni, 1964: 3).

The conception of leaders as (means-end) rational actors and formal organisations as instruments generating purposeful, coherent, consistent, and efficient action had much in common with the 1960s’ view of policy making as a strategic activity and planning and social engineering as a key process in improving society and building a welfare state. Both planning theory and organisation theory embraced deliberate organisational and institutional design and reform. Actors were assumed to:

- know what they wanted. That is, actors were assumed to have clear, consistent and stable objectives or normative criteria over the time period studied. These criteria were supposed to define tasks, performance failure, improvement, and progress.
- understand what it takes to achieve their objectives. That is, organisational form was assumed to be a significant determinant of performance and actors were assumed to know how alternative organisational forms affect performance.
- have the authority, power and resources needed to achieve desired results. Choices made by organisational/political actors were assumed to be the most important determinants of organisational form.

In spite of parallel agendas and shared assumptions organisation theory and political theory have, nevertheless, been in a state of mutual disregard for years, not seeing each other as particularly relevant, interesting, or important. A standard complaint from political science has been that generic models of formal organisation have not taken into account the specific properties of governmental and political

organisations and the specific influence of political-democratic environments (Olsen 1991). Using standard handbooks of organisations as an indicator, the two fields have also moved away from each other, rather than coming closer since the 1960s (March 1965, Nystrom & Starbuck, 1981; Clegg, Hardy & Nord, 1996).

It is beyond the scope of this lecture to summarise how different elements and theories of public administration have developed and what their main insights have been. However, different approaches make different assumptions about human actors – their will, understanding and capacity for social control - and about the nature of ‘living’ administrative-political institutions and how they function and evolve.

Today, organisation theory combines an interest in the preconditions and consequences of different administrative forms and processes with an interest in theories of democracy, assuming that an improved understanding of public administration is essential to a comprehension of political and societal life in general.

### **3.5 Criticism of the Traditional Approaches**

The traditional approaches have been criticised as static and oversimplified assumptions about today's reality of 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 ‘hyperfactualism’ 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**

Attempt a critique of the traditional approaches.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The traditional approach is one of the central pillars of the discipline of political science. It focuses on the normative values and norms that should underpin politics as well as the rules, procedures and forms of organisations of governments. Today, it remains a defining characteristic of the discipline and it has found renewed vigour within the new-institutionalism framework.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the key essence of the traditional approach including its concern for values and the rules and organisation of government. You have also learnt the various features of the institutional approach (one of the two aspects of the traditional approach) including its predilection for description, and the three key varieties including constitutional studies, public administration and new institutionalism. You have also learnt about the criticisms of the traditional approach.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. State and explain the varieties of the institutional approach.
2. Discuss the attributes of the rule of law according to Professor A.V. Dicey.
3. The formal legal- approach covers the study of written constitutional documents.
4. Discuss the current debates with regard to the reform of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution.

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## UNIT 2 THE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is the Behavioural Approach?
  - 3.2 Features of the Behavioural Approach
  - 3.3 Criticisms of the Behavioural Approach
  - 3.4 Post-Behaviouralism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 1, we examined the traditional approach to the study of politics. In this unit, we shall examine the behavioural approach which arose as a reaction to the presumed deficiencies in the traditional approach. We have discussed part of the behavioural approach in the unit that examined the evolution of political science. We shall further elaborate on the approach here.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define the behavioural approach
- state the features of the behavioural approach
- explain criticisms of the behavioural approach
- explain the meaning of post-behaviouralism.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 What is the Behavioural 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 of 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 which we discussed in the last lecture which were believed to have little analytical strength. For instance, Leeds (1981:2), criticized 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 scientificism. To achieve its scientific status, behaviouralism prescribes a closer application and affiliation with theories, methods, findings and outlooks in modern psychology, sociology, anthropology and economics which in the words of Robert Dahl aims at improving:

... 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, 1969).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1**

How does the behavioural approach or behaviouralism contrast to the legalistic and formal approach?

### **3.2 Features of the Behavioral Approach**

The advocates of the Behaviouralism saw themselves as spokesmen for a very broad and deep conviction that the political science discipline should; (a) abandon certain traditional kinds of research; (b) execute a more modern sort of inquiry instead, and (c) teach new truths based on the findings of this new inquiry (Ricci, 1984:140). The behaviouralists contended 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 (Dahl, 1969; Varma, 1975). And as Truman (1951) put it, behavioural political science demands that research must be systematic and must place primary emphasis on empirical methods (See also Varma, 1975; 81). By combining several accounts, (Easton, 1953,

1965; Somit and Tanenhaus, 1982), it is possible to identify eight main claims made for behaviouralism:

Specifically, the main features of the behavioural approach are:

**a) Methodological Individualism**

The behavioural approach emphasises the centrality of the individual as unit of analysis. In other words, the individual is a reality while groups are merely a derivation.

**b) Verification and Falsification**

All generalisations made about the political process must in principle be tested by reference to relevant behaviour or actual political context. This process of empirical verification is the key criterion for assessing the validity or utility of such generalisations.

**c) Techniques**

The acquisition and interpretation of data must be carried out via the use of techniques (sample surveys, statistical measurement and mathematical models) that has been rigorously examined, refined and validated. In other word, systematic analysis and accuracy must be developed for observing, recording and analysing empirical political behaviour.

**d) Quantification**

Precision and accuracy of data and statement of findings require measurement, quantification and mathematisation not for their own sake but only possible relevant and meaningful in the light of other objectives. This explains why David Truman (1951), posits that the political scientist should perform his research in quantitative terms if he can, and in qualitative terms if he must.

**e) Value-Facts Dichotomy**

Ethical evaluation and empirical explanations involve two different kinds of propositions that for the sake of clarity should be kept analytically distinct. However, a student of political behaviour is not prohibited from asserting propositions of either kind whether separately or in combination as long as he does not mistake one for the other. In short, empirical political research must be distinguished from ethical or moral philosophy.

**f) Systematisation**

Empirical research ought to be systematic i.e. research should be theory-oriented and theory-directed. Indeed, theory and research should develop as closely interconnected art of an orderly body of knowledge. This explains why Easton (1967) posited that, “empirical research untutored by theory may prove trivial and theory unsupported by empirical data futile.” In effect, the major pattern of behaviouralist was to develop a general theory/paradigm of political behaviour in which disparate aspects/parts could be integrated.

**g) Pure Science**

According to behaviouralists, applied research is much an art of scientific enterprise as theoretical understanding. However, the scientific understanding of political behaviour logically proceeds and provides the basis for effort to utilise political knowledge to the solution of urgent practical problems of society. Greater importance should therefore be attached to scientific understanding over policy formation of problematic ventures. In essence, the pursuit of knowledge is an end in itself. The student of political behaviour even if he/she were dubious about the practical utilities of his/her work/findings would require not more than the prospects of science to justify his/her findings.

**h) Integration**

The approach has as its goal the unity of the social science. It expresses the hope that someday the walls that separate political science from the other social sciences will crumble. According to them, because the social sciences deal with the totality of human situation, political science can ignore the findings of other social sciences only at the risk of undermining the validity and generality of its results.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain how the features of the behavioural approach conform to empirical research.

**3.3 Criticisms of the Behavioural Approach**

Generally, it is possible to identify four types of criticisms of behaviouralism viz: fundamental or philosophical objections against the behavioural approach, its methods, assumptions and techniques especially the use of quantification or surveys. There are also sociological criticisms about the allegedly conservative assumptions and values of the behavioural approach. More elaborately, the following

criticisms of political behaviour have been particularly prominent (see Bay, 1965; Kim, 1965; Somit and Tanenhaus, 1920):

- a) The rigorous scientific approach to the study of political phenomena has been questioned. They argue that political phenomena by their very nature are not amenable to rigorous scientific enquiry. This is because there are far too many uncontrollable factors, historical contingencies and unique and changing variables to permit anything about very soft/trivial statements of regularities. Furthermore, such generalisations formulated can be falsified or invalidated by sheer human volition and ingenuity. This is largely because, unlike in the natural sciences where the observation of the investigator do not mean anything to the molecules and atoms therein; in the social world, the research of the behaviouralist has a specific meaning for the individual or group living, acting and thinking therein. Thus, the fact that the theorist would produce and the affairs that are theorised about are related not only as subject and object but also cause and effect ensures that even their most innocent ideas of generalisations can contribute to their own verification or falsification.
- b) The behaviouralists' over enthusiastic pursuit of quantitative and scientific techniques has fostered a sterile methodism that has impeded rather than advanced political knowledge. Behaviouralists have tended to neglect and ignore vital areas of political science which are not directly amenable to scientific treatment and quantification. Instead, they have concentrated on the more quantitative and empirically verifiable but trivial topics of political life. This is largely because the phenomena which are observed measured and occur with regularity are often the most insignificant aspects of politics. In essence, the behaviouralists have become prisoners of their own methodology since they fail to address themselves to non-quantifiable questions of great political significance to their students and the public at large such as injustice, racism and imperialism. The result is that much of their research is not only trivial but also narrow and apolitical.
- c) The value-fact dichotomy or dualism in behaviouralist research is untenable. The very selection of subjects for investigation is shaped by values which are by no means scientific but reflect the researcher's personal or ideological biases and judgments. In other words, the behavioural researcher is himself guided in his work by a whole framework of value judgments and assumptions which determine his research priorities and modalities but which

cannot be isolated, analyzed or justified in scientific or behavioural terms (Webb, 1995).

- d) The commitment of the behaviouralists to a nebulous prejudice of value neutrality has led to a political science that is morally impotent and politically conservative. Critics of behaviouralism have raised the question whether an empirical science which can only study “what is” and not “what ought” must not be inherently conservative. They argue that underlying the behaviouralist aversion for ‘ought’ questions is a belief that what ought to be already is, and that the traditional role of the intellectual as a social critic is no longer possible. But Christian Bay (1965), has argued that the study of politics is essentially normative and that the purpose of politics is to satisfy human needs, and facilitate human development. He contend that politics exist for the purpose of progressively removing the most oppressive obstacles to human development with priority to those individuals or groups that are most severely oppressed and the least articulate and likely to achieve redress by way of the ordinary political process. The best hope for more scientific political research Bay further argues is to study how the various functions of government affect the satisfaction of basic needs and wants of the people.

A more trenchant criticism of the behaviouralists promotion of value-free political science was offered by Michael Parenti (1983, cf. Parenti, 2006) who asserted that the behaviouralists did not practice what they preach.

Although the behaviouralists claimed a value-free scientific posture, there were all sorts of value judgments hidden in their research. For instance, their eagerness to place their science at the service of government, military, and business rested on the unexamined value assumption that the overall politico-economic system was essentially a benign one.

- d) 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 cannot contribute to the formulation and elaboration of the value hierarchy or priority which characterise the moral phase of policy making which involve the moral, the empirical and the legislative. While the behaviouralist contribution to policy making is acknowledged in the area of empirical analysis of the likely implications of specific policy options, the behaviouralist is inadequate in the legislative aspect

since this phase involves complex circumstances and unpredictable situations which probably will be considerably different from those laid down by pure behaviouralistic theorists. Thus, contrary to the claim of behaviouralists, behaviouralism cannot provide the basis for general forecast of the future as distinct from tentative or probabilistic predictions. The behaviouralist can therefore not make unconditional statement of future possibility which is an important element of scientific research.

- e) The behaviouralists are limited in their ability to generalise their findings. How accurate are aggregate individual political behaviour reflective of group behaviour? The traditionalist have therefore criticised the behaviouralist for allegedly being 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 behaviouralist has perhaps never mastered those issues in all their complexity of succumbing to a 'fetish measurement" which ignores critically important qualitative differences among the quantities being measured (Bull, 1966:361).

### **3.4 Post-Behaviouralism**

As discussed above, numbers of political scientists began complaining that important happenings were being ignored by the discipline. The critics were labeled (sympathetically) by then-APSA president David Easton as "post-behaviouralists." These post-behaviouralists 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 (Parenti, 2006).

The aforementioned scholars not only complained that most of the discipline's scholarship was removed from the imperatives of political life but 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, 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 (US History Encyclopedia, 2009).

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” (US History Encyclopedia, *ibid*). 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 (Verna, 1975:101).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

This unit examined how the behaviouralist approach to the study of politics is riddled with a lot of limitations as well as how the behaviouralist attempt to separate value judgments from empirical research was doomed to failure. This is was glaringly obvious in the seeing of regularities and generalisations as the only proper objects of scientific political inquiry as an unnecessary delimitation of discipline's subject matter. In sum, it highlighted the fact that in spite of its shortcoming, the tenets of behaviouralism probably enjoys the acceptance by most political scientists who subscribe to the notion 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.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you learnt the origin of the behavioural approach, the key tenets of the approach and its criticisms.



## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List and explain six (6) key features of the behavioural Approach.
2. Attempt a critique of the behavioural approach.
3. Based on the arguments against the behavioural approach, do you think it should still enjoy its acceptance by most political scientists?

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### **UNIT 3      APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS: SYSTEMS APPROACH AND STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Systems Approach
  - 3.2 Merits of the Systems Approach
  - 3.3 Criticisms of the Systems Approach
  - 3.4 Structural Functionalist Approach (SFA)
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, we examined the behavioural approach which we said was a response to the shortcomings of the traditional approach. In this unit, we shall consider two approaches or framework of analysis developed for the study of political systems viz systems approach and structural-functionalist approach. These approaches developed at the same time with the behavioural approach and some of its proponents were the same advocates of the behavioural approach.

As you shall discover in the subsequent units, a political system refers to any stable pattern of interactions which involves power and authority (Dahl, 1976) including all the factors which influence collective decisions, even if those factors are not formally part of the government. In other words, politics is embedded within an overall system whose parts directly or indirectly influences the nature of politics (cf. Osaghae, 1988). Thus parties, voters, interest groups all form part of the system of politics even though they are not part of government or the state. Politics is a collective activity and it occurs throughout society: from family groups to the state, and from the voluntary association to the multinational corporation. Politics means planning and organising common projects, setting rules and standards that define the relations of people to one another, and allocating resources among rival human needs and purposes' (cf. Stoker, 1995). The broadening of the definition of politics from the study of government and public affairs (activities of the state) to a focus on what Lefwitch (1984) calls 'politics of everyday life' has brought a 'large mass of what is, at first, unorganised data' that

made it very important for the analysis of the data in order to draw relationship among them. While there are many political systems, we shall restrict our meaning of the term to countries or states.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define and describe the systems approach
- state the merits of the systems approach
- explain some criticisms of the systems approach
- define and describe the structural functionalist approach (SFA)
- state the merits of the structural functionalist approach
- explain some criticisms of the structural functionalist approach.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

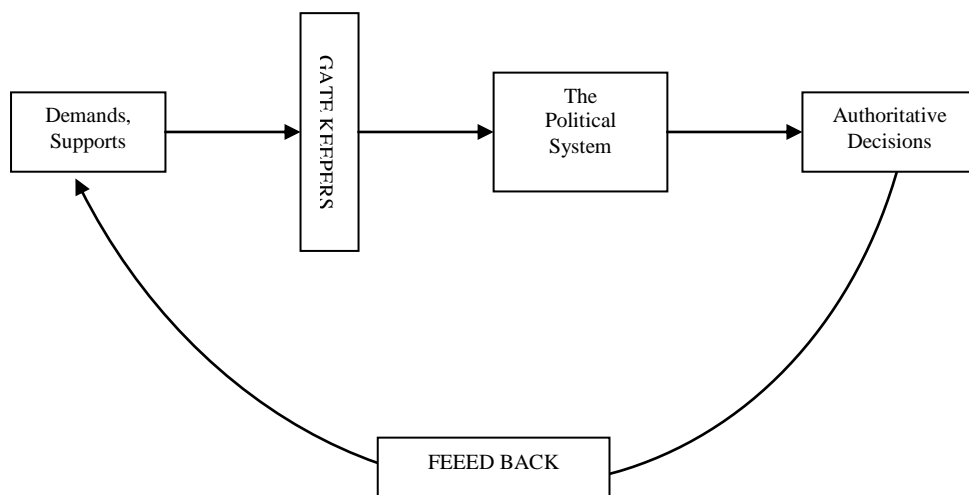
### 3.1 Systems Approach

System analysis is an attempt by David Easton, its originator, to apply general systems theories to political science. In this pioneering effort, Easton (1953) insisted that political system “is that system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made.” Easton explained that from the environment demands are made on the political system in the form of input (demands and support). These demands are then processed into outputs, which are authoritative decisions (Legislations or Acts). Through a feedback loop changes brought about by those outcomes after conversion, are channeled back into the system in form of increased, intensified or modified demands and supports. Although the model is largely abstract, it is useful as a general framework for political analysis.

Easton (1953) analyses political activity by employing the paradigm of the biological system “whose life processes interact with each other and with the environment to produce a changing but nonetheless stable bodily state.” Viewed this way, therefore, politics is the response of the political system to forces brought to bear on it from the environment.

According to Easton (1953), politics is as an output of the political system. Certain key concepts are central to the understanding of public policy from the systems theoretic framework. First, is the concept of system which “implies an identifiable set of institutions and activities in a society that functions to transform demands into authoritative decisions requiring support of the whole society.” A crucial property of a system is the interrelatedness of its parts or elements. Furthermore, it is assumed that a system will respond to its environment and will seek to

preserve itself. Second, is the concept of inputs, which refer to the forces generated in the environment that affect the political system. Inputs can take the form of demand and support. Demands involve actions by individuals and groups seeking authoritative allocations of values from the authorities. Support comprises actions rendered in favour of government such as obedience to the law and payment of taxes. Inputs on the other hand, are generated from the environment defined by Easton as “any condition or circumstance defined as external to the boundaries of the...political system”. Inputs are fed into the black box of decision making, otherwise called the conversion box to produce outputs. Outputs are the decisions and policies of the authorities. Within the systems framework, allowance is made for feedback. This is the mechanism through which the outputs of the political system influence future inputs into the system. According to Anderson (1975), “the concept of feedback indicates that public policies (or outputs) may subsequently alter the environment and the demands generated therein, as well as the character of the political system itself.”



**Fig. 1: David Easton's Input –Output Model**

Source: Easton, D. (1965a)

According to Easton (1953, 1965a, 1965b), the political system consists of all those institutions and processes involved in the authoritative allocation of values for society. The political system takes inputs from society. These consist of (a) demands for particular policies and (b) expressions of support. Supports include: compliance with laws, payment of taxes and diffuse support for the regime. The political system converts these inputs into outputs –authoritative policies and decisions. These outputs then feed back to society so as to affect the next cycle of inputs. However, inputs are regulated by gatekeepers, such as parties and interest groups, which bias the system in favor of certain demands and against others.

From the society come the inputs which consist of demands and supports. Demands refer to actions people want those in authority to undertake or reject. These demands may be articulated in a peaceful way. The voting, writing to officials or lobbying them; or in violent ways through riots, strikes, even civil war. The important demands are those that are articulated (or expressed). However in this model, demands are viewed as sources of societal stress which can largely be managed or abated by supports given to those in authority. Supports which consist of implicit or explicit agreement with government policies, or encouragement to follow certain courses of action could be given to the political system as a whole.

Generally, if supports is lacking, the political system cannot survive for long. The inputs are transmitted to the decision-making centers where they are processed and converted into authoritative-allocation of values in the form of outputs. Basically, outputs are the policies formulated by the decision-makers namely, rule-making by the legislature, rule application by the executive and rule-adjudication by the judiciary. The feedback loop in essence represents the process by which the political system informs itself about the consequences of its outputs. However, the pertinent questions are: do the outputs meet the demands? Or create-new problems? Most importantly, the extent to which the political system is able to meet the demands made determines the level of supports it is likely to get.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

With the aim of a diagram, explain Easton's input-output model using Nigeria as your political system.

### **3.2 Merits of the Systems Approach**

1. It provides a framework that helped to move political science away from an exclusive concern with the nation state (and its institutions such as the government) to the study of all groups and institutions in social context.
2. Following from the above, it provides a standardised set of concepts such as inputs and outputs to describe activities which take place in all political systems, and hence providing the framework for comparing political systems
3. By drawing attention to the external environment of every political system, it is a useful approach for analysing the international political, system, especially the linkage between the domestic and the international environments.
4. It enables us to selectively identify and organise what is political when you look at the whole society. It also enables us to identify

the interrelationships of political phenomena -cabinet office, political parties, ethnicity, and so on- and between these and other phenomena which are politically relevant but belong to other realms of society -family, economic relations, industrial relations, educational system, etc.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

List and explain the merits of the systems approach.

### **3.3 Criticisms of the Systems Approach**

1. In drawing out its framework of analysis which focused attention on all 'those institutions and processes involved in the authoritative allocation of values for society', Easton reduced the state to nothing more than a 'black box' that simply receives and shuns out input and output indifferently. However, more than the other institutions such as political parties and interest groups, which Easton believes regulates inputs, the state, given the particular form of extensive and compulsory authority embodied within its activities, is central to the authoritative allocation of values and its activities can create winners and losers in the society. As Heywood (1994) comments:

The state is best thought of not just as a set of institutions but a particular kind of political association, specifically one that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial boundaries... the state commands supreme power in that it stands above all other associations and groups in society; its laws demand the compliance of all those who live within the territory.

Thus, the systems approach underestimates the complexity of governance. For example, the impression that demands are claims made on the political system by individuals and groups in the environment of the political system neglects the view that government through its own deliberate actions and inactions instigates and generates demands which form the basis of policy decisions.

2. The most popular criticism is that the approach is conservative and ideologically oriented towards retaining the *status quo*. By placing emphasis on equilibrium and system maintenance, the approach places much value on the imperative of order and

predictability. The implication of this characterisation is that stability becomes a goal which is pursued at all cost even if it means suppressing legitimate demands. The utility of systems theory is even more worrisome in situations where stability is a problem and the policy making machinery is in dire need of revolutionary changes. It is in this sense that 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 (Osaghae, 1988).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the criticism that the system approach is conservative and ideologically oriented towards retaining the *status quo* in relation to other demerits.

### **3.4 Structural Functionalist Approach (SFA)**

This approach is an offshoot of systems approach. It focuses largely on explaining the functions a political system must perform to survive and defines structures or Organisations which can most efficiently perform the functions. The structures may be political parties, pressure groups or formal government institutions performing system-maintenance functions such as informing the electorate on important issues and allowing for wider participation in the political system. Although the approach cannot provide a general theory for all aspects of political science, nevertheless, it provides standard categories for different political system and therefore useful in comparative government/politics.

The structural-functionalist approach (SFA) was pioneered by Gabriel Almond. The SFA represented a vast improvement over the systems approach of David Easton. Almond's brilliant innovation was to outline an approach to understanding political systems that took into account not only its structural components — its institutions — but also their functions within the system as a whole. Prior to structural functionalism, scholars had no way of systematically comparing different political systems beyond a rudimentary, and oftentimes inconclusive, analysis of their institutions.

At its most basic level, the SFA, just like the systems approach, proceeds from the understanding that a political system is made up of institutions (structures), such as interest groups, political parties, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and bureaucratic machinery. However, unlike the systems approach, the SFA



believes that information is not sufficient to make a meaningful comparison between two political systems. Two countries may share many of the same political institutions, but what distinguishes the two systems are the ways in which these institutions function.

Almond postulates that political systems have universal characteristics and that these characteristics can be conceptualised into schematic approach to the comparative study of politics. In effect, of the many identified by him, four stand distinctly stand out. They are that: political systems have political structures; the same functions are performed in all political systems; all political structures... are multi-functional; and that all political systems are mixed in the cultural sense.

Almond claims that his characteristics form the basis for the comparative study of the developed and the less developed nation states. He recognises that similar structures are found from polity to polity. He however suggests that in order to fully locate them, the correct functional questions must be made since this is the only pragmatic way to appreciate the dynamic process.

While borrowing from Easton's framework with particular reference to the input, output, feedback functions within the political system, he discusses his functional equivalents in a political system emphasising the context of input and output dimensions. Four sub-themes are recognised amongst the input functions. They are: political socialisation, interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication. For the output functions there are three sub-themes: rule making, rule application and, rule adjudication. These functions are performed in order to ensure the equilibrium of the system.

**Table 2: Almond and Powell's Functions of Political Systems**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Political recruitment   | People must be recruited to fill political roles from voters to government leaders   |
| Political socialisation | Their attitudes to the political system must be formed and sustained                 |
| Political communication | Politically relevant information must be transmitted                                 |
| Interest articulation   | Demands for particular policies must be expressed                                    |
| Interest aggregation    | Demands must be selected and combined into a manageable number of major alternatives |
| Policy-making           | Demands must be converted into authoritative decisions and policies                  |
| Policy implementation   | These decisions must be put into effect  |

**Source: Almond, G. and Powell, G. (1978). *Comparative Politics*. Boston: Little, Brown. pp.13-16.**

Almond and Powell (1978) provided the most important analysis of the functions of political systems. Their list is shown in Table 2.. Functionalists argued that a check-list of this kind provided an objective, standardised and culture-free approach to comparative politics. Take the function of political recruitment as an example. All political systems have to persuade people to fill political roles, varying in scope from chief executive to the voter. However, this function is performed by different institutions in different countries. In some countries, elections are the major recruiting agent. In some others such as Communist China, the ruling party is the key vehicle in recruitment. Once the party had approved a nomination for office, election (if it takes place) becomes a mere formality. In some other countries such as Saudi Arabia, blood relationship with the ruling dynasty is the key criterion to political recruitment while in others such as Nigeria under military rule; *coup d'état* was the key way of acquiring the presidential rank. Today in a democracy, money and connection to a godfather are sometimes more significant in political recruitment. In all these examples, the institutions vary but the underlying functions must be performed by every political system if it must survive and operate effectively.

Thus for Almond and Powell, a fuller understanding emerges only when one begins to examine how institutions act within the political process. As he described it, interest groups serve to articulate political issues; parties then aggregate and express them in a coherent and meaningful way; government in turn enacts public policies to address them; and bureaucracies finally regulate and adjudicate them.

While this model neatly accounts for what happens within a political system, systems are never entirely self-contained. They exist in a dynamic relationship to other political systems and must continuously adapt to changing conditions in the larger socio-political context. For this reason, all political systems require efficient feedback mechanisms. Also, according to the structural functionalist approach, political culture plays a crucial role in determining the unique characteristics of a political system. These system functions include political socialisation, recruitment, and communication. Without understanding these elements of a society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make an adequate assessment and comparison between two political systems (Almond and Gabriel, 1978).

By political socialisation, Almond and Powell mean the process by which a culture passes down civic values, beliefs, and habits of mind to succeeding generations. It refers to the largely unconscious process by which families, schools, communities, political parties and other agents of socialisation inculcate the culture's dominant political values. Recruitment refers to the ways by which citizens become active

participants in the political system. And communication represents the way a political system disseminates information essential to its proper functioning. For example, the news media plays a vital role not only in distributing public information to citizens upon which they then make important political decisions, but also in shaping political attitudes and values concerning the political process.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the Structural Functionalist Approach in relation to system-maintenance functions in political parties, pressure groups or formal government institutions.

#### **3.5.1 Merits of the Structural Functionalist Approach**

1. The structural-functionalist approach facilitates comparison among political systems. If political systems—whether village or industrialised—require the basic functions to survive they can be compared if these functions are identified, and the structures which perform them are also identified.
2. Although the approach emphasises the structures in a system, it is more interested in the behaviour of these structures. Specifically, it focuses on what structures do rather than on what their characteristics are. In other words, it wants to find out what the behaviour is and why it is important. By so doing, we know that some structures perform other functions apart from the manifest ones.

#### **3.5.2 Criticisms of the Structural Functionalist Approach**

1. Like the systems approach, its emphasis on system-maintenance makes it ideological opposed to revolutionary change. To be sure, functionalists acknowledge that change is sometimes necessary to correct social dysfunctions (the opposite of functions), but that it must occur slowly so that people and institutions can adapt without rapid disorder. Thus, it is by its very nature conservative: it recognises that a political system's first objective is to ensure its own survival. For this reason, it is not especially responsive to innovations and movements aimed at political change — that is, beyond those that strengthen its adaptiveness and resilience.
2. The approach relies heavily on national political systems, thereby suggesting that politics does not take place outside of the state realm. In addition, it does not actually specify what political activities are.

3. By placing a lot of emphasis on functions and functional behaviour, the approach diverts attention away from the institutions and structures themselves which perform these functions. These structures and institutions are seen as merely existing to perform certain functions. In other words, the laudable abstract analysis of functions has not been matched by an equal concern with or linkage to the concrete structures. For instance, by insisting that societies must perform certain functions in order to be societies and that these general categories can be used to order the material reality, the approach creates a spurious generalisation. This is because while it may be true that all societies have to perform these functions, the variability in the manner in which they are performed is so great that it may be difficult to consider them as the 'same' (Webb, 1995). For example, an election in Nigeria would be the 'same' physical event as an election in the United Kingdom, but its meaning may be different. The Nigerian type of election which is often characterised by thuggery and vote rigging will not have the equivalent meaning in the UK, even though they refer to the 'same' physical event.
4. It also has a democratic and participatory bias insofar as it views citizen input and involvement in the political process as the surest route to political stability and responsiveness. Yet, in many political systems, citizens input is nothing but mere window dressing to legitimate decisions made by the ruling elites, as is the case under military rule or dictatorial regimes.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the merits and demerits of the structural functionalist approach.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In spite of their differences, the systems and structural functionalist approaches have three major similar features. First, they are concerned with how order is maintained. Second, they recognise that change is inevitable as it is interested in how political systems are able to meet the challenges posed by change. However, the approaches do not envisage the revolutionary or violent change that characterises many political systems of the world. Third, the approaches draw attention to the importance of goal-realisation as a central aspect of the political system because they assume that no political system can survive for long without articulating and pursuing identifiable goals.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt about the important contributions of the systems approach and structural functionalist approach for political analysis. The approaches draw attention to the fact that every political system is made up of total environment, inputs, outputs, and feedback process; that parts of a system are interdependent. The structural functionalist approach draws our attention to the universal characteristics or functions of all political systems, and is especially useful for comparing political systems. However, you learnt that both approaches do not provide a useful framework for analysing revolutionary changes.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List and explain four criticisms of the structural functionalist approach.
2. Explain the input-output mechanism of a political system.
3. Has the structural functionalist approach been justified in the functions in political parties, pressure groups or formal government institutions?

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 4 POLITICAL PROCESSES APPROACHES: CLASS APPROACH, PLURALISM (GROUPS APPROACH) AND ELITE APPROACH**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Class Analysis Approach or Marxism
  - 3.2 Pluralism or Group approach
  - 3.3 Elite Approach
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In Unit 3, the systems approach and structural functionalist approaches specifically designed for the study of political systems were examined. In this unit, three different approaches that are particularly relevant for the analysis of political processes viz class approach or Marxism, pluralist or groups approach, and elite approach will also be examined.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define and describe the class analysis approach or Marxism
- state the contributions of the class approach
- state the criticisms of the class approach and its modifications
- define and describe pluralism or group approach
- state the contributions of the pluralist approach
- state the criticisms of the pluralist approach and its modification
- define and describe the elite approach
- state the contributions of the elite approach
- state the criticisms of the elite approach and its modifications.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Class Analysis Approach or Marxism

Class approach is an important tool in political science which focuses on division of society into classes and how this social stratification determines social conflict and social change.

The class analysis approach is often referred to as Marxism because it derives from the writings of Karl Marx and his associate, Friedrich Engels. It is a critique of the capitalist system where Marx posits a materialist interpretation of human history. By this, it assumes that the mode of production of goods and services and the manner of exchange of these goods and services constitute the bases of all social processes and institutions. Marx insists that it is the economy that serves as the foundation upon which the superstructure of culture, law, and government is erected. It is those who own the means of production that not only determines the economic fortunes of the society but politically sets its social values.

According to Marx, every society is divided into classes on the basis of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. Those who own property constitute a class and those who do not constitute another class. He argues that it is the clash between classes that provides the motive force of history. The class struggle is in turn, a reflection of the contradiction between the forces of production, that is, the instrument of labour and the people producing the material wealth on the one hand and the relations of production, that is, the relations among people in the process of production exchange, distribution and consumption of material wealth on the other hand. Since the social relations develop at a slower pace than the forces of production they soon constitute a hindrance to the latter, thereby making social revolution inevitable. Marx shows that the capitalist system is polarised into two classes -the few capitalist bourgeoisies who own the means of production and the proletariat, the workers. The relationship between these two classes is characterised by antagonism because the bourgeoisie exploits and subjugates the proletariat in an effort to maximise profit. People relate to the mode of production either as owners or non-owners of the means of production. In a capitalist society, Marxists argue, two classes exist, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie as owners of means of production are not only economically dominant but also politically superior because the bourgeoisie also controls the state and its institutions. The state, in the Marxist thesis, is an instrument of domination by the bourgeoisie, “a product and manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonism” (Lenin, 1914). This view is encapsulated in Marx's oft-quoted saying that “the executive of the



modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie” (cf. Avineri, 1970).

Far from being a neutral actor which some other approaches such as the systems and structural-functionalist approaches promoted, the state, in class approach, is viewed as partisan in favour of the interests of the dominant class. Ralph Miliband has offered three reasons why the state is an instrument of bourgeois domination in capitalist society. First is the similarity in the social background of the bourgeoisie and the state officials located in government, the civil service bureaucracy, the military, judiciary etc. Second, is the power of the bourgeoisie to pressurise for political action through a network of personal contacts and associations with those in business and industry, Third, is the constraint placed on the state by the objective power of capital, that is to say, the limits placed on the freedom of state officials by their need to assist the process of capital accumulation, a need which stems from the requirements of a strong economic base for political survival (Miliband, 1989).

At the core of class analysis is the concept of dialectical materialism which presumes the primacy of economic determinants in history. Through dialectical materialism the fundamental Marxist premise that the history of society is the inexorable “history of class struggle” was developed. According to this premise, a specific class could rule only so long as it best represented the economically productive forces of society; when it became outmoded it would be destroyed and replaced. From this continuing dynamic process a classless society would eventually emerge. In modern capitalist society, the bourgeois (capitalist) class had destroyed and replaced the unproductive feudal nobility and had performed the economically creative task of establishing the new industrial order. The stage was thus set for the final struggle between the bourgeoisie, which had completed its historic role, and the proletariat, composed of the industrial workers, or makers of goods, which had become the true productive class (see Wood, 1981). Marx envisages that as the contradictions of the capitalist system become more acute, a revolutionary situation will arise during which the proletariat (the oppressed class) will overthrow the capitalists and the dictatorship of the proletariat will be established.

The proletariat, after becoming the ruling class would “centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state” and to increase productive forces at a rapid rate. Once the bourgeoisie had been defeated, there would be no more class divisions, since the means of production would not be owned by any group. The coercive state, formerly a weapon of class oppression, would be replaced by a rational structure of economic and social cooperation and integration. Such

bourgeois institutions as the family and religion, which had served to perpetuate bourgeois dominance, would vanish, and each individual would find true fulfillment. The final aim of the revolution is to establish communism, a classless society which would have no need for the state and which would be organised on the principle of, “from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs.” (Carver, 1991).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

In the class approach which focuses on division of society into classes and how this social stratification determines social conflict and social change Marx insists that it is those who own the means of production that not only determines the economic fortunes of the society but politically sets its social values. Explain.

### **3.2 Contributions of the Class Approach**

1. The class approach provides a radically different approach to the understanding of the political process, especially the role of the state and the crucial role of the ruling class in determining what the state does and what the state chooses not to do in the value allocation process.
2. Contrary to the systems and structural-functionalist approaches that favours orderly change; the class approach draws our attention to the possibility of violent revolutionary changes in political systems.

#### **3.2.1 Criticisms of the Class Approach and its Subsequent Modification**

1. The class approach has been criticised for its economic determinism. In other words, the approach gives a determining significance to economic and property relations that other institutions –political, legal, cultural and ideological – are merely a reflection of them and merely explained by their dependence on prevailing economic relations.
2. A major criticism of Class analysis is that even in communist states where attempts were made to implement Marxism, the states did not disappear as Karl Marx foretold, but rather, these communists’ regimes led to the re-erection of huge, monolithic state structures. Also, the recent demise of the Communist bloc in Eastern Europe such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc. and Central

Asia have tended to discredit Marx's dire and deterministic economic predictions.

3. A related criticism of the class approach is Karl Marx's failure to comprehend the fact that the relationship between the ruling class and the working class is not always antagonistic. Arguing from this perspective, critics have pointed out that the evolution of varied forms of welfare capitalism has improved condition of workers in industrial societies rather than worsen as Marx projected and that the proletarian revolution did not occur as he anticipated. This point itself has been acknowledged by some scholars within the class approach such as Miliband who has argued that the room for autonomous action by the state in capitalist society is not a remote possibility since the state sometimes carries out reforms favourable to the underclass (Miliband, 1989). Also in the light of the criticism, particularly the failure of the workers revolution to occur, Marx's successors introduced important revisions to his theory. One of them V.I. Lenin for instance, argues that there has been a new development in capitalism, that is, imperialism which has resulted in the acquisition of colonies. According to him, imperialism has provided advanced capitalist countries with ready markets, sources of cheap raw materials and labour and havens for investing surplus profits and thereby eased the contradictions of the system. The conditions of the proletariat have also been improved but only through the exploitation of the international working class (Lenin, 1914).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Attempt a review of the contributions and critique of the class approach.

### **3.3 Pluralism or Group Approach**

Pluralism in its classical form believes that politics and decision making is located mostly in the governmental framework, but many non-governmental groups are using their resources to exert influence. The central question for classical pluralism is how power is distributed in western democracies. Groups of individuals try to maximise their interests because lines of conflict are multiple and shifting. There may be inequalities but they tend to be distributed and evened out. Any change under this view will be slow and incremental, as groups have different interests and may act as "veto groups" to destroy legislation that they do not agree with. The existence of diverse and competing interests, represented by groups, is the basis for a democratic equilibrium, and is crucial for the obtaining of goals by individuals. The

job of political scientists with this kind of concern is the analyses of the Organisation and behaviour of these groups. From the standpoint of pluralist approach, a law passed by the legislature for instance, expresses mainly the prevailing distribution of influence among competing groups, each of them seeking to advance its own particular interest.

The pluralist approach to politics argues essentially that power in western industrialised societies is widely distributed among different groups. According to this approach, no group is without power to influence decision-making and equally no group is dominant. It is a major premise of pluralism that any group can ensure that its political preferences and wishes are adopted and reflected in governmental action with sufficient determination and the deployment of appropriate - resources.

Pluralism is a theory of representation in a democracy. It gives a pride of place to pressure groups and the representation of specific interests by these groups as a hallmark of liberal democracy. In another sense, the theory legitimises the role which these groups play in the conducting of government business by emphasising the mutuality of obligation which exists between these groups and government.

Pluralists emphasise that power is not a physical entity that individuals either have or do not have, but flows from a variety of different sources. Rather, people are powerful because they control various resources. Resources are assets that can be used to force others to do what one wants. Politicians become powerful because they command resources that people want or fear or respect. The list of possibilities is virtually endless: legal authority, money, prestige, skill, knowledge, charisma, legitimacy, free time, experience, celebrity, and public support.

Pluralists also stress the differences between potential and actual power as it stands. Actual power means the ability to compel someone to do something; potential power refers to the possibility of turning resources into actual power. Cash, one of many resources, is only a stack of bills until it is put to work. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, was certainly not a rich person. But by using resources such as his forceful personality, organisational skills, and especially the legitimacy of his cause, he had a greater impact on American politics than most wealthy people. A particular resource like money cannot automatically be equated with power because the resource can be used skillfully or clumsily, fully or partially, or not at all.

The pluralist approach to the study of power states that nothing categorical about power can be assumed in any community. The question then is not who runs a community, but if any group in fact

does. To determine this, pluralists study specific outcomes. The reason for this is that they believe human behaviour is governed in large part by inaction.

That said, actual involvement in overt activity is a more valid marker of leadership than simply a reputation. Pluralists also believe that there is no one particular issue or point in time at which any group must assert itself to stay true to its own expressed values, but rather that there are a variety of issues and points at which this is possible. There are also costs involved in taking action at all—not only losing, but expenditure of time and effort. While the Marxist may argue that power distributions have a rather permanent nature, pluralism says that power may in fact be tied to issues, which vary widely in duration. Also, instead of focusing on actors within a system; the emphasis is on the leadership roles itself. By studying these, it can be determined to what extent there is a power structure present in a society.

Three of the major tenets of the pluralist school are:

- (1) resources and hence potential power widely scattered throughout society
- (2) at least some resources are available to nearly everyone
- (3) at any time the amount of potential power exceeds the amount of actual power.

Finally, and perhaps most important, no one is all-powerful. An individual or group that is influential in one realm may be weak in another. For instance, large military contractors certainly throw their weight around on defense matters, but they may not have much say on agricultural or health policies. A measure of power, therefore, is its scope, or the range of areas where it is successfully applied. Pluralists believe that with few exceptions power holders usually have a relatively limited scope of influence. For all these reasons power cannot be taken for granted. One has to observe it empirically in order to know who really governs. The best way to do this, pluralists believe, is to examine a wide range of specific decisions, noting who took which side and who ultimately won and lost. Only by keeping score on a variety of controversies can one begin to actual power holders.

Crucial to the pluralist approach is the concept of partisan mutual adjustment. According to this concept, policy takes place in a crowded arena, and no group or political factions is powerful enough to dominate the others. Policy emerges as a compromise between the various interest groups. This brings along a specific rationale: each group adjusts its stance to take into consideration the others to promote stability, because

even if a group loses out this time, this means it still retains the ability to fight another day.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Given that crucial to the pluralist approach is the concept of partisan mutual adjustment what then is the specific rationale of its compromise between the various interest groups?

### **3.4 Contribution of the Pluralist Approach**

Pluralism maintains that the political system is hierarchically structured. This in other words means that a few are deciding for many. Despite this fact, pluralism maintains democracy is possible because the many can make the few responsive, accountable and accessible. The way this is done is as follows:

- 1) No one group in society has a monopoly of power.
- 2) In order to make governmental policy, coalitions of groups have to be formed and groups in society are pragmatic enough to work out compromises.
- 3) There is a basic consensus within society that rules out violence as a legitimate way to resolve group conflict.
- 4) This consensus also involves a widespread agreement on a mechanism for making decisions;
- 5) This mechanism is considered legitimate i.e., the losers are willing to comply with the decision of the winners.
- 6) Another requirement is that the winners permit the losers to criticise and challenge the winners' decision.

#### **3.4.1 Criticism of Pluralist Approach and Its Modification**

While pluralism as an approach gained its most footing during the 1950s and 1960s in America, some scholars argued that the theory was too simplistic (Connolly, 1969). However, Sambo (1999: 293) has offered the following criticisms of the pluralist or group approach:

1. The obvious uni-causal explanation of politics and public policy from the perspective of group struggle alone. This is an exaggerated claim which overlooks the independent role of individual actors in the policy process.
2. Is the empirical question whether, indeed, power is as widely distributed in society as group theory claims and more important, whether the voice of the least powerful is ever audible as to make it significant in the decision making process.

3. That the market place paradigm on which the pluralist approach is anchored raises the significant question about parity in the process of competition since we are told that the sources of power available to groups may not be equal. The advantage, which some groups enjoy on account of superior resource endowment, might be a factor in the dominance of their interests in public policy. This is more so as they are able to deploy their advantaged position to secure their interests through, for example, the manipulation of the rules of competition.
4. The assumed neutrality of government in the clash of partisan groups in the value allocation process is questionable if not doubtful. The underlying assumption about government in pluralism is that government is an impartial mediator of conflict in society and by implication a preserver of the social order. However, experience all over the world shows that sometimes, government is not a neutral actor in policy making: government is not necessarily a disinterested party in the conflict of interests of partisan groups in society. Indeed, government sometimes pursues its own preferences which may conflict with the interests of other groups in the society.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What are the crucial features of the pluralist approach as well as its criticisms?

### **3.5 Neo-Pluralism**

Faced with the above criticism, attempts have been made to modify pluralism. This attempt led to the formulation of neo-pluralism and corporatism.

Essentially, although neo-pluralism sees multiple pressure groups competing over political influence, the political agenda is biased towards corporate power. Neo-Pluralism no longer sees the state as an umpire mediating and adjudicating between the demands of different interest groups, but as a relatively autonomous actor (with different departments) that forges and looks after its own (sectional) interests. Constitutional rules, which in pluralism are embedded in a supportive political culture, should be seen in the context of a diverse, and not necessarily supportive, political culture or a system of radically uneven economic sources. This diverse culture exists because of an uneven distribution of socioeconomic power. This creates possibilities for some groups - while limiting others - in their political options. In the international realm, order is distorted by powerful multinational interests

and dominant states, while in classical pluralism emphasis is put on stability by a framework of pluralist rules and free market.

### 3.5.1 Corporatism

Corporatism was an attempt to apply the Classical pluralism (which was believed by many to be an American model) to Westminster-style democracies or the European context. Corporatism is the idea that a few select interest groups are actually (often formally) involved in the policy formulation process, to the exclusion of the myriad of other 'interest groups'. For example, trade unions and major sectoral business associations are often consulted about (if not the drivers of) specific policies.

These policies often concern tripartite relations between workers, employers and the state, with a coordinating role for the latter. The state constructs a framework in which it can address the political and economic issues with these organised and centralised groups. In this view, parliament and party politics lose influence in the policy forming process. Other groups that some pluralists believe are more involved and have disproportionate influence in the interest articulation function are the business interests such as multinational companies.

Besides the objections to the classical model of pluralism and the subsequent reformulations mentioned above, another criticism was that groups need a high level of resources and the support of patrons to contend for influence and the classical pluralist approach did not factor this in their account. This observation formed the basis for **elite pluralism** which is a modified pluralism account for elements of elite theory.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the critical features that led to the modification of pluralism into neo-pluralism and corporatism?

### 3.6 Elite Approach

According to Arslan (1995: 3), the concept of “elite” originally derived from the Latin “*eligere*” which means select, shares a common basis with “*electa*” that means elected or the best. However, it was not widely used in social and political studies until the late nineteenth century (Cf. Arslan, 2006).

Historical research has already established that the elite is not an immutable entity, rather its formation is determined by the structural



composition of society and especially by the characteristics of the political system. Hence there are different types of elites. These include political elites, business elites, military elites, mass-media elites, trade and labour unions elites, traditional elites, and academic elites.

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.

The elite concept acquired world-wide popularity in social science as a result of the writings of Gaetano Mosca (1939), Wright Mills' (1956), and especially Vilfredo Pareto (1968) who sought to construct an alternative vocabulary to the emphasis on Marxian "class" and class conflict. With these works, the concept of elite became new theoretical and methodological framework for researching the connections between political and economic power in the society. Since then the concept has achieved a wider acceptance within modern sociology, often being seen as a useful way of describing certain systems of political power complementary to the use of the world class to describe systems of economic power.

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, which he termed the circulation of the elites. History is not history of class struggle as maintained by Marx, but the struggles between elites over social domination.

Classical elite theory also developed from a general distrust of democracy (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1968), and of the possibility to maintain democratic institutions (Michels, 1959). C. Wright Mills (1956) supplemented the classical elite theory by conceiving public and private elites as convergent into a single ruling group in society.

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, monopolises 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 organisational 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 the governing elite. The assumptions of elite theory are captured by Thomas Dye and Harmon Zeigle (Cf. Sambo, 1999, p. 294) as follows:

- Society is divided into the few who have power and the others 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 being governed. Elites are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society.
- 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.
- 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.
- Active elites are subject to relatively little direct influence from apathetic masses. Elite influence masses more than masses influence elites.

### **3.6.1 Contributions of the Elite Approach**

What is significant about the contribution of the elite approach is that it draws 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.

### 3.6.2 Criticisms and Modifications of the Elite Approach

1. 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 characterization of the masses as passive, apathetic and ill informed and the consequential relegation of their role in policy making (Sambo, 1999). For instance, Pareto and Mosca (Mosca, 1939; Pareto, 1968), 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 un-enterprising 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 the 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.
2. Also, the classical elite theories have been criticised for their distrust for democracy and their insistence that (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 (Burton and Higley, 1987; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Dogan and Higley, 1998).

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).

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.

Post-modern Liberalism in 1980s developed a view that a key to the stability, survival and consolidation of democratic regimes is the establishment of substantial consensus among elites concerning rules of the democratic political game, the worth of democratic institutions, and the consolidation of democracy.

Analytically, consolidated democracies can be thought of as encompassing specific elite and mass features. First, all important elite groups and factions share a consensus about rules and codes of political conduct and the worth of political institutions, and they are unified structurally by extensive formal and informal networks that enable them to influence decision making and thereby defend and promote their factional interests peacefully (Higley and Moor 1981).

Second, there is extensive mass participation in the elections and other institutional processes that constitute procedural democracy. No segment of the mass population are arbitrarily excluded or prevented from mobilising to express discontents, and recourse to various corrupt practices that distort mass participation is minimal. ... these elite and mass features of consolidated democracies make them stable and resilient in the face of sometimes severe challenges, with good prospects for long-term survival (Page & Shapiro, 1983).

Thus, the concept of consolidated democracies highlights consensus among elites as the most important condition for the stability of the political system.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Does the Critique of the Elite Approach really justify its implementation?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Many political scientists that have used the class analysis approach see society in terms of material interests that are often irreconcilable. They view society in terms of exploitation rather than accommodation between competing interests. According to this approach, the state is not pluralistic in the sense of being, a neutral arbiter, but is a set of institutions existing independently of social forces and which at different stages in history will be controlled in the interest of a dominant economic class whether it be landed aristocracy in a feudal economy or industrial bourgeoisie of early capitalism. On the other hand, the pluralist approach plays down the significance of class divisions in society. Liberal democratic and pluralist assumptions about society are that it may be disaggregated along occupational, gender, ethnic, or religious lines, but not into classes. Elite theory developed as an alternative paradigm to pluralism. Elite theory 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.

In spite of their differences, however, all approaches emphasised the struggle over power in society. Both pluralist and elite theories assigns to government the role of a neutral umpire in the struggle among societal groups to reflect their interests in public policy. Elite theory favours government with the crucial role of carrying into effect, through its officials and agencies, the values and preferences which the dominant few want reflected in public policy. The underlying assumption about government in these theories is that government is an impartial mediator of conflict in society and by implication a preserver of the social order.

On the other hand, while just like the other two theories, class analysis acknowledges the view of the state as a factor of cohesion where the state is involved in regulating struggles between antagonistic classes and using both repression and concession to moderate the conflict, the state is not a neutral arbiter but a set of institutions existing independently of social forces and which at different stages in history will be controlled in the interest of a dominant economic class.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt of three approaches with contrasting views of politics and the role of the state. The shortcomings of the various approaches have also been pointed out. The approaches, just like some other approaches in political science, have come up with modified versions of the classical ones in order to make up for their identified shortcomings.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Examine the major contribution of the elite approach in the Nigerian democracy.
2. Is the pluralist partisan mutual adjustment approach the specific rationale of its compromise between the various interest groups?
3. Was there really a need to modify pluralism into neo-pluralism and corporatism?

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## UNIT 5 RATIONAL CHOICE INSTITUTIONALISM

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In continuation of previous discussions on approaches to the study of politics, this unit will address the new institutional approach. You will recall that in our first lecture on the normative approaches, we stated that the earlier study of political science largely focused on institutions. The new institutionalism is a variety of the broad institutional approach, but emerged as a result of some deficiencies noticeable in the early institutional approaches, and the behavioural approach that were influential during the 1960s and 1970s. New institutionalism seeks to elucidate the role that institutions play in the determination of social and political outcomes.

The new institutionalism is a disparate set of ideas with diverse disciplinary origins, analytic assumptions, and explanatory claims (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Koelble, 1995). Institutions are generally seen as the rules of the game or the humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions (North 1990:3). Actors' preferences and institutions are the raw materials of institutionalism explanation (Van Hees, 1997).

According to March and Olsen (1984:734), the need for a refocus on institutions became necessary because even though traditional political institutions 'have receded in importance from the position they held in earlier theories of political science' because they have been displaced by contemporary political science, contemporary political analysis itself cannot fully account for the complexity of political phenomena because, for example, it is *contextual*, or socio-centric, emphasising the social context of political behavior and downgrading the importance of the state as an independent cause; *reductionist*, explaining politics as the outcome of individual actions ; and *utilitarian*, explaining individual



actions as motivated by rational self-interest (March and Olsen, 1984, pp. 736-7).

In contrast, the new institutionalism 'insists on a more autonomous role for political institutions'. Thus "the bureaucratic agency, the legislative committee, and the appellate court are arenas for contending social forces, but they are also collections of standard operating procedures and structures that define and defend interests, they are political actors in their own right" (March and Olsen, 1984: 738).

In the broadest sense, institutions are simply rules. As such, they are the foundation of all political behaviour. Some are formal (as in constitutional rules) some are informal (as in cultural norms), but without institutions there could be no organized politics. A world in which there were no rules governing social or political behavior equates a Hobbesian state of nature where there could be no political organisation, indeed no social organisation at all (North, 1990):

Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence, they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social or economic. Institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time as well as being the key to understanding historical change.

Institutions are the rules and norms resulting in formal or informal rights and obligations which facilitate exchange by allowing people to form stable and fairly reliable expectations about the actions of others (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Lane, 2000). Institutions structure politics because they:

- 1) Define who is able to participate in the particular political arena;
- 2) Shape the various actors' political strategies, and (more controversially)
- 3) Influence what these actors believe to be both possible and desirable (i.e. their preferences).

There are three contending research/theoretical approaches within political science, which identify themselves as New Institutionalism today: Historical Institutionalism, Rational Choice Institutionalism, and Sociological Institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996:936). The role institutions play in these three analytic traditions overlap in many ways (cf. Hall and Taylor, 1996; Rothstein, 1996; Thelen, 1999). At the same time, the theoretical, indeed epistemological, goals of scholars in these three schools separate them in some rather fundamental ways. Specifically, the three schools differ on the stance each adopts towards

two issues fundamental to any institutional analysis, namely, how to construe the relationship between institutions and behavior and how to explain the process whereby institutions originate or change (Hall and Taylor, 1996, p. 937).

In this unit, we shall consider one of the most widely used approach within the new institutionalism framework and which has been described as the approach having “an ascendant position across the social sciences and in the spheres of business, law, and public policy” (US History Encyclopedia, 2009).

However, because no theoretical leaning is self-sufficient and because there is not a theory in search of evidence, a critique of the Rational Choice Institutionalism will be done, and its weaknesses pointed out, by using the strengths of the other two schools within the broad new institutionalism framework: Historical and Sociological Institutionalism.

## 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- highlight the key features of the rational choice institutionalist approach
- describe the contributions of Barry Weingast, one of the key contemporary scholars of this approach
- criticise the rational choice approach.

## 6.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Rational Choice Institutionalism

Rational choice approaches to politics have become an increasingly important branch of the discipline. They focus on politics being a response to the problem of collective action, which has applications both in the study of political institutions and processes, and in the study of international relations. In general, rational choice approaches start by making certain fundamental assumptions about human behaviour from which hypotheses or theories are deduced before being tested against the facts in the real world. The assumptions made are that human beings are essentially rational, utility maximisers who will follow the path of action most likely to benefit them. This approach has been used in so-called ‘game theory’ where individual behaviour is applied to particular situations. These ‘games’ reveal how difficult it can be for rational individuals to reach optimal outcomes because of the existence of free-riders—actors who calculate that they can reap the benefits of collective action without paying any of the costs. In political science, the

best-known applications can be found in the fields of voting and party competition and in interest group politics.

For rationalist scholars, the central goal is to uncover the laws of political behavior and action. Scholars in this tradition generally believe that once these laws are discovered, models can be constructed that will help us understand and predict political behavior. In their deductive model, rational choice scholars look to the real world to see if their model is right (test the model) rather than look to the real world and then search for plausible explanations for the phenomenon they observe.

Rational choice institutionalists apply a deductive model of science. In rational choice institutionalism general principles, logics are invoked in terms of games (settlers, prisoner dilemma, tit-for-tat etc.), which may (or may not) be then applied to particular historical events. These scholars, in short, are interested in the game and its design: institutions are simply the rules of the game(s). Rational choice institutionalists try to understand what the game is and how it is played (Steinmo, 2001).

One of the features noted about institutions - no matter what the analytic perspective - is that institutions do not change easily. Rational choice institutionalists view institutional equilibrium as the norm. They argue that the normal state of politics is one in which the rules of the game are stable and actors maximise their utilities (usually self-interest) given these rules.

In effect, as actors learn the rules, their strategies adjust and thus an institutional equilibrium sets in. Consequent upon the above, although not everyone is necessarily happy with the current institutional structure, a significant coalition is - or else it would not, by definition, be stable. Once stabilised, it becomes very difficult to change the rules because no one can be certain what the outcomes of the new structure would be. This is because institutions shape strategies; new institutional rules imply new strategies throughout the system. Change thus implies enormous uncertainty especially as it is very difficult to calculate the effects of rule changes. In short, the amount of uncertainty implied by a new institutional structure makes actors unwilling to change the structure (Shepsle, 1986). In other words, people are afraid of changing the rules because it is difficult to know what will happen after the rules are changed.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How true is the assertion by rationalist scholars that once laws are discovered models can be constructed that will help in understanding and predicting political behaviour?

### 3.2 Barry Weingast and Rational Choice Approach

One of the most dominant rational choice institutionalists in recent time is Barry Weingast.

In his article “Rational Choice Institutionalism”, Barry Weingast argues that the rational choice intuitionism provides an analytical framework for scholars to explore theoretical puzzles and conduct empirical research on a wide range of issues in political science. To Weingast, institutions are the ‘humanly created constraints on actions’. In his own words:

Methodologically, this definition translates into studying how institutions constrain the sequence of interaction among actors, the choices available to particular actors, the structure of information and beliefs of the actors, and payoffs to individuals and groups (Weingast, 2002 p. 661).

The rational choice approach views institutions as formal and informal rules of the game. Formal rules of the game are official laws and rules, and informal institutions are the norms and conventions accepted by particular groups (North, 1990).

In his study, Weingast presents two levels of analysis (exogenous and endogenous) of the rational choice institutionalism. The first level of analysis explores the effects of institutions. It examines the cause and effect mechanism of institutions, treating institutions as exogenous explanatory variable/variables. He argues that institutions shape policy process as well as outcomes in numerous ways. To buttress his argument, he uses formal and schematic examples. One of the examples show how various powers and institutional forms shape the legislative-executive balance of power policy and choices, contrasting the institutional constitutional constraint on the US President by the strong US Congress which leads to credible commitments, and the absence of such credible commitments in Latin America where the strong executive branch is granted the “power to present the legislature with a take –it- or -leave choice over policy”.

The second level of analysis deals with the “endogenous choice of particular institutions”. It explores the genesis and endurance of institutions. To shed light on the origins of institutions, Weingast argued that society or a group cannot do without institutions because “institutions exist to make cooperation sustainable” (Weingast, 2002: 670). In the absence of institutions, individuals may end up in situations where everyone is worse off. The main problem with any social

exchange is that the parties to the exchange run into the problem of incentives where some individuals have short-term temptations not to cooperate.

Analysing the limitation of the conventional repeated prisoner's dilemma, Weingast shows the need for institutions. The standard argument of the repeated prisoner's dilemma is that although all players have a short run interests to cheat, they have long run incentives to cooperate. However, dependence on repeated prisoner's dilemma is not wholesomely useful, as it cannot prevent 'common breakdowns' such as wars, ethnic conflict, government and private opportunism, and other systematic failures arising from the attempt by a group to capture gains from cooperation (Weingast , 2002: 672).

Weingast also states that the repeated prisoner's dilemma simply assumes that defection is observable. However, defection is not observable in the real world situations. Thus, Weingast states, "if some defections cannot be observed, opportunistic players can masquerade their subterfuge qua defection in a plausible rationale that the other defected". Since defection is unobservable, repeat play alone cannot sustain cooperation (Weingast, 2002, p. 674). It is in this regard that institutions become necessary.

But even at that, credible commitments do not emerge simply because institutions are in place to ensure cooperation rather it is only when institutions become self - enforcing that they can sustain cooperation. The democratic consolidation and rule of law example is illustrative. Using a game-theory approach to the problem of political officials' respect for political and economic rights of citizens, Weingast showed that democratic stability depends on a self-enforcing equilibrium: which must be in the interest of political officials to respect democracy's limits on their behaviour. Political officials will avoid violating the legitimate boundaries of the state because doing so risks losing power as "citizens hold these limits in high esteem that they are willing to defend them by withdrawing support from the sovereign when he tries to violate these limits" (Weingast, 1997, p.251). The sovereign's self-interest leads him to respect limits on his behaviour; that is, these limit are self-enforcing. Arguing further, Weingast noted, "one of the central features of limited government is the rule of law, a society of universalistic laws, not of discretionary political power. Because law and political limits can be disobeyed or ignored, something beyond laws is necessary to prevent violations. To survive, the rule of law requires that limits on political officials be self-enforcing....Self-enforcement of limits depends on the other hand, on the complementary combinations of attitudes and reactions of citizens as well as institutional restrictions" (Ibid, p. 262). However, Weingast (1997:246) argues that "self-enforcing limits on the

state result when members of a society resolve their coordination dilemmas about the appropriate limits on the state”.

Weingast (2002:681) discusses the importance of a focal solution to resolve citizens’ coordination dilemma for democratic consolidation and how a constitution can create a focal solution to such coordination dilemma. According to him, “democracies with constitutions that place constraint on government valued by citizens are more likely to survive because they are less likely to threaten their citizens. In this case, citizens do not resort to extra-constitutional means to defend themselves meaning that constitutional institutions moderate the stakes of politics by creating self-enforcing limits on politics.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Given that the rational choice approach views institutions as formal and informal rules of the game using Weingast’s exogenous and endogenous levels of analysis examine the cause, effect mechanism of institutions as well as the genesis of institutions.

### **3.3 A Critique of the Rational Choice Institutionalism**

There are at least four major criticisms of the rational choice institutionalism (RCI). First, it has been argued that the approach glosses over the impact of existing ‘state capacities’ and ‘policy legacies’ on subsequent policy choices (David Collier and Ruth Collier, 1991). In other words, the approach gives little consideration to the fact way in which political institutions had shaped or structured the political process and ultimately the political outcomes (cf. Steinmo, Thelen et al. 1992).

Following from the above, a second criticism of the approach is that it does not emphasise the way(s) in which past lines of policy condition subsequent policy by encouraging societal forces to organise along some lines rather than others, to adopt particular identities, or to develop interests in policy that are costly to shift (Hall & Taylor, 1996). For instance, in an analysis of the present development predicament of African states, RCI may downplay the impact of historical exigencies in shaping the development paths of these states. Yet as we have been reminded by Peter Ekeh (1980) and Falola, (2005), an analysis of the role of the enduring legacies of colonialism and its epochal consequences is apt if we must properly grasp the present form and depth of Africa’s development challenges. According to Ekeh, colonialism is best understood as:

A social movement of epochal dimensions whose enduring significance, beyond the life span of the colonial

situation, lies in the social formations of supra-individual entities and constructs. These supra-individual formations developed from the volcano-sized social changes provoked into existence by the confrontations, contradictions, and incompatibilities in the colonial situation. Colonialism turned African societies upside down and inside out, and marked a reinvention of social formations that have endured in various ways till date (Ekeh, 1980, p.5).

Indeed, despite the resilience and importance of certain pre-colonial and indigenous social formations and 'traditions', which continue to influence political relations, the character and nature of contemporary African politics, especially the present crisis of identity, have also taken root from and have been shaped by colonialism (Osaghae, 1990).

Similarly, Aleksis Ylönen (2005:36) has pointed out the colonial roots of inequality and marginalisation in contemporary Nigeria and Sudan. Drawing copiously from historical evidence, he argues that in these countries, "extractive colonial institutions were imposed and their legacy endured to the period of independence. By creating poverty and inequality as control mechanisms in favor of the coloniser, these institutions led to political and socio-economic marginalisation of large segments of the population and therefore also to weak, politically unstable, and conflict torn post-colonial states".

Seen from this perspective, institutions are not the only important variables for understanding political outcomes. Quite the contrary, institutions are intervening variables (or structuring variables) through which battles over interest, ideas and power are fought. Institutions are important both because they are the focal points of much political activity and because they provide incentives and constraints for political actors that structure activity. In other words, rather than being neutral boxes in which political fights take place as the rational choice institutionalists are want us to believe, institutions actually structure the political struggle itself. Institutions can thus also be seen as the points of critical juncture in an historical path analysis because political battles are fought inside institutions and over the design of future institutions.

Thirdly, the rational choice institutionalism can be criticised for given scant attention to informal rules of the game such as traditions, culture and other informal ways of interaction which also constraint the behavior of actors, especially where formal rules of the game are not credible. By excessively focusing on formal rules, norms and procedures, the rational choice institutionalism glosses over the fact that institutions also include symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral

templates that provide the ‘frames of meaning’ guiding human action and that both the concepts of ‘institutions’ and ‘culture’ are not poles apart but rather intermesh and shade into each other (Scott, 1995). Further, the rational choice institutionalism discourse of institutional reform is capable of great mystification and obscurantism. It can conceal the values, interests and agenda that are being served. For instance, as argued by Sam Amadi (2004), the current Nigerian economic reform programme, christened NEEDS II, and Seven Point Agenda is not just only a functional response of the Nigerian state to the exigencies of economic renewal, but it is also taking place because the dominant world view of globalisation promulgated by international regimes – World Bank, IMF, WTO - made such policies seem appropriate and *fait accompli* and others illegitimate in the eyes of national authorities.

Finally, the RCI has been criticised for choice approach has been criticised for its over-reliance on statistical models, its “fixation on quantitative tools” (Gunawardena-Vaughn, 2000,) and “the mathematicisation of political science” (Miller, 2001) and that by doing so, it has made political science trivial and disconnected it from “great political issues” and the “real world” to researchers’ (see Kremer, 2001; Gunawardena-Vaughn, 2000; Parenti, 2006).

In spite of all these weaknesses however, the rational choice institutionalism retains essential strength in its account of strategic behavior by purposive agents under structural constraints, of the aggregation of interests, of the distribution and exercise of power, and of the social construction of political rationality – and its ability to combine and recombine these elements and mobilise them into theoretically sound causal explanations of a wide range of political phenomena (Lieberman, 2002, p. 699).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The rational choice approach uses deductive models of human interactions based on the assumption that individuals are self-interested rational actors. From its humble origins, rational choice approach has become the dominant approach in the study of politics and has established itself as a disciplinary standard not just across the United States, but also worldwide by 1990. Yet, in spite of its success and attractions the approach has been criticised for glossing over the role of state capacities, history, and culture in politics and political behaviour; and for its over-reliance on statistical models, and quantification.



## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we discussed the rational choice institutionalist approach as one of the important variants of the broader new institutional approach. We have highlighted the contributions of Barry Weingast, one of the prominent scholars within the rational choice approach. Finally, we have also examined the criticisms of the rational choice theory using insights, especially, from the two other variants of new institutionalism viz - the historical Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the contributions of Barry Weingast to rational choice institutionalism.
2. Attempt a critique of the rational choice institutionalism
3. The greatest contribution of RCI is its emphasis on individuals as self-interested rational actors. With examples from Nigeria's political history, evaluate the roles of political leaders in shaping political and economic outcomes in Nigeria between 1999 and 2007.

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## **MODULE 3      POLITICAL SYSTEMS, POLITICAL PROCESS AND POLITICAL ACTION**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Unit 1 | Political Systems' Legitimacy: Power, Authority and Ideology       |
| Unit 2 | Political Culture  |
| Unit 3 | Political Socialisation  |
| Unit 4 | Political Participation  |
| Unit 5 | Political Representation and Political Parties and Interest Groups |

### **UNIT 1      POLITICAL SYSTEMS' LEGITIMACY: POWER, AUTHORITY AND IDEOLOGY**

#### **CONTENT**

|     |                                   |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 1.0 | Introduction                      |
| 2.0 | Objectives                        |
| 3.0 | Main Content                      |
| 3.1 | What is Political Power?          |
| 3.2 | Types of Power                    |
| 3.3 | Authority                         |
| 3.4 | Max Weber's Typology of Authority |
| 3.5 | Ideology                          |
| 4.0 | Conclusion                        |
| 5.0 | Summary                           |
| 6.0 | Tutor-Marked Assignment           |
| 7.0 | References/Further Reading        |

#### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

Regardless of the type of regime, all political systems seek legitimacy. Legitimacy is the tacit or explicit support of the regime by its people. Usually it is an emotional identification with the regime. The regime is legitimate when the people believe that institutional structures of the government are the most appropriate for society (Kelly, 2008). In this unit, we shall discuss some of the key issues related to legitimacy in political systems.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define the concept of political power
- identify the types of power
- differentiate between power and influence
- define the concept of authority
- differentiate between power and authority
- identify Max Weber's typology of authority
- define ideology and identify its functions in a political system.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 The Concept of Political Power

#### 3.1.1 What is Political Power?

According to Max Weber, “power is the possibility of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons” (Gerth & Mills, 1946). Power, according to him, involves domination – a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled in which the actual frequency of compliance is only one aspect of the fact that the power of command exists. Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) define power as a special case of the exercise of influence. It is the process of affecting the policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for non-conformity with the policies intended. Herbert Simon considers power as an asymmetrical relation between the behaviour of two persons (Simon, 1965). For Amitai Etzioni, power is a “capacity to overcome part or all of the resistance to introduce changes in the face of opposition (and this includes sustaining a course of action or preserving a status quo that would otherwise be discontinued or altered)” (Etzioni, 1970). Robert Dahl sees power as the product of human relationships. For instance, A has power over B to the extent that he (A) can get B to do something that he would not otherwise do. A person may be said to have power to the extent he influences the behavior of others in accordance with his intentions (Dahl, 1957; 1991).

The following definitions of power, explain the qualities of power as: First, as being applicable in a social relation: power is exercised over men and not over nature or things (Etzioni, 1970). The in other words means that power is the ability to get things done, to make others do what we want, even if they do not want to do it.

Second, in any power situation there is always some feedback from the influence to the influencer. This is what Carl Friedrich has described as “the rule of anticipated reactions” (Friedrich, 1963). This refers to a situation in which “one actor, B, shapes his/her behaviour to conform to what he believes are the desires of another actor, A, without having received explicit messages about A's wants or intentions from A or A's agents” (Friedrich, *ibid.*).

Third, a variety of means can be used to persuade people to do things, but power always has as its base the ability to reward or punish. A sanction is a reprisal for disobedience to a command. Its intent is punitive. It may be either a deprivation of values already possessed or an obstruction to the attainment of values which would have been realised were it not for the punitive intervention of the power-holder. A sanction may be either a physical loss [beating, confinement etc.] or a non-physical loss (fining, confiscation, removal from office, ridicule, etc.) (Goldhamer & Shills, 1965).

Fourth, power is also relative. The main problem is not to determine the existence of power but to make comparisons. To say that the power of A is greater than the power of B, there must be agreement as to the operational definition of the term power and the operational means that are to be used to determine the degree of its presence or absence in any situation (Anifowose, 1999).

Fifth, the most powerful people in the community may be those who remain behind the scenes and the issues which are raised, rather than those who openly participate in settling issues raised.

Sixth, power is not something that only exists at a national level. It also exists at the international level. Elements of state power at the international level include their physical geography, demography, resources (both human and material), technological prowess, military factors, psychological-social factors, and quality of leadership.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How does the features of power justify a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled is compliance that the power of command exists?

### **3.2 Types of Power**

Three major types of power may be distinguished in terms of the type of influence brought to bear on the subordinated individual. These are force, domination and manipulation.

- (a) **Force** - The power-holder exercises force when he/she influences behaviour by a physical manipulation of the subordinated individual (assault, confinement, etc.).
- (b) **Domination** - For Max Weber, “domination” is identical with the “authoritarian power of command” (Gerth & Mills, 1946).

However, for domination to be present there must be:

- An individual who rules or a group of rulers;
  - An individual who is ruled or a group that is ruled;
  - The will of the rulers to influence the conduct of the ruled and an expression of the will (or a Command);
  - Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of the objective degree of compliance with the command;
  - Direct or indirect evidence of that influence in terms of the objective acceptance with which the ruled obey the command (Goldhamer & Shills, 1965).
- (c) **Manipulation** – This is the third form of power and it obtains when an actor influences the behaviour of others without making explicit the behaviour which he/she wants them to perform. Manipulation may be exercised by utilising symbols of performing acts while propaganda is a major form of manipulation by symbols (Gerth & Mills, 1946).

Attempted domination may meet with obedience or disobedience. The motivation for obedience and disobedience is instrumental to the extent that it is based on an anticipation of losses and gains. In effect, if the attempt of a person to exercise power fails, the power act may be followed by a sanction (Goldhamer & Shills, op.cit).

### **Power and Influence**

According to Robert Dahl (1957; 1991), influence is “a relation among actors such that the wants, desires, preferences, or intentions of one or more actors affect the actions, or predisposition to act, of one or more other actors. There is often little practical difference between power and influence. One person has influence over another within a given scope to the extent that the first without resorting to either a tacit or an overt threat of severe deprivations can cause the second to change his/her course of action.

Power and influence are hence very difficult to measure because of the presence of feed-back. This suggests that the power of every person is limited in crucial ways. No one possesses unlimited power -even leaders at the apex of power, including the likes of General Sani Abacha of

Nigeria or Adolf Hitler of Germany, who in their respective countries had maximum power. In sum, power and influence are alike in that each has both rational and relational attributes. They differ, however, in that the exercise of power depends upon potential sanctions, while the exercise of influence does not (Anifowose, 1999).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Based on the rational and relational attributes of power and influence explain the fact that the exercise of power depends upon potential sanctions, while the exercise of influence does.

### **3.3 Authority**

There are considerable disadvantages for a government which depends mainly upon the use of force to maintain control. In the long run, it is important for all people in positions of power to recognise the use of their position as legitimate (rightful) by those over whom they have power. Thus, according to Crick (1978):

probably, all governments require some capacity for or potentiality of force or violence, but probably no government can maintain itself through time as distinct from defense and attack at specific moments, without legitimatizing itself in some way, getting itself loved, respected, even just accepted as inevitable, otherwise it would need constant recourse to open violence which is rarely the case.

Authority is the quality of being able to get people to do things because they think the individual or group has the right to tell them what to do. In effect, those in authority are followed because it is believed that they fulfill a need within the community or political system. Authority, then, is linked to respect, which creates legitimacy and therefore leads to power.

Legitimate power or influence is generally called authority. It is power clothed with legitimacy. It is the authentic form of power based on consent, voluntary obedience and persuasion (Leslie, 1993). Legitimacy is the belief in the rightness of an individual to make authoritative, binding decisions. It is the belief in the right to give commands and the right to be obeyed. All governments need authority for people to accept their right to make decisions.



## **Difference between Power and Authority**

What demarcates authority from power is that the former is power/influence recognised as rightful while authority is government that all accept as valid. Its exercise is therefore sanctioned by those who approve the particular act or agent and is tolerated by those who disapprove. Confronted with power, the citizens have a choice whether to support or oppose. Confronted with authority, it is their duty to obey. Resistance to power is lawful but resistance to authority is unlawful. Power is naked; authority is power clothed in the garments of legitimacy. It is founded on consent (Lipson, 1993). Those who oppose the government may have to submit to the decisions of power, that is, governmental decisions; but submission is different from acquiescence. The imperatives of power may secure compliance; but this is not the same as allegiance.

The mood of authority is distinctive because it expresses itself imperatively in a categorical way. In other words, language of authority is different from the language of power and influence. Individuals, who are in an institutional position to use the language of authority to issue commands, orders, directives etc., to their subordinates, can usually also use the languages of power and influence. They can threaten a subordinate or promise to recommend him for a promotion (Anifowose, 1999).

Thus, underlying their authority is both power and influence. However, not all power is strictly coercive. If positive inducements are combined with severe sanctions to bring about the action desired, the relationship is one of power but not of coercion in the strict sense.

Most power holders claim legitimacy for their acts, i.e. they claim the right to rule as they do. Equally important is the fact that the obedience of the ruled is guided to some extent by the idea that the rulers and their commands constitute a legitimate order of authority. This is what J. J. Rousseau meant when he stated that “the strongest is never strong enough to be always the master unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty” (cf. Fasuba, 1978).

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain how resistance to power is lawful but resistance to authority is unlawful if authority is linked to respect, which creates legitimacy and therefore leads to power.

### 3.4 Max Weber's Typology of Authority

According to the German political sociologist, Max Weber, there are three (3) ideal types of authority. These are:

**Traditional:** The belief of this type is that legitimacy of an authority has always existed. Hence people support the regime out of habit and custom. Rulers exercising power of command are masters who enjoy personal authority by virtue of their inherited status. Their command are legitimate in the sense that they are in accord with custom or tradition but they possess the prerogative of free personal decision, so that conformity with custom and personal arbitrariness are both characteristics of such rule. Those who obey are followers or subjects in the literal sense. They obey out of personal loyalty to the master or a pious regard for his/her time-honored status. Weber says that this is the type of authority that is typical of simpler, pre-industrial societies.

**Legal Rational:** This type of authority is based on a system of rules applied judicially and administratively. Rulers are superiors, appointed or elected by legally sanctioned procedures oriented toward the maintenance of the legal order. People support the regime and obey its rule because the explicit rules and procedures of government make sense to the people on rational grounds and not because of those implementing the law. The governments of many countries have authority because they were elected by a legal process and because they work within the law of the land. They are constitutional governments. This type of authority is typical of modern nations.

**Charismatic:** Here people support the regime because of an emotional identification with the personality of the leader of the regime. The power of command may be exercised by a leader –whether he/she is a prophet, hero, or demagogue - who can prove that he/she possesses charisma by virtue of magical power, revelations, heroism, or other extraordinary gifts or personal attributes such as eloquence. The persons who obey such a leader are disciples or followers who believe in his/her extraordinary qualities rather than in stipulated rules or in the dignity of a position sanctioned by tradition. Mao Tse Tung, Hitler, Tito, Mussolini, de Gaulle, Ghandi, Mandela, Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello could be cited as examples of leaders who wielded charismatic authority. Charisma is very rare and hence, societies with charismatic leaders often have difficulties replacing them.

Each of Max Weber's authority type leads to its own peculiar regime legitimacy, and by implication, the type of regime legitimacy influences political stability as depicted by Kelly (2008) below:

**Table 4: Weber's Typology of Different Political Regimes**

| <b>Types of Legitimacy</b>   | <b>PROBLEM I</b>                                     | <b>PROBLEM II</b>  | <b>POLITICAL STABILITY</b>     |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
|  | Dealing with Transfer of Power                       | Dealing with the Phenomenon of Change                    | (Dealing with Problems I & II) |
| Charismatic (Regime accepted by the People because of the personality of its leader)       | Deals Poorly (Cannot Transfer Personality of Leader) | Deals Well (Can Muster Necessary Political will)         | Less Stable                    |
| Traditional (Regime accepted because it based on tradition and custom)                     | Deals Well (e.g., law of primogeniture)              | Deals Poorly (Cannot break with Tradition)               | Less Stable                    |
| Rational – Legal (Regime accepted because procedures are perceived logical and reasonable) | Deals Well (Elections, explicit line of succession)  | Deals Well (Legislation, Amendments and judicial review) | Most Stable                    |

Source: Kelly (2008)

These sources of authority are not necessarily exclusive but co-exist in specific political communities in various combinations. They are pure types of authority and are unlikely to exist in their extreme forms (Swinburn & Renwick, 1981).

As we noted in our introduction, political regimes are founded on the need that men have ordered cooperation that enables them to live freely and well together. But if the regime is to achieve its ends, it must have necessary organs. The chief of these is political authority – government is made up of those members of the state who coordinate and direct the energies of all the members as they pursue their ends together. Without authority, a regime is not possible. Without adequate authority, a state is subject to disorder and weakness. From its function of directing energies in a coordinated way, the government derives its power to command, and when it is necessary, to use force (naked power), to back up its commands. And if a government has the right to guide and to command, those who come under this command and benefit from the guidance, are also obliged to obey its just directives. In other words, political obedience is a serious duty for citizens.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Without adequate authority, a state is subject to disorder and weakness in accordance with the existing types of authority.

### 3.5 Ideology

Another legitimating quality in political systems is ideology. Ideology is an explicit set of values that orients people in society in terms of what they can expect from government and what government should do for them and society. In other words, it not only speaks to human nature but the role of government in society and the relationship of politics and economics. Similarly, each ideology has its sacred documents and programme of action for realising its agenda for society. It has its beliefs referring specifically to social and/or political structure; and demanding high affective identification, loyalty, and commitment. While an ideology may undergo slow changes in its tenets, it is resistant to fundamental alterations in its world view (Webb, 1995).

The many other variations of ideologies which have existed or still exist, for example fascism, Nazism, communism, populism, etc. can be traced back to one or more of the three (3) main ideologies of politics today which are conservatism, liberalism and socialism.

In societies where democracy has taken root and become firmly consolidated, political parties are delineated by their ideologies. For instance in the United States, the Democratic Party is known over the years, indeed throughout its history, for its liberal platform. It emphasises increased regulation, workers' protection, increase social spending, big tax, decreased spending on defense, liberal immigration policies, big government, pro-choice policies towards abortion, government control of health care, ban on death penalty etc. On the other hand, its main opposition, the Republican party stands on a seemingly contradictory premise- as it shows its conservative leaning in its encouragement of private participation, de-regulation, decrease social spending, a cut in taxes to protect owners of capital, increase defense spending, lean government, decrease minimum wage and maintenance of death penalty etc. The same scenario replicates itself in U.K., France, and Italy etc.

Regrettably, the situation is totally dissimilar in Nigeria. In Nigeria, political parties are not delineated ideologically. Political parties are not made up of people who share the same ideology. Rather it is made up of strange bed fellows masquerading as political parties.

It can therefore be argued that what unites many politicians in Nigeria today is not party ideology but self interests. This dearth of ideological politics explains the frequent cross carpeting of Nigerian politicians in the present political dispensation from May 1999.

### **Functions of Ideology**

In line with the above summations, it is pertinent to note according to Enemu (1999) that ideology serves as a legitimating tool in a political system in the following ways:

**Legitimation of Leaders:** The bane of this feature is that those who occupy positions of authority often justify their positions and actions by reference to certain-Ideological tenets. In other words, ideology provides government with legitimacy and helps it obtain compliance from citizens without constant resort to the threat or actual use of force. Remarkably also, those who are opposed to the status quo and seek to replace or reform the government justify their actions on the basis of an ideology. For instance, the liberal democratic ideology was used by pro-democracy organisations in Nigeria to challenge continued military rule.

**Promotion of Social Coherence:** Ideology promotes unity among members of the society and organisations upon which it is founded. It performs this role by specifying the collective goals and designating appropriate mechanisms for actualising individual and group aspirations. It stipulates rights and obligations and outlines the nature and limits of power. Besides, it provides adherents a formula of ideas for perceiving themselves and viewing and interpreting the universe.

**Facilitates conflict management:** This feature specifies that the collective purpose and means of attaining ideology is by ensuring that political struggles become contestations over principles and not personalities.

**Guide to policy choice and assessment of conduct:** Ideology provides the framework for making policy choices by the government and the parameters for assessing the conduct of officials and the performance of government.

**Dynamic force in life:** Every ideology provides an explanation of reality to its adherents and seeks to motivate them to action.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In what ways can ideology serve as a legitimating tool in a political system that will orient people in society in terms of not only what to expect from government but what government should do for them and society?

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

This unit argued that all regimes seek legitimacy because it makes people believe that institutional structures of the government are the most appropriate for society. Also, it explained that authority is the quality of being able to get people to do things because they think the individual or group has the right to tell them what to do. On the other hand, power is explained as involving domination – a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the concept of political power; types of power, the differentiating features between power, authority and influence as well as the role ideology plays in a political system.

### 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain how each of Max Weber's authority type not only leads to its own peculiar regime legitimacy but influences political stability as depicted by Kelly (2008).
2. Describe how ideology legitimates a political system.
3. Contrast ideology in party politics between the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the Fourth Republic (1999-2010).

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## **UNIT 2      POLITICAL CULTURE**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Political Culture and Foundations of Political Culture?
  - 3.2 The Objects of Political Orientation
  - 3.3 Types of Political Culture and Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba's Civic Culture
  - 3.4 Arend Lijphart Classification of Political Culture and Neo-Patrimonial Political Culture
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In Unit 1, we looked at power, authority, and ideology as three key activities which have important implications for any political systems' legitimacy. However, these political processes are not all that matter in the understanding of a political system's legitimacy. An understanding of a society's political culture is also important in our understanding of political systems' legitimacy.

But political culture is more than a system legitimating instrument. As several scholars have noted, one political system can be distinguished from another not only by its structures but also by the political culture in which the structures are found (See Wiseman, 1966; Almond and Verba, 1963). In other words, the general working of the political system is very much affected by the political culture in which such imported institutions function. Political cultures create a framework for political change and are unique to states, and other groups. But what exactly do we mean by political culture? In Unit 1, the importance of political culture for regime legitimation was highlighted while this unit will discuss elaborately the concept of political culture, its importance and dynamics in the political system.



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define political culture
- highlight the foundations of political culture
- identify the objects of political orientation
- identify and describe the different types of political culture viz: (a) the civic culture, (b) Consociational culture and (c) the neo-patrimonial culture.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 What is Political Culture?

The definitions of political culture are many and varied. Roy Macridis (1961) defines it as the “commonly shared goals and commonly accepted rules.” Dennis Kavanagh defines it as a shorthand expression to denote the set of values within which the political system operates (Kavanagh, 1993). Lucian Pye describes it as “the sum of the fundamental values, sentiments and knowledge that give form and substance to political process”. Samuel Beer (1958) says it is one of the four variables crucial to the analysis of political systems. According to him, the components of the culture are values, beliefs and emotional attitudes about how government ought to be conducted and also about what it should do. Almond and Powell defined political culture as “the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations toward politics among the members of a political system,” (Almond & Powell, 1966). The basic distinction developed is that between “secularised” and non-secularised political cultures. The former are characterised by “pragmatic, empirical orientations,” and a “movement from diffuseness to specificity” of orientations. Individuals who are part of a secular political culture deal with others in terms of universalistic criteria as against considerations arising from diffuse societal relationships such as those of tribe caste or family (Almond & Powell, *ibid.*) They are aware that institutions have specific functions and orient themselves to institutions in these terms (Almond and Powell, *ibid.*). Further, secularised, i.e., modern, political cultures are characterised by bargaining and accommodative patterns of political action which are relatively open, in that values are subject to change in the basis of new experience. Modern states in which “rigid” ideological politics continue to play a substantial role are those in which, for some reason, “the bargaining attitudes associated with full secularisation” have failed to develop (Almond and Powell, *ibid.*, 58-59).

Robert Dahl (1966, cf. Babawale, 1999) has singled out political culture as a factor explaining different patterns of political opposition in a political system. The salient elements of the culture for Dahl (cf. Babawale, *ibid.*) are:

- Orientations of problem-solving; are they pragmatic or rationalistic?
- Orientation to collective action: are they cooperative or non-cooperative?
- Orientation to the political system: are they allegiant or alienated?
- Orientations to other people: are they trustful or mistrustful?

### **Foundations of Political Culture**

According to Babawale (1999), a political culture, whether diverse or homogenous, is a product of many factors such as geography, historical development and experiences (coups, civil war, revolutions), diversity of a nation's population (ethnicity, language and religion) pattern of traditional norms and practices as well as varying levels of socio-economic development and socialisation processes.

Sub-cultural variations may hinder the development of a national political culture. In order to overcome the problem arising from this, there is need for cultural transformation. This involves changes in the values and attitudes of the people and the emergence of shared orientations. A political culture is not static but will respond to new ideas generated from within the political system, imported or imposed from outside. Japan provides a good illustration of a state subject to such internal and external pressures resulting in rapid changes in the political culture of its people.

Among the facilitators of change in the political culture of a nation are the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, massive investment in education, the mass media, mass political mobilisation (through political parties and democratisation processes) as well as the creation of symbolic elements such as national heroes and political leadership, lingua franca, national flags and national anthems, national public events and popular national constitutions. All these can foster the spirit of emotional attachment and loyalty to the nation thereby engendering national pride and unity.

Political culture then may be seen as the overall disposition of the citizens' orientations to political objects. Orientations are predispositions to political action and are determined by such factors as traditions, historical memories, motives, emotions and symbols. These orientations may be broken down into three viz:

- a) Cognitive orientation (i.e. knowledge of, awareness and beliefs about the political system, its roles, its inputs and outputs);
- b) Affective orientations (emotions and feelings about political objects); and
- c) Evaluative orientation (judgment about political objects). The objects of these subjective orientations involve three objective dimensions of political life viz: system, process and policies.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Political culture as a concept explains different patterns of political opposition in a political system. Explain.

### **3.2 The Objects of Political Orientation**

According to Almond and Verba (1956), the objects of political orientation include:

- The general political system about which members may, for example, feel either patriotism or alienation; that it is large, small, strong, weak, democratic, autocratic, constitutional etc.
- The component parts of the political system – legislature, executive, bureaucracy, judiciary, the political leaders, such as monarchs, presidents, party leaders, public policies, etc.
- The -orientation towards the self as a political actor – For instance, sense of obligation, competence, etc.

### **Types of Political Culture**

#### **Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba's Civic Culture**

In 1963, the “Civic Culture” project of Almond and Verba was considered groundbreaking for social sciences. It was the first attempt to systematically collect and codify variables measuring citizen participation across five different states. Those variables, based on cross-sectional surveys, measured the qualities used for assessing the degree of political participation of citizens in the United States, Mexico, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. Through their project, Almond and Verba wanted to create a theory of civic culture - a political culture explaining the political involvement of citizens or lack thereof in democratic states.

In their work, the authors discussed the historical origins of the civic culture and the functions of that culture in the process of social change. They compared and contrasted the patterns of political attitudes in the five countries and contended that, across states, a democratic system required a political culture encouraging political participation.

The theory employed by Almond and Verba was based on Harold Lasswell's personality characteristics of a 'democrat' including the following features: "open ego" (a warm and inclusive attitude toward other human beings; a capacity for sharing values with others; a multi-valued rather than a single-valued orientation; trust and confidence in the human environment; and relative freedom from anxiety. The authors used a methodology of experimentation rather than inferring a theory from the institutional systems prevalent in the discussed states in order to make a valid contribution to the scientific theory of democracy.

In their research, Almond and Verba asked if there is such a thing as a political culture: a pattern of political attitudes that fosters democratic stability. They came to the conclusion that a civic culture is a mixed political culture: individuals are not always perfectly active or passive. Almond and Verba struggled with a discrepancy between the participants' actual behavior, their perceptions and political obligations. They also questioned the socialisation of the citizenry into the civic culture. They asserted that civic culture is not taught in school. Rather, it is transmitted by a complex process that includes training in many social institutions: family, peers, school, work, and the political system itself. Socialisation occurs through the direct exposure to the civic culture itself and to the democratic polity.

In order to preempt criticism, Almond and Verba stressed that their research did not carry the explanatory power for creation of the civic culture in the newly-created nations; this question was beyond the scope of their research. However, they did not refrain from making an attempt to speculate on this question based on the cases they studied: the civic culture emerged in the West as a result of a gradual political development (based on history and characteristics of the civic culture). It developed as a fusion of new patterns of attitudes, merged with the old ones. In their work, they distinguished three types of citizen's orientation. These are:

**Parochial** - political sleepwalker, not involved, no knowledge or interest in the domestic political system. Here citizens are only remotely aware of the presence of central government, and live their lives near enough regardless of the decisions taken by the state. Distant and unaware of political phenomena, citizens with a parochial political culture have

neither knowledge nor interest in politics. This type of political culture is in general congruent with a traditional political structure.

**Subject** - Where citizens are aware of central government, and are heavily subjected to its decisions with little scope for dissent. The individual is aware of politics, its actors and institutions. It is affectively oriented towards politics, yet he/she is on the "downward flow" side of the politics. In general, this type of political culture is congruent with a centralised authoritarian structure.

**Participant** - possessing a strong sense of influence, competence and confidence in understanding the domestic political system. Here citizens are able to influence the government in various ways and they are affected by it. The individual is oriented toward the system as a whole, to both the political and administrative structures and processes (to both the input and output aspects). The participant political culture is in general congruent with a democratic political structure.

As mentioned above, the Civic Culture compared and contrasted five political cultures: Italy— an alienated political culture with low sense of confidence and competence; Mexico—alienation and aspiration with low but positive sense of confidence; Germany—political detachment and subject competence with confidence about the administrative system only; the US—participant civic culture with confident and competent political actors choosing political leaders and administration; the UK— a deferential civic culture.

Babawale (1999) advised that we should be cautious in taking the above categorisation of political culture as mutually exclusive or existing in isolation. According to him, no political culture fits perfectly into any of these three types. Rather, each is mixed, made up of different proportions of parochial, subject and participant attitudes. The relative prevalence of each type determines the kind of political culture which exists in a nation.

In a developed democratic political-system, dominant values may emphasise participation, the idea that common people are rational and intelligent enough to participate, that they can trust other citizens, that interest groups are legitimate .and that governors gain their privilege of governing and decision making only from the consent of the governed. These kind of values set limits to government and spell out relations between the governed and the governors.

Also, there may be fragmentation in the political culture of a nation, that is, political culture may not be the same throughout the entire population. No nation has a homogeneous political culture. Even within specific groups within a nation, there will be sub-culture alongside the

dominant political culture. In short, most nations' political cultures are heterogeneous. Where differences between one group and others are marked, there is said to exist a political sub-culture. In Nigeria, for example, there is no predominant political culture. The various ethnic groups inherently constitute different political sub-cultural groups. They all exhibit cohesive political cultures of their own which are very different from each other and which resist amalgamation into a Nigerian whole (Babawale, 1999).

Patterns of interaction between individuals and groups within a society require norms which define the roles, duties, rights and claims of interrelated or interaction of members of the society. In effect, a large measure of common acceptance of such norms is a condition of social integration and stability. The general acceptance of these structurally crucial norms is connected with the value systems which underpin the norms of the value system of society. The value system of a society is the set of normative judgments held by the members of a society who define with specific reference to their society, what to them is a good society. Social integration depends on the acceptance of a common system of values. No society can maintain itself if the consciences of most of its citizens are out of tune with the norms. The every-day operation of the system requires that there be a high degree of moral consensus.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the mix-up of different proportions of parochial, subject and participant attitudes of political culture in the Nigerian Polity.

### **3.3 Arend Lijphart Classification of Political Culture**

The conclusion of the civic culture has been criticised by some political scientists, foremost among these is Arend Lijphart who analysed politics in Netherlands and argued that the Netherlands's political system is more stable than the one in the USA.

According to Lijphart, there are different classifications of political culture:

- a) Political culture of masses
- b) Political culture of the elite(s).

Lijphart also classified structure of the society into:

- a) Homogenous
- b) Heterogeneous.

**Table 5: Lijphart Classification of Political Culture**

| Structure of society (right<br>Political culture of elites<br>(down)) | Homogeneous             | heterogeneous             |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Coalitional   | Depoliticized democracy | consociative<br>democracy |
| Contradictive   | centripetal democracy   | centrifugal<br>democracy  |

Source: Wikipedia (2009)

Based on his research, Lijphart classified the political culture of the elite into coalitional and contradictive. The consociative or consociational model was developed in Lijphart's groundbreaking work: *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (1968) and elaborated in his later works (1969, 1977, 1985, 1991, 1995, 1996). The key element in Lijphart's consociational model is elite cooperation. The political stability of consociational democracies is explained by the cooperation of elites from different groups which transcend cleavages at the mass level (Lijphart, 1977:16). Related to this element are four important defining features of the consociational model. The first is *executive power-sharing* where each of the main groups shares in executive power in a grand coalition government. The other basic elements of the consociational model are: (1) the application of *proportionality principle* in office distribution and revenue allocation, (2) *autonomy or self-government* for each group, particularly in matters of cultural concern; and (3) *veto rights* that would enable each group to prevent changes that adversely affect their vital interests (Lijphart, 1977:25).

The consociational model explains democratic stability in such "culturally fragmented" and "divided" European societies as the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland. Lijphart argued that democratic stability in these countries is a product of the deliberate efforts by the political elites to "counteract the immobilising and unstabilising effects of cultural fragmentation" (Lijphart, 1968:212).

However, scholars have contested the classification of some of the European countries as consociational democracies. One of the most systematic critiques was written by Brian Barry in 1975. He insists that Switzerland, for example, is not an example of consociational democracy because in the first place, the country was never a deeply divided society since political parties cross-cut cleavages and facilitate "consensus rather than highly structured conflict of goals" (Barry, 1975:501). Again, he argues that the institutions of referendum and popular initiative in Switzerland contradict the tenets of consociational decision making (Barry 1975:486).

## Neopatrimonial Political Culture

Many scholars have characterised developing countries such as Nigeria as having a neo-patrimonial political culture. These scholars maintain that the distinctive characteristic of the political culture which informs the complexion of the political regimes in these countries is a hybrid of the legal-rational and the concept of neo-patrimonialism. It is argued that in these countries, neopatrimonial relationships play the key and structure-forming role both in the determination of the rules of “political games” and in the operation of the political system as a whole.

Neopatrimonial systems are hybrid in that they share the features of both of Weber’s (Weber, 1964 & 1978) rational-legal bureaucratic systems and patrimonial systems (Theobald, 1982; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; van de Walle, 2001). Erdmann and Engel (2007:104) reiterate this argument as: “The term clearly is a post-Weberian invention and, as such, creative mix of two Weberian types of domination: a traditional subtype, patrimonial domination, and rational-legal bureaucratic domination.” Erdmann and Engel went further to state that “under neopatrimonialism the distinction between the private and the public, at least formally, exists and is accepted, and public reference can be made to this distinction” (Erdmann and Engel, 2007:104). Thus the distinction between what constitutes a public sphere and a private sphere exists in theory. However this distinction is blurred in practice hence the argument that neopatrimonial systems are characterized by the privatization of public affairs (Médard, 1982) with corruption and patron client relationships being endemic in these societies.

The concept neopatrimonial has become a widely accepted concept in the African studies literature and many have argued that the concept encapsulates the nature of political and administrative behavior in Africa (Médard’s 1982; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; Englebort, 2000; van de Walle, 2001; Erdmann and Engel, 2007). Writers such as Englebort (2000) and van de Walle (2001) have drawn on the concept to explain why Africa has been saddled with economic and political crises with Le Vine (1980) even suggesting that there is a distinct neopatrimonial system in Africa called ‘Africa patrimonialism’. Boas (2001) attributed conflicts in Africa especially the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone to the persistency of neopatrimonial systems. Taylor and Williams (2008:137) argue that in Sub-Saharan Africa “...the dominant political culture can be characterized as neopatrimonial, that is, systems based on personalized structures of authority where patron-client relationships operate behind a façade of ostensibly rational state bureaucracy”.



According to its proponents, the neopatrimonial culture leads to a particular kind of state in Africa. Chabal and Daloz offer the following interpretation of the African state as arising from neopatrimonial practices:

... in most African countries, the state is no more than a décor, a pseudo-Western façade masking the realities of deeply personalized political relations. ... In Western Europe the Hobbesian notion of the state led to the progressive development of relatively autonomous centers of power, invested with sole political legitimacy. In Black Africa ... such legitimacy is firmly embedded in the patrimonial practices of patrons and their networks (1999: 16).

The neopatrimonial culture is characterised by among other things patronage, clientelism, and corruption. Erdmann and Engel (2007) argue that clientelism which involves the transfer of public goods and services by the 'big man' (patron) to the 'small man' (client) for political favours is based on personal relations.

Patronage on the other hand is "the politically motivated distribution of favors not to individuals but essentially to groups, which in the African context will be mainly ethnic or sub-ethnic groups" (Erdmann and Engel, 2007:107). In states labeled neopatrimonial or hybrid, real power and real decision-making lie outside formal institutions. Instead, decisions about resources are made by 'big men' and their cronies, who are linked by 'informal' (private and personal, patronage and clientelist) networks that exist outside (before, beyond and despite) the state structure, and who follow a logic of personal and particularistic interest rather than national betterment. These networks reach from the very connecting the big man, MPs, chiefs, party officials, and government bureaucrats to villagers.

Accordingly, the foundation of neopatrimonial regimes is the patron-client relationship in the neopatrimonial system, the individual national leader controls the political and economic life of the country, and the personal clientistic relationships with the leader play a crucial role in amassing personal wealth or in the rise and decline of members of the political elite.

Corruption is rampant because private and public funds are co-mingled by those in power. Though there are differences between regimes, their overarching logic is to gain and retain power at all costs. In such circumstances, policy decisions about development and governance are subordinated to that single, overriding goal. The idea of democracy –

acceptance of a 'loyal opposition', a tolerance of dissent, effective checks and balances, a rotation of parties to power through fair elections, a vocal and organised public – is anathema if these result in the big man and his associates being ousted from office (see Chabal & Daloz, (1999); Bratton and van de Walle (1997).

However, the concept of neopatrimonialism has been criticised by some scholars of the “radical political economy school” who have pointed the uncritical use of the concept (Mustapha, 2002). Their criticism comes down to the reproach that it is part of the “neo-liberal project” by Western scholars who use it as an ideology to affirm the superiority of Western cultures above that of African’s and that at best, the thesis is as much about the prejudices of the authors than the problem of culture (Mustapha, 2002). Arguing in the same manner, Theobald has stated that “rather than isolating a socio-political phenomenon, the concept of neopatrimonialism tends to gloss over substantial differences ... it has become something of a catch-all concept, in danger of losing its analytical utility” (Theobald, 1982: 554, 555). Finally, as (Erdmann and Engel, 2006) have argued, an understanding of politics in Africa which depicts all official relations as privatised or the *modus operandi* as being essentially informal does not reflect African realities.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

In what way(s) can you describe the Nigerian political culture as neopatrimonial?

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Political culture is the values, beliefs, attitudes and aspirations of the people in society which orient them politically. In order for a regime to be legitimate there has to be widespread agreement in society on certain sets of values i.e., some sort of a consensus.

The key elements of what constitutes a nation's political culture include: the degree of social trust or distrust which prevails in society; the degree of consensus; the general attitude of tolerance and interpersonal cooperation permeating political relations among people; attachment and loyalty of citizens to the national political system people's attitude towards authority -the degree of public recognition of what constitutes the legitimate authority and; people’s sense of their rights, powers and obligations.

Although, members of a political community never share exactly the same orientations towards their government, yet it is important for the stability of any system that certain basic common assumptions and

beliefs are shared, or in other words, that the political culture be relatively homogeneous. Without such homogeneity or some level of agreement on the basic nature of politics, the general role of government in the society, and the legitimate goals of policy and participation, governmental policies which are popular with some sections of the citizenry, are likely to be extremely unpopular with others and this may result into political strife and instability. A high level of agreement or consensus on norms concerning the basic aspects of the political system is necessary for the political system to endure without disruption by violence, civil war, or revolution. The problem which leaders in such fragmented cultures face is how does a relatively homogenous political culture evolve from such divergent ones? This is a fundamental problem of nation-building in many new nations.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have examined the concept of political culture, the foundations of political culture, the objects of political orientation, and the types or classification of political culture.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How relevant is the concept of neopatrimonialism to the understanding of Nigerian politics?
2. Describe the key features of Lijphart's consociational model.
3. How does a relatively homogenous political culture evolve from a divergent one?

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## **UNIT 3 POLITICAL SOCIALISATION**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Political Socialisation/Agents of Socialisation
  - 3.2 Process/Time Span
  - 3.3 The Concept of Change/Methods of Political Socialisation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous unit, we examined political culture as a pattern of attribute and orientations of citizens in a political system. This unit will however, discuss how individuals acquire these basic attitudes and orientations which accounts for their political behaviors. The stability of a political system is underlined by the relative success or failure of the assimilation of new attitudes into the existing value structure. This change is made possible through political socialisation which serves not only as a means of effectively transmitting the political culture of a nation from generation to generation but helps in creating or developing new attitudes and values about the political system

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define political socialisation
- identify and describe the agents of political socialisation
- identify and describe the process of political socialisation
- identify and describe the time span of political socialisation
- describe the concept of change in political socialisation
- explain the methods of political socialisation.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Political Socialisation**

Political scientists have offered various definitions of political socialisation. There is a general agreement; however, that political socialisation involves the transmission of the political culture of a group or the society to successive members of that group or society. In other words, political socialisation refers to the process by which the central values of the political culture are transmitted from one generation to another.

The following definition of political socialisation underscores the popularity of the views that socialisation is mainly concerned with the inter-generational transmission of political culture. According to Verba (1960), political socialisation is “the process by which the norms associated with the performance of political roles as well as fundamental political values and guiding standards of political behaviour are learnt.” Robert Levine described the political socialisation process as entailing “the acquisition by an individual of behavioural dispositions relevant to political groups, political systems and political processes” (Levine, 1963). Harry Eckstein defines political socialisation as a “process through which operative social norms regarding politics are implanted, political roles institutionalised and political consensus created either effectively or ineffectively” (Eckstein, 1988).

Generally, analyses of the concept of socialisation have attempted to distinguish between different patterns of socialisation through the use of four interrelated analytical categories viz: agencies, process, time span and change.

#### **Agents of Socialisation**

Agents of socialisation refers to the persons through which and the setting in which the process of political socialisation is accomplished. In other words, a person's political orientation and behavior patterns are not born with him. They are not instinctive. They are learned. Political learning is a process of interaction between the learner and certain elements of his human environment generally called “socialisation agents.”

There are numerous socialising agents exercising different influences and varying in the degree to which they reinforce or contradict each other. Generally speaking, however, you may distinguish between the primary and secondary agencies of political socialisation. The primary agencies refer to the family, whether nuclear or extended. Secondary



agencies refer to schools, peer groups, occupation, the mass media, political parties, etc.

### **A) The Family**

The family is the most important agent of socialisation. Initial studies of political socialisation focused almost exclusively on the family in the belief that it is in the family that a citizen first become aware of power and experienced authority, albeit in its non-political context. Most of this learning is informal, unintentional and often subconscious. Families initially provide everything necessary for a child to survive and grow such as food, shelter, affection and social interaction. Because of this, families influence basic personality development and have great influence on the acquisition of not only non-political but politically relevant values.

For instance, children's basic personality orientation such as capacity for trust and cooperation is developed within the family (Kent & Tedin, 1974). Furthermore, children had been shown to inherit or share the political outputs and party loyalties of their parents. Politically relevant ideas and values, such as proper conduct or orientation to authority, rules, and obedience also develop within the family.

Some studies have found that the family transmits political orientation to the children. One of such studies, for example, discovered that there is great intra-family correlation in party preference. According to West "a man is born into his political party just as he is born into probable future membership in the church of his parents" (cf. Babawale, 1999). Thus, party attachment tends to be passed from parent to child and persists into adult life. Different family structures may encourage different kinds of expectations about the rest of the world. Thus families that encourage child participation in family decisions seem to encourage these children to participate in politics when they become adults; children of politically active parents tend to be more - politically active as adults.

Children whose parents avoid political involvement or rarely discuss political events have few parental examples and less encouragement to participate themselves. Consequently, they tend as adults to be less involved in politics.

However, while the family is extremely important in personality development creation of politically relevant attitudes, and in some countries party identification, it has much less impact on development of particular issues, preferences or ideology.

The family is a very powerful agent of political socialisation because it is a major determinant in an individual's formative years. An individual learns what is expected of him/her as a child and how he/she should behave and relate to others. This is why the family has a great influence on an individual. For instance, an individual may identify with a particular political party because the family supports it. The attitude of a child to political leaders may be influenced by how the parents respond to them. Thus, the family unit provides personal and emotional ties which mould an individual's personality and affect his/her political behaviour (Babawale, 1999). The family may be losing its power as an agent of socialisation; however, as other institutions take over more of child care and parents perform less of it.

## **B) The school**

Schools pass on nation's political values through the teaching of social studies, government, citizenship education and history. The school accomplishes political socialisation through its curriculum, classroom rituals and values and attitudes unconsciously transmitted by the teachers. The school's social climate, political and non-political organisations and extracurricular activities also serve to instill political values, such as participation, competitiveness, achievement, and observing the rules of the game (Prewitt, 1968).

Children are introduced to elections and voting when they choose class prefects, school prefects, and the more sophisticated elections in high school and college teach the rudiments of campaigning. Political facts are learned through courses in American history and government, and schools, at their best, encourage students to critically examine government institutions. Schools themselves are involved in politics; issues such as curriculum reform, funding, and government support for private schools often spark a debate that involves students, teachers, parents, and the larger community.

Other socialising stimuli are presented by rituals observed in the schools, such as the salute to the flag, singing of the national anthem, celebration of national historical events and displays of historical portraits or events on classroom walls. The teacher, through expression of opinions and display of interest in political events, may have an unconscious impact on the political orientations of students. The effects of being educated about political affairs, also, a task of the school bear on political socialisation.

The study of political attitudes in five countries by Almond and Verba (1963) has shown that education above the primary level itself

represents a many-sided experience that can, in a large number of ways, increase an individual's potentiality to participate.

Educational attainment has an important effect on political attitudes. The uneducated man or the man with limited education is a different political actor from the man who has achieved a higher level of education.

There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing, people do learn in schools: they learn specific subjects as well as skills useful for political participation. And they learn the norms of political participation as well. Much of this learning may be through direct teaching; some of it may be more indirect. Not only does education influence political perspectives, it also places the individual in social situations where he/she meets others of like educational attainment, and this tends to reinforce the effect of his/her own education.

All governments find the schools a useful agent to instill some political attitudes and behaviour patterns in their citizens. Formal education is certainly powerful in developing children's political selves. The best evidence is the nearly universal tendency, as many studies have shown that the most educated people have the strongest sense of political efficacy, the most politically interested and take most active roles in political affairs

The school contributes significantly in shaping an individual's political behaviour. It is in the school that the most formal political socialisation takes place because one is directly taught and trained to obey the rules of the society.

Through well defined methods, the school formally inculcates political beliefs into the individual. This is done by teaching subjects like civics and government to educate students about the political system. Individuals are taught how to be good citizens and obey constituted authority. Patriotism is also emphasised. It is in the schools that individuals are formally nursed or socialised for future leadership. So the school stresses the moral values and ethics which will sustain and strengthen the political system.

The school not only trains the individual to become a useful adult, it also induces him to be political. Indeed, in the schools, you learn about fundamental rights and obligations. An individual learns that it is an obligation to participate in political activities like voting; expressing ones opinion and keeping law and order. Thus the school is a key agent of political socialisation.

### **C) Peer groups**

Peer groups are important in the socialisation process. A peer group refers to a group of people sharing similar status and having intimate ties. In schools, it is very common to find various peer groups. In other words, every individual, as a child or an adult, belongs to a peer group. Examples of peer groups are children playmates, small work groups, and married couples; friendship cliques, etc.

As an important medium of social learning, peer groups can influence the behaviour of its members. In situations where we have weak family ties, an individual may turn to his/her peer group for guidance on political or other social issues. Peer groups are also powerful agents of political socialisation in the sense that in most cases, members seek for approval, acceptance and friendship from them. As such, individuals take to the views held by the peer groups they belong.

### **D) Mass media**

The usefulness of the mass media as a socialising agent cannot be over emphasised. The newspaper, radio, television, magazines, etc. are very educative. They do not only transmit information and messages, but also provide visual pictures of 'government activities. The government and other organisations use the mass media to communicate with the public. For instance - television enables the public to see and hear the Head of State when he/she is delivering a speech or transmit news on election campaigns and voting. The mass media also publish and transmit news on activities of other countries. They do not only teach the individual or public the norms and values of the society, they also reinforce them. The present campaign by the Federal Ministry of Information and Communications to instill positive values in citizens through the Rebranding Nigeria Project, for instance, is being actively publicised and promoted by the mass media. The mass media are therefore a useful instrument of socialisation because they can through their transmission influence the political beliefs and education of individuals.

Much of our political information comes from the mass media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. In many countries, the amount of time the average citizen spends watching TV makes it the dominant information source, particularly with the expansion of 24-hour all-news cable channels such as CNN, BBC, *Al Jazeera*, Press TV, NTA and different sorts of movie stations such as Mnet or Africa Magic. Not only does television help shape public opinion by providing news and analysis, but its entertainment programming addresses important contemporary issues that are in the political arena, such as electoral violence, drug use, abortion, and

crime. Burgeoning Internet communication has not only created avenues for the dissemination of news, but also facilitated the creation of an online community, discussion forums, and blog that present a broad range of political opinion, information, and analysis that transcends countries and linking citizens in their home countries and those in the Diaspora. Examples of blogs include *Gamji*, *Sahara Reporters*, *Nigerian Village Square*, and *Elendu Reporters*.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Examine the roles of the various agents in political socialisation.

### **3.2 Process**

The socialisation process may be latent or manifest. The latent or unconscious aspects of socialisation are usually associated with the primary agencies while the manifest or consciously cognitive aspects of socialisation are often associated with the secondary agencies. Latent political socialisation entails the implicit or informal transmission of political orientations through the essentially non-political agency of the family. Manifest political socialisation, on the other hand, entails the intentional or explicit acquisition of orientation through such manifestly political instructions as the mass media, political parties and trade unions. The related conceptual distinction concerns the perspectives from which the socialisation process is viewed. Do we stress the role of the socialising agent or the role of the learner? While initial studies of socialisation focused on the agent, usually the family is the key initiator and factor in the socialisation process. More recent studies conceive of socialisation as a cognitive and interactive process in which the learner and not just the agency plays a key role.

### **Time Span**

The time span of socialisation refers to an individual's formative or mature years. Political socialisation through the family is not only latent and agency-dominated but also tends to occur in the individual's formative or childhood years. Socialisation through the secondary agencies on the other hand, tends to be manifest to depend on the conscious actions of the learner and to occur during an individual's mature years. The bulk of socialisation literature has concentrated on the formative or childhood years on the assumption that this is the crucial period of political learning and that what enters the mind first remains there to provide lenses and categories for perceiving and comprehending later experiences. In other words, adult opinions are seen as the end-product of youthful socialisation. However, more recent studies now see

socialization as a continuous process going beyond childhood to cover adolescence and adulthood.

The time span of socialisation can also refer to the following:

- A) **Life-cycle Effect** – how a person’s beliefs and behavior change over time. For example, the political views prior to having a family vs. the views after having a family.
- B) **Period Effect** – refers to how one historical event impacts an entire society. Example includes the impact of the current global economic meltdown on the Nigerian economy; and the impact of May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 on the history of democratisation in Nigeria.
- C) **Cohort Effect** – refers to how one historical event impacts a specific group of people. Examples include the impact of the Biafran war on the orientation of the Igbos to other groups in the country or to the country itself; and the impact of the annulment of June 12<sup>th</sup> election on Yoruba’s in Nigeria.

### **The Concept of Change**

This final analytical category on the study of socialisation seeks to illustrate the structural consequences of political socialisation on the polity. Political socialisation may endanger systemic or non-systemic change. Systemic change refers to fundamental alterations in the structural foundation of power relations of a polity. Non-systemic or intra-systemic change on the other hand, refers to incremental adjustments within the framework of the existing political system. Generally, however, socialisation is often seen as a conservative stabilising or system maintaining rather than change producing process. In other words, when secondary socialisation agencies inculcate political values different from those of the past or when children are raised with political and social expectations different from those of their forebears, the socialisation process can be a vehicle for social and political change. In effect, political socialisation may serve to preserve traditional political norms and institutions.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain the conception that socialisation is conceived as a cognitive and interactive process in which the learner and not just the agency play a key role.

### **3.3 Methods of Political Socialisation**

#### **A) Direct Political Socialisation**

This is a formal method of political socialisation in which the individual consciously learns political behaviour. First, direct political socialisation can take place through one's imitation of the behaviour of others. That is, copying their values and beliefs. Children are easily influenced so they copy the behaviour skills and attitudes of adults. They are influenced by what they see and hear.

A second way direct political socialisation occurs is through the formal training and education provided by parents, teachers and peer groups. Parents teach their children good morals, skills and habit. In the schools, individuals are deliberately taught by their teachers to be good citizens. This is why subjects like civics are taught to mould the students to be loyal disciplined and to give support to political institutions. Individuals can also formally acquire their political attitudes directly from membership of peer groups of other political associations like political parties or churches.

A third type of direct political education occurs through the impact of direct political experiences on the individual. For example experiences with a policeman, legislator, government official, political campaign or an appearance in court affect the individual's political orientations toward the regime, political institutions, its incumbents or the political community.

#### **B) Indirect Political Socialisation**

This is an informal method of political socialisation. It is indirect in the sense that one is unconsciously learning roles, skills and attitudes without being aware of it. Indirect socialisation involves acquiring values and orientations which are not political but which influence ones political behaviour. It also entails the learning of non-political but politically relevant aspect of behaviour while direct socialisation involves the appropriate formal teaching of political values.

One type of indirect political socialisation is interpersonal transfer. This is where attitudes towards authority are developed. It means that orientations learned in other social bodies like the family, the church or peer groups are transferred into political roles. For instance, if a child or an individual is brought up under strict parental authority, he/she may expect political leaders to operate under the same code of conduct.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How does the direct and indirect method of political socialisation aid political participation?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Political socialisation is the transmission of political culture from one generation to another. It is indispensable in the survival of political systems. It is also very important in systems changes.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Political socialisation is carried out through interaction and association with others. Through socialisation, the basic personality that each person will exhibit throughout life is formed. Societal culture and skills are also passed from generation to generation through the process of socialisation. This process does not cease even when one becomes an adult. It begins from the cradle and ends in the grave. People continue to participate in new experiences that will further affect their personalities. During an individual's life-time, he/she is exposed to a variety of socialising agencies: The family, school, peer groups, secondary groups, the mass media and varied experiences. It is, therefore, a life-long, continuous, developmental process and as such not completely static. In order to ensure a stable political system, the various agencies of political socialisation should be sufficiently flexible and interdependent to accommodate changes without violent disruptions.

### **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Examine how school as an agent of socialisation has facilitated political participation.
2. Describe how the types of socialisation agencies have played a role in the political participation process in Nigeria.
3. How true is it that indirect political participation entails the learning of non-political but politically relevant aspect of behaviour.



## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 4 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Citizen participation in politics has always been a core issue in political sociology (Pateman, 1970; Milbraith & Goel, 1977; Verba & Norman, 1972). In democratic polities, political power is achieved by persons and groups through a process of participation which eventually leads to various positions at the pinnacle of power. This is in sharp contrast to what obtains in the traditional state, or in a dictatorship where positions of political power can be attained by aristocratic birth-right or by force.

In modern democratic states, there can be no political power without political participation, the latter being the only avenue to the former. Actually, the classical liberal notion of democracy relates it to majority participation in the political system. This notion dates back to the Greek city-states in which, because of the small sizes, it was possible for every adult to participate directly in the affairs the state. However, with the phenomenal expansion of the modern nation- state which has a complex form of government and bureaucracy, direct participation by all is no longer possible. In most countries, the majority participate indirectly through their representatives who they elect at regular intervals. While majority participation remains a cardinal principle of democracy and adult suffrage has become almost universal everywhere, numerous studies reveal that the majority of the members of society, even in countries like the USA, are not interested at all in politics. Many do not vote; much less know a lot about the political process (Milbraith, 1965; Darlton, 2000). In effect, it has been found, only a tiny proportion of members of society participate in politics. Even among such

participants, only a few are very active. Against this background, this unit shall discuss the complex process of political participation and the actual participants in the political process. We shall also examine the levels of political participation by looking at some of the typologies of political participation that have been developed.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define political participation
- identify the typologies of political participation
- explain Lester Milbraith's typology
- explain Deutsch's typology
- explain Robert Dahl's typology
- describe the role of elections and suffrage as a key concept in democratic participation
- trace the development of suffrage in Nigeria and USA
- explain the models for interpreting electoral and voting behaviour.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 What is Political Participation?**

Political participation encompasses the various activities that citizens employ in their efforts to influence policy making and the selection of leaders. According to Orum (1978), political participation refers simply to the "variety of ways in which people try to exercise influence over the political process." In a similar vein, McClosky (1968), sees political participation as "those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy." Lawson and Wasburn (1969) on the other hand describes political participation as "the process by which individuals acting singly or through group origination, attempt to influence decision-making or alter the manner in which it may be exercised in a particular society People participate in politics in many ways "ranging from discussing political issues or events, taking part in a demonstration or riots, voting, writing a letter to political parties and seeking political offices" (Osaghae, 1988). In a federal system such as Nigeria, people have many opportunities to participate in democracy on national, state, and local levels. Some forms of participation are more common than others and some citizens participate more than others.

According to Agbaje (1999), in modern society, participation tends to take either of three basic forms, viz:

- the form of elections or selections, when people seek to participate in societal affairs through elected or selected representatives
- the form of routine individual or group involvement in the day to day affairs of the society
- through the shaping of public opinion on issues, events and – personalities of the day.

From the above, it is clear that political participation is not a preserve of only democratic political systems. In other words, political participation takes place in all political systems. Political systems however differ with regard to the degree of citizens' participation, type of participation, and the level of their participation. For example, in a single party system where elections are mere formalities, the degree of citizens' participation in elections cannot be compared to a democracy where competitive party elections take place periodically. Also, it should be noted that political participation encompasses such acts as campaign and voting during elections, riots against government policies, writing of protest letters to one's representatives, etc. However, because of the emergence of liberal democracy or representative democracy as the dominant model of democracy and the salience of election under this system, there is a tendency to associate political participation with elections, especially participation in campaigns and voting. The literature on political participation is therefore so overwhelmingly dominated by writings on elections and electoral behaviour that it will be understandable for political participation to be identified exclusively with the study of voting. Also, giving the status of the United States as a prototypical liberal democratic country, most mainstream analyses and models of political participation are developed in the U.S. context, a unique case by any standard, suggesting that the dominant models are strongly biased by domestic politics in the United States. In spite of its shortcoming however, this dominant bias in extant literature on political participation for elections and voting behaviour in the US context shall underscore our discussion in this unit. However, wherever necessary, the Nigerian example shall also be highlighted.

### **Typologies of Political Participation**

I shall discuss three typologies of political participation which show the levels of participation. They are those of Lester Milbraith, Karl Deutsch and Robert Dahl. For a summary of these typologies, we shall rely exclusively on Osaghae (1988: 66-68).

### Lester Milbraith's Typology

According to Milbraith (1965), political participants can be classified on the basis of their political activities. He said there are three such activities, namely, spectator activities, transitional activities and gladiatorial activities. Accordingly, we have spectator participants, transitional participants, and gladiatorial participants.

- a) **Spectator participants:** These are the participants who expose themselves to political stimuli, mainly information, initiate and partake in political discussions, attempt to influence others into voting for a party and who they vote. Spectator participants, in effect, take part in the basic political activities required of all full members of the society. But they do not become actively involved, but prefer to remain 'spectators' who enjoy seeing active participants.
- b) **Transitional Participants:** are midway between spectator and gladiatorial participants. Participants in this category typically have begun to take a keener interest than the spectators in politics. The activities they engage in include attending a political meeting or rally, belonging, and making a monetary contribution to a political party or association, and contacting a public officer or political leader over issues.
- c) **Gladiatorial Participants:** These are the most active participants who typically have the highest level of political efficacy. Gladiatorial activities include caucus or strategic meeting, soliciting party funds, seeking political office and influence, and actually holding public and party office. Gladiatorial participants then, are the top political leaders, and they often constitute a tiny minority (between 5-100%) of the total adult population.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Explain in details how Milbraith (1965) classified political participants.

### 3.2 Karl Deutsch's Typology

In this typology (Deutsch, 1974), there are two broad categories of political participants, namely, the politically relevant strata and the elite strata. Each of these categories is further subdivided into narrower categories of participants based on the position method and the level of participation.

- a) **The Politically Relevant Strata:** Comprise those members of the political system who count or matter, and must be taken into consideration by decision-makers. Students, teachers, market women, the “common man”, all count because they are those to be affected by the decisions made. In democratic and non-democratic political systems alike, where voting is a primary political activity, the politically relevant strata would include all those who are eligible to vote. In this sense, most adults belong to the politically relevant strata.

Within the politically relevant strata, a further distinction can be made between those who are active (those who actually participate, by for example voting or demanding or opposing a particular policy) and non-activists (those who are relevant, but fail to actually participate by not voting or discussing politics).

- b) **The Elite Strata:** Comprise those who are not only politically relevant, but most actively participate in the political process, seeking influence and power, and actually occupy the most important political positions. The elites are the most educated and influential members of society, and they constitute the "attentive public" which moulds public opinion and provide leadership and direction for society.

The elite strata are further subdivided into the marginal elites, the mid-elite core, the who's who elite, and the top elite, based on the position method. This method uses the positions or roles of elites to classify them. Members of the lower middle-class-Clerks, small-scale business men and intermediate staffers-belong to the marginal elite class. Those in the upper middle- class-academicians, senior civil servants, and military officers-belong to the mid-elite group. The who's who elites are the 'notables' - captains of industry, Permanent Secretaries, military Generals, in short, the leaders or the various influential political, actors-President, Ministers, Ambassadors, and Chief-Justice - who actually make authoritative decisions. This top class of participants usually constitutes between 1 and 5% of the total population. Again, Deutsch's typology, like Mitbraith's, does not include those who are not interested at all in politics, though it talks of non-active members of the politically relevant strata.

### Robert Dahl's (Dahl, 1976) Typology

There are four categories in this typology. These are:

- a) **The Apolitical Stratum:** This is the category of those who are apathetic and not interested in politics. People in this category would not even vote. However, they sometimes take part in politics in unsystematic ways, like violently rioting or participating in a civil war.
- b) **The Political Stratum:** This is similar to Deutsch's politically relevant strata. Participants in this category take part in basic political activities like voting and discussing politics.
- c) **The Power Seekers:** Are those who have become so highly involved that they decide to seek power and influence by running for political office.
- d) **The Powerful:** They occupy the top political positions, and control the greatest amount of political resources and have the greatest political skills. These are the President, leaders of political parties, heads of legislative assemblies and “the powers behind the scene”, who are mostly the wealthiest members of society.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Compare and contrast Karl Deutsch's and Robert Dahl's typologies

### 3.3 Elections and the Right to Vote (Suffrage or Franchise)

Election is at the heart of a modern participation in politics. A vote sends a direct message to the government about how a citizen wants to be governed. The right to vote is known as suffrage. The critical question here is who has the right to vote? Usually, the qualified electorate in most countries today is the adult citizen – both male and female. This is known as universal adult suffrage. However, universal adult suffrage is a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Up till this period, suffrage was based on religion, sex, property and qualification. The adoption of universal suffrage is a product of a century-old bitter war of many separate and hard-fought campaigns against the entrenched oligarchy. Property, religion, race, education etc. requirements for voting were eliminated one by one in the face of bitter opposition from those who were eliminated by such requirements.

## The Development of suffrage

In many countries, voting rights were not originally extended to all the citizens. In Nigeria, for instance, the right to vote has developed in the colonial period during the Clifford Constitution of 1922 which introduced the elective principle which allowed elections to the Legislative Council. However, elections were restricted to Lagos and Calabar (three members from Lagos and one from Calabar). These elections were based on property, educational qualifications, gender and social status of citizens. For instance, only adult males could vote under the 1922 Constitution. Also, under the 1922 and 1946 Constitutions, only men who earn 100 and 50 UK Pounds per annum respectively were eligible to vote. Furthermore, while franchise was extended to women in the southern part of the country, women in the north did not receive the vote until 1976 (Pepple, 1992). In essence, while women were generally denied the suffrage, women in the North were barred from exercising the suffrage longer than those in the south. Increasingly, the base of the franchise was broadened to accommodate all qualified adult citizens irrespective of gender, class, and status. Presently, all Nigerian citizens who are eighteen years and above can exercise the suffrage.

Similarly, in the United States of America for example, originally the Constitution let individual states determine the qualifications for voting, and states varied widely in their laws. The expansion of the right to vote resulted from constitutional amendment, changing federal statutes, and Supreme Court decisions. Changes in suffrage over American history include:

- a) **Lifting of property restrictions:** At first, all states required voters to be property owners, with varying standards for how much property a man had to own to merit the right to vote. During the 1830s when Andrew Jackson was president, most states loosened their property requirements to embrace universal manhood suffrage, voting rights for all white males. By the end of Jackson's presidency, all states had lifted property restrictions from their voting requirements.
- b) **Suffrage for Black Americans and former slaves** - After the Civil War three important amendments intended to protect civil rights of the newly freed former slaves were added to the Constitution. The last of the three was added in 1870 - the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which said that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Despite the amendment, many states passed Jim Crow laws such as literacy tests, poll taxes, and the grandfather clause



that prevented many blacks from voting until well past the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, the Supreme Court declared various Jim Crow laws unconstitutional. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other federal laws prohibited states from using discriminatory practices, such as literacy tests.

- c) **Women's Suffrage:** In contrast to black Americans, women were kept from the polls by law more than by intimidation. An aggressive women's suffrage movement began before the Civil War, but it brought no national results until social attitudes toward women changed during the Progressive Movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The result was the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which extended the vote to women in 1920. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment doubled the size of the electorate.
- d) **Change of minimum voting age:** A final major expansion of voting rights occurred in 1971 when the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment changed the minimum voting age from 21 to 18. A few states such as Georgia, Kentucky, Alaska, and Hawaii had allowed younger people to vote before 1971. The increased political activism of young people, particularly on college campuses during the 1960s, almost certainly inspired this expansion of voting rights.

### **Types of Voting Activities**

Citizens voting activities differ. Generally, however the range of political participation during the elections include watching the campaign on television, voting in the election, influencing others on how to vote, putting a car sticker or wearing a button of a candidate, giving money to help a campaign, attending a political meeting, and working for a party or candidate or the party as electoral agent, party militia, etc.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Following the analogy so far, what features accords one the right to vote?

### **3.4 Models for Interpreting Electoral and Voting Behaviour**

There are many reasons why some people participate in politics and others do not, and why, even among those who participate, some are more active than others. We shall consider these reasons according to mode and sets of factors that have been identified.

According to Dennis Kavanagh on why people vote the way they do, it is possible to identify at least five different theories or analytical models for interpreting the voting decision (Kavanagh, 1993; 1995). These are:

**a) Structural Theory/Model**

This model sees the voting decision as being structured or determined by a host of factors over which are external to individual voters and therefore to a great extent outside of their immediate control. Rather than placing political action, and hence the blame for inaction, on individuals, the structural model draws attention to the powerful ways in which political opportunities and the political process constrain individual behavior. These factors include national history, the social structure, and its associated cleavages or social class, religion, ethnicity and urban-rural dichotomy, the party system, electoral regulations, etc. The structural theory is the broadest of the analytical frameworks for studying the voting decision and the least vulnerable to partial or trivial explanations.

A key issue in the structural model is the political correlates of participation such as action of the state, the nature of institutions, the nature of a political system and in particular, of the ruling regime. In military and dictatorial regimes for instance, the scope of political participation is narrow and although trade unions and other interest groups may exist; government often tends to suppress opposition and potential opposition fronts. By contrast, in countries where political parties compete at periodic intervals during elections, there is ample room for participation, especially at election times. Even so, as between a one party and a two or more party state, one expects a higher level of political participation in the two or more party state than in the one party state where opposition is usually suppressed.

As Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) showed in their study of political participation in seven nations, a fuller explanation of political participation requires us to look at how institutions enable and constrain the activity of different groups in different contexts. Paying attention to institutional factors also helps us to better understand the causal mechanism that link attitudes to political activity. For example, a survey data that compares the attitudes and political participation of Mexicans living in Mexico, recent Mexican migrants to the U.S. and Americans shows that attitudes can and do change very quickly and are not fixed features of social or national groups. Camp reports that Mexican Americans' begin to adopt the American definition of democracy (liberty over equality) after having resided in the United States for only a year. (Camp, 2003) This suggests that attitudes and values, even apparently deeply held values about the meaning of democracy and

citizenship, can change very quickly if the political context changes (or if individuals leave one context for another). But if such values change quickly and easily they are not much use in explaining political participation unless we can also explain how attitudes change and why they change. Political institutions provide the answer. Camp's analysis makes it clear that most attitudes are wholly or in part artifacts of where one lives and what kinds of experiences one has had with the political process. It appears then that institutions affect political behavior directly by affecting the incentives and constraints actors face for engaging in different kinds of political activity, and indirectly by influencing citizen's political attitudes, values and sense of efficacy.

**b) Sociological Theory**

This model analyses the voting decision on the basis of such standard and demographic variables as age, occupation, social status, education, and sex. Generally, studies carried out within this analytical framework tend to conclude that a voter's political preferences are determined by such social characteristics as his/her socio-economic status, education or residence. This framework is however usually criticised for its sociological determinism.

**c) Ecological/Aggregate Statistical Model**

This model relates aggregate votes to general features of an area, be it a constituency, housing estate or region. The analytical model depends on the availability of accurate or demographic data (census). This method is useful for interpreting the political behaviour of groups that are heavily concentrated in particular constituencies e.g. miners, immigrants or students.

**d) Socio-Psychological Theory**

This analytical model interprets the voting decisions as the amount of the voter's psychological predispositions or attitudes. The most famous concept associated with this is that of party identification. This concept refers to the voter's affective attachment or allegiance to a party. Once a voter has acquired an allegiance to a party he is usually never again so open to the possibility of change party identification has been an essential tool for studying the nature of electoral behaviour in USA. However, critics have argued that the concept is close psychologically to the voting decision to be useful as an independent explanation for voting behaviour. The concept has also been criticised for its psychological determinism and reductionism.

**f) Rational Choice Model**

This model which is borrowed from economics relies on a few assumptions to make deduction about the instrumental and cost-effective behaviour of a person whether or not to participate in politics. According to this model, a rational person decides to participate or not in politics based on his/her calculations of gains and losses, with a view to maximising "gains and minimising losses. The point then is that individual who participates in politics does so because he/she gains immensely from doing so. Such gains are not necessarily monetary. There is prestige, psychological satisfaction, and so on. If the individual finds that he/she cannot benefit or that the costs of participating are high (money, time, convenience, etc.), he/she is not likely to participate in politics. For instance, with regards to people's participation in elections either as voters, or campaigners, the individual will make certain assumptions before he/she participates. These assumptions include a voter's calculations about the cost of voting, the probability that his/her vote would affect electoral output and the difference between party platform for policies. These calculations determines whether the rational voter should vote at all and if so for which party or candidate? In essence, rational choice theory portrays the voters as utility or benefit maximisers and the parties and candidates as vote maximisers. Thus, whereas the social psychological theory and its associated concept of party identification stresses the affective ties between voters' parties, the economic rational choice model stresses the more instrumental aspects of the interactions between electorates and parties. The criticisms of the model is that it is economically deterministic and overlooks the fact that many voters instead of being informed about parties or policies rely on shortcuts like traditional ideology, ethnicity or party identification in making decisions. In fact as Osaghae (1988) has noted, voting and attending a rally do not necessarily follow a cost and benefit calculation. Rather they may sometimes become so habitual that few people calculate before they act. Probably because of this, many participants in politics behave non-rationally. For example, some voters vote for candidates because they are handsome or because they speak well, rather than on calculations of what they stand to gain.

**SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Using the different theories or analytical models for interpreting the voting decision explain using Nigeria as an example why some people participate in politics and others do not, and why, even among those who participate, some are more active than others.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Political participation encompasses the various activities that citizens employ in their efforts to influence policy making and the selection of leaders. It takes place in both democratic and non-democratic states. Accordingly, a key part of political participation in democratic states is electoral behavior.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning of political participation, the typologies of political participation, meaning of suffrage, development of suffrage, and the models of electoral behaviour.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List and explain four models for explaining electoral behaviour.
2. Explain how Milbraith's classifications of political participants explain the Nigerian political scenario.
3. How true is the notion that majority participation remains a cardinal principle of democracy?
4. What is suffrage? Trace the evolution of suffrage in Nigeria.

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## UNIT 5 POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is Political Representation?
  - 3.2 Two Historical Conceptions of Political Representation: Delegate vs. Trustee
  - 3.3 Changing Political Realities and Changing Conception of Political Representation
  - 3.4 Challenges to Political Representation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The concept of political representation had its origin in England in 1215, when the King was forced by nobles to sign the Magna Carta (Fasolt, 1991). The works of several political philosophers such as Hobbes, Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and other political scientists such as Dewey, Dahl and Schmitt have focused on the concept of representation, with this scholars giving multiple and competing evaluations and recommendations of how it should be carried out.

Jean J. Rousseau for example was disapproving of ceding representative functions completely to the parliament. To him, civil government was established by a social contract in which men surrendered part of their natural rights in return for a certain degree of influence on government decisions. All citizens were therefore entitled to political representation. Rousseau argued that in a truly free state, every man would give his/her personal consent to the laws. Representative government was the best thing, but sovereignty would remain with the people and could not be properly claimed by parliament (Rousseau, 1978).

This unit will examine the concept of representation and its relevance in the modern political system as well as some of the problems associated with the usage of the concept and attempts made to resolve some of these issues.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define political representation
- identify the two historical conceptions of political representation
- describe the impact of changing political realities on the conception of political representation
- identify several challenges/problems with the theory of political representation.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 What is Political Representation?

According to Pitkin (1967; 1997), political representation involves, *inter alia*, authorisation, accountability and the looking out for another's interests or rather the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in the public policy making processes. Seen from this perspective, political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, and act on behalf of others in the political arena. Political representation, on any account, will exhibit the following four components: some party that is representing (the representative, an organisation, movement, state agency, etc.); some party that is being represented (the constituents, the clients, etc.); something that is being represented (opinions, perspectives, interests etc.); and a setting within which the activity of representation is taking place (the political context) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006).

According to Agbaje (1999), representation is the process by which people get chosen to act in the interest or on behalf of the community or sections thereof, or the process by which an idea, issue, line of action or programme is portrayed as the idea, issue, and line of action or programme of the entire community or sections thereof. As in participation, representation can occur through:

elections, selections and appointments into the formal structures and bureaucracies of decision-making, implementation and feedback; mobilizing and aggregating through and within largely voluntary institutions, organisations and associations such as trade unions, religious bodies, civic and human rights bodies, cultural organisations, political parties, cooperatives, professional associations, farmers and artisan guilds, chambers of commerce and industry, market women associations, student unions and so on, and public opinion as expressed



in the media of mass communication (including the radio, press and television) and as mediated by local opinion leaders.

What is clear from the above definitions is the complex character of the concept of political representation which Agbaje aptly noted when he stated that “ordinarily, representation should provide a more orderly and predictable platform for democratic and effective governance” but that however, it is not in all instances that representation tends to enhance democracy”. In fact “representation can equally work against democracy when it deepens ethnic, religious, class or, as indicated above, racial cleavages in society”. In addition, and as we shall see later, a more nuanced conception of political representation must take into cognisance the fact that political representation can take place within both democratic and non-democratic frameworks and that we can, as Rehfeld (2005) posited, explain political representation without necessarily appealing to normative standards of democratic legitimacy.

### **3.2 Two Historical Conceptions of Political Representation: Delegate vs. Trustee**

Historically, the theoretical literature on political representation has focused on whether representatives should act as *delegates* or as *trustees*. Representatives who are delegates simply follow the expressed preferences of their constituents. James Madison (1987) is one of the leading historical figures who articulated a delegate conception of representation. Trustees are representatives who follow their own understanding of the best action to pursue. Edmund Burke is famous for arguing that Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interest each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole... You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a Member of Parliament (Burke, 1967: 115).

Both the delegate and the trustee conception of political representation place competing and contradictory demands on the behavior of representatives. Delegate conceptions of representation require representatives to follow their constituent's preferences, while trustee conceptions require representatives to follow their own judgment about the proper course of action. Any adequate theory of representation must grapple with these contradictory demands (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006).

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Based on the fact that representatives should either act as *delegates* or as *trustees* what then do you think is the adequate theory of political representation?

### 3.3 Changing Political Realities and Changing Conception of Political Representation

In today's world system, increasing international and domestic political transformations have made the standard notion of political representation which has focused mainly on the formal procedures of authorisation and accountability within nation states unsatisfactory. With increasing international and domestic political transformations transnational and non-governmental actors play an important role in advancing public policies on behalf of democratic citizens—that is, acting as representatives for those citizens. Such actors “speak for,” “act for” and can even “stand for” individuals within a nation-state. It is no longer desirable to limit one's understanding of political representation to elected officials within the nation-state.

As the powers of nation-state have been diffused by international and transnational actors, elected representatives are no longer responsible for deciding or implementing the public policies that directly impact the citizens who authorised them. Given the role that International Non-Governmental organisations play in the international arena, the representatives of dispossessed groups are no longer located in the formal political arena of the nation-state. Given these changes, the traditional focus of political representation, that is, on elections within nation-states, is insufficient for understanding how public policies are being made and implemented (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006). The complexity of modern issues and the multiple locations of political power suggest that contemporary notions of accountability are inadequate.

Domestic transformations also reveal the need to update contemporary understandings of political representation. Associational life — social movements, interest groups, and civic associations—is increasingly recognised as important for the survival of representative democracies. The extent to which interest groups write public policies or play a central role in implementing and regulating policies is the extent to which the division between formal and informal representation has been blurred. The fluid relationship between the career paths of formal and informal representatives also suggests that contemporary realities do not justify focusing mainly on formal representatives.

### 3.4 Challenges to Political Representation

There are three challenges associated with political representation. The first problem is the question over what is the proper institutional design for representative institutions within democratic parties. The theoretical literature on political representation has paid a lot of attention to the institutional design of democracies. The specific challenges here are which type of representation institutions are appropriate? For instance, what type of electoral system should be adopted by a country? However, with the growing number of democratic states, we are likely to witness more variation among the different forms of political representation. There is likely to be much debate about the advantages and disadvantages of these different ways of representing democratic citizens.

This leads to a second concern related to the ways in which democratic citizens can be marginalised by representative institutions. This problem is articulated most clearly by Young's discussion of the difficulties arising from one person representing many. Young (2000) suggests that representative institutions can include the opinions, perspectives and interests of some citizens at the expense of marginalising the opinions, perspectives and interests of others. Hence, a problem with institutional reforms aimed at increasing the representation of historically disadvantaged groups is that such reforms can and often do decrease the responsiveness of representatives. For instance, the creation of the federal character principle in Nigeria has blocked the chances of more qualified citizens from other states.

A third and final problem involves the relationship between representation and democracy. Historically, representation was considered to be in opposition with democracy (see Dahl, 1989). When compared to the direct forms of democracy found in the ancient city-states, notably Athens, representative institutions appear to be poor substitutes for the ways that citizens actively ruled themselves.

Today, while it is clear that representative institutions are vital institutional components of democratic institutions, much more needs to be said about the meaning of democratic representation. In particular, it is important not to presume that all acts of representation are equally democratic. After all, not all acts of representation within a representative democracy are necessarily instances of democratic representation. Similarly, it is unclear whether a representative who actively seeks to dismantle democratic institutions is representing democratically. Does democratic representation require representatives to advance the preferences of democratic citizens or does it require a commitment to democratic institutions? At this point, answers to such

questions are unclear. What is certain is that democratic citizens are likely to disagree about what constitutes democratic representation.

In fact by attaching representation to the conditions that render it legitimate, the standard account is doing double duty: not only does it tell us when a representative is legitimate or democratic, it also purportedly tells us when a person is a political representative at all. By simultaneously defining conditions by which someone becomes a political representative and the conditions for her legitimacy we are unable to explain how the cases of 'illegitimate' representation should be described.

Yet Cases of illegitimate political representation are not mistakes of classification or cases in which the representative simply fails to achieve an ideal: political representation, say, in the early modern period in England, was less about legitimising practices as about a practical way for the monarchy to extract taxes from the people (Fasolt, 1991). Similarly, in many nations over the last 50 years, whether in Africa, South America, Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union, we see nations filled with political representatives, but whose elections, conduct and other criteria do not meet any plausible account of legitimacy. NGO's now send their representatives who purportedly "represent" non-state actors and causes on the world stage.

The question is, given the lack of any democratic structures by which those represented can authorise and hold these actors to account, given the fact that they may or may not actually be pursuing the interests of those they purportedly represent, are these even cases of political representation? As Rehfeld (2005) noted, this question is critical because contemporary accounts of political representation explain why one is or why one fails to be a representative at all by reference to democratic norms: a representative is purportedly someone who looks out for the substantive interests of those who elected them through free and fair elections.

If political representation is explained by democratic norms and institutions, then it would seem that the series of military government Nigeria has had, for example, were not representatives of the country, a result as strange as it is false, because while in government, these military leaders and those they appointed carried out binding functions of political representation or what Harold Laski would call 'the authoritative allocation of values' such as rule making, rule execution and symbolic government acts such as the signing of treaties and bilateral agreements with other countries.

Given this complexity, Rehfeld (2005) has argued that we can explain political representation without necessarily appealing to normative standards of legitimacy or justice democratic legitimacy. Rather, political representation results from an audience's judgment that some individual, rather than some other, is a representative of a particular group. The audience uses a set of "rules of recognition" to judge whether a claimant is a representative in any particular case. When audiences use democratic rules to guide their judgment, the democratic, but special, case arises. By referencing the rules of recognition that any particular audience uses rather than any substantive evaluation about those rules we can thus explain how political representation *qua* representation arises. The standard, democratic account thus turns out to be merely a special case of the more general phenomenon: political representation arises simply by reference to a relevant audience accepting a person as such.

Thus, political representation, *per se*, is not a particularly democratic phenomenon at all. It also operates as a political phenomenon in democratic, non-democratic, formal and informal contexts. What matters in the evaluation of political representatives in both democratic and non-democratic contexts is the more generally important rules of recognition that different audiences use to judge whether this person, but not that one, is a representative (Rehfeld, *ibid*).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Explain how the challenges associated with political representation affect elections.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Besides participation, the only orderly manner by which people can get involved in the modern day political system is through representation. Ordinarily, representation should provide a more orderly and predictable platform for democratic and effective governance. However, it is not in all instances that representation tends to enhance democracy. For instance it is possible for representation not to enhance participation and democracy (as, for instance, in Nigeria under colonial, military rule and even the present democratic rule where elections are characterised by massive rigging and the distortion of the people's will. Representation can also in certain circumstances, generate as much alienation (anger) and apathy (lack of enthusiasm) toward the political process as non-representation. Such a situation can arise when representation does not meaningfully enhance participation (for instance, when elections are rigged or when an elected government degenerates into a sit-tight oligarchy).

## 8.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we examined the concept of representation as a key activity that takes place in the political system. We have also examined some of the problems associated with the concept and attempts made to resolve some of these issues. We have learnt that representation does not only take place in democratic settings but also operates as a political phenomenon in non-democratic, formal and informal contexts.

## 9.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the idea that representation takes place in both democratic and non-democratic political systems.
2. “Representation does not enhance the goals of democracy and popular participation in Nigeria today.” Discuss this statement with regards to the pattern of electoral politics in Nigeria from 1999 till date.
3. Examine the link between representation and accountability in Nigeria’s democracy.

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## **UNIT 6      POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS**

### **CONTENT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Political Parties
  - 3.2 Interest Groups
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The political system consist of the regime i.e. the aggregate clusters of interlocking institutions: both inputs institutions like political parties, interest groups and mass media and output institutions like the legislature, the executive, bureaucracies and the courts. The political system also include specific incumbent of these institutions and the nation at large. The political process refers, of course, to politics i.e. the actions, conflicts, alliances and behavioural styles of parties, interest groups, movements and individuals. The policies are the decisions or outputs of the system.

Robert Fishman draws analytic distinctions between regimes, governments, and states. Regimes are:

the formal and informal organisation of the centre of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those in power deal with those who are not... Regimes are more permanent forms of political organisation than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the state. The state by contrast is a (normally) more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it (Fishman, 1990).

Political regimes therefore are sets of political procedures –sometimes called the “rules of the political game” – that determine the distribution of power. These rules prescribe who may engage in politics and how (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997). In this unit, I shall discuss the political



process and actions in political regime. I shall discuss the role played by three (3) key factors in the political process and actions (ways in which authorities make policy decisions) within the political regime viz: 1) political parties and interest groups.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define political parties
- state the Functions of political parties
- highlight the structure of political parties
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of political parties
- define interest groups
- identify the types of Interest groups
- state the functions of interest groups
- describe the tactics of interest groups
- evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of interest groups.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 Political Parties

#### Definition of a Political Party

A political party is an organised group of persons seeking to take control of government through elections. According to Agbaje (1999), “a political party is a group of persons bonded in policy and opinion in support of a general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices”.

Following from the above definition, a political party represents, therefore, at least three things to its members and on-lookers:

1. It is a *label* in the minds of its members and the wider public, especially the electorate.
2. It is an *organisation* that recruits and campaigns for candidates seeking election and selection into public political office;
3. It is a *set of leaders* who try to organise and control the legislative and executive branches of government (Wilson, 1992 cf. Agbaje, 1999).

In democracies therefore, a political party is a more or less permanent institution with the goal of aggregating interests, presenting candidates for elections with the purpose of controlling governments, and representing such interests in government. It is thus a major vehicle for enhancing participation in governance (Foley and Edwards, 1996, cited in Agbaje, 1999).

### **The Functions of Political Parties**

Political parties provide the connection between politics and society. In this sense they fulfill at least seven crucial functions:

- a) **Control of government:** The implication of this function is that parties are the main vehicles for recruiting and selecting people for government and legislative office. In effect, although they are often criticized for filling high level public positions with their own (people considered political rather than technical), which expectedly are what they are supposed to political parties provide a responsible vehicle to achieve control of the government. In essence, political parties bring people together, develop policies favorable to their interests or the groups that support them, and organise and persuade voters to elect their candidates to office. But although political parties are very much involved in the operation of government at all levels, they are not the government itself.
- b) **Implementation of policies:** The content side of responsibility of political parties is to develop policies and programmes. It is pertinent to note that there are different choices in the political market place – not only in terms of candidates but also in terms of ideas however, once in government, a party can start implementing these ideas. In sum, the manifestos of political parties serve as a ready source from which government policies can be formulated.
- c) **Making policy:** This feature implies that although political parties are not policymaking organisations in themselves while not in government however, they certainly take positions on important policy questions, one of which especially is to provide alternatives to the position of whichever party is in power. The input into policy making is through legislation.
- d) **Representing Groups of interests:** Irrespective of the party, the elected officials that represent the people called constituents make their concerns known to their representatives. These elected officials however, must not only

reflect the concerns of their own political party but must also try to attract support from people in their districts or states who belong to the other party. They can attract this support by supporting bipartisan issues (matters of concern that cross party lines) and nonpartisan issues (matters that have nothing to do with party allegiance).

Political parties represent groups as well as individuals. These interest groups have special concerns. They may represent the interests of ethnic minorities, of farm workers, small business operators, particular industries, or teachers — any similar individual who cooperate to express a specific agenda.

- e) **Simplifying the Policy Making Arena:** With demands being numerous and sometimes conflicting, political parties pick up demands from society and bundle them into packages. In other words, political parties are an important part of the political process because they are able to discuss and evaluate these issues and shape human needs into policy alternatives.

Political parties appeal to as many different groups as possible. They do so by stating their goals in a general way so that voters are attracted to a broad philosophy without necessarily focusing on every specific issue. In many countries, political parties are known for specific ideology. As we discussed in Unit 1 of Module 3, ideology is the magnet and driving force that binds together members of the same political party. Party members share the same views, principles and ideas about the socio-economic and political organisation of the society. Arising from the people's understanding, emotional identification with, and evaluation of reality, ideology acts as a compass for the practice and interpretation of politics. In this respect, it guides, supports restrains and rationalises political action. At the same time it can act as a great mobilising energy to galvanise mass political action.

In the USA for instance, Republicans are known for their support of business, conservative positions on social issues, and concern about the size of government; Democrats traditionally have supported labor and minorities and believe that government can solve many of the nation's problems. The alternative to using the general philosophies of the political parties to sort out candidates is to vote for individuals based on just their own one-or two-issue programs.

In Nigeria, the 1922 Clifford Constitution granted three legislative council seats to Nigerians on the colonial legislative council (Crowther, 1968). The three legislative seats were allocated to Lagos

and Calabar. Consequent upon these developments, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was established in 1923 by Herbert Macauley and his fellow nationalist. Its stated aims included the attainment of Municipal status and Local self government for Lagos, the provision of facilities for higher education in Nigeria, the introduction of compulsory education at the primary school level, the encouragement of non-disciplinary private economic enterprise, and the Africanisation of the civil service (Crowther, *ibid.*). In addition, the party was committed to cooperate with, and support, the programme of the National Congress of British West Africa. Their aims represent the party ideology.

Later in 1944, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon's was inaugurated. At the time of its formation it was made up of the most articulate and conscious nationalists. At the death of Herber Macauley, Nnamdi Azikwe was elected the new leader of the NCNC. In 1945, Chief Awolowo formed a Pan-Yoruba cultural organisation called, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, with the sole aim of promoting the interest of the Yorubas. However, by 1950, it metamorphosed into a political party-the Action Group (AG). The objective of the party was to seek control of the then western Nigeria regional government. The ideology professed by the party was called by its leader, Democratic Socialism (Crowther, 1978).

The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was inaugurated in 1949, it was formed from the merger of two political societies-the Northern Elements Progressive Association and the Northern People's Congress. As a Cultural Organisation, Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa (JMA), it was meant to serve as a rallying point for educated and progressive Northerners. The northern people congress was transformed into a political party in 1951, after the expulsion of radicals who were considered to be members of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). The main objective of the NPC was the protection of Northern elite interest in the politics of the colonial society.

The political parties that contested the 1979 second republican elections, aimed at achieving the ideals of national unity, peace, solidarity, progress, egalitarianism, freedom of private enterprise, socialism, justice, etc. at the same time the interest of the workers and the employers, the nation as a whole and the multinationals, the chiefs and the masses, women and youths, all regions, all tribes and all ideologies were provided for. The registered parties in the fourth Republic also shared a similar ideology or vision of society. However, the NCP, PRP, DA and PSD (now Labour Party) profess, in addition, a socialist vision.

It is instructive to observe that there is complete or near total lack of ideology articulated by all the parties of the fourth Republic. As Jerry Gana, former information minister, conceded in relation to the death of cohesion and ideological orientation “In terms of cohesion and formal ideological learning, there is a problem, but PDP will be strengthened ideologically, PDP will be more organised, PDP will be in power for 30 years.”

What is evident from the above statement is that rather than ideology, political parties and politicians in Nigeria are merely interested in capturing power, qua power. Most of the parties seem united only in a predatory enterprise than in any love for the common good. They generally lack any discipline and dealers angling to milk the nation dry and reinforce the process of primitive accumulation.

There is almost nothing to choose between People’s Democratic Party and other parties in terms of ideological learning. Parties like the NCP, DA, and Party for Social Democracy (PSD) and Green Party which have variants of leftist and radical tendencies are not deep enough in terms of their link to the grass roots.

The lack of commitment to party’s ideology leads to political opportunism and the view and perception of politics as an investment from which one expects huge returns. Therefore, to be at the periphery would be viewed as a huge political loss. Consequently, the struggle for power becomes highly intense and a do-or-die affair. This creates crisis in the party and political instability.

The lack of ideological commitment and opportunism has been a feature common among politicians in Nigeria, even before independence. The situation has however become worse in the Fourth Republic. All the political parties of the fourth Republic have no clear ideological foundation or principles to strictly bind members together. Political opportunism is consequence of jettisoning principles and waiving political ideology.

Political leaders who have decamped in the Fourth Republic include Imo state governor, Ikedi Ohakim, from the Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA) to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); Bauchi state governor, Mallam Isa Yuguda, from the PDP to the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), and then back to the PDP; and former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, from PDP to the Action Congress (AC), and from the AC to the PDP and now to APC ; The former Governor of Anambra State, Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju, from the PDP to the Alliance for Democracy (AD); the former governor of Borno state, Mala Kachalla, from the ANPP to AC; the former governor of Sokoto state, Attahiru Bafarawa,

from the ANPP to Democratic People's Party (DPP) now to APC; the former governor of Lagos state, Bola Tinubu, from AD to AC; former governor of Abia state, Orji Uzor Kalu, from the PDP to the PPA; and Tom Ikimi, from ANPP to PDP and then to AC.

Thus, a major weakness of most parties in Nigerian is the lack of any commitment to any ideological flavour making it impossible for them to simplify the policy arena for national development. Its consequences however are a lack of party cohesiveness and political instability which pose threats to sustainable democracy.

#### **f) Political education**

Political parties educate the electorate through campaigns and rallies which stimulate their political awareness.

#### **g) Systems maintenance**

Political parties help to ensure political stability through the availability of a pool of their members capable of running the government at any time.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Does the function of political parties justify its goal of enhancing participation in governance?

### **The Structure of Political Parties**

Most parties are organised at the local, state, and national levels. Party leaders and activists are involved in choosing people to run for office, managing and financing campaigns, and developing positions and policies that appeal to party constituents. The national party organisations play key roles in presidential elections. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution stipulates that political parties must have national spread and they must have offices that spread across the whole of the country. This requirement is to prevent the emergence of ethnic or sectional parties at the national level.

#### **a) The Caucus**

This refers to (the meeting of) a group of top party members (Party caucuses) who often meet to plan strategies and take a common position on a piece of legislation. It is members of the caucus that plan for electoral success, and take important decisions on behalf of the party.

**b) Branches**

Parties are usually organised into branches spread across the country, with a view to increasing their influence and membership. In Nigeria, for example, party branches are organised at ward, local government and state levels, with the national headquarters coordinating all the party's activities.

**c) The cell**

A party cell consists of a small group of party members. These are usually members who work in the same place. This party structure makes it possible for secret decisions to be taken and implemented in the party. It was the structure of former socialist and communist parties which is not very popular in today's open world.

**d) The militia**

This sort of structure obtained essentially with such dictators as Hitler and Mussolini, who structured their parties like the army complete with military hierarchy, discipline and training for party members (Human Rights Watch, 2007; 2008). However, while the militia party structure may no longer exist in its formal sense, in many developing democracies such as Nigeria, party thugs, play vital roles in rigging elections in favour of their party. They carry out most of the 'dirty' works of political parties including intimidation of opponents, snatching of ballot boxes and the stuffing of same with fake ballot papers in their party's favour, and outright assassination of political opponents. In many states of the federation, party thugs are the instruments, which the so called godfathers use for their political influence and as instruments of violence.

**The Strengths and Weaknesses of Political Parties**

Political parties have unified groups of people and helped them seek and achieve common goals. They have a tradition of participation and encouraging citizens' participation in democratic government. They have also served to integrate people of differing ethnic, religious and other interest groups under one political party, and hence serve as a forum for national unity.

However, in many countries, besides the competition between engenders unhealthy rivalry between political parties which may lead to election rigging, clashes between members of opposing parties and general political instability, political parties are also seen to be losing touch with society and moreover evolving into semi-state agencies

(Bartolini and Mair 2001; van Biezen, 2004). Consequently, political parties have been in decline for at least four decades and it seems reasonable to conclude that the 'golden age' of mass parties is now part of history (van Biezen *ibid.*).

The evidence demonstrates that patterns of extensive party membership and partisanship, and party control of electoral politics evident during the 1960s had largely disappeared by the nineties (Bartolini and Mair, 2001). In addition, analyses have shown that parties have simultaneously declined as channels for popular demands, thereby losing their legitimacy as representative organisations (Katz, 2002).

Consequently, research on political parties in recent times have focused on the extent to which political parties are democratic by particularly looking at parties' organisational strengths/failures, such as structures and functions of party decision-making and executing organs; primary election processes; financing sources and regulatory mechanisms; and women participation in decision-making processes within parties. The following fundamental questions are being asked: Are party members becoming more or less important? How successful are political parties in giving the ordinary members a greater say? Have parties really become more isolated from society?

In other words, in recent times, discussions of multiparty politics in many countries are focusing not just on the impact of political party deficiencies on democracy at the national level but also the internal processes of political parties. The reason for this emphasis on the internal processes of political parties is the realisation that political parties cannot enhance democracy if they themselves lack democracy. As the popular saying goes, 'you cannot give what you do not have'. Increasingly therefore, intra-party democracy is now being recognized as a necessary aspect of a healthy democracy and thereby an important area for discussion in particular for countries with political parties that lack such democratic internal processes.

With regards to transitional democracies such as Nigeria, what has tended to occur often is a political environment in which parties are ill organised, insufficiently institutionalised and lack transparent and accountable regulatory mechanisms coupled with non-democratic leadership styles (Adetula (Ed.), 2008). The following internal-party features bring to the fore the existing difficulties/challenges parties experience in nurturing a democratic culture especially in Nigeria: primary elections or candidate selection, internal party organisational structures, political party financing, and policy development (Adetula (Ed.) *ibid.*).



Unfortunately, political parties often fail to perform these roles adequately or with sufficient credibility. While formally all political parties have established democratic rules and regulations, “the biggest challenge, however, is the gap between rhetoric and reality. In other words, the problem is not the intention to do so as manifested in the formal requirements that are easily fulfilled, but rather it is the actual practice of walking the talk.” Most parties in the country today are fundamentally weak and rely heavily on the personal appeal of party godfathers and thugs to rig their ways into political offices. Hence, political parties are not properly connected to society, but have rather become distant from voters and their concern and needs (Ayoade, 2008).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Using the Nigerian political party as your guide, discuss the current worries about political parties’ internal democracy.

### **3.2 Interest Groups**

An interest group (also advocacy group, lobby group, pressure group or special interest group) is an organisation that seeks to influence political decisions, typically through the use of financial contributions to politicians to bias political opinion to create incentives for politicians to receive further financial contributions. Public and private corporations work with lobbyists to persuade public officials to act or vote according to group members’ interests (Sullivan & Sheffrin, 2003).

In the course of representing the interest of their members these groups are often active participants in the political process. They may have both well defined political agendas and the financial resources necessary to exert broad influence on the political and regulatory process; utilizing direct lobbying, letter-writing campaigns, and voter turnout efforts during elections. However, unlike political parties, pressure groups are not interested in direct governance or in contesting elections. They may however support particular candidates or parties they regard of supportive of, or beneficial to their cause. An example of this is the support given to the Action Congress (AC) in Lagos by the Lagos state branch of Market Women Association, or the support given to the Labour Party (LP) in Ondo state and the Action Congress in Edo state by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

## **Types of Interest Groups**

### **a) Promotional or single-issue groups**

Some interest groups are formed to promote a particular cause which may not directly benefit their members. Promotional or single issue interest groups do not usually expect to profit directly from the policy changes they seek. However, the activists who staff these groups may gain financially by attracting donations from individuals and foundations that support their activities. Also, these interest groups enjoy an image of non-partisanship, even though some of them engage, necessarily, in clearly political activities. Promotional or single-issue groups (cause or attitude groups) seek to influence policy in a particular area, such as the environment (Green Peace, or Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria), gun laws (National Rifle Association in the United States) the protection of birds (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the USA), or animal rights (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in the USA), human rights groups, and consumer protection (Nigerian Consumer Protection Council). These groups tend to be aligned toward a political ideology or seek influence in specific policy areas. While some promotional interest groups do not generate their opposite, others do. For example, the issue of abortion has generated interest groups for and against. In America for example, while the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) is against abortion, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) supports it.

### **b) Economic interest groups**

These interest groups focus on the economic well-being of their members. They include organisation that represents big business, such as the Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (NACCIMA), and the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (NMA), as well as big labour- the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

### **c) Professional or Occupational Interest Groups**

These are interest groups embracing workers of the same occupation or profession who try to protect their work or work interest. The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Nigerian Union of Teachers (NTU), Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASSU), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers, Nigerian Union of Textiles Workers and Barbers Association.

**d) Government Interest Groups**

These are interest groups formed from within the governmental framework. In Nigeria for example, there are organisations formed to bring the issues of governance as it concerns specific interests before the public opinion and the administration. Government interest groups include the Governors' Forum, South-South Governors' Forum, Northern State Governors' Forum, and the Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON).

**e) Religious Interest Groups**

These are interest groups of people that belong to the same religion and wish to influence government decisions in favour of their belief or members. Examples are Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA), Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria (SCSN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). These groups representing the two biggest religions in the country – Islam and Christianity - have been in the forefront of protesting government policies whenever they feel such policies are not favourable to them. For instance, CAN have stringently protested Nigeria's membership of the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in the 1980s, and the implementation of Sharia (Islamic law) since 1999 by 12 northern states. The Muslim groups on the other hand have supported these developments. In some countries such as USA, religious interest groups directly lobby to sway public policy in their interests and in the process they become involved in politics, to some degree. The Christian Coalition, which draws most of its support from conservative Protestants, has an agenda that includes support for school prayer, opposition to homosexual rights, and a constitutional amendment banning abortion. It became an important factor in American politics, particularly in the Republican Party, in the early 1990s.

**f) Ethnic Interest Groups**

Ethnic interest groups, as the name implies, represent specific ethnic groups either in their ethnic homeland, in foreign lands, or in the Diaspora. In Nigeria these include Afenifere (Yoruba), Arewa People's Congress (Hausa), Ohaneze Ndigbo (Igbo). In many instances, these groups have functioned as 'shadow states' for their members. However, in pressing forth their demands and in contestations with other groups for scarce government resources, the activities of these groups have been characterised by violent rhetoric, confrontations, and even physical clashes that have led to fractious controversy, bitter recriminations, and loss of lives and properties.

## Functions of Interest Groups

The two principal functions of interest groups are representation and education.

### a) Representation

The representation function stems from the reason interest groups are created in the first place: Collective action is the most effective way of influencing policymaking and bringing issues to a large audience. Interest groups also serve as a watchdog, monitoring the actions of lawmakers, the courts, and the administration in the interest of their constituents. This work can include keeping track of the voting record of members of Congress and rating them on how well or how poorly they do on a particular issue.

### b) Education

Interest groups educate both their own constituency and the public. Through their publications, or advocacy, the groups keep members (and sometimes the general public) abreast of the latest developments on the issues they care about. Because they have developed an expertise in a particular policy area, interest groups are often in a better position to initiate and contribute to debate on issues of national importance such as legislation that has to do with Child Rights, anti tobacco or same sex marriage in Nigeria.

Shaping opinion by educating the public on issues that are important to the interest group is one of the central features of new-style lobbying. The idea is to shape public opinion and elite opinion in such a way that government officials will be favorably disposed to the views of the interest group.

This attempt to shape public opinion and elite opinion comes in many different forms. When an Organisation believes that it has research results that will bolster its position, it may call a press conference to present a summary and mail the research report to influential people in government, the media, and education.

Interest groups may often conduct national and regional advertising campaigns to impress their views on government policy. The smart and well-heeled interest group will regularly prepare materials that are of use to radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. Many produce opinion pieces, magazine articles, television and radio spots, or even stage events to be covered by the news. Examples here are the various TV and radio adverts by NGOs in Nigeria on various issues including the Child

Rights Bill, achieving the Millennium Development Goals, etc. Groups may also use targeted mailings to gain support on a particular issue. For instance, business interest groups, particularly trade associations, publish data and reports on their sector of the economy that are widely used and that draw attention of government and the public to the growth and challenges facing their sector. For instance, press statements by the Nigerian Manufacturers Association (NMA) on the state of the manufacturing sector is, an indispensable source not only on the sector but the economy in general. Also the Human Rights Watch makes periodic reports available on human rights and its broader ramifications including conflict and governance in different countries. Interest groups were very also active in both supporting and opposing the term debate in the last political dispensation. Finally, groups without substantial resources or ready access to the offices of government officials sometimes turn to the use of public demonstrations to attract attention to their cause. These and other examples of interest groups advocacy help to educate the public on a wider range of issues.

### **Tactics of interest groups**

#### **a) Lobbying**

Lobbying is one of the ways in which interest groups shape legislation and bring the views of their constituents to the attention of decision-makers. The term "lobbying" conjures up images of favours, substantial honoraria paid for brief appearances, and other unsavory exchanges verging on bribery. In the main, however, such images do not help us fully understand the intricacies of the inside game. This game does not always involve money or favours. It is mostly about the politics of insiders. It is the politics of one-on-one persuasion, in which the skilled lobbyist tries to persuade a strategically placed decision-maker such as well-placed legislators, chairpersons of important committees or subcommittees, or key members of professional staffs - to understand and sympathise with the point of view of the interest group.

Lobbying the executive branch is another way in which interest groups attempt to have their views heard. Career civil servants and upper-level appointees in the executive branch have a great deal of discretionary authority because Congress often writes legislation broadly, leaving it to bureaucratic agencies to fill in the details. Given the broad powers they carry, it behooves interest groups to establish stable and friendly relationships with those agencies of the executive branch that are most relevant to their interests. As with Congress, the key to success in the lobbying game with the executive branch is personal contact and long-

term relationships. Once established, interest group representatives can convey technical information, present the results of their research, help public officials deflect criticism, and show how their group's goals are compatible with good public policy and the political needs of the officials.

Interest groups also lobby the courts but not in the same way in which they lobby Congress and agencies in the executive branch. A group may find that neither Congress nor the White House is favourably disposed to its interests, and that the courts can serve as an alternative route to the transformation of public policy.

Government officials are more likely to listen to a lobbyist if they are convinced that a great many politically active people stand behind the lobbyist. The outside game is a form of interest group activity in which such support is identified, created, mobilised, and brought to bear on policymakers in government.

For instance, when a bill that is relevant to the interest group comes before the Legislature or a ruling or regulation comes before an agency in the executive branch, the efforts of the group's lobbyist are greatly enhanced if decision-makers know that their constituents back home and around the nation care about the decision. Interest groups with a large membership base will try to persuade their members to send letters and make phone calls to the appropriate officials.

Governments also responds to interest groups based on their perception of the damage a negative tactics of the group such as strike may cause the regime or the nation. Thus accounts for why some groups' demands are quickly met or efforts are made to genuinely meet them, while others often receive less than serious attention from the government.

#### **b) Strikes and boycotts**

Occupational pressure groups may employ strikes and boycotts to achieve their aims where other means fail. In trying to avoid the great loss that may arise from a long-term strike, the owners of an organisation may agree to what the pressure group demands. If the strike is directed at government, the government may negotiate with the pressure group in order to ensure industrial peace and political stability.

#### **c) Publicity campaigns**

Pressure groups organise intensive campaigns through meetings, rallies, house to house campaigns, posters, handbills, stickers and conferences to attract public support and get their aims achieved.

**d) Mass media**

Pressure groups advertise and sponsor programmes on the radio, television and in newspapers to convince the citizenry to embrace their position as the most appropriate one for the whole society.

**e) Letters and petitions**

Pressure groups write letters of information or complaint to officials of the legislative or executive arm of the government to try to convince them of their viewpoint.

**f) Electoral politics**

Pressure groups go out to campaign and vote for candidates who will be sympathetic to their cause. They on the other hand campaign against candidates they believe are not in support of their cause.

In advanced democracies such as America, interest groups have become key players in electoral politics. Many interest groups rate members of Congress on their support for the interest group's position on a selection of key legislative votes. These ratings are then distributed to members of the interest group and other interested parties in hopes that it will influence their voting behavior in upcoming elections.

**g) Demonstrations**

Pressure groups also use demonstrations which may be peaceful or violent. In peaceful demonstrations, they march, carrying placards stating their demands. If this fails, violence could be resorted to by pressure groups to achieve their objectives. Examples are tertiary students who abduct school administrators and burn vehicles.

**h) Courts**

Interest groups also go to court to challenge the constitutionality of legislation or event. The case brought by the previously unknown group by the name Association for Better Nigeria (ABN) to advance for the stoppage of the conduct of the June 12 1993 presidential election, and also for the annulment of the election is among of the queer but decisive cases of interest groups use of the courts in Nigeria. The ABN courts not only granted the two requests, but the court's decision was a key reason the military government of Ibrahim Babangida publicly adduced for canceling the June 12<sup>th</sup> election, widely acclaimed to be of good standards and adjudged as one of the freest and fairest in the country.

Going to court, however, is a secondary strategy for most groups, because they must have their standing. This means that the group must be a party to the case and be able to demonstrate a direct injury. Going to court, moreover, is very expensive and beyond the means of many groups.

When interest groups get involved in court actions there are a number of things that they can do. First, they can file *amicus curiae* (or friend of the court) briefs in cases involving other parties. In this kind of brief, a person or an organisation that is not a party to a lawsuit may file an argument in support of one side or the other in hopes of swaying the views of the court. Second, interest groups can become involved in court actions through the process of appointment and approval of federal judges.

### **i) Warfare**

If other means seem ineffective, pressure groups could employ (guerrilla) warfare means to achieve their goals. Examples are the Mau-Mau struggle for independence in Kenya, the independence struggles in Mozambique and Angola, and the ongoing struggles of MEND in Nigeria's Niger Delta.

### **The Strengths and Weaknesses of Interest Groups**

Interest groups are inimical to the democratic process. This is the view offered by Lewis (1996) when he stated that Interest group fights against democracy and takes away its authoritativeness, confuses expectations about democratic institutions and corrupts democratic government by treating all values as equivalent interests, renders government impotent by multiplying the number of plans available, but not addressing implementation, and demoralises government because it can't achieve justice (because without a value-system, justice is not an issue for discussion).

Interest groups have also been usually regarded as narrowly self-interested, out for themselves, and without regard for the public good. This theme of selfish interests recurs throughout Nigeria's history. A good example was the activities of youth groups especially the Youth Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA) who openly canvassed for the transformation of General Sani Abacha into a civilian president.

It is also often argued that the politics of interest groups is usually not the province of majorities, but of narrow, particularistic, and privileged interests. This, it is argued, is problematic in two respects. First, it undermines systems stability, which is vital for a functioning



democracy. Second, and relatedly, it makes it difficult for governments to formulate broad and coherent national policies. Proponents of this view for example will support their argument with the example of the ASSU strike which has paralysed university education since June 2009 till date (October) and still ongoing. To many, especially government functionaries, even though some of the issues raised by ASSU have been addressed, ASSU is yet to call off its strike. ASSU therefore cannot be said to be fighting for the 'people's interests. Rather, their action is related to the narrowness and the particularism of interest group politics and its undermining of both systems stability and political coherence.

To many, other examples depicting the 'negative' consequences of interest groups actions include strikes by the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) or Nurses over pay rise while several patients languish in pains in the hospitals, with some even losing their lives due to lack of attention from the doctors; or activities of militant groups in the Niger Delta, including attacks of oil facilities and oil companies, which according to estimates have caused the nation loss of an estimated \$16 billion in export revenues due to shut-in oil production. Militant attacks on oil infrastructure have also crippled Nigeria's domestic refining capabilities (Energy Information Administration, 2007).

These and other examples, for many, show how interest groups' concern for particularistic interest above the national interests can constrain the smooth operation of the political process, lead to inertia in the political system and hardship on the public.

However, for others including members of the interest groups and political scientists who take a pluralist approach, interest groups do not hurt democracy and the public interest but are an important instrument to attain both. Pluralists believe that elections are essential to a democracy, but they do not readily communicate what the people want in terms of policy. This is better communicated to political leaders on a day-to-day basis by the many groups and organisations to which people belong.

Pluralists argue that the interest group system is democratic because people are free to join or organise groups that reflect their interests. Pluralists, therefore, do not see interest groups as a problem but as an additional tool of democratic representation and for making political elites act more responsible in the people's interest.

In other words, those in favor of interest groups believe that the activities of interest groups regarding various aspects of public policy have made the policy process far more transparent than ever before. This is the view offered by David Truman who argued that Pluralism due to

interest groups representation is the 'balance wheel' in the U.S. political system and that group politics is a perfect representation of democracy in action (Truman, 1951).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss the structures of a political party.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Interest groups are inevitable in a free society, in which people have diverse interests ranging from those based on economic circumstances, to property ownership. Consequently, factions are innately part of interest groups. However, trying to eliminate factions would require tyranny. The only way to control factions, it has been argued, is to organise constitutional government in a way that moderates the bad effects of factions and to have a society that would be so large that no single faction could dominate public life.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this lecture, you have learnt about the role of political parties and interest groups in a modern government. You have also learnt about their strategies and characteristic features. Even though they are indispensable to the functioning of the modern states, some of the challenges or weaknesses facing these two groups have also been highlighted.

## **6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. With specific Nigerian examples, enumerate the functions of political parties.
2. Examine the weaknesses of interest groups in Nigeria today.
3. What are the functions of interest groups?
4. List and discuss five tactics used by interest groups

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## **MODULE 4      TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS**

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### **UNIT 1      FORM OF RULE/GOVERNMENT**

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| 7.0 | References/Further Reading                         |

#### **1.0      INTRODUCTION**

A typology is a proposed way of classifying the subject matter in which we are interested. It is an analytical construct which seeks to present a simplified view of actual situations. In other words, typologies present ways of simplifying complex political situations by presenting abstract standards by which they can be composed (Osaghael, 1988). Typologies of political systems are essential to boosting our understanding of politics and governments. They also facilitate evaluation of political systems.

Attempts to classify political systems have been a fine art for many years, perhaps as old as political science itself. However, the task of classification is not an easy one for the political scientists. This is because the political systems that are present in our world, or which have been present in the past, are widely varying. Worse, for the political scientist, these systems are not governed by laws of nature that are unchanging, but by humans who, by nature, change constantly.

Thus, the student of political systems grapples with a subject matter that is today inconstant flux. He must deal not only with the major processes of growth, decay, and breakdown but also with a ceaseless ferment of

adaptation and adjustment. The magnitude and variety of the changes that occurred in the world's political systems between the second and eighth decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century suggest the dimensions of the problem. These are the disintegration of Great empires; emergence and brief flourishing of nation-states; world wars which twice transformed the international system; new ideologies swept the world and shook established groups from power; all but a few nations experienced at least one revolution and many nations two or more; domestic politics in every system were contorted by social strife and economic crisis; and everywhere the nature of political life was changed by novel forms of political activity, new means of mass communication, the enlargement of popular participation in politics, the rise of new political issues, the extension of the scope of governmental activity, the threat of nuclear war, and innumerable other social, economic, and technical developments (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009).

In spite of these challenges, attempts have been made to classify political systems. The most influential of such classifying schemes is undoubtedly the attempt of Plato and Aristotle to define the basic forms of government in terms of the number of power holders and their use or abuse of power. Plato held that there was a natural succession of the forms of government: an aristocracy (the ideal form of government by the few) that abuses its power develops into a timocracy (in which the rule of the best men, who value wisdom as the highest political good, is succeeded by the rule of men who are primarily concerned with honour and martial virtue), which through greed develops into an oligarchy (the perverted form of government by the few), which in turn is succeeded by a democracy (rule by the many); through excess, the democracy becomes an anarchy (a lawless government), to which a tyrant is inevitably the successor. Abuse of power in the Platonic typology is defined by the rulers' neglect or rejection of the prevailing law or custom (*nomos*); the ideal forms are thus *nomos* observing (*ennomon*), and the perverted forms are *nomos* neglecting (*paranomon*) (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009).

Although disputing the character of this implacable succession of the forms of government, Aristotle also based his classification scheme on the criteria of rulership - of the relative number of citizens entitled to rule, and whether the rulers rule in their own selfish interests or in the common interest.

Aristotle six-fold typology consisted of the following: monarchy (rule by one for good of whole), tyranny (rule by one for self interest), aristocracy (rule by few for good of whole), oligarchy (rule by few for own interest), polity (rule by many for good of whole), and democracy (rule by many in their own interest). Aristotle did not think any rule in

the interest of a particular class (even the masses) was good. Hence, tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy were bad; and monarchy, aristocracy, and polity were good. Aristotle did not trust pure democracy. Instead, he favored "polity" as the best representative form of government because it gives a share in the regime to the many while also leaving a role for the rich and virtuous. Oligarchies and democracies were second-best after the ideal type (see Aristotle, 1962).

Another classic typology of political systems is that rooted in works of Robert Dahl about polyarchy. Dahl's classification is grounded on two dimensions: 1) contestation and 2) participation. According to Dahl, a contestation is the level of regime's liberalisation, and participation indicates the level of democratisation. As a matter of fact it generalizes the features of European and North American ways of development, where sixteenth century democratisation (e.g. working class struggle for franchise and labor rights) came in particular to expansion of participation and happened, in most cases, after nation-building and state-building (through liberalisation/bureaucratisation first, followed by democratisation). Based on this classification, Dahl identified what he called "polyarchy" as the best form of government because it created multiple centers of political power. Dahl believes that the U.S. is a classic type of polyarchy (see Dahl, 1971; Dahl, 1989).

From the above, it is clear that political scientists have attempted to classify and categorise, to develop typologies and models, or in some other way to bring analytic order to the bewildering variety of political system. In the process many different typologies, some complex and others simple, have been developed. However, since the purpose of this unit is to educate students about contemporary world political systems, we shall use as our guide the typology developed by DK Publishing (2006) in the book *How Governments Work: the Inside Guide to the Politics of the World*. It holds that there are six main types of rule/government: monarchical, theocratic, military, democratic, single party, and transitional. We shall examine each of these below.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss monarchical political system
- explain theocracy
- discuss military rule
- discuss single party rule
- explain transitional rule
- discuss democracy.

### 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

#### 3.1 Types of Political Systems

**Monarchy** - this is a system whereby one person rules for life as the head-of-state and passes on power to their children or family (dynasty or royalty) when they die. There are currently 31 true national monarchies in the world today (O'Connor, 2009). Monarchy is often contrasted with republic. A republic is a system of government which has officials that are elected by the people.

Classic political theory distinguishes between two types of monarchies:

##### A. Absolute (true) Monarchy

An absolute monarch rules by whim and has unlimited powers, although he may not be a tyrant or dictator (as is more common with military or single party rule). An absolute monarchy may also have cabinet officials or symbolic parliaments, but such institutions can be dissolved or altered at will. It should however be emphasized that sometimes, a true monarch may not be the real ruler, as state power might be wielded by ministers, regents, or advisors, with policy determined more by palace intrigue than anything else (O'Connor, 2009). Examples of former absolute monarchs are late Emperor Haile Sel'aisle of Ethiopia and Nicholas II in Tsarist Russia. In contemporary times, absolute monarchies are very few. The most absolute monarchies are the Arab monarchies and include: Morocco, where the 'Alawite dynasty has ruled since the 17th century and bases its claim to legitimacy on being a being a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammed" (Copnal, 2009); and Saudi Arabia ,ruled by the House of Saad with over 25,000 family members helping run the government (DK Publishing, 2006).

Others monarchies include Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Nepal, Cambodia and Bhutan. Africa's absolute monarchy is Swatziiland.

##### B. Constitutional Monarchy

In the form of monarchy, there are elected representatives who make policy decisions, and a prime minister usually leads the government with the King or Queen as a ceremonial head. The constitutional monarch has limited powers which are derived from the constitution. Such a monarch is just a ceremonial head of state and a symbol of the nation. The elected representatives in the legislative and executive arms of government exercise real power of governance. Britain is a good example of a ceremonial monarchy. where the head of state is a figurehead. Other



examples include Holland, Sweden, Austria, and Denmark etc. In Africa, Lesotho and Morocco are the constitutional monarchy (Copal, 2009).

Some common justifications for monarchies include the need to keep the aristocracy and clergy in line, as well as reduce the uncertainty which would occur with continual changes in the head-of-state. It is sometimes argued that monarchies are inexpensive to maintain (because they save the cost of holding elections). However, as O'Connor (2009) has argued, the fact of the matter is that monarchies are very expensive systems. The most common causes of monarchies are political necessity, tradition, greed, and a desire for conquest and sovereignty. Monarchies are usually dissolved by revolution."

**Table 3: Africa's Sovereign Monarchies**

| Country   | Monarch     | Regime since | Type           | Succession             |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Morocco   | Mohammed VI | 1999         | Constitutional | *Agnatic Primogeniture |
| Lesotho   | Letsie III  | 1990         | Constitutional | **Elective             |
| Swaziland | Mswati III  | 1986         | Absolute       | Elective               |

- \* Agnatic primogeniture inheritance according to seniority of birth among the sons of a monarch or head of family with sons inheriting before brothers.
- \* Elective — a monarchy ruled by someone, usually from a royal house, who is elected by a group.

Source: Wikipedia cf. Copal (2009)

**Theocracy** - Theocracy is commonly understood as a political regime in which power is wielded by some sort of priestly caste recruited on the basis of the orthodoxy of its members with respect to a religious creed (Brague, 2006). A theocracy is an oligarchy based on religion - the group is ruled by the group's spiritual leaders- or more generally, where there is a claim to divine mandates or divine powers that govern civil affairs. Religion is a powerful human phenomenon, and religious leaders can often exert great influence over the group's actions (O'Connor, 2009). Only when temporal and spiritual affairs are combined is there a true theocracy (Clarkson, 1997). Contemporary theocracies include Iran and the Vatican City (Wikipedia, 2010).

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Distinguish between the absolute monarchical rule in Swaziland and Iran's theocratic rule.

### 3.2 Military Rule

A system of rule by military strongman or *junta* (pronounced "hun-ta" or "jen-ta" and coming from the Spanish word for committee). It typically occurs as part of the evolution of single-party rule (the populism route) or when some national emergency merits the declaration of martial law and the leader in office happens to have (or assumes) some military rank. A military dictatorship more correctly comes about via a *coup d'etat*.

Almost every society in known history has or has had a military structure. It is a constant in human history that societies will defend their national interests including the territory and resources within the state. This requires a trained class of persons - soldiers.

In some nations, the military is a dictatorship, and the head of government is a military officer. This is in contrast to other dictatorships where the military is completely subservient to the ruler. In Hitler's Germany, for example, the military was a strong tool of the Nazi Party, but Germany was not run by the military. The same can be said for the United States which, since World War II has maintained a very strong military, but where the military has no actual power in the government.

Ancient Sparta is a good example of a nation where the military was a distinct branch of government - in fact, Aristotle said that Sparta was an unending generalship. The militaristic nature of Sparta is generally overstated, though, as there were some democratic institutions in place. However, most citizens were expected to be soldiers - only those too weak to soldier were permitted to be civilians.

Militarism can co-exist with democracy, but most military rule is non-democratic and further makes any transition to democracy difficult. For example, some common characteristics of military rule include sacking Parliament (suspending the legislature), controlling the judicial branch (no appeals allowed on verdicts favorable to the military), and proscriptions of political activities especially during the initial period of military rule. Today, some typical countries under military rule include: Myanmar, Niger and Guinea.

## **Reasons for Military Intervention in Politics**

Cyril Obi (Obi, 1999) has offered the following reasons of military intervention in politics:

1. Since the military are the traditional guards of the state, military intervention has often been justified as a step to arrest political instability, ensuring territorial integrity and eliminating any threats to national security.
2. Given the nature and role of the military as the only public institution that has the monopoly of the instruments of violence (arms) it becomes very easy for the military to force its way into power as an organised agency without much opposition.
3. Often, the military have justified their intervention as patriotic acts based on the national interest. Adopting labels such as "corrective", military regimes often pledge themselves to ending what they consider to be civilian misrule consisting of corruption, abuse of powers, disregard of the constitution and of electoral procedures, tribalism, nepotism and economic underdevelopment etc.
4. Due to the pervasive politicisation of social life in the developing world, particularly in Africa. Military intervention can be the result of the politicisation of the military institution itself. This is especially brought about by civilians involving the military in their scheming and struggles for power.
5. Military intervention can be cause by a military elite or officer corps under the leadership or control of ambitious and powerful individuals who seek to control government in order to pursue defined interests: personal, sectional, class, ethnic, religious or imperialistic.
6. Sometimes the military intervene to protect their defined corporate interests. For instance, this may be to remove a government that is seen to be hurting the military either through reduced spending, irregular payment of salaries and the embarrassment of the military as an institution.
7. Military interventions are the outcome of factional struggles for power, especially in contexts where there is little faith in the sanctity of the ballot box and where the stakes in the control of power are very high. In this context of a zero-sum approach to politics in which the winner takes all and the loser loses

everything, the military is inevitably drawn in by the violent turn of politics as war by other means.

8. Foreign powers often instigate and finance a *coup d'etat* in another country, where the government of that country may be pursuing policies they (the foreign powers) consider to be against their own interests.

### Features of Military Government

1. A military government usually suspends, abrogates or modifies some or all Sections of the existing constitution.
2. A military government is highly centralised in structure.
3. It rules by decrees and edicts passed by the ruling council. (There is usually a ruling council which goes by different names – from country to country).
4. The military head of state, in conjunction with the ruling council, performs both executive and legislative functions of government.
5. There is absence of elections, and coercion is used for policy implementation.
6. The military government is dictatorial, and tolerates no form of opposition.
7. Under the military government, fundamental human rights are often violated.
8. Some declare a state of emergency and begin to exercise arbitrary powers.
9. Punitive and retroactive decrees are sometimes enacted in order to punish perceived offenders.
10. The press is usually censored, and the judiciary kept under surveillance.

**Single Party** - A single party is a system of rule "in which a single political party forms the government and no other parties are permitted" to present candidates for elections (Wikipedia, 2010). It is not to be confused with a dominant party system where opposition parties are simply too weak to win or the dominant party engages in dirty tricks like gerrymandering, press bans, lawsuits, constitutional prohibitions of opposition parties and/or outright voter fraud to keep the opposition down (examples include Cambodia, Egypt, El Salvador, Ireland, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, Sweden, Venezuela, and many African nations) (O'Connor, 2009). Sometimes the term *de facto* single-party state is used to describe a dominant-party system where laws or practices prevent the opposition from legally getting power (Wikipedia, 2010). Currently, the following single party states exist in the world: China (Communist), Cuba (Communist), Eritrea (Marxist), North Korea

(Workers Party), Laos (Communist), Libya (Socialist), Syria (Beath Party), Turkmenistan (Democratic Party), and Vietnam (Communist).

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Examine the background to the Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu-led coup in January 1966.

### **3.3 Transitional**

A system of temporary or reconstructive rule while a nation is undergoing some crises from war, civil unrest, corruption, or disaster. An example in this regard was the Ernest Shonekan Interim Government instituted in Nigeria following the crisis that ensued after the military government annulled the June 12th 1993 Presidential elections. A transitional government can also function while a nation is forming or in the process of drafting a constitution. Recovery from war often requires a transitional government where military rule is imposed, and most military rule of the kind here relies heavily upon martial law, which is typically used to suspend civil liberties such as freedom of speech and assembly and/or the carrying of firearms. The doctrines of military necessity and orderly administration of territory (upon which martial law is based) also allows removal of officials, anti-corruption measures, and the possibility for economic reform. However, martial law itself is something of an oxymoron since it's not really any kind of law at all, but the suspension of standing law. The only real alternative to martial law occurs when the UN, the US or an international coalition imposes a temporary rule. Recent examples include: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Burundi, Iraq, Liberia, Maldives, Rwanda and Somalia (O'Connor, 2009).

**Democracy** - a system of rule by the people in which supreme power is vested in them and exercised directly by them or for them via their elected agents under a free electoral system. This is the dictionary definition, and it should be quickly noted that there is no accepted, scholarly definition of democracy (Dahl, 2000). There is sufficient agreement, however, that a democracy is always a creative work in progress that tries to institutionalise freedom, although the two terms - freedom and democracy - are not synonymous.

Democracy has certain principles which have universal application. First, is a competitive election. Second is the principle popular consultation, which means that in a democracy decisions are taken after the citizens have been widely consulted. Second, political sovereignty, this implies that in a democracy power belongs to the people (electorate). Third, legal and political equality. Legal equality refers to

equality before the law while political equality implies one man one vote, irrespective of social status, wealth, religion, etc. Fourth, majority rule and minority rights this implies that, the majority will always have their ways while the minority opinion must be respected. Fifth, fundamental human right which includes the right to life, liberty and property. Sixth, independent judiciary that guarantees the fundamental human rights of citizens; and seventh separation of powers so that no organ of government will be so strong to dominate the other.

It is correct to say that democracy as an experiment is built around time-honored principles such as these essential elements. It is also correct to distinguish a democracy by what it is not; which is to say that it can be defined by its opposite - an authoritarian or totalitarian regime. Most democracies in the world today are called "republics" because people power is represented indirectly via elected officials, a direct democracy only being possible in small groups. This was the case in the Greek City States of old, which were small enough in size and population to enable all adult male citizens (minus slaves, children, and women, who were then considered sub-human) to gather together in one hall and direct) participate in the taking and implementing of decisions affecting the community.

### **Types of Democracy**

In the modern day, the most prevalent form of democracy at the nation-state level, given its sheer geographical size, population and complexity, is what has come to be known as indirect or representative democracy. By this is meant a democracy in which the people participate in taking and implementing decisions on the common affairs of the community indirectly through their representatives elected or selected for that purpose. Countries that practice democracy are themselves called democracies to distinguish them from those that do not. Thus, According to Dahl (2000), democracy exists where the principal leaders of a political system are selected by competitive elections in which the bulk, of the population has the opportunity to participate.

There can be no meaningful democracy without a properly functioning party and (pressure group) process. It is obvious, therefore that parties and pressure groups constitute the heart of democracy -the more vigorous and healthy they are the better assured is the health of the democratic process itself. The quality of democracy also depends on political participation (Agbaje, 1999).

The growth of modern liberal democracies dates back from the 1970s and 1980s. The 1970s saw quite number of West European States

moving towards democratic rule after many years of authoritarianism. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was democratic movement in parts of the world, notably, in South America countries of Brazil and Argentina, in Africa and South East Asia e.g. South Korea, Taiwan. After the collapse of Soviet bloc in 1989, the Soviet satellite countries joined the clubs of democratic States.

The world today has fully embraced liberal democracy. In Africa, the movement for democratization has become the norm. According to Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) by 1994, not a single de jure one-party state remained in Africa. In its place, governments adopted new constitutional rules that formally guaranteed basic political liberties, placed limits on tenure and power of chief political executives, and allowed multiple parties to exist and compete in elections. Significant transformation had taken place in Africa. For instance, a successful democratic election was held in South Africa in 1994, in Nigeria in 1999, and most recently in Liberia, which marked the end of more than two decades of civil war.

### **A. Majoritarian and Consensus Democracy**

Perhaps the simplest typology is provided by Lijphart (1999) who argues that there are two basic types of democracies: majoritarian and consensus. A majoritarian system (also called *the Westminster Model*) has two-party elections, a one-party executive and cabinet, a unicameral legislature, and a weak judiciary (e.g., England and its former colonies) while a consensus system has a power-sharing, multiparty-coalition executive, a consensus-oriented legislature, and strong judicial review (e.g. Switzerland and Germany).

### **B. Parliamentary and Presidential Democracies**

Common distinctions are also made between parliamentary democracies and presidential democracies. In a parliamentary democracy, like England, the lowest house of Parliament is venerated or honored; i.e., the House of Commons. The upper house; i.e., the House of Lords, is just for show and subordinate to the lower house. The House of Commons has a "Question Time" every Wednesday when the Prime Minister (as first among equals) must answer questions regarding the activities of government. There is seating for the public and debates are broadcast live on the internet. There are parliamentary commissions which look into public complaints about government maladministration. Cabinet officials also must come from the Parliament.

The most distinguishing features of parliamentary democracies, however, are the ongoing reviews, checks and balances by the

legislative branch and a cabinet government of the Westminster type which produces a fusion of executive/legislative power. Przeworski *et al.* (1996) have found that parliamentary democracies last longer, are easier to govern, and are arguably "better" than other systems of political rule.

It is a fact that the Presidentialist system first evolved in and became the model of the United States, and is widely copied in Latin America but less widely copied elsewhere (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997). Hence, it is sometimes (but not often) called the American Model.

Presidential democracies usually exist in one of two forms: (1) a presidential system (which strongly separates the executive from the legislative branch by making the president perform combined or multiple roles -- such as head of state and head of government as well as commander-in-chief - for a fixed term); and (2) a semi-presidential system (where the president and prime minister, or vice-president, can come from different parties - called cohabitation - and the legislature can force the President's cabinet to resign through votes of no confidence). Presidential democracies are also sometimes referred to as congressional systems because there almost always is an elected legislative body called a Congress which co-exists with the president on the basis of the separation of powers principle and also on a fixed term.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Discuss Nigeria's experience in practising consensus democracy with special emphasis on the current debate on zoning of the presidency in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Confronted by the vast array of political forms, political scientists have attempted to classify and categorise, to develop typologies and models, or in some other way to bring analytic order to the bewildering variety of data.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have examined six types of political systems, their main features and examples.



## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Using the key features of democracy as your guide, examine the practice of democracy in Nigeria since 1999.
2. Attempt an assessment of the regime of (Gen. Sani Abacha, Nigeria's military ruler from 1993 to 1998).
3. Examine the issues that led to the institution of the Ernest Shonekan Interim Government in Nigeria.

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## **UNIT 2 POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT**

### **CONTENTS**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Government can be described as a set of institutions performing specified functions. A fundamental characteristic of government is that it creates and allocates values. Indeed, it is a fundamental concept of politics that any governmental action, be this the laws passed by legislatures or the rules made and applied by administrators or decisions made by the Courts, have the intent or the effect of creating and “allocating values.” The point, of course, is that governmental actions which seek to create or promote certain values also involve the allocation of values among the diverse groups composing the society and generally entail the unequal (although not necessarily unjust) distribution of values. In addition, governmental actions also entail uneven maximisation pattern among values. In other words, governments discriminate as to what values to create or promote among competing values; and which societal groups benefit from what values. Significantly, the creation and allocation of values through governmental action entails costs to some elements of society in that the maximisation of a set of values invariably requires some costs in terms of minimisation or deprivation of other values.

A related issue derives from the philosophical speculation concerning the end of government. Government, it is generally believed, ought to promote the public interest and all governments invariably justify their actions as being in the public interest. A venerable notion of politics held by political philosophers from Aristotle to the present is that it is a public activity that involves public purposes, or public interests, or a public good, or some distinctly 'public' aspect of human life. This

concept of the public interest entails the ideas that governmental actions ought to create and promote values that are for the good of the general public and that are made with the welfare of most of society in mind. Commenting along this line, Jeremy Bentham has argued that the task of government is to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number (cf. Baradat, 1997).

Ascribing a public interest concern to governmental actions will no doubt generate much controversy. In any case, such an understanding of the purpose of government reflects poorly the popular perception of government as the self-seeking and self-promoting activity of ambitious politicians. Neither common experience nor systematic research would seem to give much support to the postulation that government is motivated by a concern for the public good. At best, the notion of public interest could only have been a normative expectation of what ought to be the end of government.

A key attribute of government is its authority, that is, its right to make, administer and enforce legally binding policies and rules on its citizens. The notion that governmental actions are under-guarded by authority dates back to Aristotle. In *Politics*, Aristotle argued against those who say that all kinds of authority are identical and sought to distinguish the authority of those who - occupy governmental roles from other forms of authority such as the master over the slave. Government, by this argument, functions with respect to society as a whole and its rules are legally binding on all people within the government's legal jurisdiction. Indeed, Aristotle defines the *polis*, or political association as the "most sovereign and inclusive association" (Aristotle, 1962). The German scholar, Max Weber has extended our understanding of the authoritative basis of governmental action by postulating that an association should be called political "if and in so far as the enforcement of its order is carried out continually within a given territorial area by the application and threat of physical force on the part of the administrative staff (Gerth & Mills, 1946).

According to Encyclopædia Britannica (2009), the functions of the state are self-preservation, supervision and resolution of conflicts, regulation of the economy, protection of political and social rights, and the provision of goods and services. The next question to be asked is, how does the government perform its functions? What are the instruments through which the business of government is executed? Regardless of the type of political system used by any nation or society, there is a very typical and well-used set of divisions in governments. Government is divided into different segments, branches, or organs. These organs which fulfill the general functions of government are made up mainly of the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. This unit will look at

each structure in a general sense, and the role performed by the structure.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define and describe the executive branch of government, its various types, functions and limitations to the powers of the executive president
- describe the Legislative arm of government, its functions and powers, the types of legislature, reasons for the declining powers of the legislature, meaning of bills and the process of bills passing by the legislature
- define and describe the Judiciary, its functions and how to maintain judicial independence
- define the theory of separation of powers
- describe the doctrine of checks and balances.

## **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

### **3.1 The Executive**

Generally speaking, the executive branch of government executes the laws created by the legislative branch, though this general rule is modified in some political systems. For example, in a totalitarian dictatorship, there may be no legislature, and hence the executive also makes laws.

The executive branch is sometimes divided into two parts, a head-of-state and a chief executive. The head-of-state is the person, or group, that represents the nation to other nations. The chief executive is responsible for all those roles of the executive that are not handled by the head-of-state. The power held by these two positions is not consistent. In Britain, for example, the head-of-state is the monarch, who has little actual power over the executive branch. The Prime Minister is the chief executive and holds a great deal of power. In France, the President is the head-of-state and has a great deal of power over the executive. The Prime Minister has been likened to a junior partner in the executive.

The Israeli President is elected by the Knesset and is largely ceremonial, much like Britain's monarch. The Prime Minister holds the bulk of the power. In Russia, the roles are again reversed, with the President holding the bulk of the power and the Prime Minister being a junior partner. In the United States, the President is both the head-of-state and

the chief executive. While the head-of-state is almost always a single person, the chief executive has sometimes been a group, or committee, or people.

The method for choosing the executive varies greatly. In some cases, such as in Britain, the head-of-state is a hereditary monarch and the chief executive is the Prime Minister chosen from the Parliament. The people, then, have no choice in the head-of-state and only a small segment of the population have a choice of the Prime Minister (the Prime Minister is chosen from all the Members of Parliament (MP) from the majority party - each MP is elected in a local election). In Israel, the President is chosen by the Knesset and the Prime Minister is a Member of the Knesset. In the United States, the President is elected, indirectly through the Electoral College, by the people.

The terms spent by the executive in office also varies. Monarchs generally hold life terms. Members of parliaments hold maximum terms, though votes of no confidence in parliament can force new elections sooner. Other executives hold their positions for a fixed term, such as four years in the United States and Nigeria. In dictatorial systems, terms are for life.

### **3.1.2 Types of Executive**

#### **A. Parliamentary Executive**

The parliamentary executive refers essentially to the prime minister in a cabinet system of government. He emerges as prime minister by virtue of his leadership of the majority party in government. Real executive powers are vested in the cabinet, consisting of the prime minister and a number of ministers. Hence the executive is the head of government but he/she is equal to other ministers. It is in this sense that the executive in a parliament system is referred to as first among equals. The executive holds office as long as he commands majority in the parliament. A vote of no confidence by parliament forces the prime minister and his cabinet (ministers) to resign *en bloc*. The classical example of a parliamentary executive is Britain.

#### **B. Presidential Executive**

A presidential executive is one who is both the head of state and head of government. He is elected by a majority of eligible voters across the country. Such an executive holds office for a fixed term, and can only be removed from office through a process of impeachment. Nigeria has a presidential

### 3.1.3 Functions of the Executive

1. **Policy formulation:** The executive formulates policies that guide the general administration of the state.
2. **Implementation of policies:** The executive also executes or implements the laws made in the legislature or policies made by it (the executive) and ensure obedience to them.
3. **Giving Assent to Bills:** The head of the executive arm signs or gives assent to bills before they can become laws. However, the president can veto any bill brought before him for signature which he does not support.
4. **Initiation of Bills to the Legislature:** The executive sometimes initiates and submits bills to the legislature to pass into law for good governance of the country.
5. **Military Functions:** It controls the armed forces and declares war against any external or internal aggressors. (The head of the executive arm of government is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces).
6. **Maintenance of Law and Order:** The executive uses the police to maintain law and order in a country through the enforcement of law and order.
7. **Provision of Welfare Services:** It is the executive that performs the main function of the government which is provision of welfare services to the citizens.
8. **Maintenance of External Relations:** The executive maintains external relations, signs treaties, etc, with other countries especially friendly ones. In carrying out this duty, the executive normally visits other countries, attends world conferences and meetings such as that of the United Nations and also receives visiting heads of state or representatives of other countries such as ambassadors to his/her own country.
9. **Making of Budgets:** It is the executive that prepares the total proposed financial expenditure.
10. **Pardoning of Convicts:** The executive, through the powers granted to it by the constitution, may reduce the sentence passed against a convict, or delay the execution of the sentence.

11. **Granting of amnesty:** The executive may, from time to time, grant an amnesty to certain categories of state offenders. This applies especially to political offences.
12. **Inaugurating and Dissolution and of the Parliament:** The executive has power, in some countries such as Britain and Nigeria, to summon and dissolve parliament.
13. **Appointment of Judicial Officials.** The executive appoints the Chief Justice of the state, judges of the Supreme Court, and other high ranking officials *of* the judiciary.
14. **Delegated Legislation:** While the legislature makes the major laws, the executive is delegated the power to make minor laws like statutory orders, edicts, etc. in turn, the executive, in exercise of delegated power, issues statutory orders and rules for the governance of the country.
15. **General Administration:** The executive carries out general administrative functions like recruitment of civil servants and exercising disciplinary control over them, creation of employment opportunities for the citizens, provision of food, shelter and rendering of other essential services to the people of the country, etc.

### 3.1.4 Limitations to the Powers of the Executive President

1. In a presidential system, the president can be impeached by the legislature if he violates or abuses the provisions of the constitution.
2. He must present the list of his ministers, judges and ambassadors to the legislature for approval.
3. The term of the president is fixed by the constitution for a limited period.
4. The constitutional review power of the Supreme Court can declare null and void any unconstitutional action of the president.
5. As sometimes happens, the control of the legislature by another party other than that of the president, acts as a strong check on the powers of the president.



## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List and explain seven functions of the Executive.

### 3.2 The Legislature

Generally speaking, the legislative branch makes the laws. Legislatures usually consist of many members chosen by the people of the country. Under a parliamentary system, the legislature remains in power for a fixed term or until a vote of no confidence is taken and the majority loses the vote.

In a presidential system like that of the United States and Nigeria, members of the legislature hold their office for a certain fixed term. After elections, a majority party is determined, but there is no such thing as a vote of no confidence. Though parties play a major role in the selection of legislative leaders, individual members of the legislature are free to vote however they wish without fear of bringing down the government as in a parliamentary system.

Another common system involves a legislature composed of one party. Such systems are common in single party systems such as China's National People's Congress. Though dissent is generally allowed in such a system, the decisions of the party are rubber-stamped by the legislature.

#### 3.2.1 Functions and Powers of the Legislature

- 1. Lawmaking:** One of the main functions of the legislature is making of laws that guide and direct the affairs of a country. The legislature considers and, where necessary, passes into law bills brought before it by its members, and by the executive. The legislature can repeal, amend or add to existing laws.
- 2. Constitution making and amendment:** It is the legislature that draws up the constitution, and it plays a major role in the procedures for amending the constitution.
- 3. Approval of executive appointments:** The legislature has power to consider and, where necessary, approve appointments made by the executive.
- 4. Power to remove the executive:** In a presidential system of government, the president can be impeached by the legislature if he fails to abide by the tenets of the constitution; while in a parliamentary system, the prime minister and his cabinet can be

removed through a vote of no confidence by parliament. The legislature can also remove or recommend to be removed, any judicial officer found wanting in his duties.

5. **Budget approval:** The legislature considers and approves the national budget, prepared by the executive. In this way, the legislature controls the running of the economy.
6. **Training of future leaders:** Membership of the legislature affords one the opportunity of having requisite knowledge and experience to use in running the country at the highest level, in the future.
7. **Approval of treaties:** International treaties negotiated by the executive must be approved by the legislature before they are ratified by the executive.
8. **Judicial functions:** The legislature in some countries serves as the highest judicial authority or the last appeal court. In Britain, for instance, the House of Lords serves this purpose.
9. **Political education:** Through its debates and committee hearings, the legislature helps to educate the people on the political situation in the country. Legislatures maintain ties with their constituencies through newspapers, radio and television.
10. **Representation and expression of the people's interests:** The legislature is a platform through which members of the public, through their elected representatives, express their opinion. Individual members of the public and groups make – known their needs as well as their views on various national issues through their representatives in the legislature.
11. **Ratification of international treaties:** The legislature approves treaties entered into with other countries by the president or prime minister.
12. **Investigation of citizens' complaints:** In many countries, the legislature is responsible for establishing and/or supervising the 'public complaints' agency-- popularly known as the ombudsman. This department investigates complaints of members of the public against government departments, agencies and institutions.

### **3.2.2 Types of Legislature**

The legislature can be classified into two: The unicameral and the bicameral.

#### **Unicameral Legislature**

This refers to a situation in a country in which there is only one legislative house or chamber. Examples of countries operating the unicameral legislative system are Kenya, Greece, Israel and Gambia.

#### **Bicameral Legislature**

This is the type of legislature with two (legislative) houses or bodies. Usually one of the houses is identified as the lower house, while the other is the upper house. The lower house or chamber is often made up of members directly elected on the basis of universal, equal and secret suffrage while the upper house consists of more experienced men and women, some of whom are sometimes appointed to the house. Nigeria and the USA have a bicameral legislature.

### **3.2.3 Declining Powers of the Legislature**

In most countries the power of the legislature has declined over the years, while the powers of the executive continue to wax stronger.

Reasons for the decline in legislative powers include:

1. Limitations are imposed on the powers of the legislature by pressure groups, public opinion and political parties.
2. Most legislative houses lack technical experts; and since most bills are technical in nature, many members of the legislature do not understand the content of such bills.
3. The need for the exercise of emergency powers by the executive is another reason for the decline in legislative powers.

### **3.2.4 Bills**

A bill is a proposed law to be discussed in parliament in order to become law. For a bill to be turned into law, the head of state or president must sign or assent to the bill.

**A) Types of bills**

1. **Appropriation bill:** An appropriation bill deals with the total estimated revenue and expenditure of government in a financial year. This bill originates from the executive arm of government.
2. **Private member's bill:** This is a bill brought to parliament by a member of the legislature (the parliament).
3. **Public bill:** The bill comes from the executive arm of government, and deals with matters or problems affecting the whole segments of a country.
4. **Money bill:** It has to do with specific projects involving expenditure, emanating from the executive.

**B) Stages of passing a bill into law in parliament**

1. **First reading:** This is the stage at which the draft of a bill is presented to the clerk of the house, a minister or member of parliament—depending on the type of bill. The clerk of the house normally notifies members of parliament about the presence of the bill; and the title is read out before them. It is printed (in leaflets), and circulated to all members for study before the second reading at a future date.
2. **Second reading:** At this stage, the purpose of the bill is explained to the house by the person who brought it.
3. **Committee stage:** The bill at this stage is referred to a committee which can be a committee of the whole house, or a standing committee—depending on the importance of the bill.

A committee of the whole house comprises all members, presided over by the speaker of the house or president of the senate. The bill is considered section by section, and amendments proposed and voted for less important bills are referred to standing committees of members of parliament.

4. **Report stage:** All the findings of the various standing committees are reported to the house (or the bill placed before the house), after all necessary amendments have been made. The chairman then reads the bill in its amended form to the house.

5. **Third reading:** This is the final stage, at which a thorough look is taken at the bill to correct any errors connected with the drafting or amendment. After this, vote is taken on the bill before it is taken to the president for his signature. Once the president has signed, the bill automatically becomes law.

### **SELF -ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Describe the stages of passing a Bill into law in the Parliament.

### **3.3 The Judiciary**

Generally, the judicial branch interprets the laws of the nation. The structure of the judiciary varies greatly from one nation to another, based on the legal tradition. The most familiar may be that of the United States, where there is a Supreme Court that is the final court of appeals in the nation. Below the Supreme Court are a series of inferior courts, starting with the federal court where most cases are heard, and several levels of appeals courts. Britain has a similar set up, but the House of Lords is the court of final appeal.

Israel has several judicial systems - the secular system is divided into general law courts and tribunals. The general court has a Supreme Court, district courts, and magistrates. Personal matters, such as marriage and divorce disputes, are handled by religious courts. There are four systems of religious court; Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Druze.

In Nigeria, the judiciary is made up of magistrates, judges and chief judges-who preside over such courts as the Customary courts, Sharia Courts as exists in 12 states in northern Nigeria today, Magistrate and High Courts, as well as Appeal and Supreme Courts. They also preside over tribunals, and administrative courts.

Selection of judges is another point of comparison. Generally, the selection process is divided between appointed and elected. Appointed judges are thought to be free from political pressure, and thus are able to best represent the people and the law. Elected judges are thought to best represent the will of the people. Terms vary from life to several years, in both systems of selection.

### 3.3.1 Functions of the Judiciary

1. **Interpretation of Laws:** this is the primary and revenue of the government in every new function of the judiciary in a country.
2. **Dispute Adjudication:** The judiciary adjudicates in disputes between the executive and the legislature, between other government departments, between individual citizens, between citizens and governments, and between organisations/groups and themselves or government.
3. **Punishment of Law Breakers:** As the watchdog of the law, the judiciary makes sure that laws are obeyed and those who refuse to obey the laws are severely punished.
4. **Guardian of the Constitution:** The judiciary interprets the constitution, and protects it against violation. It can declare any action of government unconstitutional, and therefore null and void.
5. **Determination of Election Petitions:** The judiciary performs the function of hearing and determining election petitions in order to ascertain true winners. For examples, the final outcome of the three presidential elections in Nigeria in 1999, 2003, and 2007 were decided by the Supreme Court.
6. **Protection of Citizens' Rights and Liberties:** It is the function of the judiciary to protect the citizens' fundamental rights as enshrined in the constitution. It is as a result of this function, performed by the judiciary that has made it to be described as the last hope and defender of the oppressed or the hope of the common man.
7. **Lawmaking Function:** Judicial officers advise on matters relating to constitutional preparation and amendment.

### 3.3.2 How to Maintain Judicial Independence

The independence of the judiciary essentially refers to the insulation of the judiciary from the control of the executive, the legislature and/ or any other body. This means that judges should have full powers to try cases brought before them without fear or favour. The independence of the judiciary can be enhanced through the following means:

1. Judges should be appointed from proven members of the bar. This should be based on the advice of a body of knowledgeable

persons. In Nigeria, such a body is the Judiciary Advisory Commission.

2. Judges and magistrates should have some level of immunity, as obtains in almost every country, from prosecution for anything they say in the performance of their duties.
3. Judicial officers should enjoy security of tenure, and may only be removed on grounds of ill-health or gross misbehaviour.
4. Judicial officers should be well paid, and their remuneration should not be subject to executive or legislative manipulation. Also, funding for the judiciary should not come from the executive but from an independent source guaranteed by the constitution.
5. Judges must not belong to any political party in order not to be influenced by political considerations in the discharge of their duties.
6. Judicial officers must be seen to be persons of high moral standard. In this way, they will gain the confidence of the people.
7. Judges must be provided with adequate security for their personal safety.
8. The principle of separation of powers-with its in-built checks and balances should apply especially regarding the judiciary.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

How can the independence of the Judiciary be guaranteed?

### **3.4 The Theory of Separation of Powers**

Separation of powers may be defined as the division of governmental political powers that exist in any given state into the three organs of government. What this principle is saying is that all the amount of governmental political that exists in a given state should not be rested or consolidated in one person or one organ. That if these powers are divided into the three of government – the Legislature, executive, and judiciary, that the chances of dictatorship or tyranny will be reduced.

Political philosophers like Locke, Bodin, Rousseau, Aristotle, and Plato had earlier expressed their views on the principle of separation of powers. However, it was the French political thinker and jurist Baron de

Montesquieu who developed and popularised the principle of separation of powers in his book entitled “*Espirit des Lois*” which means the spirit of the laws published in 1748. According to Montesquieu, if rights, liberty and freedom of citizens are to be maintained and guaranteed, then the three organs of government must be separated and entrusted to different people to administer. That there will be chaos, dictatorship, tyranny and oppression if there is no separation of powers. In other words, the governmental function of law making, execution and adjudication should be handled by different organs of government without interference.

### **3.5 The Doctrine of Checks and Balances**

According to the principles of checks and balances, separation of powers alone cannot prevent abuse of power, constitutional violation and naked use of power as the different organs of government can each decide to misbehave in its own sphere of influence and powers. Also important, according to the advocates of checks and balances, is the need to use one organ of government to check the activities of the other organs, this is where the powers of one organ are used to check the powers of other organs. The doctrine of checks and balances does not advocate fusion of the three organs of government in the performance of their constitutional functions. Rather, it insists that in-as-much as these organs will be mutually independent; they should act as watchdog of each other to avoid the misuse of power and to avoid the immobilism that will arise in the performance of governmental functions if each of them decides to work on its own without recourse to the others.

The doctrine of checks and balances applies in both parliamentary and presidential systems of government. For instance, the executive can veto the legislature’s bills, it can also dissolve parliament, as well as make judicial appointment and promotions. On the other hand, the legislature can check the executive’s power to appoint ministers and declare war using the military; it can set up committees to investigate activities of executives and has the power to impeach the president for gross misconduct. In like manner, the judiciary has the power to review both the executive and judicial actions. It has the power to declare the activities of either executive or the legislature null and void and without effect (Addison-Wesley Publishers, 1986).

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Regardless of the type of political system used by any nation or society, there is a very typical and well-used set of divisions in governments. Government is usually divided into different segments, branches, or



organs. The main organs of government in any modern political system are the executive, legislature and judiciary.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about the three main organs of government, their features and processes. You have also learnt that even though these organs have separated powers and hence function independently, they do not function in isolation from one another: they are related by the system of checks and balances.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. “The judiciary is indispensable in any modern government”. Discuss.
2. Examine the principle of checks and balances.
3. “The executive is key in modern day government”. Discuss this in the relation to the roles of the executive in Nigeria.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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## **UNIT 3 POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND DISTRIBUTION OF POWER**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

There are a few other notable differences between political systems that should be mentioned, and which can be used to characterise a country's government. A key issue is the distribution of power. Using feature of, we can classify political systems into unitary, federal, and confederal states. In this unit, we shall elaborate and discuss the key features of these government types.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- define and describe the unitary system of government, its features, merits and demerits
- define and describe the federal system of government or federalism, its characteristics, merits and demerits, and the

difference between a federal system and a Quasi-federal system of government

- define and describe a confederation, its characteristics, and its merits.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Unitary System of Government**

A unitary system of government is one in which there is a single central government that does not share power with any other body. It may only delegate power to other subordinate bodies. A unitary government adopts a unitary constitution. It is desirable in a small state with low population. This is not to say that it is restricted to these states. Examples of countries with a unitary system of government are Britain, France, Ghana, Italy, Sweden and Gambia.

##### **3.1.1 Features or Characteristics of a Unitary Government**

1. Power emanates only from the central government.
2. There is no constitutional division of powers between the central government and lower units.
3. The constitution may not be supreme, for the central government may modify it with its powers. As a result, the constitution need not be rigid.
4. National administrations is usually organized at two levels-central and local. The local authorities are subordinate to the central government.
5. An important feature of the unitary system of government is parliamentary supremacy.
6. Conflicts between the central government and the subordinate bodies are almost non-existent in a unitary system.
7. The citizens often owe allegiance only to the central authority.
8. There is usually no 'final authority' to decide on conflicts of jurisdiction between the centre and the local units.
9. A unitary government adopts a unitary constitution.

### **3.1.2 Merits or Benefits of a Unitary System of Government**

1. There is only one source of authority, thereby making it easy for the citizens to identify with the supreme power in a state.
2. Owing to the absence of competing centres of constitutional powers, conflicts of jurisdiction are eliminated.
3. A unitary system of government is usually strong and stable.
4. The loyalty of the citizens in a unitary system of government is shown only to the central authority.
5. Multiplicity of offices and services in a unitary system is reduced. This also reduces administrative costs.
6. The decisions of government are quick, thereby saving time.
7. The constitution of a unitary system of government can easily be amended to suit political, social and economic changes in a country.

### **3.1.3 Demerits of a Unitary System of Government**

1. A unitary system of government may promote dictatorship because of the concentration of powers in a single central authority.
2. In a unitary system of government, the power of the local authorities is drastically reduced.
3. The central authority in a unitary system is overburdened with power and responsibility.
4. Minorities are often dominated by the majority group in a unitary system of government.
5. It lowers local initiative as a result of relative lack of autonomy.
6. The unitary system of government tends to make government appear very far from the people, especially those in the remote parts of the country.
7. As a result of the centralization of political administration, unitarism does not provide sufficient training ground for wider political participation.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Highlight the key features of a unitary government.

### **3.2 Federal System of Government or Federalism**

A federal system of government is one in which powers are constitutionally shared between the central government (that represents the whole country) and the component units of government variously called regions, local authorities, states, provinces and cantons-which are constitutionally recognised and largely autonomous. Conditions for the adoption of federalism include cultural and ethnic differences, fears of the domination, economic factors, the size of the country nearness of government to the people, preservation of local authority, and security reasons. We shall discuss these factors in our discussion of the Nigerian federation unit.

#### **3.2.1 Characteristics of Federalism**

According to Wheare (1964), the desire and capacity for federalism entails a number of prerequisites involving among others ‘geographic proximity, hope for economic advantage, wishes for independence, earlier political ties and insecurity and similarities of traditional values’.

Following on the classical model popularised by K. C. Wheare, Ronald Watts has drawn up a list of structural characteristics distinctive to federations:

1. Two orders of government, each in direct contact with its citizens
2. An official, constitutional sharing of legislative and executive powers and a sharing of revenue sources between the two orders of government, to ensure that each has certain sectors of true autonomy
3. Designated representation of distinct regional opinions within federal decision-making institutions, usually guaranteed by the specific structure of the federal Second Chamber
4. A supreme written constitution that is not unilaterally modifiable but requires the consent of a large proportion of federation members
5. An arbitration mechanism (in the form of courts or a referendum) to resolve intergovernmental disputes
6. Procedures and institutions designed to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration in cases of shared domains or inevitable overlapping of responsibilities (Watts, 2001, p.8).

Ideally, nations decide to federate due to one or a combination of the following three factors—socio-economic, political, or security considerations. In terms of socio-economic factors, it is assumed that some of the following factors are pertinent, namely the presence of shared values, access to a larger domestic market, access to a seaport, access to higher standards of living and the enhancement of welfare policies. Politically, the considerations include the strengthening of existing relations with the co-federating units and bringing about a stronger voice internationally. Security wise, it is for the unit in question to be able to protect itself from real or imagined threats to its survival as an entity.

### **3.2.2 Merits of Federalism**

1. The division of power among the component units fosters rapid development in a federal system of government.
2. Federalism brings together people of different political, religious, historical, geographical and social backgrounds—thereby promoting unity among them.
3. Smaller units enjoy their autonomy in a federal system.
4. Federalism discourages concentration of power in a single authority, thereby preventing the emergence of a dictator.
5. Federalism helps to bring government nearer to the people as a result of the division of the country into relatively smaller administrative units.
6. It encourages local political participation.
7. Federalism encourages the expansion of the local market for enhanced economic development.
8. Duplication of offices in a federal system fosters the creation of more employment opportunities.

### **3.2.3 Demerits of a Federal System of Government**

1. Federalism leads to unnecessary duplication of organs and levels of government. This makes the running of government very expensive.

2. Federalism results in a considerable waste of time, as a result of the consultations among the various levels of government before important decisions could be taken.
3. Federalism makes the coordination of state activities difficult, because of the many component units of government.
4. Despite the fact that powers in a federal system are divided between the central and component units, the fear of some groups dominating the others still exists in many federal states. This fear sometimes results in threats of secession.
5. Sharing of wealth between the component units, and among the component units themselves, often give rise to conflicts in a federal state. In Nigeria, for instance, the problem of revenue allocation is a very serious one.
6. There is usually tension in the exercise of constitutional powers between the central authority and the component units.
7. Federalism tends to lead to dual loyalty-people are sometimes first loyal to their component units before showing allegiance to the central authority.

### **3.2.4 Quasi-Federal System of Government**

The term quasi-federal is used to describe the system of government that is somewhat between the federal and unitary systems. It is an incomplete federal system of government. An example is the system introduced by the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 in Nigeria. Many scholars have also described a system that has all the trappings of federalism, or that calls itself as a federal state, but which in essence do not fully practice the tenets of federalism as a quasi federal system of government. In essence therefore, a federal system can be described as 'quasi' when power is not well defined, nor fully shared between the various levels of government, and when the federal or central government can override regional powers. Its sole advantage is that it may succeed in keeping together the different peoples that make it up thereby permitting them to reap some of the benefits of actual federalism. Nigeria under military rule was described as such because the military did not usually abide by the tenets of federalism for example power sharing between the federal and state governments or the supremacy of constitutional provisions. Even now under a democracy, some people prefer to call Nigeria a quasi federal state because they feel dissatisfied about the way federalism is practiced, especially when compared with 'ideal' federal countries like the USA. However, while there are shortcomings in Nigeria's practice

of federal governance, the point need to be stated that there is no perfect federal system, and that federal institutional arrangement, as Livingstone (1952) reminds us, must be structured to reflect the society it represents. Thus, besides the problem of its actual practice, some of the problems in Nigerian federalism do not stem from federalism *per se*, but from the challenges of unity and diversity which the federal system was designed to address in the first place.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

To what extent is Nigeria a quasi-federal state?

### **3.3 Confederation**

Confederation is the type of government in which sovereign states come together as autonomous bodies to form a loose political union, in which the central government is subordinate to the component governments. Each autonomous state is sovereign, and has the constitutional right to secede from the confederation. An example was the former Confederation of Senegambia-made up of sovereign Senegal and Gambia.

#### **3.3.1 Characteristics of a Confederation**

1. The component sovereign states are more powerful than the central government.
2. Actual powers of government lie with the component units-making it difficult for the central authority to enforce its decisions on the autonomous states.
3. Since the union is a loose one, the component states have constitutional powers to secede.
4. The allegiance of the citizens is usually more to the component sovereign states, than to the centre.
5. The component states have the constitutional right to have their own army and police.
6. A confederal state usually possesses little political stability.
7. The component states retain their sovereignty and identity in a confederation.



### 3.3.2 Merits of a Confederation

1. A confederation enables the component states to retain their individual identities.
2. It makes it possible for a union to be forged among people of different cultural backgrounds.
3. It brings weak component states together to form a strong nation able to defend themselves as one against any external aggression.
4. A confederation reduces the fear of domination of one state by the other because each autonomous state retains its identity.
5. Members in a confederal state cannot be compelled to remain in the union because of their constitutional right to secession.
6. A confederation is economically beneficial to the autonomous states that have come together, as a result of possible economic projects jointly implemented for the benefit of members of the union.
7. It enables many otherwise sovereign states to speak with one voice on issues relating to foreign policy.

### 3.3.3 Demerits of Confederation

1. The component units' right to secede is a source of serious instability in a confederal system.
2. Since the component units retain more power than the centre, the authority of the central government to speak and act for the nation, is undermined.
3. The citizens of a confederal state pay more allegiance to their own governments than to the central government. This further reduces the power and authority which the state ought to command over its citizens.
4. It does not encourage political unity, which is vital to the security and development of the nation.
5. A confederal system does not encourage even development of the country.
6. The power of regional governments to retain their own police and armed forces fosters the potential of an outbreak of civil hostilities.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Political systems can be classified according to the distribution of power into unitary, federal and confederal. A unitary system of government is one in which there is a single central government that does not share power with any other body. A federal system of government is one in which powers are constitutionally shared between the central government (that represents the whole country) and the component units of government variously called regions, local authorities, states, provinces and cantons-which are constitutionally recognised and largely autonomous. Confederation is the type of government in which sovereign states come together as autonomous bodies to form a loose political union, in which the central government is subordinate to the component governments.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have examined the unitary, federal and confederal systems of government, their features, merits and demerits. We have learnt that Nigeria is a federal state, even though there is a predilection by some scholars to describe it as quasi-federal because power is not fully shared between the various levels of government, and because the federal system of government has not been able to satisfactorily meet the needs of the society. Finally, you have learnt that while there are shortcomings in Nigeria's practice of federal governance, there is no perfect federal system, and federal institutional arrangements are structured to reflect the society they represents, and they must always adapt to meet the needs of the federal society.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What is a unitary system of government? What are its key features?
2. Outline the main features of a federal system.
3. What reasons can you adduce for the unattractiveness of the confederal system of government?

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## **UNIT 4 THE FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is a Federal Republic with a US-style presidential system. The Nigerian federalism has been described as “life-blood” of Nigeria’s survival as a multi-ethnic political entity (Onwudiwe & Suberu, 2005). The bicameral National Assembly comprises a 109-member Senate and a 360-member House of Representatives. Each of the 36 states has an elected state governor and a state legislature. In this unit, we will examine elaborately the federal system of government in Nigeria, in order to get knowledge of the actual distribution of power in a political system as discussed in the preceding unit. Also, given its importance in the political life of the country, a focus on the federal system will give us a good grasp of the politics and government in Nigeria.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- trace the origin of federalism in Nigeria
- highlight the major constitutional conferences towards federalism in Nigeria
- list the factors that necessitated the adoption of federalism
- describe the structure of Nigerian federalism
- describe the features of Nigerian federalism

- explain practical relevance of the federal idea to Nigeria
- identify the problems of Nigerian federalism.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Origin of Federalism in Nigeria**

Nigerian federalism started-during her colonial experience with the British. The colonial administration since the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, under a governor-general, Frederick Lugard till the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, treated Nigeria a unitary country. Bernard Bourdillon as governor of Nigeria had in 1939, divided Nigeria into three-the Western, Eastern and Northern provinces. These provinces became regions under Governor Richards whose constitution (1947) created a council for each region. The succeeding Macpherson Constitution (1951) further created the position of a lieutenant governor as well as an executive council 'in the regions. In all these, however, ultimate power still resided in the central government and the regional councils-Legislative and Executive-still remained largely mere advisory bodies to the central administration.

It was the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954, which fully introduced a federal system into the administration of Nigeria by devolving considerable power on the regional administrations who could formulate policies and execute programmes of their own. The central government then focused on an exclusive list of nationally important matters like defence, external affairs, customs and currency.

The Independence Constitution of 1960 worked on this federal structure with more powers to the regional governments. The military government under General Yakubu Gowon, in 1967 created twelve states shifting the focus on divisions from regions to states. This continued under the 1979 Constitution with 19 states, and the 1989 Constitution with thirty states which gave greater autonomy and prominence to local governments. Today, Nigeria has thirty six states.

#### **3.2 Major Constitutional Conferences towards Federalism in Nigeria**

- A) The idea of constitutional conferences started from the time of Sir John Macpherson as governor of Nigeria in 1948. In order to review the 1946 Constitution, a committee was appointed. Members were all unofficial members of the legislative council, three chief commissioners, the attorney-general, financial secretary and the chief secretary as the chairman of the committee.

The terms of reference of the committee were to gather public opinion at all levels in order to find solutions to complex issues. From 10 to 21 October 1949, the drafting committee met and recommended that:

1. A federal system should be adopted in the country.
2. A regional legislature with legislative powers on subjects like local government, health, education; forestry, fishing, agriculture, town and regional planning, should replace the purely advisory legislative council.
3. A central legislature to be called the House of Representatives and a central executive to be called the council of state should be set up.
4. The central legislature should be empowered to review, refer or even reject regional legislations which interfered with the general interest of Nigeria as a whole.
5. The inter-regional boundaries between the provinces of Ilorin, Oyo and Ondo; Kabba, Ondo and Benin; and Benin and Onitsha should be referred to a commission of enquiry which would make recommendations to the governor.
6. A council of state with the governor as president, six official members, and twelve unofficial members appointed from the House of Representatives should be constituted to formulate policy and direct executive actions.
7. The elected unofficial members of the House of Representatives should be made official members, each responsible for one or more subjects, and not departments.

## **B) 1950 Central Conference in Ibadan**

Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January 1950, the conference met in Ibadan to review the constitution. There were 50 members with 25 as unofficial members from the legislative council, and the remaining half drawn from the three regions and the colony of Lagos. The recommendations of the drafting committee which were adopted by the committee of the delegates were that:

1. The regional governments should be given more autonomy within a united Nigeria.
2. Nigerians should be given ministerial responsibilities.
3. There should be the creation of larger and more representative regional legislatures with real legislative power.

The Northern delegates added the following:

1. That if the experts' investigation showed that a region had not been given its due in the past, such region should be given a block grant to make up part of what it had previously lost.
2. That the recommendations of the experts' commission and the constitution should take effect simultaneously.

### **C) London Constitutional Conference of 1953**

The defects of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 necessitated the 1953 London constitutional conference. It was made up of 19 delegates made up of 6 representatives from each region and one from Cameroon.

#### **Decisions of the Conference**

The Conference met between 30 July and 22 August 1953, and reached the following agreements:

1. That a federal government should be established with the functions of the federal government and the residual powers of the regional governments spelt out.
2. That Lagos should be carved out of the Western Region as a neutral federal capital territory.
3. That regional lieutenants should be called governors whilst the governor of Nigeria should be referred to as governor-general.
4. That legislative powers should be shared between the central and regional governments.
5. That subject to the approval by the conference to be held in Lagos the following year, a separate regional administration should be set up in the Southern Cameroons if the inhabitants so desired in a referendum.
6. That Her Royal Majesty should in 1956 grant self-rule to the regions which desired it.

### **D) Lagos Conference of 1954**

The purpose of the conference was to consider the unresolved political problems arising from the 1953 London conference and to consider the advice of the fiscal commission appointed by the secretary general at the

1953 conference. It met on 15 January 1954 presided over by the secretary of state for the colonies. The conference:

1. Accepted the proposal of the fiscal commissioner, Sir Louis Chick's allocation of resources to the regional and federal governments.
2. Recommended the judiciary to be regionalised.
3. Recommended that the whole public service be regionalised.
4. Advised granting of autonomy to Southern Cameroons.

#### **E) London Constitutional Conference of 1957**

A major decision taken at this conference which held from May 23 to 26 June 1957 was the setting up of a minority's commission, under Sir Henry Willink, to look into the fears of the minority ethnic groups who agitated for the creation of new Regions out of the existing three Regions of the Federation of Nigeria. Other decisions taken include

1. Establishment of full regional self-government for the East and West regions in 1957 and for the North in 1969.
2. That the office of prime minister of Nigeria should be established.
3. The federal legislature would comprise of two houses, the senate and House of Representatives.
4. Southern Cameroons would become a region, with its own premier and house representatives.
5. That the house of chiefs should be established in the Eastern Region in addition to the house of assembly, in uniform with the other two regions with bicameral legislatures.
6. That the police should remain under federal control.
7. That while adult male suffrage would be used in the north, universal adult suffrage should be used in the East, West, Lagos and Southern Cameroons to elect members of the federal and regional legislatures.
8. That the leader of the part who commanded a majority in the regional legislature should be appointed premier.



## F) Constitutional Conference of 1958

This conference was held between 29 September and 27 October 1958. Various political parties attended the conference to consider the following issues:

1. Reports of the Minorities Commission
2. Reports of the Fiscal Commission
3. Other outstanding issues

The following decisions were reached at the conference:

1. The Northern Region should become self-governing in March 1959.
2. Procedures for amending the constitution and altering regional boundaries should be entrenched in the constitution.
3. Fundamental human rights were to be entrenched in the constitution.
4. If a resolution was passed by the new federal parliament early in 1960 asking for independence, Her Majesty's government would introduce a bill to enable the federation to become independent on 1 October 1960.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Enumerate the decisions of the London Conference of 1957

### 3.3 Factors that Necessitated the Adoption of Federalism

1. **Cultural Differences:** The country was made up of people of different ethnic groups, religions, customs, traditions and languages. The peoples thus opted for federalism to retain as much as possible of their identity. Similarly, these diversities created problems for the running of a unitary system.
2. **The Size of Nigeria:** Nigeria with a territory covering 373,000 square miles and with a population today of about 140 million, (according to the 2006 census) is so large that a centralized system of power and administration will inevitably be very far from a large number of the citizens and hence effective administration will be impaired particularly when Nigeria has not

developed modern effective transport and communication systems to make communication easy from a centre. As a result governmental powers need to, be decentralised for effective administration. Federalism thus became an administrative convenience.

3. **Economic Factor:** In Nigeria, natural resources are scattered among contiguous states, the units were encouraged to unite to form a federation in order to pool these resources for greater economic development.
4. **Fear of Domination:** when Nigeria was about to attain her independence, each major ethnic group felt the notions that by having a Unitary form of government, the strongest ethnic group might politically, dominate the others. There was also the fear that such domination by the strongest ethnic group might continue for a long time to the extent that the disadvantaged ethnic group will continue to suffer from both political and economic marginalization. This fear, for instance, contributed to the assassination in 1966 of then Head of State Major General J.T.V. Aguiyi Ironsi, soon after his government promulgated decree number 34 which (temporarily) changed Nigeria's federalism to a unitary system. Federalism was therefore chosen so that each group would have some economic and political freedom that will act as safeguard against domination.
5. **The Desire of the British:** Scholars have generally accepted the centrality of British colonial administrators in creating the federal structure. According to a report of the roundtable on "Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities in the Nigerian Federation," the Nigerian federation "neither emerged through a contract between states nor was it a voluntary union of a number of originally independent states. It emerged through a process of conquest and charters granted to British Companies from the middle of the 19th century, when nationalities, which later composed the federation of Nigeria, lost their sovereignty to the British Colonial authority" (Forum of Federations and IACFS, 2003). In the words of Uma Eleazu, "the roots of federalism in Nigeria must be sought partly in the process by which the country came into being, partly in the administrative structure of colonialism that was set up and partly in the varying responses of the Nigerians to both the process and structure (cf. Akindele, 1996). From the scattered origin that heralded the country now called Nigeria which has been severally denounced by journalists, politicians, and even some of the 'nationalists' as a 'mere geographical expression' (Awolowo, 1947), a 'historical

accident' (Ostheimer, 1973), or a 'colonial error' (Williams, 2000), it was obvious that all Britain succeed in doing was to amalgamate, rather loosely, a large mixture of diverse, conflicting and otherwise distinct groups into a homogenous political assemblage to ease administrative governance for the purpose of economic and strategic exploitation. Although essentially beneficial to the British, this 'experiment in political cloning for Nigeria and Nigerians meant a forced brotherhood and sisterhood which has been the subject of continual tinkering, panel beating and even attempted dissolution' (Ayoade, 1998).

6. **Security:** The need for internal security and protection necessitated the coming together of the component units together as a federation would be stronger and more units.

### 3.4 Structure of Nigerian Federalism

The foundation of federalism was laid in Nigeria by the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914. Northern and Southern Nigeria were recognised as near autonomous entities with some differences in the administration of each. However, it was the Lyttleton Constitution which came into effect on 1 October 1956 that introduced real federalism in Nigeria. The constitution shared powers between the central and regional governments, giving out details on issues which were exclusive to only one level and those on which both could legislate. Regional premiers were also provided for in the constitution.

The Independence Constitution of 1960 followed the federal structure introduced by the Lyttleton Constitution with minor modifications. The prime minister was the head of government under the Independence Constitution, with a ceremonial president as head of state. The Republican Constitution of 1963 created the Mid-Western Region thereby increasing the regions from three to four. However, the problem of unequal size of regions remained, with the Northern Region larger than the three Southern Regions combined.

On 27 May 1967 under the administration of General Gowon, the four existing regions were sub-divided into twelve states, with powers and functions similar to those of the regions. The four regions were restructured into 12 states, with the former Northern Region having six, the Eastern Region three, the Mid-West, one, the Western Region, one; and the old Lagos Colony with some part of Western Region making up a state. A military governor headed each state with the exception of the East Central State with a civilian administrator. This was an attempt to weaken the administration of Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then governor of Eastern Nigeria from seceding from the federation with the whole

region. On 30 May 1967, three days after the creation of states, Ojukwu still proclaimed the former Eastern Region, Republic of Biafra an action which eventually resulted in a three-year civil war.

The General Murtala Muhammad regime created seven new states on 3 February 1976, with the states bringing the number of states to nineteen. In 1987, the Babangida Administration created two more states-Akwa Ibom and Katsina. In 1991 under the same administration, nine more states were created, bringing the number of states to thirty, excluding Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. The Abacha regime created additional six states on 1 October 1996 to bring the total number of states to thirty six.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Nigeria is a federal system made up of 36 states presently. Trace the evolution of the structure of Nigerian federation from its foundation till today.

### **3.5 Features of Nigerian Federalism**

1. The constitutions of Nigeria, from the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 to the 1999 Republican Constitution, have been written and rigid constitutions-the amendment procedures of which would be complicated and rigorous.
2. The constitutions have been dividing powers between the federal government and the component units, formerly called regions, and new states and local governments. Specifically, political power is usually shared between the central and regional (state) governments as follows:
  - a. **Federal exclusive list:** Currency, foreign affairs, defence, immigration and emigration, and customs.
  - b. **State exclusive list:** State civil service commission, state council of chiefs, state judicial service commission, and local government service commission.
  - c. **Concurrent list:** This lists the powers shared jointly by the central authority and regional or state governments. Matters on the concurrent list usually include education, health, roads, housing and agriculture.
  - d. **Residual list:** This list is made up of powers not listed in either the exclusive or concurrent list. Residual powers are both

exercised by the central authority and the state or regional governments. Matters on this list include markets, local governments and chieftaincy.

3. In all the constitutions, the central government has been supreme with exclusive powers on many subjects, and final authority on some others.
4. There has been the existence of a multi-party system, except the 1989 constitution that stipulated a two-party system.
5. There has been a bicameral legislature of one form or another.
6. There has been the supremacy of the constitution, from which all the various levels of government derive their power.
7. The Supreme Court gives judicial interpretation of the constitution.
8. Constitutional conferences usually take place to consult the people, towards modifying the constitution.
9. Secession by any section of the federation is constitutionally forbidden.

### **3.6 The Practical Relevance of the Federal Idea to Nigeria**

In spite of its shaky foundations, many travails and entire shortcoming in the tortuous journey towards nation building, Nigeria has achieved remarkable success in managing its complex ethnic and national diversity. Federalism has helped to achieve this amazing feat achieved. To reiterate, the federalist foundations were laid by the 1946 constitution which created three regions (East, North and West); the 1951 which combined quasi-federal and confederal features; and the 1954 constitution which introduced a federal constitution into the country. During this colonial period and over the course of four-and-half decades of independent nationhood, including almost 30 years of military rule, Federalism has at once provided for the country the “constitutional technology employed to accommodate the heterogeneous but territorially structured and demarcated diversities” as well as the “device for facilitating and strengthening the integrative desire and impulse of the country’s multiethnic communities seeking unity in diversity” (Elaigwu & Akindele, 1996). This genius of Nigerian federalism is poignantly reflected in the instrumentalities it has presented for ‘curbing ethnic domination, dispersing or decentralising sectional conflicts, promoting inter-regional revenue redistribution, fostering inter-ethnic

integration, and generally defusing and subduing the combustible pressures inherent in the country's ethno-linguistic, regional and religious fragmentation' such that the country is saved from the tragedy of state collapse or large scale internal insurgency that has recently convulsed other African states like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire (Suberu, 2005).

It has achieved this enviable feat through the innovative instrumentalities of state creation, strengthening of local government and its elevation to the third tier of federal government, the federal character principle and adaptive revenue allocation systems, which have all enhanced the accommodative genius of the federal solution in the country (Osaghae, 2005). By exploiting the integrative and accommodative opportunities inherent in Nigeria's complex ethnic diversity itself, the multi-state framework has functioned relatively well to:

- Provide opportunities for some measure of self-governance to a variety of territorial communities
- Contain some conflicts within the federation's respective subunits
- Fragment and dilute the ethnocentrism of the three major groups
- Alleviate ethnic minority insecurity or fears of inter-group domination
- Generate potentially crosscutting state-based identities; and
- Decentralise and redistribute economic resources (Suberu, 2004a).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

"Federalism is as relevant for Nigeria today as it is when it was first adopted in 1951." Discuss.

### **3.7 Problems of Nigerian federalism**

#### **A) Conflicts over Revenue Allocation Formula**

The issue of revenue allocation is one of the most fundamental problems facing Nigeria. It is the method and procedure for sharing the revenue generated by the federation between the federal government and the component units. The need for revenue allocation arises mainly because

of inequalities. It attempts to bridge the gap of inequalities in financial resources between the relatively rich units and the relatively poor units. The need for an acceptable formula for revenue allocation has been the occupation of succeeding governments in Nigeria, which have established various revenue allocation commissions and made other laws/decrees. All these commissions recommended some criteria for revenue allocation and many suggested percentage divisions between the federal and other units of government. The summary of these commissions' reports and decrees on revenue allocation is as follows:

1. Phillipson Commission (1946): Recommended the use of derivation and even development as criteria for distribution of revenue. By derivation, the commission means each unit of government would receive from the central purse the same proportion it has contributed to the purse.
2. Hicks Phillipson Commission(1951). Criteria: derivation, independent revenue or fiscal autonomy, need and national interest.
3. Chicks Commission (1953). Criterion: derivation.
4. Raisman Commission (1957). Criteria: need, balanced development and minimum responsibility. Percentage division: 40% to the North, 31% to the East, 24% to the West and 5% to Southern Cameroons.
5. Binn Commission (1964): Rejected the principles of need and derivation. Criterion: regional financial comparability. Percentage division: 42% to the North, 30% to the East, 20% to the West and 8% to the Mid-West.
6. Dina Commission (1969). Criteria: national minimum standards, balanced development in the allocation of the States' Joint Account, and basic need.
7. Aboyade Technical Committee (1977). Criteria: national minimum standard for national integration (22%), equality of access to development opportunities (25%), absorptive capacity (20%), fiscal efficiency (15%) and independent revenue effort (18%). Other criteria: 57% to Federal Government, 30% to state governments, 10% to local governments and 3% to a special fund.
8. Okigbo Presidential Commission (1980). Percentages on principles: population (40%), equality (40%), social development

(15%) and internal revenue effort (5%). Percentages for governments: Federal (53%), States (30%), Local Governments (10%), special fund (7%).

9. Danjuma Commission (1988). Percentages: Federal (50%), States (30%), Local Governments (15%), special fund (5%).
10. Other laws and decrees on revenue allocation:
  - (a) Decree 15 of 1967
  - (b) Decree 13 of 1970
  - (c) Decree 9 of 1971
  - (d) Decree 6 of 1975
  - (e) Decree 7 of 1975
  - (f) Allocation of Revenue (Federation Account) Act, 1981.

Under the current revenue allocation arrangement, states and local governments spend about half of total government revenues, almost equal to that of the federal government. The federal government is allocated 52.68% percent of Federation Account revenues (including 4.8% of the Account originally earmarked for “special projects” like the development of the FCT Abuja, development of natural resources, and the amelioration of national ecological emergencies), while the states and the local governments get 26.72% and 20.60%, respectively, bringing the total share of sub-national governments’ revenues from the Federation Account to 47.32% (Babalola, 2008). There is also a constitutional provision for the allocation of 13% as derivation fund to the oil-producing states.

The various Commissions, laws and decrees on revenue allocation had arisen because of the continuous disagreement of sections of the country with the way the national resources were divided. Thus whatever criteria were used at any time would seem favourable to some and unfavorable to others. For example, derivation was highly favoured by agriculturally buoyant areas, producing cash crops at a time when that was the major resource of the nation. When oil now became the nation's ‘gold’, such agricultural areas would prefer population, need, national interest, land mass and others as bases for revenue allocation, while the oil producing areas would prefer derivation. For as long as the component units of the country cannot contribute equally to the national purse, so would there be conflicts on allocation formula and every constitutional review would still need to address the unending problem.

In recent years, conflicts over revenue allocation are poignantly reflected in the violent conflict in the Niger Delta, the main oil-producing region. The complain of the ethnic minorities of the Niger



Delta is that while derivation- the revenue sharing principle that requires that a certain percentage of revenue from natural resources be returned directly to the states from which the revenue was produced- was as high as 50 per cent under the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions when it benefited the majority ethnic groups, it has been persistently reduced with the discovery and exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta populated by ethnic minorities. As Suberu observed, “the proportion of oil revenues allocated on a derivation basis declined from 50% of mining rents and royalties in 1969, through 2% of the Federation Account in 1981, to only 1% of mineral revenues in the account during the period from 1989 to 1999” (Suberu, 2001). Many in the Niger Delta consider this concession far too little and agitations for a greater share from the oil wealth or outright control of the oil resources have dovetailed into youth militancy and also criminality (such as oil bunkering, and kidnapping of oil and even non-oil workers). This has not only threatened the peace of the region but also caused disruption in oil supply.

## **B) Minorities Issue**

Nigeria is a plural society made up of 354 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990) including three major ethnic groups-Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo in addition to other minority groups. Each of the three major ethnic groups dominated one of the three regions that existed before independence, while they had many other groups with them in the same region. This development according to Crawford Young (1976: 275) “created cultural anxieties for the minority groups whose interests and aspirations were suppressed by the ‘big three’ groups who were the dominant actors in political and economic relations in the region. In the prevalent atmosphere of ethnic consciousness and the struggle for political ascendancy by the major region dominant groups, the minority groups began to agitate for constitutional arrangements which would give them some autonomy or at least ensure the protection of their rights and interest against what Eghosa Osaghae calls “majoritarian nationalism” and the ‘exclusive control of the regions’ by the core ethnic groups (Osaghae, 1999). Thus, the Bornu Youth Movement demanded a separate union, the non-Igbo in the East demanded for the autonomy of Cross -: Rivers, Ogoja and Rivers while the non-Hausa group in the North through the Middle Belt Congress demanded for a separate Middle Belt State. In the West, the non- Yoruba speaking people of Asaba, Warri and Benin demanded for a separate Mid-Western Region.

To allay the fears of the minorities, the Sir Henry Willink Commission was set up in 1957 to look into the grievances of minority groups and their agitations for separate states, and make recommendations. The Willink Commission was constituted on 23 November 1957. It met between 23 November 1957 and 12 June 1958. It received memoranda

from individuals and minority groups, deliberated on them and presented a report containing, among others, the following points:

1. Problems cannot be solved by creating more or new states.
2. Fundamental Human Rights should be entrenched in the constitution to safeguard the interest of the minority.
3. The police should be under federal control.
4. Minority areas should have special councils.
5. There should be special development boards for Niger Delta areas.
6. A plebiscite for Northern minorities should be conducted.

However the Willink Commission did not recommend the creation of more states as the minorities had expected. Consequently the demand for the creation of more states continued and became more complex and this raised an ethnic political storm, which kept ethnicity alive as a salient political issue (Suberu, 1996; Osaghae, 1998a).

### **C) Inter-Ethnic Rivalry and Conflict**

Rivalry among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria evolved from the disparity in social, economic and political development of the component units of the federation. For instance, the early contact of the Yoruba with European missionaries and traders put them in an advantageous position in Nigerian commerce and senior positions in the federal civil service. The southern Igbo and Yoruba are also advanced in western education unlike the northern Hausa-Fulani, which led to the fear of domination of the north. The large size of the northern region and its unity as a single force which made it a domineering force in politics also threatened the southern elites. As Mustapha has noted, the combination of these systemic educational, economic and political inequalities have engendered the fear of discrimination and domination and a resultant conflict-ridden political system (Mustapha, 2009). High levels of ethno-regional confrontation and conflict over unequal distribution of bureaucratic and political offices up to 1966 contributed in no small measure to the eventual collapse of the First Republic in January 1966, military intervention in politics, the Civil War in 1967, and the failed attempts at democratisation.

#### **D) Threat of Secession**

Threat of secession has been a feature of the politics of Nigerian federalism. Inter-ethnic rivalry in Nigeria delayed the attainment of independence. Chief Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group member of the central legislature had tabled a motion calling on the House to accept as a primary political objective the attainment of self government for Nigeria in 1956. The motion generated tribal rivalry and a lot of controversy. The AG and NCNC had agreed to support the motion but the NPC, the majority party was against it. So, as a delay tactic, a member of the NPC called for adjournment which made the AG and NCNC members stage a walkout. On leaving the house later, the Northern members met with a hostile Lagos crowd that greatly insulted and jeered at them. Back to the North, the representatives informed their people of the insult which made the joint Northern House of Assembly and House of Chiefs pass an eight-point programme which, if implemented would have eventually resulted in the North's secession. The points included that there should no longer be a central legislative or executive body for the whole of Nigeria, that the North should have absolute legislative and executive autonomy, that all revenue should be collected by the regional governments, and that each region should have a separate public service.

Since this period, the threat of secession has been a recurring feature of Nigerian federation. However, the only secession threat that has been carried out in Nigeria since independence was that of the Eastern Region in May 1967 which led to the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, a development which eventually crystallised into the thirty month civil war, between 1967 and 1970. It is believed that over a million people, mainly civilians, died during this bitter secessionist warfare.

#### **E) Citizenship Question**

The citizenship question in Nigeria borders especially on the differentiation of citizens of the country into indigenes and non-indigenes with differing opportunities and privileges. This practice is partly legitimated by the ethno-distributive principles of federal character under the federal constitution, that discriminate against so called non-indigenes, that is Nigerians living in states which they have no direct ethno-biological roots. As spelt out in the 1999 constitution, one is a citizen of Nigeria provided such a person:

- Was born in Nigeria before the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents belong or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria. Provided a person shall not

become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria

- Was born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria
- Was born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria (Chapter 3, Section 1).

Thus, Nigerians who have their ethnic genealogy elsewhere, even if they were born in a particular state or lived all their lives there, are regarded as “settlers” (Ibrahim 2006). A settler is regarded as a stranger, a sojourner who may have been born in a location but is regarded as a bird of passage who would ultimately go “home” (Alubo, 2009). In many states of the federation, this “Son-of-the-soil” syndrome not only inhibits citizen’s inter-jurisdictional mobility or exit and entry rights, it has also been the source of widespread discriminatory practices (Suberu, 2005; Horowitz, 2008). For instance, Nigerians from Ebonyi state, some of whom were born and have lived all their lives in Sokoto state do not have the same rights as Nigerians of Sokoto state origin. Rather they are described as non-indigenes or settlers and discriminated against in accessing entitlements and opportunities. According to Alubo (2009), the more common forms of discrimination against settlers include the following:

- Employment—available jobs are often reserved for indigenes and where non-natives are employed at all, they are placed on contract appointment. This form of employment has no provision for pension benefits. Sometimes, advertisements for employment are run with the proviso that “only indigenes need apply”.
- Since the return of civil rule, all non-indigenes who were employed have been dismissed from many state civil services, obviously to replace them with indigenes. Increasingly, settlers are perceived as snatching food from the mouths of indigenes, a perception which becomes more telling because of the uneven development. Only few centers (such as the former regional capitals, oil producing areas and state and federal capitals) have thriving organisations and easier opportunities for employment.
- Admissions to secondary and higher institutions—these too are reserved for indigenes and only few non-indigenes are offered places. The issue here goes beyond quota and catchment considerations; there is a clear sense of who receives or is denied priority opportunities.

- Scholarships –this is exclusive to indigenes; non-indigenes are required to “go home”, even where they may not have another home.
- Higher schedule of fees for the non-indigenes in educational institutions such as Polytechnics and Universities. This is enforced without distinction to who may have lived for decades and paid all taxes in the state.
- Standing elections—while non-indigenes can vote, they are frequently not allowed to stand elections. Married women also suffer similar discrimination.

It suffice to say that the “exclusions and denials of rights and opportunities on the basis of indigeneity have also resulted in many cases of violence, especially since the return of civil rule in 1999 in different parts of the country” (Alubo, 2009). In Plateau State, for example, recurrent clashes since 2001 between “indigene” and “settler” communities competing over political appointments and government services have left thousands dead and many more thousands displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2006).

#### **F) Economic Underdevelopment**

The structure of Nigerian federalism has actively aggravated the country’s economic failure by institutionalizing a regime of guaranteed transfers of oil resources, which systematically prioritises distribution and patronage politics over considerations of development and wealth creation. In other words, the system violates a cardinal condition for accountability and efficiency in fiscal federalism, namely that the government which enjoys the pleasure of spending money must first experience the pain of extracting the money from taxpayers. By breaking this critical nexus between expenditure authority and revenue raising responsibility, the Nigerian federal system has fuelled truly monumental levels of corruption, waste and mismanagement at the three tiers of government (Suberu, 2004b).

Compounding the travails of Nigeria’s federalism was the entrenched structure of a monolithic resource flow based on oil as the nation’s economic mainstay. Oil accounted for over 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Program on Ethnic and Federal Studies. 2005). Nigeria, as the *Economist* aptly puts it, “produces almost nothing but crude oil.” (*The Economist* (London), August 3, 2002). This warped practice of putting all national fates on oil has proved problematic for the country.

Apart from the fact that oil is a non-renewable resource, it has a weak linkage to the local economy, and is dependent on the ever-fluctuating world market prices. More importantly, heavy dependence on oil has stifled the robust practice of fiscal federalism and the creative initiative of the federating states for wealth creation, fostered conflicts, environmental destruction, gross economic injustice in the oil-producing region and created a repugnant culture of laziness and corruption among the political class. Beyond this however, over-concentration on oil has also sidetracked the pursuit of growth in the real and productive sectors of the economy.

Indeed, the consequences of the over-dependence on a rentier oil economic system have been disastrous for economic and political development. First, the state was preoccupied with distributive politics rather than a systematic programme of wealth creation and hence did not really take seriously the issue of providing an enabling environment for industrialization. Second, with oil rents from the state providing the quickest means of acquiring stupendous wealth, most of the elite who could have become the hub of the entrepreneurial class were diverted into rent-seeking in government rather than seeking risky investment opportunities in the private sector. For example, besides the huge bureaucracy and large number of political appointees to service government machinery, the Federal Government appointed about 5,000 board members to run the largely comatose public enterprises. Most of these are people who should have channeled their talents into productive activity in the private sector. Third, given the federal nature of the country, and the dependence of state revenues on statutory allocations from the oil dominated “Federation Account” (more than 95 percent for most states), the incentive to creatively pursue wealth creation through industrialization at the regional-state levels was dampened (Ikpeze, Soludo & Elekwa, 2004). Paradoxically too, oil producing states in the federation have benefited the least from oil wealth. Devastated by the ecological costs of oil spillage and the highest gas flare in the world, the Niger Delta, Nigeria’s oil producing region, has remained a political tinderbox. Obi (2005: 201) succinctly summarizes the challenge of oil for Nigeria’s federalism:

The problems that lie at the heart of the oil-federal nexus exist within the contradictions spawned by the political economy of oil and Nigeria’s total dependence on oil. It also lies within the strong streak of centralization inherent in post-war Nigerian federalism, its structural inequities, and the zero-sum politics of the highly divided, opportunistic, and unproductive hegemonic elite in Nigeria.

In the context of ethnic heterogeneity and elite fractionalization as in the case in Nigeria, the struggles over oil merge with the struggles for power to fuel intense, and sometimes violent, inter- and intra-ethnic competition in the Nigerian federation. Further, it has engendered a ruinous type of state politics which encourages predatory behavior or “indiscriminate and opportunistic power-seeking ...for its own sake” on the part of the elite (Shridaran, 2004 cf. Osaghae, 2005).

With regards to economic reform through the privatization of state owned enterprises, the monetization of fringe benefits of public servants and poverty eradication programmes through the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), and the Seven Point Agenda have yet to yield the desired results. Although the government is said to have raised money from the privatisation process and saved on costs through the monetisation policy, Nigerians keep asking questions about the use to which such proceeds have been put. This is against the background of the fact that today close to 70 per cent of Nigerians live below the poverty line, with many living in absolute poverty. Yet, as Elaigwu reminded us that “one must not forget that democratic culture and stability cannot thrive in a society where there is abject poverty” (Elaigwu, 2007).

Estimates have shown that Nigeria would need about 7–8 per cent annual growth rate in its gross domestic product (GDP) if it wants to halve the number of people in poverty by 2015. The government has been boasting that the GDP currently grows at seven per cent per annum. However, there is a large question mark as to the authenticity of this claim, because the much-orchestrated growth has not been accompanied by any significant improvement in the living conditions of the average Nigerian. This may not be unconnected with the lopsided system of distribution in favour of the rich, leading to wider inequality in society (Okonjo- Iweala, Soludo & Muhtar, 2003). Yet the privatisation process, having coincided with democratisation, has been predicated on a system of political patronage and opportunism, making it difficult for the emergence of a vibrant private sector that is autonomous of vested interests. It has also been done in a way that excludes the majority of Nigerians, particularly the workers. This anarchic form of globalisation therefore serves to ignite more crises and contradictions in Nigeria’s political economy (Amadi & Ogwo, 2004).

### **G) Problem of Democratisation**

According to KC Wheare, federalism thrives on open government associated with democracy (1964). However, Nigeria’s democratic experience has been tortuous. While Nigerians have found the federal

grid a conducive mechanism for managing conflicts arising from their heterogeneity, the record of democratic regimes is poor. Out of its forty-nine years of independent existence, thirty of those years were under military rule. Over the years, there have been frictions between the federal grid and Nigeria's democratic soil. Often the Nigerian 'federation' had to operate without any democratic underlay (Elaigwu, 2007).

Upon Nigeria's attainment of political independence on 1 October 1960, international attention shifted to it as a country that would possibly make steady progress along the paths of sustainable peace, democracy and development in Africa. Such hopes were not misplaced, given the abundance of human and natural resources endowing the country. Contrary to expectations, however, it did not take long before these hopes were dashed (Osaghae, 1998b). Nigeria's ignominious transition from hope to despair began with the failure of the managers of the immediate post-independence Nigeria to fundamentally redress the crises and contradictions bequeathed to the country by the departing colonialists. The opportunity presented by independence to redress the roots of these problems was wasted by the new elite who took over. They saw independence as an opportunity to further their selfish and parochial interests through the manipulation of the forces of identity, particularly ethnicity and religion, within the country.

Against these historical antecedents of structural incongruities, the socio-political future of Nigeria was laid on a very shaky foundation - the enumerated problems (including some of the problems of federalism in the country) became intrinsic sources of agitation and violence and eventually added to hasten the collapse of the First Republic / the emergence of the military on the scene of Nigerian politics in 1966, and other debilitating events that have characterised the progression of the Nigerian federation including ethnic conflict and "brinkmanship" (Agbaje, 2003), a bitter secessionist warfare between 1967 and 1970 in which over a million people, mainly civilians, died; unstable civilian rule and democratic breakdown; and of course, a long spell of devastating military rule (almost 30 out of the nearly 39 years of political independence as at 1999 when the fourth republic was ushered in).

With respect to political reforms, the democratisation processes have so far been carried out in a manner detrimental to the fundamental ideals of democracy. This is what Ake (1996) refers to as violence against democracy, which he describes as the reversal or retrogression of democratic gains, occasioned largely by the negligence, perversion and inefficiency of those structures, institutions and actors saddled with the promotion and protection of democracy. To begin with, the main



political actors, by their actions and utterances, have demonstrated that they are not democrats. Democrats have democratic mindsets, which are pivotal to the promotion of a democratic political culture and good citizenship (Jega, 2003). The actual political behavior of Nigeria's present power elite, especially during the period under review, was a drift towards megalomania, a situation whereby new mediums of personalising power and of creating the appearance of popularity were constructed in such a way that elected officials engage in clearly undemocratic practices and forms of power intrinsic to autocracy, while seeking, at least rhetorically, to cast the presentation of power as a departure from its military predecessors (Ochonu, 2004).

Political parties, for example, have no clear political ideology, lack internal party democracy and have been hijacked by the 'godfathers', all of which have seriously undermined their important roles in the democratisation and nation-building projects (Ibrahim, 2009). Civil society organisations are also hamstrung by the all-powerful state, segmented and urban biased, with a low degree of social embeddedness. There is also a low level of political participation and competition, as well as electoral corruption and violence that amount to a state culture, all with negative implications for the consolidation of the fledgling democracy (Agbaje, 2006).

Today, of the political dimensions of the contradiction in Nigeria's democratic federation, the issue of electoral maladministration through electoral fraud and violence stands out as the most devastating, and deserves elaboration. While elections in Nigeria, as in most other parts of Africa, have been problematic, appearing merely as the 'fading shadows of democracy' (Adejumobi, 2000), the 2007 general elections will go down in history as possibly the most flawed in the country's history.

From the beginning, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had, through its poor preparation and interference in purely internal party affairs, demonstrated that it might not be capable of acting as an independent, impartial and efficient electoral umpire. A typical example was the insistence of Professor Maurice Iwu, INEC's chairman, on disqualifying some aspirants of the most notable opposition parties, particularly Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate of the Action Congress. All entreaties to make INEC understand that it did not have the power to disqualify candidates fell on deaf ears, and it went ahead and disqualified Atiku on an alleged corruption indictment by an administrative panel set up by President Obasanjo to investigate corruption charges against Atiku. It took a landmark judgment by the Supreme Court five days before the presidential election to annul INEC's disqualification of Atiku. By implication, therefore, the playing

field was not level for all contestants. The actual conduct of the election was equally flawed. Through bad administration, which manifested in the form of late arrival of voting materials; non-delivery of materials; under-age voting; ballot paper and ballot box stuffing; falsifications of results; and intimidation of opposition candidates, agents and parties by party thugs and security agents, with the active connivance and involvement of INEC officers, the 2007 elections were certainly not a reflection of the wishes of Nigerians (Ibrahim, 2007).

Societal disapproval was clear from post-election violence such as widespread thuggery, looting, killings and arson that accompanied the announcement of the results. The reports of domestic and international election observers, including Democratic Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, European Union and Commonwealth monitoring teams; the ECOWAS monitoring group; and the TMG, all came to the conclusion that the elections were massively rigged in favour of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (Suberu, 2007). More importantly, the gale of reversal of election outcome by the judiciary in states such as Edo, Ondo, Rivers, Ekiti, Adamawa and Kogi States has lent credence to the reports of the election monitoring groups. This has put the democratisation process on the line, the survival of which will largely depend on how post-election issues such as protests are managed, as well as how the winners and losers manage their successes and failures, respectively. The preference for due process by the opposition in pursuing their grievances over the elections remains a good response. The president's call for a government of national unity and the inauguration of the electoral reform panel also gives hopes for democratic continuity. However, these efforts have been confronted with contradiction and crisis.

The cumulative effects of the foregoing on the democracy project in Nigeria are obvious. Firstly, the economic foundation that is so germane to democratic rebirth, nurturing and consolidation is suspect in Nigeria. The pervasiveness of poverty has become a worrisome dimension in the democratization process. Rather than the economic and political realms reinforcing each other, the reverse seems to be the case. This development lies at the very heart of the unprecedented degree of ethno-religious and communal clashes all over the country since 1999 at the expense of appreciable 'democracy dividends' generally for the people (Olurode, 2005).

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The Nigerian federalism is the "life-wire" of Nigeria's survival as a multi-ethnic political entity. However, in spite of its real achievement in averting national disintegration, and in promoting a relatively benign

accommodation of competition amongst ethnic constituencies, the Nigerian multi-state federalism remained in serious jeopardy and has been implicated in the country's underdevelopment. Given its failure to meet the conditions of institutionally formalized, durable and guaranteed decentralization or non centralization, and hence satisfy the needs of the federal society, the Nigerian federalism has been variously described paradoxically as “embattled federalism”, (Adebayo, 1993) “sham-federalism” (Mcgarry, 2004), and “pseudo-federalism” (Suberu, 2004b).

## 5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has examined government and politics in Nigeria through the prism of the country's federal system. The Unit has traced the evolution of the federal system, the structure and features of the federal system, the practical relevance of the federal system and some of the problems and challenges facing the federal system today.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. List and explain three problems or challenges facing the Nigerian federal system.
2. With copious examples, describe the challenge of democratisation in Nigeria's federal system.
3. In what way does the militancy in the Niger Delta represent a problem of and for Nigeria's federalism?

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## **UNIT 5      INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GLOBALISATION**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

States and regimes are not isolated entities. They exist in an international system that undergirds them and exposes them to change. Most social scientists take the nation-state as the prime unit of comparative analysis. But they frequently discover that explanations of domestic political dynamics require reference to influences emanating from outside environment.

In the preceding lecture, you learnt about the major characteristics of the contemporary Nigerian political system, especially its federal system (including its evolution from colonial to military rule and the recent transition to democratic rule). However, this transition did not take place in isolation. Nigeria also relates with other countries and non-state actors in the international political system. If a political system is defined as any stable pattern of interactions which involves power and authority, then a political system cannot be narrowed down to countries alone. A comprehensive understanding of national political systems therefore requires an understanding of politics at the international arena or in the international political system. This is the focus of this unit, which is the concluding part of this lecture.



## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- define and describe the nature of the international political system
- explain what globalisation is
- identify the forces propelling rapid globalisation
- identify the key actors shaping globalisation
- explain the approaches to globalisation
- evaluate the role of the state in a globalised economy
- examine the impact of globalization on developing countries.

## 3.0 MAIN CONTENT

### 3.1 The International Political System

According to Waltz (1979), the international system is a social system that has structure and function. He believes that the international system contains patterns of action and interaction between collectivities and between individuals acting on their behalf. Roseau (2006) argues that the international system is made up of a disturbance input, a regulator which undergoes change arising from disturbance influences and environmental constraints. This transforms the state of the disturbance and the state of the regulator into stable or unstable outcomes.

The international political system is a replication of the cooperative, collaborative and conflictual process of social interactions within the state at the international level between and amongst different state systems, and other non-state actors that have bearing on the possibilities or otherwise of what happens in terms of who gets what, when and how. Central therefore to the understanding of the international system, is the issue of power, its uses and control between and amongst states and non state actors.

**International relations theory:** This attempts to provide a conceptual model upon which politics in the international political system can be analysed. Each theory relies on different sets of assumptions respectively. As Ole Holsti describes them, international relations theories act as a pair of coloured sunglasses, allowing the wearer to see only the salient events relevant to the theory (Holsti, 1987).

International relations theories can be divided into many conflicting approaches. However, the prevalent broad approaches are realism and liberalism.

Realism makes several key assumptions. It assumes that nation-states are unitary, geographically-based actors in an anarchic international system with no authority above capable of regulating interactions between states as no true authoritative world government exists. Secondly, it assumes that sovereign states, rather than International Governmental Organisations (IGOs), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), or Multinational Corporations (MNCs), are the primary actors in international affairs. Thus, states, as the highest order, are in competition with one another. As such, a state acts as a rational autonomous actor in pursuit of its own self interest with a primary goal to maintain and ensure its own security—and thus its sovereignty and survival. Realism holds that in pursuit of their interests, states will attempt to amass resources, and that relations between states are determined by their relative levels of power. That level of power is in turn determined by the state's military and economic capabilities.

Liberalism holds that state preferences, rather than state capabilities, are the primary determinant of state behavior. Unlike realism where the state is seen as a unitary actor, liberalism allows for plurality in state actions. Thus, preferences will vary from state to state, depending on factors such as culture, economic system or government type. Liberalism also holds that interaction between states is not limited to the political/security (“high politics”), but also economic/cultural (“low politics”) whether through commercial firms, organisations or individuals. Thus, instead of an anarchic international system, there are plenty of opportunities for cooperation and broader notions of power. Another assumption is that absolute gains can be made through co-operation and interdependence - thus peace can be achieved.

What is clear from these perspectives is that both states and non state actors exercise influence in the international political system. It should be emphasised that the relations between states and non-state actors at the international political system is not static and it has undergone major shifts and changes which have coincided more or less with major shifts in the global order. Perhaps, the most important of these changes is the unprecedented impact of globalisation. According to Palan and Abbott, (1999), if ‘globalisation’ has had one simple effect on development studies and international political economy, it is this — it is now extremely difficult to analyse a national unit in isolation from some concept of global structure and process, even if one wishes to make an argument for the persistence of the nation-state. But what exactly do we mean by the term globalisation? The remaining part of this unit will introduce you to the concepts of and globalisation and its complex dynamics.

## **The Concept of Globalisation: Meaning, Forces, Actors, and Approaches**

### **3.2 Meaning of Globalisation**

Globalisation ‘has become the most ubiquitous in the language of international relations’ (Ostry, 2001 cf. Kegley and Wittkopt, 2004). Yet globalisation is a contentious process. Ever since the term was first used to make sense of large-scale changes, scholars have debated its meaning and use. As the term became a globally popular catchphrase, it served to crystallize disagreements about the direction of change in the world at large. By the end of the twentieth century, the meaning and merits of globalisation were contested in the media and in the streets. Intellectual debate blended with political conflict. In recent years, debates and conflicts surrounding globalisation has increasingly taken place during summits by leaders of the developed countries and opposition to these summits by protesting ‘anti-globalisation’ groups who denounce globalisation as evil and a force promoting global inequality (Clark, 2003).

The contention in the process of globalisation is reflected in the disagreement about its meaning. According to one popular view, globalisation is the “inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before-in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and nation-states to reach round the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before” (see Friedman, 1999). By contrast, some groups of scholars and activists view globalisation not as an inexorable process but as a deliberate, ideological project of economic liberalisation that subjects states and individuals to more intense market forces (see, McMichael, 2000; Hirst and Thompson, 1996).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

What do you understand by the concept of globalisation?

### **3.3 Forces Propelling Rapid Globalisation**

There are several forces driving much of the globalisation process today and these include international trade, investment, finance and production. Perhaps by far of these influences is information technology (Kegley & Wittkopt, 2004). All the changes brought about by globalisation - economic, political and cultural - are maintained through the activities of the information technology and mass media, both in terms of its structure and its audiences. The pervasive nature of the communication technology is obvious when one looks at its size and

impact. For instance, information contained in 1000 books can travel across the globe each second. One aspect of information technology is the mass media. It has become an integral part of everyday life. In the contemporary world, Hollywood and CNN, for instance, are more influential than some religious and traditional leaders or the public relations rhetoric of political figure. They play a pervasive role as agent of socialisation. As agents of socialisation, the communication technologies represent a channel for the distribution of social knowledge and hence a powerful instrument of social control. Much of our knowledge of the world is gained directly through the media especially, about people, places, event, and how to make sense of the world. The impact of information technology revolution goes beyond information and pervades all the different aspects of globalisation. The power of computer communication technology (the Internet) has changed the nature of finances and trade, putting an end to geography, creating a borderless world.

According to Pickering (2001), developments in communication and transportation technologies have given rise to new forms of cultural production, consumption and exchange. Similarly, Giddens (1999) has claimed the invisible overthrow of old pattern of living through the expansion of communications systems around the world: “This is the first time at which you can have instantaneous communication across the world. That simply changes the nature of people’s lives. When the image of Nelson Mandela is more familiar to you than the image of your next-door neighbor, there’s something different in the world.” As the UNDP comments:

Communications technology set this era of globalisation from any other. The Internet, mobile phones, and satellite networks have shrunk space and time. Bringing together computers and communications unleashed an unprecedented explosion of ways to communicate at the start of the 1990s. Since then tremendous productivity gains, ever-falling costs and rapidly growing networks of computers have transformed the computing and communications sector. If the automobile industry had the same productivity growth, a car would cost \$3 (UNDP, 1999 cf. Kegley & Wittkoft, 2004).

To be sure, the information revolution has increasingly translated into a digital divide with most countries in the developing countries not catching fully on the gains. However, there is also progress made even in these countries. Take Nigeria for instance. It has been reported that the country has in the last ten years been experiencing sustained double digit growth in excess of 20% per annum in the telecommunications

sector. With teledensity of 48 phones per 100 people, the country has attained 67 million active phone subscribers base composed of 59, 194, 972 mobile phones, 7233089 CMDA, and 1, 435, 279 fixed wire/wireless network (Daily Trust, September 11, 2009: 35).

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

“The forces propelling globalisation are diverse and complex”. Discuss

### **3.4 Actors of Globalisation**

Globalisation entails multiplicity of agents or actors (Helvacioğlu, 2000), actors and agents that are instrumental or are direct players in the process. These include the state and non-state actors. Traditionally, the essential purpose of international relations is the investigation and study of patterns of actions and reactions among sovereign states as represented by their governing elites (Buzan & Little, 1994). Today however, besides the traditional role of the state in the international system, other non-sovereign or non-state entities actors are also exercising significant economic, political, or social power and influence at a national, and in some cases international level.

According to the USA National Intelligence Council (2007), “a globalisation-fueled diffusion of finance and technology has enabled nonstate actors to encroach upon functions traditionally performed by nation-states, facilitating their evolution into forms unheard of even a few years ago.” The NIC however cautioned that estimates of the impacts of non-states actors should be made cautiously, “for few nonstate actors are completely independent of nation-states, and they do not have uniform freedom of movement”. For instance, although non-state actors have a great deal of latitude in both weak and post-industrial states, modernising states such as China and Russia—home to the bulk of the world’s population—have been highly effective in suppressing them and in creating their own substitutes, some of which have demonstrated their power to counter US objectives and even to challenge global rules of engagement.

While these influential non-state actors are not a new phenomenon, what differentiates and shapes contemporary non-state actors, is an unprecedented operating environment. The end of the Cold War meant that military and security issues no longer automatically dominated the economic and social ones that are the benign non-state actors’ stock-in-trade; globalisation has made financial, political, and technical resources more widely available (and constrained the developed world's ability to make the rules); and technology and the growth of a global popular

culture provide new opportunities for rallying support and getting messages across (US National Intelligence Council, 2007).

The burgeoning scholarly literature on globalisation has noted the virtual explosion in the numbers and types of non-state actors populating the international system, many of which are operating on the fringes of state control or under the auspices of states that lack adequate nationally administered control regimes (Reimann, 2006). Multinational corporations, nongovernmental and quasi-governmental organisations, and transnational social movements all represent examples of a growing number of organisational structures that operate across borders on a global scale. International nongovernmental organisations (defined as operating in more than three countries) engaged in advocacy or direct action have grown from an estimated 985 in 1956 to more than 21,000 in 2003 (Russett, 2006). According to the Global Policy Forum (2000), non-governmental organisations of all types numbered above 37,000 by the year 2000, representing a nearly 20 per cent growth over the previous 10 years. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Disarmament (2004) estimated in 2004 that there were a total of 61,000 transnational corporations with as many as 900,000 foreign affiliates around the world.

Non-state actors operating in contemporary international system can be roughly categorised into the following:

**International Organisations:** International organisations are transnational organisations created by two or more sovereign states (Akindele, 2003) while some international Organisations are universal, others are regional, and pursue strictly the political, and socio-economic interests of the member states. Examples of universal international organisations with universal or near universal membership include the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO). Examples of regional multilateral organisations include European Union, African Union, New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Commission (SADC). Suffice it to say that in some international organisations, common interests constitute the basis of the associational life of members and hence the rule of geographical contiguity does not hold. This is the case, for instance, with OPEC which is an oil cartel with membership from Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Another example is the Group of Eight (G8) which comprises of governments of the eight richest countries in the world industrialised countries of United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Canada, and Russia.

**Multinational Corporations:** these are enterprises that manage production or deliver services in at least two countries. The traditional multinational is a private company headquartered in one country and with subsidiaries in others, all operating in accordance with a coordinated global strategy to win market share and achieve cost efficiencies. The popular multinationals include those linked to America and European countries such as Shell, Chevron and Agip. However, in recent times, multinationals from China, India, Russia and other emerging-market states are offering some developing countries an alternative source of investment. For example, Indian energy firms are investing in Burma and Cuba, and have growing ties with Venezuela, while Chinese state-owned enterprises are investing in Iran, Sudan, Burma, and Zimbabwe.

**Non-governmental Organisations:** these are organisations that are private, self-governing, voluntary, non-profit, and task- or interest-oriented advocacy organisations. Within those broad parameters there is a huge degree of diversity in terms of unifying principles; independence from government, big-business, and other outside influences; operating procedures; sources of funding; international reach; and size. They can implement projects, provide services, defend or promote specific causes, or seek to influence policy. NGOs have prospered from both the growing (but primarily Western) emphasis on human rights, environmental protection, security—which raises the stock of the social and humanitarian issues in which many NGOs have unique expertise—and the involvement by billionaires in social issues.

Since 2001, advocacy NGOs that work on transnational issues such as the environment, public health, migration and displacement, and social and economic justice have received greater visibility and influence thanks to increased public demands for action in such areas. With national governments frequently ceding the handling of these issues to NGOs, they have been allowed to encroach upon areas that had traditionally belonged to states. Traditional NGO networking, information exchange, and initiation of global campaigns has been exponentially enhanced by use of the Internet. Examples of NGOs include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, Action Aid, and many others.

A key variety of NGOS acting as non state actors is the philanthropic foundations or charities. Philanthropic foundations are unique actors, guided by a very strong culture of independence, innovation and risk-taking. In their insightful study on American philanthropic foundations, Chervalier & Zimet (2006) revealed the following findings:

- (a) American philanthropic foundations devote a growing portion of their financing to international cooperation for development activities. Although the number of philanthropic foundations in the United States has doubled in ten years, their international contributions have been increasing at a constant rate since the end of the 90's. American philanthropic foundations have become influential actors at the international level, especially in the area of providing Aid for developing countries.
- (b) The number of philanthropic foundations in the United States doubled between 1995 and 2005, growing from 38, 807 foundations to 75, 953. The global volume of financing allocated each year by foundations in the United States and abroad has logically reflected this net increase, rising from 11.3 billion dollars in 1994 to 32.4 billion dollars in 2004. For instance, since its creation in 1998, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has donated some ten billion dollars, including 5.8 billion for the Global Health Program. (Chervalier & Zimet, 2006).
- (c) International activity by American foundations is mainly undertaken by a group of 12 major foundations, which are very active in the area of international cooperation. These are Ford, Hewlett, Packard, Rockefeller, Gates, Mellon, Kellogg, Mott Foundations, Open Society Institute, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Carnegie Corporation of New York, MacArthur.

**Super-Empowered Individuals**—these are persons who have overcome constraints, conventions, and rules to wield unique political, economic, intellectual, or cultural influence over the course of human events—generated the most wide-ranging discussion. “Archetypes” include industrialists, criminals, financiers, media moguls, celebrity activists, religious leaders, and terrorists. The ways in which they exert their influence (money, moral authority, expertise) are as varied as their fields of endeavor. This category excludes political office holders (although some super-empowered individuals eventually attain political office), those with hereditary power, or the merely rich or famous. For instance, Koffi Annan, the former UN Secretary General, played a mediating role in the post- election conflict in Kenya in 2005. Also three former Nigeria leaders have played some mediatory roles in different African states. Abdusalami Abubakar has played a role in peace-building and democratisation in post-conflict Liberia; Olusegun Obasanjo has been playing a mediating role under the auspices of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the DRC; and Ibrahim Babangida was appointed by Nigeria to mediate in the Guinea military *coup d’etat*. Other examples include United Nations (UN) Goodwill Ambassadors such as Kanu Nwankwo (United Nations



Fund (UNICEF) Goodwill Ambassador); Emmanuel Adebayor (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Goodwill Ambassador; and Nelson Mandela (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Goodwill Ambassador).

Globalised media have allowed **entertainers** to replace artists and intellectuals as leaders in shaping global public opinion. A good example of this is the rock star Bono, who has raised global consciousness about the plight of Africa, while Mia Farrow has been instrumental in pressuring China over its relations with Sudan by drawing linkages between Darfur and the 2008 Beijing Olympics (US National Intelligence Council, 2007).

**Terrorists and Organised Crime Syndicates:** This is the group that Pollard (2002) describes as “illegitimate nongovernmental actors” as a result of their propensity to carry out covert operations and operate outside International Law or norms of etiquette in international relations. While the phenomenon of terrorists is not new, the ability to transmit information via the internet and other global media has exponentially increased the speed with which terrorists work in the contemporary modern. Technological advances also have put ever more powerful weapons into the hands of individuals and small groups (US National Intelligence Council, 2007).

Transnational criminal organisations supports illicit markets in nuclear and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) materials due to perceived value of the assets. Perception that WMD materials have intrinsic value stimulates this demand.

### **SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Who are super-empowered individuals and how important are they as forces of globalisation?

### **3.5 Approaches to Globalisation**

There are different approaches to globalisation. Economics is the dominant approach. Rajae (2000:24) notes that the economists approach globalisation “in terms of increased economic interdependence and the integration of all national economies into one global economy within the framework of a capitalist market”. Similarly Bairoch (2000:197) refers to globalisation as a “situation wherein industrial and commercial companies as well as financial institutions increasingly operate trans-nationally, in other words, beyond national borders”. What are the features of the global economy? Helvacioğlu (2000) provides us

with some of its characteristics. According to him, the globalisation of the economy can be characterized by first, the growing structural power and mobility of capital in production and financial markets, articulated with neo-liberal policies of privatisation, deregulation and structural changes in national governments, welfare programme and public services. Second, the liberalisation of trade and monetary policies, the growth of trans-national networks of investment, finance, advertising and consumption markets and third, the changes in the foundations and structures of the world economy.

The most important aspect of the change, argues Rajae (2000), is the shift in commodities and mode of production from capital to knowledge, and from industry to information technology respectively. Production becomes decentralized and scattered across the globe through the process of production sharing with little control from nation-states. For instance, production sharing based on the principle of comparative advantage has made Singapore the biggest producer of computer hardware and Bangladesh the biggest producer of clothing. Globalisation of the economy involves such issues as flexible and fluid global labour, global production and capital, global market, and of competition etc (McMichael, 1996 and Bilton, 1997).

Despite the dominance of economics in the globalisation discourse, there are quite a number of scholars (Bilton, 1997 & McMichael, 1996) who warn us about the danger of putting too much faith on the market and other economic forces. More importantly, economic is not the only prime mover of the globalisation process.

Globalisation of culture is another area of discourse. It is argued that one of the consequences of globalisation is the end of cultural diversity, and the triumph of exclusively Western interests and control, especially the imperialism of the United States which leads to the global spread of American symbols and popular culture (cf. H. Schiller, 1969; Hamelink, 1994). Hence the world drinks Coca-Cola, watches American movies and eats tinned food, whilst traditional cultural values and practices decline in importance. The implication of this is not only in terms of its consequences on the economy, but equally important is that such global commodities imply the emergence of global culture. The issue here is not just the sale of global goods, but also the ideas and statements that imply modernity, which means westernisation.

The discussion about the cultural undertone of globalisation normally takes moral and religious tone. Mr. Wolfgang Thierse, the President of the German Bundestag, writes in the April/ May of 2002 issue of the periodical, *Deutschland* that “what we refer to today as globalisation is a Western-dominated form of economic power which is breaking and

entering into all the world's cultures, and which endeavors to reduce people to their economic functions as consumers and producers.... If people believe that their own cultures are being marginalised, their religion disdained, their ties and bonds undermined, and then their reactions are predictable.”

One can easily establish the linkages; global production led to global market, which in turn led to global consumption and global ideas and ideology. Thus, globalisation is seen as a new form of cultural imperialism.

The counter-argument to this stresses new heterogeneity that results from globalisation: interaction is likely to lead to new mixtures of cultures and integration is likely to provoke a defense of tradition; global norms or practices are necessarily interpreted differently according to local tradition, and one such norm stresses the value of cultural difference itself; cultural flows now originate in many places; and America has no hegemonic grasp on a world that must passively accept whatever it has to sell. In other words, as Rajae (2000) notes, globalisation is not harmonisation of community. The diverse identities may not allow that. Nobody can make claim to globalisation- it is complex and vast- beyond the control of anybody or nation.

### **3.6 The Role of the State in a Globalised International System**

Another dimension to the globalisation debate is the political. Those that adopt political approach tend to emphasize the near impotence of the state in the era of globalisation. According to one line of argument, globalisation constrains states: free trade limits the ability of states to set policy and protect domestic companies; capital mobility makes generous welfare states less competitive; global problems exceed the grasp of any individual state; and global norms and institutions become more powerful. States, argues this perspective, are increasingly losing their capacity to govern, and to regulate in an increasingly borderless world. Increasingly, the government's activities are defined by international frameworks, such as World Trade Organisations (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the OECD, as well as influenced by regional blocks like the European Union, African Union. No longer bound by the artificial limitations of territoriality, many public issues are seen as requiring the collective actions of numerous stakeholders, in order to protect or advance the interests of individual nations.

Furthermore, the universalisation of western form of democracy has increasingly become the final form of government across the globe. In

addition and related to the above, is that the rise in importance of such supranational bodies as World Bank, IMF, UN, and AU introduces new agents into decision-making processes of which the nation-states have to negotiate and contend with. As such the locus of political power is no longer the national government. Consequently, diverse forces and agencies at national and international levels share power. Thus, the incursions of international organisations upon national sovereignty and the effects of large-scale migration on social cohesion are restricting the ability of the state to uphold its own fundamental values and determine its collective identity.

While the central argument so far presented is the continued decline in the role of the state, there are some who question such view (Therborn, 2000; Held, 2000; Rajae, 2000, and Pickering, 2001). Pickering (2001) argues that to see these changes in the function of the state as signs of the inevitable death of the nation-state and national identity is misguided. The complex interdependencies between international trade and international organisations on the one hand, and the nation-state on the other, suggest that global processes may change the role of the nation-state, but they are not making it irrelevant. In fact, globalization may lead to the revival of the nation-state. In a more integrated world, nation-states may even become more important: they have a special role in creating conditions for growth and compensating for the effects of economic competition; they are key players in organisations and treaties that address global problems; and they are themselves global models charged with great authority by global norms. As Griffin argued:

Globalisation will affect the way governments intervene and in some cases, the effectiveness of their interventions, but it would be wrong to claim that an inevitable consequence of globalisation is a small and weak state. Territorial states will continue to be responsible for the creation and extinction of property rights within their boundaries and the distribution of productive assets. They will continue to be responsible for public investment and expenditure on education, health and welfare services; for occupational health and safety; for the creation of employment and improvements in the distribution of income. The state will continue to have responsibility for local and national environmental issues and, more generally, for regulating markets (Griffin, 2004).

### **3.7 Impact of Globalisation on Developing Countries**

Debate on the participation of developing countries in the globalisation process has given rise to two positions leading to what are now pro-

globalisation and anti-globalisation groups. The first position calls for critical and positive engagement with the forces of globalisation to harness the opportunities they provide and minimise their consequences. This position rejects the description of globalisation as westernisation. Rajae (2000) was arguing along this line when he stated that globalisation is not a project manipulated by a specific group or state. No player can establish monopoly on information. No imposition of will, views, interests as indicated in the revolt of the masses against globalisation. In other words, globalisation is rooted in an expanding consciousness of living together on one planet, a consciousness that takes the concrete form of models for global interaction and institutional development that constrain the interests of even powerful players and relate any particular place to a larger global whole (R. Robertson, 1992; Meyer *et al.*, 1997). According to an extreme view of this position, all countries are essentially the same, so that even if they appear to be very different (in size, sectoral profile, resource endowment etc.), they are not different in any sense that they might not benefit from liberalisation (cf. Harrison, In other words, their difference does not make a difference. In a nutshell, 'global economic integration will lift all boats' (Nederveen Pieterse, 2002: 1027). What is needed, according to this view, to steer globalisation to positive ends is a more democratic architecture of global public authority (Griffin, 2003). This is what is now referred to as both the Washington (WC) and Post Washington Consensus (PWC): liberalisation is socially progressive (WC); liberalisation is only socially progressive when institutional factors are taken into account (PWC) (Fine *et al.*, 2001). The foundations of this thinking are a characterisation of politics as rational; a faith in the ability of unencumbered markets to deliver social optimality; a conviction that democratic politics will improve the performance of public authorities; a general ontology of the positive-sum in both the political and economic spheres.

The second position tends to be critical about the consequences of the globalisation process and dismisses it as another phase of imperialism, the end result of which the rich get richer and the poor poorer. Many authors attribute the dynamics of globalisation to the pursuit of material interests by dominant states and multinational companies that exploit new technologies to shape a world in which they can flourish according to rules they set (Frank, 2004).

Other proponents of this view have argued that the idea of globalisation as happiness for all people and countries in the world takes too much for granted, as it leaves out the issues of power relations in international politics. For example, there is the fact that African countries joined the present international system as peripheral states and junior partner, a fact that has since placed them in a disadvantageous position with the world

powers. According to this position, the argument that globalisation will 'make everybody happy' is untenable as the global economy is still highly unequal in its spatial patterning, whether one looks at trade or investment (Dicken, 2001; Harrison, 2004), and that this historically-constituted or constructed structures of inequality within and between economies make liberalisation advantageous for some, acceptable to others, and damaging to the rest (Kaplinsky, 2001). But not only are some developing countries, especially African countries, disadvantaged from the beginning in the international political system as a result of their forceful insertion into the global capitalist system through colonialism, their peripheral location within the system, and "the unequal exchange that characterises its relations with the dominant centres of that systems (the industrialised or developed countries who belong to the twenty-nine member Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, and the G-8)" (Osaghae, 1999); they also experience routine and pervasive economic and political intervention from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (the Bank), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), UN Organisations, and Western official aid departments. They also suffer from trade rules that are rigged in favour of the developed countries (Oxfam, 2003). Seen from this perspective, globalization has produced 'uneven development' throughout the world (Colas, 2003) and hence it is nothing but dependent development (Munck, 2003).

Whatever the direction of the debate, it is evident that participation in the globalisation process by the developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular is a must. It is unavoidable as was noted by Giddens (1999). He argues that "European, North or South American, African or Asian - wherever we live, whatever our upbringing, we are all children of a revolution. It's not been a bloody uprising, nor an entirely peaceful, 'velvet' revolution, such revolution is globalisation.

Thus for countries all over the world, the fundamental issue is not to oppose globalization or accept it but rather, how to manage globalisation so that its positive aspects can be maximized and the negative ones minimized. If the reality thus far is that nations have no choice but to participate in the globalisation process and are indeed participating, then the key challenge, besides democratisation of global governance to 'steer globalisation towards greater human security, social equality and democracy' (Scholte, 2005: 383), is the crucial question of what individual nations should do to take up the opportunities provided by globalisation and harness them with their local capabilities as well as have programmes that would cushion the negative effect of the globalisation.

## SELF- ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

“The impact of globalisation on developing countries is mixed. On one hand, globalisation empowers these countries; while on the other hand, it disempowers them.” Discuss.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Globalisation has affected social, political, economic and cultural relations. Particularly, several important conclusions about the nature of the changes caused by globalisation are: the commodification of services has increased significantly, and the organisation of capitalism has changed with the increasing integration of production and services through value chains; new forms of governance and regulation have emerged, including the establishment of multiple levels of authority and the rise of private sector governance; identity formation has obtained a pluralistic character, with the rise in importance of sub-state and macro-regional identities, along with non-territorial identities related to religion, gender and race; and the growth of supraterritorial relations has spurred changes in the way people understand and value the world.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that globalisation process is inevitable. You have also learnt that while globalisation can be a negative force engendering inequality and underdevelopment at both the national and global levels, the fact that globalisation has some negative impact should not imply a wholesale rejection of all signs of globalisation.

## 6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the Approaches to the understanding of globalisation?
2. Evaluate the Impact of globalisation on developing countries.
3. In what ways does globalisation erodes states sovereignty?

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