

First axis: Definition of politics and political science

I. Definition of the word politics

- ✓ The word “politics” comes from the Greek word “polis,” meaning everything that concerns or belongs to the “polis,” or city-state.
- ✓ Politics is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of status or resources.
- ✓ Britannica Dictionary definition of POLITICS « activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies of a government or getting and keeping power in a government »
- ✓ Cambridge Dictionary : « the activities of the government, members of law-making organizations, or people who try to influence the way a country is governed »
- ✓ The art or science of government
- ✓ The art or science concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy
- ✓ The art or science concerned with winning and holding control over a government

II. Definition of political science

We encounter a great difficulty when we try to define the term “politics” ,Some political scientists define politics as the process by which scarce resources are allocated within a social unit for the purpose of providing for human needs and desires.

There is no universal definition of politics. Politics has been defined in many different ways: Politics as the art of government, politics as public affairs, politics as the study of conflict resolution, politics as the study of power.

1. Politics as the art of government

Bismarck told “politics is not a science ... but an art.” He believed that politics was the art of government. politics can be defined as the study of the state, its aims and purposes – the institutions by which those are going to be realized, its relations with its individual members and with other states. Politics is also defined as the study of the government – a collection of officers who make, interpret and enforce rules for the whole community.

This means that politics is the matter of politicians, civil servants and lobbyists. According to this view the vast majority of the people are not involved in politics

This extremely narrow view of politics helps to explain why negative images have so often been attached to the world politics. Politics is often described as a negative phenomenon because only politicians are seen as decision-makers.

2. Politics as public affairs

The distinction between “the political” and “the non-political” coincides with the division between an essentially public sphere of life and private sphere. How can we differentiate the public sphere from private sphere? The traditional division between the public realm and private realm conforms to the distinction between the state and civil society. The institutions of the state are considered as the part of the public sector, whereas the civil society belongs to private sector. Thus, public sector is regarded as “political”, whereas the private sector is considered to be “non- political”. Thus, politics is an essentially “public” activity and it does not take place in private sphere of life.

3. Politics as the study of conflict resolution

Some political scientists see conflict as the essence of politics. Conflict is a necessary characteristic of society. Human beings differ from each other. People's wants are infinite and the resources possessed by societies are limited and therefore generally insufficient to satisfy everybody's desires fully. The conflict does not take place between individuals but also exists between larger groups – between countries, as well as within them. There is a competition for access to, or control over, a society's resources. Some political scientists see politics as a particular means of abolishing conflict by compromise, conciliation and negotiation, rather than through force, so that people can live in reasonable harmony with each other. Politics is the art of finding peaceful resolutions to conflict, through compromise and the building of consensus

4. Politics as the study of power

According to the sociologists Dowse & Hughes (1972) politics is about power. They say: “politics occurs when there are differentials in power.” This suggests that: “Any social relationship which involves power differentials is political. Power is the ability to make other people do whatever you want either by threat, sanctions or through manipulation. Politics is, in essence, power: the ability to achieve a desired outcome, through whatever means.

In the end we can tell that Political science is the study of politics and power from domestic, international, and comparative perspectives. It entails understanding political ideas, ideologies, institutions, policies, processes, and behavior, as well as groups, classes, government, diplomacy, law, strategy, and war.