

Structure

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

Politics is a broad phenomenon. There are several institutions, organizations, processes and issues that are related to politics. Because of vastness of the scope of politics, it becomes difficult to explain politics. Besides, politics is a fast changing process. In such a situation, it becomes difficult to understand politics. The question arises as to which aspects of politics should be studied, how they should be studied, etc. This problem can be solved if we have some way to study politics. There are some ways or tools which suggest as to how we should study politics, which issues should be given priority. These ways are known as frameworks. Any attempt to understand reality without a framework is like groping in the dark. Thus when applied to study state politics, these frameworks can be referred to as the frameworks for the analysis of state politics. In this unit, you will read about different frameworks to understand state politics in India. After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of various frameworks to understand state politics;
- Underline the need to use the frameworks;
- Compare various frameworks to explain state politics.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have studied in unit 1, development of state politics in India was marked by the emergence of new issues, processes and political forces over more than six decades. These changes gave distinct identity to the state politics. They also drew the attention of scholars to study them. Political scientists have used different frameworks in order to capture and understand patterns of state politics in India

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It should be noted that there are no specific frameworks meant exclusively to state politics. The same frameworks can be applied to study politics at any level of its operation—national, state or local. The categorisation of frameworks is generally known by the level at which it is applied.

2.2 SYSTEMIC FRAMEWORK

Systemic framework is one of the two frameworks which have been most commonly used to analyse state politics. The other such framework is Marxian, which you will study in the next section. Systemic framework is also known by its variants like structural-functional, modernisation or developmental frameworks. Indeed, till the 1970s these two frameworks were the predominant. As you will study in this unit, there also emerged other frameworks in the later period. But these two frameworks continue to be used in one or the other forms. Some of the later frameworks are the off-shoots of these two principal frameworks - the systemic and the Marxian. Besides, some scholars have used a combination of frameworks at the same time.

Let us begin with the systemic framework. As a part of the behavioural movement in social sciences, this framework was adopted by political scientists to study changes and order in the political systems. Developed basically in America, this framework was used to study the politics of the countries which had been liberated from the colonial rule. It became very popular in these countries following the publication of G. A. Almond and J. S. Coleman (ed.) *The Politics of Developing Areas* in 1960. The basic features of systemic framework are the following. The unit of political activities is a political system. The political system consists of political institutions/ structures and processes. Different constituent structures/institutions of the system keep interacting, conflicting and adjusting with each other, balancing and counter-balancing themselves. These processes occur in a social and political milieu. In such situation the political system maintains itself. It does not break down. The political system thus is resilient. Many political scientists have followed the systemic framework to study Indian politics. It has been used to study both the politics of the country as a whole and also state politics. The most important example of its application to all India level politics is Rajni Kothari's *Politics in India*. With the recognition of state politics as distinct arena of study, the systemic framework came to be used by several individual scholars in case of studies of individual states or the group of states. They studied various aspects of state politics. These aspects included principally political parties, factions within parties, caste, religion, language, leadership, election, pressure groups, etc. These aspects were also considered as sub-system of political system. Two issues which are among the most significant part of studies are political parties and caste. Paul Brass and Richard Sisson have studied Congress in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively applying the systemic framework. Richard Sission studied the institutionilisation of Congress—adaptability of modern institution, political party to the traditional system of caste. Rajni Kothari, in fact, had conceptualised Congress party as Congress System. Congress had shown resilience in adapting to the factionalism within it. These are some examples of the application of systemic framework.

Caste also drew attention of political scientists like that of the sociologists. In an attempt to understand the developing or traditional societies, they strove to comprehend the interaction between the modernity and the traditions. Modernity

was identified with modern political institutions and processes—elected government, nation-state, modern leadership or elite, universal adult franchise, parties, elections, etc., which were new to the newly decolonised countries. And tradition was identified with the ascriptive or the primordial attributes like caste, religion, tribe, etc. While studying interaction between modernity — elections, political parties, etc. and the tradition like caste Rajni Kothari argues that the interaction between caste and politics is a two-way process; both caste and politics change each other. In the process caste no longer plays the traditional or ritualistic role. It has got secularised.

While pursuing pioneering studies of politics in different states within broad systemic framework, published in Myron Wiener (ed.) *State Politics in India*, a large number of scholars focused on the following aspects — the social and economic environment of political processes, description of political processes, and performance of state government. The principal variables to study social and economic environment included social configuration (caste, religion, language, etc.), economic structure, rural-urban divide; the description of political processes dealt with political parties (with special emphasis on factionalism within Congress), interest groups, leadership pattern and conflict over public policy; and performance of government was assessed primarily in terms of distribution of goods and services. The scholars used these variables in varying degrees, but the common framework of their analysis has been systemic framework.

The studies of different states which have been published in Iqbal Narain (ed.) *State Politics India* are also done in the systemic framework; they also give prominent place to the context of state politics. The context includes history, political status of states, roles of states in national movements, castes and religious composition, levels economic developments, role of educated middle classes. The differences in the levels of these determinants or the context get reflected in differences in state politics. Despite these differences, general framework of analysis in these studies is systemic analysis.

Systemic framework has come under attack from various quarters. Its most scathing critique has been provided by the Marxist scholars. They argue that systemic framework overlooks the role of class in politics; it undermines the significance of history in political processes; it subordinates the state to the political system and does not link the politics within a country to the influence of outside forces like imperialism. They contend that systemic framework is basically anti-change and status quoist.

2.3 MARXIAN FRAMEWORKS

The Marxian framework analyses politics in terms of class relations or social relations of production and forces of production. It considers politics as reflection of class relations. Politics is impacted or determined by the economic relations in a society. The political institutions including the state are representatives of the class interests. And in a class divided society they serve the interests of the upper or the propertied classes. Unlike the systemic framework the Marxian framework links the politics in a developing country to the imperialism of the developed countries. The imperialism influences the politics in the developing countries by the conditionalities of the international funding agencies like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a result of these

conditionalities, the states within the developing countries devise policies which adversely affect the ordinary people. Peoples' reaction to these policies form the part of class struggle against the ruling classes. Unlike the system analysis, the Marxian framework traces the politics to its history. It uses the principle of dialectical materialism to comprehend the social and political reality. The application of dialectical materialism is known as historical materialism. It is worth emphasising that the application of Marxian analysis has been more interdisciplinary in comparison to the system analysis. There are differences among the Marxist scholars regarding the determining role of class or economic factors. In the light of these differences, the Marxian framework can be divided into two groups —classical and neo-Marxism frameworks.

2.3.1 Classical Marxian Framework

The classical Marxian approach mentioned in the *Communist Manifesto* accords an over-determining role to economy in relation to politics. In this case the economy is base and the politics is superstructure. Marx and Engels revised their thesis regarding the determining role of base in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of the Louis Bonaparte*. They now believed that superstructures are not always determined by the base. The latter has its relative autonomy. But in the ultimate analysis it is the base which determines the superstructure. Thus politics has its relative autonomy.

Like the system framework, the classical Marxian framework has also been used to study politics and the national and state levels. The prominent all India level studies relating to post-independence period by classical Marxian framework include Charles Bettelheim's *India Independent* and Achin Vanayak's *The Painful Transition: India's Bourgeois Democracy*. The prominent application of the classical Marxian analysis has been to study the agrarian movements, agrarian relations and land reforms and the trade union movements in different states.

The classical Marxian framework is criticised for giving undue importance to economic factors in comparison to the non-economic factors. The followers of the classical Marxian approach counter this charge: the Marxian framework accepts the autonomy of politics from class, which is relative, but ultimately it is the class which is determining; it is rather the followers of system framework, which ignore caste or non-economic factors at cost of role of class.

2.3.2 Neo-Marxian Framework

The Marxian perspective which gives adequate focus to the non-economic factors —culture, consciousness to the analysis of politics or any other issue is known as neo-Marxism. The neo-Marxism has emerged as a result of the influence of Gramsci, Frankfurt School and Ralph Miliband. The Gramscian impact is most visible in the subaltern school. Popularised by Ranajit Guha subaltern school is significant in the study of modern Indian history. But the insights and concepts used by the subaltern school are used by individual political scientists to study the contemporary politics as well. The scholars applying the subaltern framework argue that the ordinary people develop their autonomous consciousness and take decisions accordingly, without the impact of outside agencies. Belonging to the Frankfurt School, as based in Frankfurt, Germany philosophers like Althusser, Kolakosky, Poulantzas, etc. criticised the dialectical materialism of the classical Marxism.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** i) Use the Space given below for your answer.
 ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Discuss how the systemic framework is used to study state politics.

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- 2) Identify the basic features of the Marxian framework.

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2.4 THE POST- MODERNIST FRAMEWORKS

As you have studied in unit 1, several significant political, social and economic changes have occurred in India. These changes are denoted by advancing globalisation, democratisation, decentralisation, emergence and assertion of identities based on caste, religion and ethnicity, and new social movements. These developments are being captured from various perspectives including the systemic and the Marxian. Some scholars are mixing more than one framework. But there is a growing understanding of some scholars that hitherto available frameworks are not able to explain the new features of politics. They follow the alternative frameworks, which are known as the “post- modernist” framework. Inspired by the writings of philosopher like Lyotard, postmodernism has become a significant framework of analysis for several disciplines. The adherents of the postmodernist framework hold the modernist project of development and its referents responsible for crisis in the society. According to them, the modernist project has not given the autonomy to smaller identities, traditions and indigenous knowledge system. The application of the postmodern perspective is necessitated by the simultaneous rise of identities, social movements and heightened social conflicts or even ethnic/ communal riots. The scholars who use the postmodernist framework find an alternative to modernity in the traditions, sustainable development and indigenous knowledge. The common adversary in modernity has enabled the Gandhians, Socialists, “non-traditional” Marxists, environmentalists, etc. to come to a common platform. Such movement—disenchantment with modernity and search for an alternative is referred to as post-modernism. The postmodernist frameworks are used to study identities, riots, social movements. They are used by scholars belonging to different disciplines.

Let us consider its application to the study of state politics. There is a growing understanding among some scholars that studying the political system as mega unit of analysis - nation-state, political system, party system, caste system, etc. has been impacted by the modernisation project. While in the practice politics of modernisation or modernity does not give enough autonomy to the parts of a political unit, in academic studies the impact of modernisation project or modernity is reflected in the neglect of these parts. In order to break away from such framework of analysis, a large number of scholars emphasise the need to study the fragments of the mega units, to acknowledge their autonomy.

Inextricably linked to the post-modernist perspective is the discourse or deconstructionist analysis. According to the “discourse” or “deconstructionist” perspective a narrative can be understood by breaking its contents into pieces or by deconstructing it. The best way to understand it is contextualising the narrative in terms of knowledge power and discourse formation, areas which have been theorised extensively among others by Michel Foucault. For example, in case of conflict between more than one party, it is difficult to know as to what is the truth. Every protagonist in the conflict justifies its version, and logically; it is difficult to know which version is true. In such a situation, if the conflict, parties and processes related to it are placed in specific context, it is possible to understand it. Paul Brass in his books *The Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in Representation of Collective Violence* and *Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* has developed a framework to analyse the ethnic riots between social groups. He argues that it difficult to understand the reality in the riots. It can only be possible by placing the riots, institutions, persons and processes in proper context.

2.5 FEDERATION-BUILDING FRAMEWORK

This framework is developed against the modernisation or development perspective to study the problems related to the self-determination movements - autonomy movements, insurgencies, secessionist movements and conflicts arisen because of them, in the states located in the periphery of the country, especially North-East India; it can also be applied to Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab or any other state where self-determination movements take place. The most articulate expression of this perspective is found in Sanjib Baruah’s *India Against Itself*. Advocates of this perspective argue that the modernisation or development framework to study the problems of federalism, self-determination movements is biased towards the formation of nation-state, it ignores the point of view of the segments which form the nation-state. The nation-state, according to them, is actually a construction. Such perspective sidetracks the problems of the states by looking at the issues in terms of dichotomy between tradition and modern, incongruence between the aspiring new social forces and the ability of the system to satisfy their demands. The policy makers and the scholars representing the dominant opinion in the country do not take into consideration the perspective of the constituent states. They adopt “step motherly” and arrogant attitude towards the smaller states. Sanjib Baruah suggests that the “nation-state” perspective should be discarded and “genuine federation-building” perspective should be followed so that the “sub-nationalism and Pan Indianism” have stronger relations.

2.6 SOCIAL CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

With the publication of Putnam's *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, social capital has become quite popular concept to study the significance of associations in public life. Social capital is considered to be indicative of existence of civil society and democracy. Drawing on Toquevillian notion of associations, the Putnam popularised the concept of civil society; attributes of which are trust, shared values and norms and networking among the members of associations. The rise of new social movements, civil societies and realisation to study substantive democracy has added to the significance of this perspective. In an attempt to study social capital in fragmented societies, the scholars have given significance to it. Ashutosh Varshney in his book *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* has used social capital framework to study ethnic riots in six cities of India. He argues that ethnic riots occur in the cities where the people do not have good associational relations among themselves. And they do not occur where people have associational relations. He seeks substantiate his argument with the empirical study of pairs of six cities, three of which have witnessed riots and three of which have not. In the similar vein, a large number studies which have and social capital framework to study politics in some states have been published in *Interrogating Social Capital* edited by Dwaipayan Bhattacharya, Niraja Jayal, Sudha Pai and Bisnu N Mahapatra. The scholars of these studies attempted to study of possibility of existence of social capital and its relationship to democracy in states of India, as a case of segmented society.

2.7 FRAMEWORKS TO STUDY ELECTIONS

Elections have been considered as the most expressive medium of existence of democracy. Indicative of only minimalist notion of democracy, elections, however, according to critics do not always prove the existence of true democracy unlike the substantive democracy. Nevertheless, elections are among the most significant features of democracy in India, at various levels of their operation - national, state or local. Their significance has got further enhanced with the increased frequency of elections in India since the last decade of the twentieth century. Elections have attracted the attention of scholars, journalists and psephologists to study electoral politics, especially at the national and state levels. The general interest in elections which mainly started in the 1960s has got further boost since the 1990s. A host of people, survey agencies, psephologists conduct surveys before and after elections to cater to the immediate need to satisfy the public curiosity as well as to provide data to analyse democracy in India. This is known as survey research. The efforts in this direction by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, are note worthy so far as the usage of its data for the usage of academic analysis is concerned. The election surveys done on the meticulously selected samples collect data on the profiles of voters, constituencies and relate the election result to assess the performance of parties, democracy, etc. Answers to questions like "Is India Becoming More Democratic?" are sought in the light growing participation of large number of social groups.

Since survey research to study elections are time - bound, conducted before or after elections, they do not tell as to what happens when elections to not take place. Paul R. Brass argues that if survey research is corroborated with the

ecological analysis, we can be able to make much better analysis of political processes. Ecological analysis means the analysis of data from various regions of a country or state within the country. These data could be about economic, social, educational, etc., profile of people of people living in different areas. With the help of correlation coefficient analysis a relationship between the electoral performance of political parties with different social groups can be ascertained. Brass combined the survey data with ecological analysis to study “*The Politicization of Peasantry in UP*”.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the Space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss how the post-Modernist frameworks are applied to explain identity politics in the states.

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, frameworks are necessary tools to study the social reality. For the study of politics there are some principal frameworks. These are - systemic, Marxian, neo-Marxian, postmodernist, frameworks to study elections, etc. The systemic framework considers political unit of analysis as a system. It argues that every system consists of various components which keep conflicting and adjusting with each other. In the process, the system maintains itself; it adapts to the challenges and the environment. The Marxian framework on the other argues that politics is reflections of the class relations in the society. The nature of politics depends on that of economic contradictions in a society. But there have been changes in this type of Marxian framework. The advocates of these changes agree that economy is important in impacting politics but non-economic factors are also very important. The latter also have their relative autonomy. The Marxian framework with these changes is known as neo-Marxian framework.

It must be noted that these frameworks are not specific to the unit of political analysis local, state or national levels. These could be applied to any unit - local, state or national politics. For the purpose of studying state politics, these could be called as the frameworks for the study of state politics. Their significance further increases for state politics as several aspects of politics are more visible in states. In fact, there are not uniform patterns of state politics. In this context, these frameworks assume special significance.

2.9 REFERENCES

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2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Exercise 1

- 1) Systemic framework is used to explain state politics by taking into consideration political institutions and processes pertaining to state politics. It focuses on how a political system responds to changes taking place in a society. According to this framework a political system remains resilient by responding to changes in society.
- 2) Basic features of the Marxian framework include explaining politics in terms of class relations or in terms of social relations of production and forces of production. According to this framework politics is affected by the class relations in a society. There are two kinds of Marxian framework: Classical and Neo-Marxian. The classical framework suggests that economy plays a predominant role in determining politics. The Neo-Marxian framework suggests that non-economic factors, which include politics, are not absolutely determined by economic factors. They enjoy relative autonomy from the economic factors.

Check Your Exercise 2

- 1) The post-modernist frameworks give importance to various components of a political system, and the factors that influence politics. These factors include various identities such as caste, religion, ethnicity, language, etc. By focusing on such identities, the post-Modernist frameworks give enough recognition to them unlike the systemic and Marxian frameworks. As you have read in this unit, systemic and Marxian frameworks give more importance to a political system and class relations respectively rather than to identities.