

RECENT TRENDS IN POLITICAL THEORY

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 18th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: Democracy Authoritarianism Intersectionality	A consensus among political scientists during the last decade seems to indicate that political science as a discipline will have a brighter future if it is guided by an approach that is behaviorally relevant; political theory is the least significant field of political science because it is least relevant to a behavioral treatment of the discipline. In this study, the author challenges such behavioral contempt for political theory by presenting his vindications of the importance and value of political theory. Furthermore, he attempts to locate political theory in a proper and legitimate place in the study of politics.

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Introduction To Political Theory Meaning & Approaches

The terms 'polity', 'politics' and 'political' are derived from Greek word 'polis' which meant ancient Greek city states. Living in the state was a natural process for a man in the sense that a man who lived outside the state was a God or a beast.

Each state had a social life and culture where activities and institutions were knit together and all these institutions were treated as a part of politics all this was part of ancient times but today the definition of state is not so comprehensive as there has been a distinction drawn between the public and private spheres of human life and politics and polity are together denoted for activities which fall into the public sphere of life.

When in an organization rules are made and designed to regulate the whole community it takes the character of polity. Therefore, in polity rules and decisions are made for whole community and authority is exercised over each member of community.

The word 'Political' refers to something that is public as distinguished from private or something that applies to limited number of people. Society consists of many institutions of which Polity has been uniquely concerned in the sense that it applies to all, and it regulates and oversees functions that apply to all the members of society. Such is the importance of polity of state that Aristotle went on to the extent of describing man as a political animal.

Some Important Definitions -

Numerous eminent theorists have explained the nature of political theory' by defining it.

- **David Held**, *"Political theory is a network of concepts and generalizations about political life involving ideas, assumptions and statements about nature, purpose and key features of Government, state and society, and about the political capabilities of human beings."*
- **Andrew Hacker** states that, *"political theory is a combination of disinterested search for the principles of good state and good society on the one hand, and a disinterested search for knowledge of political and social reality on the other."*
- **John Plamentaz** delineates political theory in functional terms and said that *"the function of political theory has come to be restricted to the analysis and clarification of the vocabulary of politics and the critical examination, verification and justification of the concepts employed in political argument."*
- **Sabine**, *"political theory is, quite simply, man's attempt to consciously understand and solve the problems of his group life and organization. It is the disciplined investigation of political problems not only to show what a political practice is, but*

also to show what it means, or what it ought to mean, political theory can alter what it is."

- **Germino** has stated that, *"Political theory is the critical study of the principles of right order in human existence."*

Features/Characteristics of Political Theory -

Based on above mentioned meaning and definitions of 'Political Theory', some important features/characteristics of political theory can be described as follows:

- ✓ Political theory is a separate area within the discipline of political science, the objective of which is to build theory by analyzing political facts and phenomenon.
- ✓ It is summing total of generalized statements which may be called laws or prepositions that explain the political phenomenon under various conditions.
- ✓ It is a formal, logical and systematic analysis of the processes and consequences of political activity.
- ✓ It is mere explanation of a situation and does not suggest as to how a situation should be.
- ✓ Its laws should be deduced scientifically and not in imagination.
- ✓ Political theory is concerned with explanation (cause and effect relationship) not merely description. Aristotle gave a theory when he analyzed the cause of revolution.
- ✓ In fact, political theory explains the causes and manners of certain political changes and actions. But these explanations should be generalized so that they may be applied to any phenomenon of the future.
- ✓ Political theory provides a rational explanation of the facts of present political life and has the importance for further as well.
- ✓ Political theory can be scientific and non-scientific according to whether scientific principles are followed. Further, political theory can be normative and speculative in character.
- ✓ Political theory is mainly a conceptual study; political theorists concentrate more on theoretical claims instead of empirical claims about the nature of politics.

Scope of Political Theory -

The term theory denotes systematic knowledge and on combining the term political with theory it denotes to the systematic knowledge of political phenomena. The context of Political Theory is concerned with three types of statement:

I. Empirical statements are based on observation through sense experience.

II. Logical statement which is based on reasoning and rationalism.

III. Evaluative statement which is based on value judgment and political science as it alone relies on a empirical and logical statements and it is often put forward that the correct observation and correct reasoning by different sets of person would lead to similar conclusions hence both empirical and logical observations are capable of verification on the other hand when it comes to evaluative statement, they are based on preferences whether they are individual or group and they differ from group to group and help in determining and developing a bankable method to know what is right or Wrong, good or bad it is difficult.

The exponents of logical positivism often argue that evaluative statement has no logical and empirical content they are the result of emotional preference whereas on the other hand, the exponents of scientific method vouch for the study of politics which is based on value neutral approach and we cannot limit Political Theory to the cages of scientific knowledge as it is concerned equally with values that forms a part of philosophy as we cannot accept the view that values are based on individual or group preferences values do have a definite and a logical structure unless we confuse them for bias statements people with different set of values can be invited to have discussion and also an opportunity to understand the others point of view in order to develop certain set of universal principles which can determine the validity of values.

Values are also determined by people who can develop a sound public policy or decision and if this responsibility is not done in a responsible manner the task of determination of values would fall into a irresponsible hands which would eventually have disastrous consequences. That is the reason study of Political Theory must include both Political Science and political philosophy Even George Catlin while studying the nature of Political Theory observed that: the theory itself is divided into Political Science and political philosophy. He asserted that it is the supreme virtue of fusion of Sociology with Political science so that it would enable us to be ready for the phenomena of control in its many forms.

Andrew Hacker has also attempted to explain the major components of Political Theory,

but he uses his own analogy to define and analyze the issue and concluded that every political Scientists play a dual role of both scientist and philosopher as theorist need to have the idea of both science and Philosophy.

The part of theory that is capable of verification can be in sync and assume significance if the theorist has some pre conceived goals or idea of political life Hacker further explains theorist whose interest is political science is interested in explaining realities of political behaviour drawing up of universal propositions about the power structure of the society and the about the relations that exist between different organs and groups of the society. On other hand, the theorist whose interest is political philosophy will draw out the aims and goals of the citizens of the country and about the role power in the country.

Thus, to understand political philosophy sufficient knowledge of political science is required as it prepares a roadmap about the future while keeping in mind the existing realities of life. So, it can be concluded that political science deals with facts of political life and Political philosophy is concerned with values.

Old trends in political theory -

Classical phase starts with ancient Greek political thinkers and continues till the beginning of 19th century. It deals with law, forms of governments, justice etc. modern political theory includes new values and ideas this phase studied the human behavior. The post-modern phase starts after 1960's. In this phase thinkers like Rawls, Nozick, Foucault developed several political theories.

New trends in political theory -

In last few decades political theory has started a new journey with some new agendas and issues. It just does not limit its scope in justice, liberty, democracy or other issues related to state and government institutions. On the contrary it has changes and it adopted a new trend. Now this new trend discusses not only the old issues confined to state and other political institutions, but it has also added some new areas. These are:

1. Contestation over capacity and legitimacy of state -

In last few years in political theory the question of legitimacy of state has become an important one. With the liberalization of market policy, the state becomes a minimal state with a few responsibilities in hand. In India also with the implementation LPG state become a minimal state. But recently with the failure of liberal market policy to uplift the standard of common people's lives though having a sound GDP, the government starts some welfare policies like NREGA, NRHM etc., which is against the concept of minimal state. So, a debate is there whether state should interfere in people's life or not. This

debate led to the question of legitimacy of state as if it has nothing to do with welfare activities than what is the need of state. It also challenged the capacity of state to what extent it can interfere in people's life.

Though the question of role of state in human life there in old trends in political science but it was not like that as it emerges at these days as earlier it was on the issue of communist state or a liberal state but now it is in case of all states.

2. Contestation over the values like Democracy, Liberty etc.-

Another area of new trends in political theory is the issues of contestation over values like democracy, liberty and question of ideology. In recent times the debate is not which form of government like dictatorship or democracy but on what kind of democracy like participatory democracy. What kind of participatory. Participation of individuals as a citizen of the nation or participation as a member of his community, cast and ethnicity is a question nowadays.

3. Issues of representation -

Issue of representation in global and trans nation organization is also a new area of debate. The countries like India follow the policies adopted by WTO, and IMF. As they take loans from them, they are bound to work with that type of development model. But it is important to see that in these institutions there is no representative from these countries. So, the question of representation in global organizations is also a new area of debate in political theory.

4. Creative and obsessive self -

Again, one more area of debate in new trends of political theory is the rise of social movements and their ironic nature. Now against the coercive character of state several social movements against state outbreak. But it is very strange to see that in these movements co-workers become co enemies. They, instead of fighting against the coercive state now, are fighting in-between themselves.

5. Multi culturalism -

Another trend in political science is multiculturalism. With the development of multi-cultural trends, the question of homogeneous development program is challenged by various ethnic and secessionist movements. It led to a crisis in the concept of unity in diversity. This is also an area where recent political theory is debated.

6. Globalization, market fundamentalism and religious fundamentalism and clashes of civilization -

Another debate in political theory nowadays is the debate regarding the implementation of globalization. Many political theorists now believe that globalization in the name of a competitive market leads to hegemony or monopoly of few multinational companies. Again, they also believe that as all political parties accept the same economic policy, they start differentiating themselves on the grounds of religion, caste, and language which led to religious fundamentalism.

7. Resource course -

Recent development in political theory is talking about resource courses. To these thinkers the resources now become a curse to the state. There is war because of the resource. Again, there is debate over who will control the resource, the central government or the local government.

8. Contestation over the issue of sovereignty -

Another issue of debate in modern political theory is the issue of sovereignty. A modern school of political thinkers debates whether the nation state can talk on the issue of sovereignty or can't. They debate on can Indian government seat in peace talk with ULFA with sovereignty as a main issue or not.

9. Debate on climate responsibilities -

Climate change and global warming are few challenges related to third generation of human rights. The unprecedented unsustainable development had resulted in huge human rights violation across the globe. Now the nations both developing and developed are talking about control on development activities to stop this HR violation. But there is a debate also going on that who, developed or developing nation will play the role in doing so? To the East, the developing nations should play the role and to the developing it is the duty of the developed. A major debate in political science is also going on regarding this issue. So, it is also an uprising issue in political theory.

10. Peoples movements -

One more area of recent political theory debate is the transformation of aims and goals of new social movements. Nowadays social movements are not confined in small matters like ethnicity, cast etc. but their aims are for universal development. Now the social movements are fighting for human rights, environmental rights etc. So, it is also a new area in political theory.

11. Third sphere – civil society -

The debate on the definition and role of civil society in human life is also a concern of political theory in the recent trends. Civil society is recognized as the third sphere of human life. So, it plays an important role in human life. But there is a debate going on that can civil society is recognized as an alternative to the state. To what extent can civil society assist human beings as a political institution.

Conclusion:

So, these are the emerging trends in political theory. Though some of them were also in the old phase, the countryside was quite different from the recent one. These new trends in political theory have clearly indicated that political science is changing with time and become more related to human life than before. Now political theory has encompassed all concern matters of human beings which have any relation to politics.

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