
Behaviouralism

Introduction

The process of development of new science of Politics, which has now come to be known as modern Political Science, began with the coming of Behavioural revolution. The deep dissatisfaction with the nature, scope, methods and conclusions of the traditional Political Science led to the emergence of a revolution-the Behavioural revolution in Politics. This revolution led to the emergence of Behavioural Approach in Politics. Thus, development however could remain popular for only one decade. Under the weight of its own weakness as well as due to several new developments it got replaced by a revolution from within-The Post-Behaviouralism. As such a study of modern Political Analysis must begin by a review of these two developments-Behaviouralism and Post Behaviouralism.

Behaviourism: Reason of Growth

The deep dissatisfaction with the nature and methods of investigation of traditional political science turned into a revolution after the end of Second World War. This revolution came to be characterised as the Behavioural Revolution or Behavioural Approach or Behaviouralism, and within its broad ambit involved all such approaches, protests and reactions which were developed by many political scientists as alternative methods or investigation necessary for making political science a real science of political behaviour in place of its traditional nature as a philosophy of state and government. The legal and institutional approaches were rejected as parochial, formal configurative, static and inadequate for the study of politics. The political scientists now came forward to advocate the need for building a behavioural science of politics capable of explaining all the processes of politics and all aspects of human political behaviour.

Since 1949 the behavioural approach has posed the most serious challenge to traditional approach. Political behaviouralism represents one of the most challenging developments in contemporary political science. Though the roots of political behaviouralism stretch back to the beginning of the century in the work of such European scholars as Max Weber and Graham Wallas, its phenomenal post 1945, development has been primarily the work of Americans. As Evron, M Kirkpatrick has observed, "The challenge to traditional political science of behavioural approach deserves to be ranked as the most single development in political science".

Reason for the Coming of Behavioural Revolution

The Centre of the origin, development and subsequent decline of Behaviouralism has been American universities. It had its antecedents at the University of Chicago in the 1920s with Charles Merriam and his students. However, it has phenomenal growth and its vitality came only in early fifties after the Second World War and in other American Universities.

Several factors contributed to its origin and development. The late development of political science as an autonomous academic discipline in American Universities, the dissatisfaction with the nature of traditional political theory, the existence of several other factors and forced together made possible the emergence of Behavioural revolution. In fact a number of forces contributed to the development of Behaviourism.

It is indeed very difficult to precisely define Behaviouralism because it has been used as an umbrella by the behavioural political scientists to record their protests, for the rejection of traditional political theory/approach, and for advocating the building up of a science of human – political behaviour through empirical, mathematical and statistical analysis of data leading to scientific generalisations. Even during its hay days, it was differently defined by a large number of political scientists, who, despite differences regarding its, nature and scope, took pride in describing themselves as behaviouralists.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BEHAVIOURALISM

In order to know the characteristics of Behaviouralism we have again to study the views of several eminent scholars- David Truman, Heinz Eulau, Samuel J.Eldersveld and Morris Janowitz, and David Easton.

David Truman's View

David Truman defines political Behaviouralism as the science of political behaviour. "Where political behaviours means all "those actions and interactions of men and groups which are involved in the process of governing..... At the maximum this conceptions brings under the rubric of political behaviour any human activity which can be said to be a part of governing."

He specifies that Behaviouralism stands for two features:

- (i) research must be systematic, and
- (ii) it must place primary emphasis upon empirical methods.

By the first i.e, systematic research, Truman means, "A precise statement of hypothesis, and a rigorous ordering of evidence" and by the school i.e, empirical methods, he means research and theory building through data analysis and empirical testing. The ultimate goal of the student of political behaviour is "the development of the science of political process." He favoured a controlled use of inter-disciplinary focus. He even admitted the usefulness of historical knowledge. It can be "an essential supplement to contemporary observation of political behaviour."

Robert Dahl whole heartedly accepts the views of David Truman and believes that if these characteristics of behavioural political science had been properly understood and accepted by all the behaviouralists and their critics "much of the irrelevant, fruitless and ill-informed debates over the behavioural approach over the past decade need never have occurred, or at any rate might have been conducted on a rather higher level of intellectual sophistication".

Views of Heinz Eulan, Elderseld and Janowitz.

In an introduction to their Book Political Behaviouralism: A Reader in Theory and Research, Heinz Eulan, Elderseld and Janowitz specify the following four characteristics of the political behaviour approach:

1. It specifies as the unit or object of both theoretical and empirical analysis, the behaviour of persons and social groups rather than events, structures, institutions, or ideologies.
2. It seeks to place theory and research in frame of reference common to that of social psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. In other words, it favours inter- disciplinary focus.
3. It stresses the mutual inter-dependence of theory and research. Theoretical questions need to be stated in operational terms for purpose of empirical research. And, in turn, empirical findings should have a bearing on the development of political theory. It is self-consciously theory oriented.
4. It tries to develop rigorous designs and to apply precise methods of analysis to the political behaviour problems. It stands for scientific procedure of research.

Thus, "political behaviour approach seeks to understand political action and, whenever and wherever possible, it employs quantitative and statistical methods."

View of David Easton

David Easton has identified the following eight major assumptions or characteristics of Behaviouralism:

Regularities There are discoverable uniformities in political behaviour. These can be expressed in generalizations or theories with behavior. These can be expressed in generalizations or theories with explanatory and predictive values.

Verification The validity of such generalizations must be testable, in principal by reference to relevant behavior.

Quantification Precision in the recording of data and the statement of findings requires measurement and quantification, not for their own sake, but only where possible, relevant and meaningful in the light of other objectives.

Value "Ethical evaluation and empirical explanation involve two different kinds of proposition that for the sake of clarity should be kept analytically distinct. However, a student of political behavior is not prohibited from asserting propositions of either kind separately or in combination as long as he does not mistake one or the other."

Techniques “Means for acquiring and interpreting data cannot be taken for granted. They are problematic and need to be examined self-consciously, refined and validated so that rigorous means can be found for observing, recording and analyzing behavior.”

Systematization Research ought to be systematic, that is to say, theory and research are to be seen as closely inter-twined part of a coherent and orderly body of knowledge.

Pure Science The application of knowledge is as much a part of the scientific enterprise as theoretical understanding. But the understanding and explanation of political behavior logically precede and provide the basis for efforts to utilize political knowledge in the solution of urgent practical problems of society.

Integration Because the social sciences deal with the whole human situation, the political research can ignore the findings of the other disciplines only at the peril of weakening the validity and undermining the generality of its own results. Recognition of this inter-relationship will help to bring political science back to its status of earlier centuries and return into the main fold of the social sciences.

These eight assumptions definitely form the common core of the views of almost all the behaviouralists. However, at the same time it reflects the inherent weakness of behaviouralism. As Easton has himself observed that: It is “less a tightly structured dogma than a congeries of related values and objectives.”

On the basis of the above description of the characteristics and assumptions of Behaviouralism, we conclude: Behaviouralism seeks to study politics as an aspects of human behaviour in a framework of reference common to other social sciences and prescribes the use of empirical research, mathematical-statistical-quantification techniques of data collection and analysis with the purpose of building a scientific theory political behavior.

LIMITATIONS OF BEHAVIOURALISM

Behaviouralism has been subjected to severe criticism particularly by the supporters of the traditional approach to politics. In fact the differences and divisions among the behaviouralists and the concerted opposition that they had from the traditionalists have made behaviouralism face a severe criticism. Even during its hay days there was lack of definition. As Evron Kirkpatrick has observed: “It was general ambiguous enough that its proponents and representatives disagreed about its definition, specific enough to inspire articulate opposition from some proponents of traditional political science”. Behaviouralism served as, “a sort of umbrella capacious enough to provide temporary shelter for a heterogeneous group united only by dissatisfaction with traditional political science and comprised of persons who would probably move out in quite different directions once the storm of protest against innovation was passed. The criticism of behaviouralism has been directed against its major assumptions as well as against its general approach towards politics.

The main points of criticism have been:

1. That human behaviour as the object of study is bound to be problematic and even fruitless.
2. That all aspects of human behaviour cannot be observed and stated in empirical generalizations.
3. That behaviouralism makes political science dependent upon other social sciences, particularly Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology.
4. That behavioural advocacy or study of facts to the exclusion of values is neither possible nor desirable, nor even can it be useful.
5. That the differences among the behaviouralists have tended to reduce it to a congeries of several views both related and unrelated from one another.
6. That scientific method, particularly as used in natural sciences cannot be applied to social sciences, particularly political science.
7. That behaviouralists were obsessed with methods and techniques and that they failed to concentrate upon the substance of politics.
8. That behaviouralism reflected a bias in favour for liberal democratic system since empirical research can be really possible only in such system.
9. That behaviouralists in their passion for „Scientism“ have created a ridiculous complicated gargon.
10. That the „value-neutrality“ preached and practiced but the behaviouralists was destined to make it a less-relevant if not non-relevant theory of human political behavior.

11. That the behaviouralists failed to make real headway towards the professed objective of theory-building. They remained lost in trivial research and failed to come to grips with the brute realities of politics.