

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS  
POLITICAL SCIENCE  
SEMESTER -I**

**UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL SCIENCE  
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC CORE (DSC)-I**

**PAPER-I**

**BLOCK-1**

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## **FOREWORD**

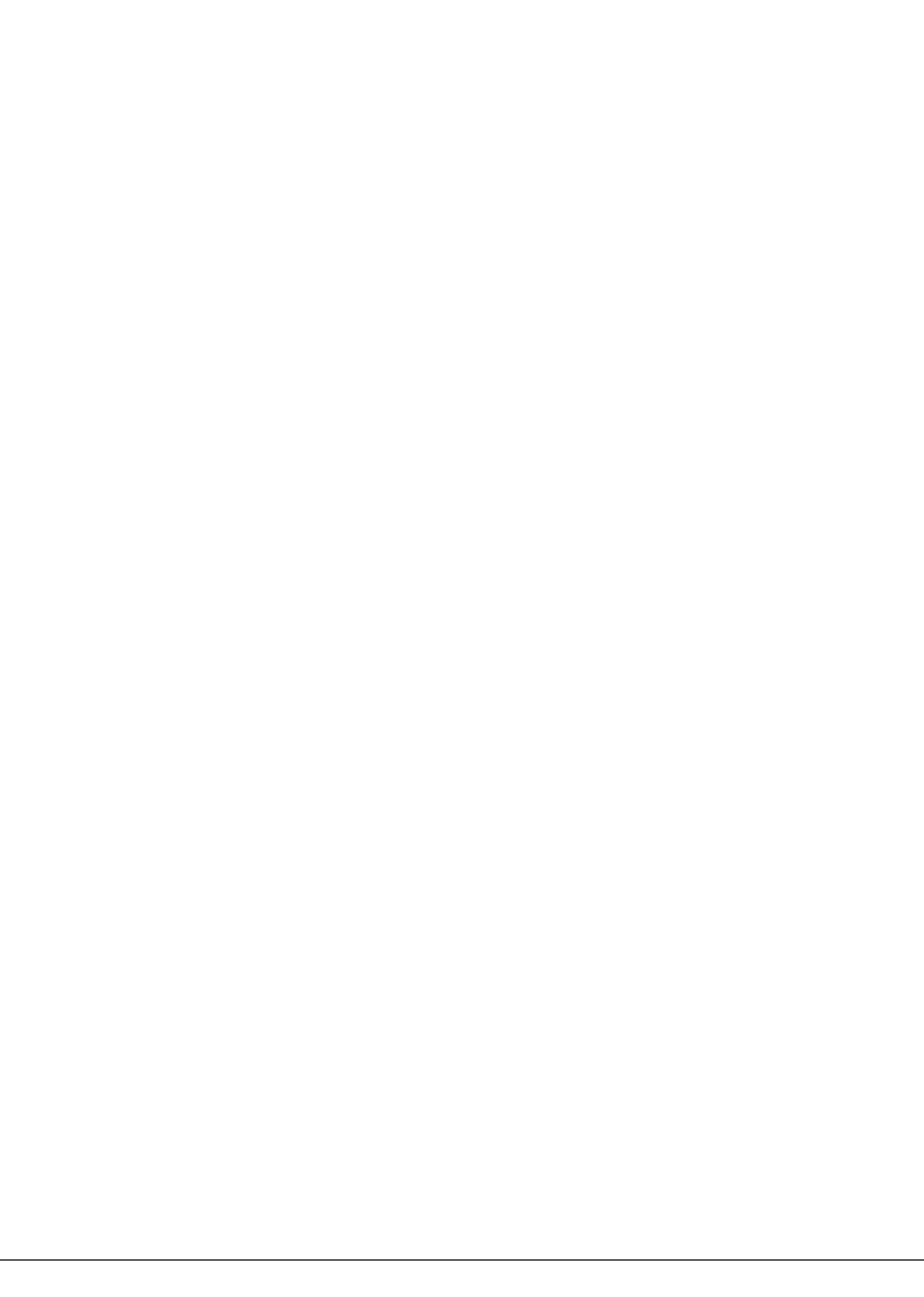
The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavours.

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# UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL SCIENCE

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# **BLOCK-1: UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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## **Introduction to the Block**

Unit 1: Politics and Political Science deals with meaning of Politics and political science.

Unit 2: Relationship of Political Science with other Social Sciences deals with

Unit 3: Nature of Political Theory deals with the basic meaning of politics and thus, about the fundamentals of the discipline of political science.

Unit 4: Elements of State deals with the basic elements of State formation like population, territory etc.

Unit 5: Difference between State and Government, State and Society, State and Association deals with “state” and “government” are often used interchangeably in political discourse.

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# UNIT 1: POLITICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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## STRUCTURE

### 1.0 Objectives

#### 1.1 Introduction

#### 1.2 Meaning of Politics

##### 1.2.1 Changing Meaning of Political Science

##### 1.2.2 Growth of the Discipline of Political Science

#### 1.3 Definition of Politics

#### 1.4 Nature and Scope of Political Science

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#### 1.7 Let us sum up

#### 1.8 Key Words

#### 1.9 Questions for Review

#### 1.10 Suggested readings and references

#### 1.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- To understand the meaning of Politics;
- To know the definition of politics;
- To know the nature of political science and
- To understand the scope of political science.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Politics exists everywhere. It is all-pervading and as old as human beings. Politics prevails in every sphere of human life. Whether one likes or not virtually no one is completely beyond the reach of some kind of political system.

Political science is a social science and like its sister subjects it revolves around man and his social (Political) environment. Being one of the oldest social sciences its nature and scope of the study have undergone several changes over the centuries. Political Science first began with the Greeks. The term 'Politics' is derived from the Greek word '**Polis**' which means 'city-states' (Polity meaning Government, politeia meaning Constitution) and each city in those days was an independent state, a principality in its own right. E.g. Athens, Sparta, Corinth etc.

Aristotle is regarded as "**the father of Political science**" on account of his far reaching and permanent contribution to the field of politics. He called politics the Master Science because politics determines the environment within which every person will organize his life. No one can escape from the parameters set by politics. In his famous book 'Politics' Aristotle wrote, "Man is by nature a Political Animal and he who is by nature or by accident is without state is either above humanity or below it." Politics is the control room of all human activities.

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## 1.2 MEANING OF POLITICS

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Political Science is that part of social science which deals with the foundations of the state and the principles of the government. According to J W Garner, "Politics begins and ends with the state." Similarly, R G Gettel wrote that Politics is the "study of the state in the past, present and future". Harold J Laski stated in the same vein that the study of Politics concerns itself with the life of men and women in relation to organized state. Thus as a social science, Political Science deals with those aspects of individuals in society which relate to their activities and organizations devoted to seeking of power, resolution of conflicts and all these, within an overall framework of the rule and law as laid down by the state.

### 1.2.1 Changing Meaning of Political Science

The term Politics is derived from the Greek word polis which means city-state. That is why many commentators, as you saw, rightly define Politics in terms of the state or government. However, this definition does not exhaust the meaning of Politics. Politics also deals with power. Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan define Political Science as “the study of shaping and sharing of power”. In a word, Politics deals with both state and power. However, the power that Political Science deals with is, more often than not, the legitimate power. Since science is the systematic study of any phenomenon through observation and experiment, it follows that Political Science studies the state and power in all their aspects. You will learn more about the state and power later in this lesson. Political Science deals with both empirical facts and normative issues. Facts are in the domain of “what is” and value preferences are in the domain of “what should be.” For example, if somebody says India is a parliamentary democracy, he or she is making a statement of empirical fact. This is what India today actually is. But if she or he were to make a statement like the one that India should switch over to a presidential form of democracy, the statement would be a normative one. Political Science is not satisfied with describing the state of affairs, it wants to change or improve upon them. Empirical statements are true or false by virtue of what observation shows to be the case. Evaluative statements are ethical/moral imperatives, which are often said not to be true or false in any sense at all. Formal statements (such as the propositions of mathematics) are true or false by virtue of the meanings of their constituent terms alone. Political Philosophy deals with formal statements. Political Science deals with empirical statements and also evaluates the existing political institutions, practices and focuses on how to improve them.

- explain the meaning of Political Science in the light of some standard definitions;
- distinguish between Political Science and Politics;
- describe the scope of Political Science in terms of role of the State, functions of

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- government and its relationship with citizens;
- recognize the relevance of Justice for citizens and State.

### **1.2.2 Growth Of The Discipline Of Political Science**

Systematic study of Politics started with the Greeks in the fourth century BC. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle used it in the most comprehensive sense. Aristotle called Politics a “master science”. For him, it comprised of not only the institutions of state or government but also family, property and other social institutions. Politics, for the Greeks, was an all-encompassing activity. The ancient Greek view about Political Science was mainly ethical. In contrast, the ancient Romans considered the legal aspect of Politics more important for their governance. Individual and the State during the Middle Ages, Political Science became a branch of religious order of the Church. Political authority was, then, subordinated to the authority of the Church.

As the state grew in size and became more complex, Political Science acquired a realistic and secular (non-religious) approach. After the Industrial Revolution, the role of the State, which was limited to maintenance of law and order and providing defense against external aggression, underwent considerable changes with the emergence of the new economic system called capitalism. In the twentieth century, after the Second World War, the ‘behavioural approach’ offered a new dimension of Political Science. The behavioural movement in American Political Science in the 1950s and the 1960s placed a lot of emphasis on the ‘science’ part of Politics. It wanted to model Politics after the methods followed by natural sciences like Physics, Botany, etc. The behaviouralists built theory inductively from empirical propositions. Those who follow inductive method would come to the conclusion after study, observation and experiment. For example, when some behaviouralists saw African-Americans (Blacks) of the southern United States of America (USA) voted for the Democratic Party of the United States, they came to the conclusion that the African-Americans do vote for the Democrats.

This behavioural approach shifted the focus of its study from political institutions and structures to their functions. It placed stress on political activity and the behaviour of men and women who control these institutions. It replaced the study of ideas by the study of facts, evidence and behaviour. It considered political activity manifested in behaviour as the true subject of Political Science. A political activity may be in the form of an individual contesting an election. It may be the activity of a group seeking the adoption of a particular policy in its favour by the government. As different people pursue different interests, such activities tend to generate disagreement, competition and conflict. But the distinctive quality of Politics is that it includes physical coercion or force by the government. It may and usually does involve the persuasive influence and effort of the government to resolve conflicts through its balanced policy decisions. Politics is also viewed as a process whereby individuals, groups or communities seek to achieve their specific but conflicting goals. Politics, as the process, seeks to allocate resources (Easton calls it, values) authoritatively. Politics, as the study of structures, institutions, processes and activities, recognizes the possibility of the use of power. The Marxist approach, which is derived from the writings of the nineteenth century German philosopher Karl Marx, views Politics as a study of irreconcilable conflicts between the two classes 'haves' (those who have private property, or simply the rich) and the 'have-nots' (those who do not have any private property, or simply the poor); in other words, the exploiters and the exploited. The emancipation of the have-nots will come only through a revolution which would put an end to the institution of private property, thus changing the class society to the classless society. But Politics, as against the Marxist view, has another view also, the liberal view, according to which Politics is considered as an as effort for conciliation and accommodation to bring about rule of order and Justice. Incidentally, the Marxist view of politics comes as a reaction to the liberal view of politics.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

1. What is the Changing Meaning of Political Science?

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2. What is the Growth of the Discipline of Political Science?

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### 1.3 DEFINITION OF POLITICS

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**Changing nature of Politics: Is Political science a Science or Art?**

Whether politics can be considered a science has been a long standing controversy. Aristotle adopted a scientific approach to the study of the discipline. He separated the study of politics from ethics and law, examined and compared constitutions (158) and classified governments into meaningful categories. On the other hand James Bryce, Charles Beard and Harold Laski are of the opinion that politics is not a science. It is said that the nomenclature Political Science owes its origin to William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Science is systematised body of knowledge about any phenomenon which is governed by its own laws. Science is based on collection of data, generalisations, accuracy and verification or experimentations. Let's try to test political science on these grounds.

The word comes from the same Greek word from which the title of Aristotle's book Politics (from Ancient Greek: Πολιτικά, romanized: Politiká or Polis, meaning "affairs of the cities"). The book title was rendered in Early Modern English in the mid-15th century as

"Polettiques"; it became "politics" in Modern English. The singular politic first attested in English 1430 and comes from Middle French politique, in turn from Latin politicus, which is the Latinization of the Greek πολιτικός (politikos), meaning amongst others "of, for, or relating to citizens", "civil", "civic", "belonging to the state", in turn from πολίτης (polites), "citizen" and that from πόλις (polis), "city".

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## 1.4 NATURE AND SCOPE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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### Nature of Political Science

Here we shall learn about the scope of Political Science in terms of role of the State, functions of government and its relationship with citizens.

#### 1.4.1 Role Of The State

The term 'State' in its modern sense was first used by Machiavelli (1469-1527), the Italian statesman. The study of the State has since remained the focal point for the political scientists. The State consists of four elements. These are:

- (a) the people;
- (b) the territory on which they live;
- (c) the government to rule and regulate the lives of the people and
- (d) sovereignty, which implies unrestricted authority to take decisions and manage its own affairs.

You will read in detail about these four elements in the second lesson.

The role and nature of the State have been interpreted differently.

Modern western liberal thinking, about which you will study more in the fourth lesson, arose with the commercial (Mercantile) Revolution in Western Europe in the sixteenth century and became prominent with the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. These Revolutions brought into focus a new economic system called capitalism. Market is a place where goods and services are sold and bought. It operates on the basis of demand and supply. Many people regard it as a self-regulating, self-correcting place, provided there is no interference by the state.

Competition is the chief hallmark of market. Capitalism and market are considered two sides of the same coin. The social group consisting of

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traders, merchants and businessmen and later the industrialists (also known as the bourgeois) was the major beneficiary of this system.

The liberals emphasized that the consent of the people is the true basis of the state. Early liberal thinkers also considered the state as a 'necessary evil' - an evil but necessary for the purpose of protecting the individual from the external and internal enemies. According to this view, that government is the best which governs the least. In other words, the state should be a 'police state' and hence a limited one. It should also be limited in a different sense: as John Locke, the famous English liberal philosopher of the seventeenth century said it is there to protect the individual's natural right to life, liberty and property. Rights are claims by an individual on the state. Natural rights are those rights with which an individual is supposed to have been born. These are, so to say, God-given rights. More importantly, individual is supposed to have acquired them even before the state came into existence. The important implication is that since the state has no role in the creation or granting of these rights, it cannot take away or abridge these rights. By contrast, the Marxist view, about which you will study more in the fourth lesson, does not consider the State as an impartial institution. It asserts that, throughout the centuries, the state has been a tool in the hands of the "haves" for exploiting and dominating the "have-nots." In the future classless society like the communist society, the state would "wither away." According to the Gandhian view, the State would justify its existence, by acting as a "trustee" of the people. It should help the poorest and the weakest one. It should restore to him or her, a control over his or her own life and destiny. The Welfare State, which slowly emerged during the 1930s, tries to promote the wellbeing of its citizens, especially the poor, the needy, the unemployed and the aged. It is now generally agreed that the Welfare State exists to promote common good. So the functions of the state have increased manifold.

Power refers to the ability of one person affecting the attitudes or action of another. I have power over you if I can make you do what you would not have done otherwise. But power is not always exercised openly. It can be exercised in unseen way, as in controlling the agenda. However,

power can be best exercised when I can convince you about what is good/bad for you. To that extent, my power over you would be complete. And this dominance would always go unchallenged. By power of the government, we think of the different aspects of government. We think of ministers who have departments under them for the exercise of power over the area of their domains. There is the bureaucracy and the enormous structure of governmental administration, which has power over us. It can control our lives in various ways by making, administering and implementing laws. Here, one thing is to be noted. Power does not lie only in the highly publicized areas of social life, like government, administration, elections, etc. It also exists in small institutions like family etc. Many feminists are of the opinion that inside the private world of family, man exercises power or dominance over woman. Hence, it is very aptly said, “even the personal is political.” Another thing to be noticed is that there is a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate power. There can be power, which is considered right or proper, while another may be improper. A dacoit’s power over me is very real, because if I do not comply with his wishes, I might lose my life or limb. But it is not proper power as is generally understood. Contrary to it the power that the government’s representatives, policemen or judges exercise over me is proper power. The dacoit’s power is illegitimate power while the government’s is legitimate. And the power of constitutional authorities over me is called authority. Authority contains the two ideas of power and legitimacy. Authority is that form of power which is legitimate. It is power plus legitimacy.

### **1.4.2 Citizens And Government**

The government is the most important instrument of the State through which the latter realizes its objectives. Through its three organs i.e. the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, it makes laws and rules, implements them, maintains peace and order in the Individual and the State country and resolves clashes of interests. It also tries to ensure territorial integrity or unity of the country. Modern democratic governments perform many other functions for the development and

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welfare of citizens and the society, as a whole. This is especially so in a developing country like ours. The relationship between citizens and the government is reciprocal. The citizens are members of the State. The state recognizes certain rights of the citizens and in turn expects certain duties from them. So far as the rights of the citizens are concerned, they can be divided into three: civil, political and social.

**CIVIL RIGHTS** are those rights which are necessary for the freedom/liberty of the individual. They include the right to life and personal liberty, right to freedom of speech, expression and thought, right to own property, right to enter into contract, right to equality before law and equal protection by law. Equality before law means absence of special privileges; equal protection of laws implies equals should be treated equally.

**POLITICAL RIGHTS** include the right to vote and the right to contest election.

**SOCIAL RIGHTS** include the right to some degrees of economic welfare and security and the right to live the life of a civilized being according to standards prevailing in the society. It is the primary duty of the citizens to pay taxes to the government. They should cooperate with the government and abide by the laws and rules; should help in preventing diseases by immunization and by keeping the neighbourhood clean. They should have small families to help the government check the population growth. They should preserve public property, help in catching and punishing anti-social and anti-national elements. Further, the citizens of different castes, religions, languages and regions should solve their problems by understanding and agreement and not by violent means. In this way, a lot of resources, energy and time of the government can be saved for constructive purposes.

### **1.4.3 Liberty**

The term liberty is derived from the Latin word liber meaning free. Thus liberty means freedom. Freedom is of paramount importance for the

development of an individual's personality. Historically speaking, the term liberty was initially defined as absence of all restraints on an individual. This is known as the negative concept of liberty. Early liberalism championed negative liberty. John Stuart Mill, the nineteenth century English political philosopher, described, "Restraint as an evil". Mill was especially worried about the restraints coming from the state and society. However, since individuals live together in a society, complete absence of restraints would be neither possible nor desirable. Further, differentiating between the self-regarding and other-regarding action is not always possible. It has been very aptly said that your liberty to swing your arm ends there where my nose begins. For liberty to be enjoyed by everyone, it should have reasonable restraints. This is the concept of positive liberty. This concept further means freedom to be a master of one's own self. Harold J Laski supported this concept. Freedoms are opportunities which history has shown to be essential to the development of personality. The freedom of many requires restraint of law on the freedom of some. Later liberals supported the positive liberty.

### **1.4.3.1 Safeguards Of Liberty**

Declaration of rights of the individuals in the Constitution is considered as an important safeguard of liberty. This way the government can be prevented from encroaching upon the freedoms of the people. Impartial judiciary is rightly called the watchdog of liberty. Without it the liberty of the individuals would be meaningless. Decentralization of powers is another important safeguard of liberty. History is witness to the fact that concentration of power has very often led to despotism. Separation of powers, i.e. the executive, the legislature and the judiciary being separate, is a great ally of liberty. Montesquieu said, "Power should be a check on power." Rule of law or equality in the eyes of the law is also an important safeguard of liberty. This is the bulwark against discrimination based on caste, class, colour, creed, etc. A large measure of social justice or diffusion of social and economic privileges is a prerequisite for liberty. If privileges become the prerogative of the select few, then effective liberty would be denied to a vast majority. A well-knit party

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system is also indispensable for the preservation of liberty. All these institutional safeguards are inadequate to preserve liberty if the citizens themselves do not possess the proud spirit to preserve it. People should always be on their toes to ensure that their liberty is not encroached upon. Eternal vigilance, it has been rightly said, is the price of liberty.

### **Scope of Political Science**

There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the scope of political science. There is lack of precision in the definitions and meanings of political science and that creates confusion regarding the precise boundaries of the subject.

According to Willoughby, political science has to deal with three great topics: State, Government and Law. The view of Prof. Goodnow is that political science divided itself into three distinct parts: the expression of the state wills, the content of the state will as expressed and the execution of the state will. At the UNESCO conference held in September 1948, distinguished political scientists from the various parts of the world marked out the subject-matter of political science which included 1) Political theory 2) Political Institutions 3) Political Dynamics and 4) International Relations.

As the importance of political science is increasing day by day, its scope is also increasing and becoming wider. Thus in general scope of political science includes following things:

#### **1) Study of State and Government:**

Political science is the science of state and government. It deals with the nature and formation of the state and tries to understand various forms and functions of the government. Scholars like Bluntschli, Garris and others believe that the scope of political science is restricted to the study of the state alone. Scholars like Leacock attach more importance to the study of government than to the state.

Political science makes a thorough investigation into the origin of the state. It also deals with the elements of the state, sovereignty and law, ends and functions of state, the rights and obligations of the individual, political institutions, forms of government, elections, political parties,

public opinion, local bodies and international bodies etc. it studies state as it is, as it has been and as it ought to be.

**2) Study of Political Theory:**

Political theory is a major branch of political science. On the basis of the political ideas or thoughts of political thinkers, political theory formulates definitions of the concepts like democracy, liberty, equality, ground of political obligation etc. It deals with some rudimentary concepts of political science. Speculations of political philosophers and other ideologies are put together in one volume which is given the title political theory.

**3) Study of Political Institutions:**

The study of political institutions includes a study of constitutions and comparative governments. It deals with the nature of different political institutions, including government, explains their merits and demerits, their structure and working and arrives at different conclusions on comparative basis. The study of public administration and local governments may also be included under this heading.

**4) Study of Political Dynamics:**

The study of political dynamics has become important in the twentieth century. It means the current forces at work in government and politics. It covers a wide range of and includes political parties, public opinion, pressure groups, lobbies etc. A scientific study of the working of these political dynamics helps us to explain the political behaviour of individuals and groups. The study in this field is often done in collaboration with other social sciences like sociology, anthropology and psychology etc. Human nature is not static but dynamic. Hence the study of political dynamics becomes extremely essential to understand changing concepts.

**5) Study of adjustment of individual with the state:**

It is interesting to study the nature of relationship between individual and state and to examine how man adjusts within the society. Man is the root of politics. The state guarantees certain rights and liberties to its citizens

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and also imposes certain reasonable restrictions on them. Maximum state intervention can lead to loss of liberty and complete absence of the state intervention can lead to a state of anarchy (Chaos). It is a difficult problem to adjust and reconcile the authority of the state with the individual liberty.

### **6) Study of international relations and international law:**

It includes wide range of topics like diplomacy, international politics, international law and organisations like UN. With technological advancement and progress in human knowledge the world has come closed and become like one family. Human society today is viewed from a world perspective. Therefore the study of international relations today has become an independent discipline.

### **7) Study of disagreements and their resolution:**

Disagreement is at the root of any political process on account of conflicting interests, contradictory view and opinions, socio-economic inequalities and scarce resource available to resolve these issues. Hence politics is all about making choices and arriving at policy decisions suitable to the broad demands and needs of people in the society.

Elections are said to be the most effective means of resolving conflicts in any society. Apart from it Legislature, Judiciary, Pressure groups also are some other means to resolve political conflicts at public level.

Thus political science over a period of time has covered wide range of subjects under its scope. Beginning from traditional study based on state, government, law and institutions to modern study focusing on process, political dynamics, political socialization, political cultures, political development and informal structures like pressure groups etc. It is not that traditional boundaries in the study of political science have been obliterated. They merely have been extended to give sharpness and depth hitherto unknown.