



A PPT ON DAVID EASTON'S SYSTEM'S APPROACH

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DAVID EASTON

David Easton (June 24, 1917 – July 19, 2014) was a Canadian-born American political scientist. From 1947 to 1997, he served as a professor of political science at the University of Chicago.

At the forefront of both the behavioralist and post-behavioralist revolutions in the discipline of political science during the 1950s and 1970s, Easton provided the discipline's most widely used definition of politics as the authoritative allocation of values for the society. He was renowned for his application of systems theory to the study of political science. Policy analysts have utilized his five-fold scheme for studying the policy-making process: input, conversion, output, feedback and environment. Gunnell argues that since the 1950s the concept of "system" was the most important theoretical concept used by American political scientists. The idea appeared in sociology and other social sciences but it was Easton who specified how it could be best applied to behavioral research on politics. He was president of the American Political Science Association.





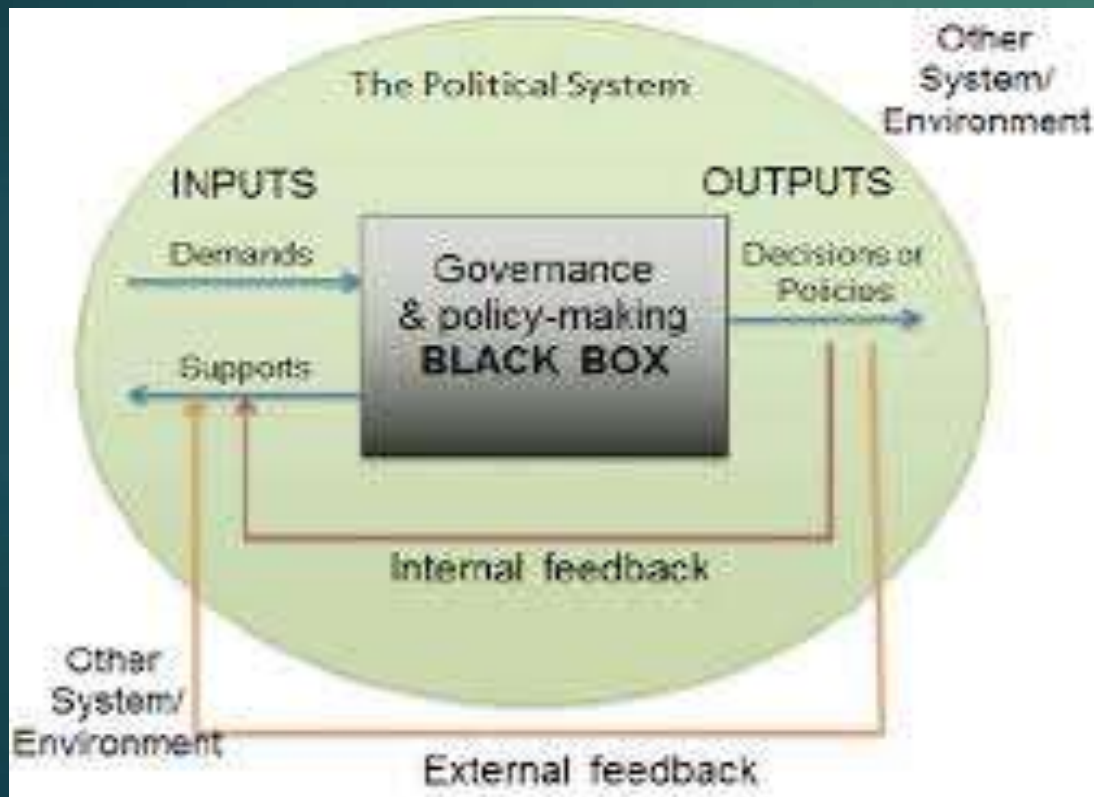
David Easton's System's Approach

- ▶ David Easton is the first political scientist to have developed a systematic framework for the study of politics on the basis of systems analysis approach . He had introduced the concept of system to politics and selected political system as the basic unit of analysis. Where he defined Political System as ‘Set of Interactions’ and Politics as ‘making authoritative allocation of resources’. He elaborated that the political system is “set of interactions abstracted from the totality of social behavior, through which values are authoritatively allocate for the society.”
- ▶ Easton’s System Approach is otherwise known as Input Output Model. He has analyzed his theory in his three important works –
 1. The Political system : An Inquiry into the State of Political Science (1953)
 2. A Framework for Political Analysis (1965)
 3. A System’s Analysis of Political Life (1965)

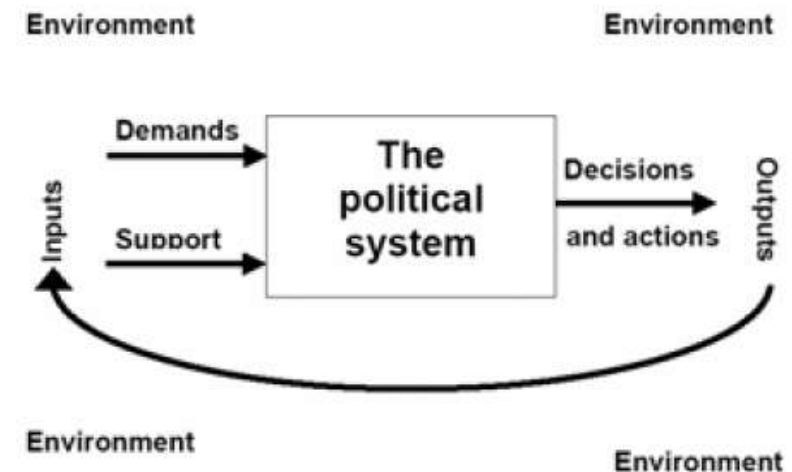
For Easton, a Political System consists of the following -:

- (1) A set of elements, parts or subsystem.
- (2) Regular Pattern of interaction.
- (3) A comprehensive whole as it includes both the input and output functions of the system.

- 4). Inter-relation and inter dependence of the elements. A change in one affects the other and the whole also in affected.
- 5). Existence of boundary where one system ends and another begins.
- 6). A system operate within an environment both intra-societal and extra-societal in nature.



Politisches System nach Easton



Quelle: Easton, David (1965). A Systems Analysis of Political Life, New York u.a., S. 32.

Persistence of the System : Easton points out that all political systems are both open and adaptive. It constantly receives from the environment a stream of events and influences that shape the conditions under which it operates. It should have the capacity to adjust itself to the conditions and disturbances under which it functions. Therefore, for Easton persistence is the chief characteristic of the political system. According to Easton, A political system may or may not come back to its original position after suffering disturbances and oscillations, but it persists so long as it is in a position to make and implement authoritative values in its environment.”

ANALYSIS OF INPUT OUTPUT MODEL :

This model focuses on variety of influences which flow from the environment into the political system and secondly, the processing and converting of these influences. Thus according to Easton, a political system is basically a system of conversion of inputs into outputs. Inputs are the elements which give political system its dynamic character and furnish it both with raw material or information to the system. Inputs are in form of demand and supports that are fed the political system.

Outputs have a feedback which leads to more inputs resulting from feedback information. Feedback makes proper adjustment between input and output. Thus the Political System functions within a particular setting known as Environment. In the Environment exist all those ecological, social, sociological, economic, cultural, political and personality forces both inside and outside of a particular society which affect and also get affected by the political system.

ENVIRONMENTAL – INTRA SOCIETAL AND EXTRA SOCIETAL

The environment may be divided into two parts-the intra-societal and extra-societal. The intra-societal environment consists of those systems in the same society as the political system but excluded from Political System for the reason of not being engaged in authoritative allocation of values. The intra-societal system includes economy, culture, social structure or personalities. These are segments of the society of which the political system is itself a part. The extra-societal environment, on the other hand, includes all those systems which lie outside a given society. Such as the Political systems of all other states, particularly the neighboring states, International Organizations like UNO, IMF, World Bank, WTO, International Laws International Political systems, the International Economic system. They too have their impact on a given Political System. The political system is linked with its environment through the process of inputs and outputs.

INPUTS

David Easton has chosen to deal with inputs from various environments in form of demands and Support.

DEMANDS

- ▶ In context of Political system, these demands are in the nature of articulated claims and aggregated claims or desires that values be allocated in particular ways or directions. Demands is thus, “the raw material out of which finished products called decisions are manufactured”. Demands come from the environment or arise within the system itself. Demands are the issues which are dealt through the recognized channels in the system. Demands are of four types -:

Demand for allocation of goods and services such as wage, hour laws, educational opportunities, medical facilities etc.

Demand for the regulation of the behavior such as control over markets, provisions for public safety, electricity, telecommunications etc.

Demand for participation in the political system such as the right to vote, contest in elections, to petition public officials etc.

Demands for communication and information such as information's regarding government policies to be available easily by the beneficiaries, communication of policy intent from political elites or display of the power of the political system in times of threats or on ceremonial occasions.

Support is a type of energy that flows from environment to the political system that helps in the conversion process. These are “expressions of willingness to accept particular value allocations or the process by which the allocations are made”.

Supports are of four types – (a) **Material Support** such as payment of taxes (b) **Obedience Support** such as obedience to laws, rules and regulations (c) **Participatory Support** such as participation in the political process like voting, debate and discussion etc (d) **Respect support** involves respect to public authority, symbols, ceremonies and attention to official communications.

- ▶ Lack of support limits the ability of Political System to convert inputs into outputs.
- ▶ **Stress Factors** : The political systems are subject to two types of stress-(a) demand stress and (b) support stress. The system is subjected to “demand input overload” when demands are more and the ability of the system to process them is less. Each political system has to keep the demand stress low. The support stress refers to lack of support or decline in support rendered by its members to the system. The persistence of the system requires effective in-built mechanisms to cope with the stress. Each political systems are having formal political structures like political structures like political parties and pressure groups that serve as gate keepers. They make a screening of these demands and decide which are to be processed and which are to be rejected. Culturally incompatible demands are prevented by the cultural mechanism. Political system also try to scatter some controversial demands which can be diluted in the due course. Through the in-built reduction mechanism and communication channels, the political system can cope with the demand stress.

Levels of Support : Easton refers to three main level of supports (1) Community that implies fellow citizens, (2) Regime meaning values of the system and (3) Authorities meaning power-holders.

- ▶ A system can persist and becomes very stable if there is flow of support for all the three levels. It is quite stable if there is support for the first level. More support means greater stability of the political system.
- ▶ Each political system is constituted by those institutions, processes and interactions by which demands are converted into outputs. In Easton’s model, it is shown as the box in which inputs enter and from which outputs flow out.

OUTPUTS

- ▶ Outputs emerge from of the political system in the form of binding and authoritative decisions, laws and policies. Outputs result from the conversion of inputs. For Easton, Outputs are “those actions by the political system that affect the system’s environment in some manner consisting mainly of authoritative decisions and acts, rules, laws, policies, decisions, rewards, deprivations, plans, policies and the like, promulgated by the authorities”. Easton points out that outputs “not only help to influence events in the broader society of which the system is a part, but alos, in doing do, they help to determine each succeeding round of inputs that find its way into the political system.

FEEDBACK

- ▶ Feedback is a dynamic process through which info about the performance of the system is communicated back to the system in such a a way as to affect the subsequent of that system.
- ▶ O. R. young rightly points out that outputs play a crucial role in generating specific support for political system because of the existence of the feedback loops. These feedback loops are responsible for completing the cycle of a Political System and making it a dynamic and regenerative process.

Criticisms of David Easton's System's Approach

- ▶ As Easton's input output analysis attaches importance to the questions concerning persistence and adaptation of the Political system and regulation of stress, stability and systems equilibrium. It has been charged with from time to time with status quo bias.
- ▶ O. R Young has pointed that the systems approach has little to say about the process of decline, disruption and breakdown in Political system.
- ▶ As Easton's System's approach is concerned with present context, it has no perceptiveness of future, no sound study of past. That's why it's called as anti historical. It has therefore completely ignored the complexities of social conflicts and class relationship.
- ▶ This approach has been designed for macro level and not micro level studies. Even at macro level it's not applicable to the third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is mostly applicable to the Western world.
- ▶ This model continues to the quest for allocation and distribution of power in the Political system but its capacity to deal with wide variety of Political phenomenon is severely restricted. That's why it's said to be abstract and too far from empirical reality.