

Social science is any discipline or branch of science that deals with human behaviour in its social and cultural aspects. The social sciences include cultural (or social) anthropology, sociology, social psychology, political science, and economics. Also frequently included are social and economic geography and those areas of education that deal with the social contexts of learning and the relation of the school to the social order.

Political science, occasionally called politology, is a social science which deals with systems of governance, and the analysis of political activities, political thoughts, and political behaviour. It examines the state and its organs and institutions. The contemporary discipline, however, is considerably broader than this, encompassing studies of all the societal, cultural, and psychological factors that mutually influence the operation of government.

Although political science borrows heavily from the other social sciences, it is distinguished from them by its focus on power—defined as the ability of one political actor to get another actor to do what it wants—at the international, national, and local levels. Although political science overlaps considerably with political philosophy, the two fields are distinct. Political philosophy is concerned primarily with political ideas and values, such as rights, justice, freedom, and whether people should or should not obey political authority.

Political system is the set of formal legal institutions that constitute a “government” or a “state.” This is the definition adopted by many studies of the legal or constitutional arrangements of advanced political orders. More broadly defined, however, the term comprehends not only the legal organization of the state but also the reality of how the state functions. Still more broadly defined, the political system is seen as a set of “processes of interaction” or as a subsystem of the social system interacting with other non-political subsystems, such as the economic system.

Many different schemes have been developed. There is, for example, the classical distinction between governments in terms of the number of rulers—government by one man (monarchy or tyranny), government by the few (aristocracy or oligarchy), and government by the many (democracy). There are schemes classifying governments in terms of their key institutions (for example, parliamentarism, cabinet government, presidentialism). There are classifications according to basic principles of political authority or the forms of legitimacy (charismatic, traditional, rational-legal, and others). Other schemes distinguish between different kinds of economic organization in the system (the laissez-faire state, the corporate state, and socialist and communist forms of state economic organization) or between the rule of different economic classes (feudal, bourgeois, and capitalist). And there are modern efforts to compare the functions of political systems (capabilities, conversion functions, and system maintenance and adaptation functions) and to classify them in terms of structure, function, and political culture.

Forms of government by power source

Autocracy is a system of government in which supreme power (social and political) is concentrated in the hands of one person, whose decisions are subject to neither external legal restraints nor regularized mechanisms of popular control (except perhaps for the implicit threat of a coup d'état or mass insurrection). Absolute monarchy (such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Brunei) and dictatorships (also including North Korea) are the main modern day forms of autocracy.

Democracy, meaning "rule of the people", is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a parliament. Democracy is sometimes referred to as "rule of the majority". Democracy is a system of processing conflicts in which outcomes depend on what participants do, but no single force controls what occurs and its outcomes. This includes citizens being able to vote for different laws and leaders.

Oligarchy, meaning "rule of the few", is a form of power structure in which power rests with a small number of people. These people might be distinguished by nobility, wealth, family ties, education or corporate, religious or military control. Such states are often controlled by families who typically pass their influence from one generation to the next, but inheritance is not a necessary condition for the application of this term.

Typologies of government

The most important type of political system in the modern world is the nation state. The world today is divided territorially into more than 190 countries, in each of which a national government claims to exercise sovereignty. This fact suggests the distinction among supranational, national, and sub-national political systems.

Supranational political systems are created by independent nations to reach a common goal or gain strength from forming an alliance.

Empires are widespread states or communities under a single rule.

Leagues are international organizations composed of states coming together for a single common purpose. In this way leagues are different from empires, as they only seek to fulfil a single goal.

Confederations are voluntary associations of independent states that, to secure some common purpose, agree to certain limitations on their freedom of action and establish some joint machinery of consultation or deliberation. Historically, confederations have often proved to be a first or second step towards the establishment of a national state, usually as a federal union (Switzerland, Germany, the USA). On the other hand, the Commonwealth (formerly the British Commonwealth of Nations) is an example of a confederation born as the result of the decentralization and eventual disintegration of an empire.

National political systems: A sovereign state is a state with a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and the capacity to enter into relations with other sovereign states.

a) *Unitary nation-states*

b) *Federal systems* - in federal systems, political authority is divided between two autonomous sets of governments, one national and the other subnational. Usually a constitutional division of power is established between them.

Subnational political systems

Tribal communities - the typical organization of humankind in its early history was the tribe. Today, in many parts of the world, the tribal community is still a major form of human political organization. Even within more formal political systems, traces can still be found of its influence.

Rural communities - the village has traditionally been contrasted with the city: the village is the home of rural occupations and tied to the cycles of agricultural life, while the inhabitants of the city practice many trades, and its economy is founded on commerce and industry; the village is an intimate association of families, while the city is the locus of a mass population.

Cities

Regions