



PRINCIPLES OF POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Fifth Edition

Edwin M. Coulter



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Clemson University

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Preface

Why another introduction to politics book? The answer is the reason I decided to write this book. Most of the existing works on the subject begin by assuming that the student is already intellectually well into the field. More often than not, this is simply not the case. My purpose herein is to enable the beginning student to understand what politics and government are all about (and what they aren't).

Most American college freshmen and sophomores have been ill taught or are generally ignorant about politics and government. I have bemoaned students' myths and misconceptions for two decades in large and small colleges and universities. I have attempted to get them to "unlearn" the myths and to teach the basic realities of political science. We in the profession have all too often assumed that they already know these realities.

This book attempts to teach students to better understand the world environment in which government operates; to acquire a theoretical and analytical structure in which to approach questions about government; to relate Western political democracy to other governmental alternatives; to clarify the verbiage of political discourse; to examine the problems of achieving political democracy in the last quarter of the twentieth century; and to gain a historical perspective with regard to the age-old dilemma of achieving order without servitude.

It provides that basic level of understanding necessary before one can fruitfully embark on a political science curriculum of American Government, Political Methodology, Comparative Government, Public Administration, Public Law, or International Relations. It is my belief that this book is where all of these things must begin. Whereas it can and should be supplemented by works that emphasize other aspects of the discipline, it lays the groundwork for almost any of these endeavors. Whereas the traditional introductory subjects of political culture, political socialization, and voting behavior are each addressed separately as subsections of chapters, they are also integrated, along with other standard concepts, into a more general

and systematic approach to politics and government. My goal was to interrelate as many of the facets of the subject as possible into a relatively jargon-free explanation of the major political systems of the world and the principles under which they operate.

This book also assumes a traditional, historical, and normative stance toward the study of politics. It assumes that politics is rooted in a system of conciliation, however misapplied. It argues that good government is political government and that the political process should be defended from the assaults of power, nationalism, and ideology. It suggests that any government made by human beings can be improved and that to this end value judgments are necessary. Thus, there are many value judgments rendered here. They are not offered as self-evident truths, but as points for reflection, discussion, and debate.

Finally, law is viewed here as essentially positive in nature and subject to humanity's will, whether or not that will serves the ends of politics and good government. I make no apologies for this overall approach and point of view. I only hope that those who read and use this book will understand the material within it and profit from its descriptions and the organization of its basic concepts.

In the second edition of the book, I added a chapter on the origins and evolution of political science. Particular emphasis was given to the tension between the traditional approach to political science and the behaviorist approach to the discipline. Further, in response to several critics, I added to the end of the chapter on the basic concepts of politics a section entitled "Other Definitions of Politics," which takes into account those writers whose definition of politics varies with my rather narrow and normative definition.

In the third edition, I expanded the chapter on ideology to address the question of democracy versus guardianship, updated all references to party politics to take into account the possible political realignments in America and elsewhere since 1980, added a section on the relationship between law and truth, expanded the section on regulation, included a glossary, and, most important, added a new and separate chapter on administration and bureaucracy.

In the fourth edition, I added a chapter on international politics, which included the material on international law previously found in chapter 5 along with other relevant principles. This chapter can serve as a follow-on chapter to chapter 3. I also updated the material in the governmental, ideological, and political parties sections to reflect events since 1985.

A fifth edition has now become necessary for several reasons. First and foremost is the revolutionary change in the international community brought on by the emancipation of the East European states, the reunification of Germany, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. These events

impact directly on theories of ideology, nationalism, and international politics. Much that has been written in the past few years is already out-of-date. Much change still lies ahead, which will no doubt bedevil even this new edition. A second area of revision concerns the continuing evolution of American party politics. The realignment that began in the 1980s proceeds apace with more clarity than it had some five years ago. I have also thought it helpful to add, to a now renumbered chapter 12, a section on war in the new age and the lesser problem of terrorism. In addition, attention is given to the reemergence of the United Nations as an instrument for world peace. Finally, I have changed chapter 9 (The Functions of Government) to chapter 5 for purposes of better continuity.

Most of these changes were made in response to my most helpful critics, for, in the final analysis, no textbook author can stand alone as the singular organizer of a subject. With that in mind, I would say to some who have found certain sections of this book to be somewhat compressed and occasionally lacking in expanded commentary that there are two reasons for this. First, I wish to give the instructor wide latitude for his or her own interpretation of the subject. Second, I want to provide for the student some basic information relevant to many different organizational approaches to the subject. This book is not so much designed for a single kind of course as it is an outline and anchor for many different kinds of introductory courses. I hope that this fifth edition will prove to be even more useful and timely than the last four versions.

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1

Politics, Government, and Political Science

DEFINING MY TERMS

This book is primarily about politics and government, two related concepts that will be examined in great detail in the next chapter. The student who reads the book will most likely do so in conjunction with an introductory course in political science.

Political science is a broad discipline that includes many different but related subfields. A basic subfield is American government. This is the study of our national governing structure, our state governments, and local (municipal) governance. The study of American government involves, sometimes as separate courses, such major areas as the Constitution and its evolution, federalism, political parties, the bureaucracy, elections, and an analysis of the three major organs of our system: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Other subfields concern comparative government—the study of the forms of government found in other countries, both democratic and nondemocratic.

There is a group of subfields concerning nation-states and their interactions. These subfields include international politics, International Law, international organizations, and foreign policy. Public law is a subfield of considerable interest to those students interested in going to law school. This study is usually divided into constitutional law in general and a concentration on civil rights. Public administration is a major subfield useful to future bureaucrats and other government workers. Future politicians will want to study the political dynamics of parties, campaigns, pressure groups, and the media. One can also study the judicial, executive, and legislative processes as separate bodies of knowledge. Political theory is a major subfield. This can be approached from a historical, philosophical, or methodological point of view. One can also study the politics of geographical areas such as Western Europe, South Asia, or Latin America. One of the newest areas of political science is national security policy—the study of national defense and how best to achieve an acceptable level of security in

the world. Even this survey does not include all the subfields of political science, as it spills over into psychology, sociology, geography, and history. Nevertheless, all these aspects of political science require an overall orientation or approach, and there are several possibilities.

The approach herein is a traditional one. It is also *normative*, which is to say that it deals not only with what *was* and *is* but also with several views of what *ought to be*. Furthermore, the approach is theoretical, historical, and institutional. In other words, it examines the historical record of ideas about government and the structure of the institutions of government, and it tries to illuminate the basic theoretical assumptions behind them.

This is my "approach" to political science. There are others, and, since the reader who carries his or her studies further into the field will encounter different approaches along the way, they should be at least partially defined here.

EARLY APPROACHES TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

Political science began as political speculation for the most part. Ideas about how to govern humanity are as old as governments themselves, and no one knows for sure how old *they* are. Early non-Western political thought can be found in the *Arthashastra*, a book believed to have been written by a Brahman advisor to an Indian king in the fourth century B.C. It is full of pragmatic advice on how to govern successfully, and it bears a remarkable resemblance to a sixteenth-century Western work, *The Prince*, written for a similar purpose by Niccolò Machiavelli, an Italian statesman and scholar. The writings of Confucius (551–478 B.C.) are also a good example of non-Western political theory.

Early Western studies of government include *The Republic* by Plato and *Politics* (as well as other works) by Aristotle, two Greek philosophers of the fourth century B.C. As in the *Arthashastra*, the approach of these studies is essentially practical and theoretical. Roman writers, such as Cicero (106–43 B.C.), also emphasized the practical aspect of government, especially in the areas of administration and law. Later, during the medieval period, when the church became the locus of much of what passed for government, the approach became extremely normative, blending together both government and theology in the writings of such theologians as St. Thomas Aquinas (1227–1274).

The Renaissance produced a return to the emphasis on the pragmatic side of the political order, creating the first serious attempt since Aristotle to discover a political "science." One of the least known but most illustrative works of the period was *The New Science* by Giovanni Battista Vico, published in the 1740s. Also, after the Reformation, there was a return to the more theoretical approach common to the "age of reason." This flowered in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Bodin, some of which

will be examined later. Most of the books of the period focused to some extent on the best forms and structures of government for the evolving nation-states of Europe.

America's beginnings as an independent state were couched in both the practical and theoretical ideas of Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, and others among our founding fathers. *The Federalist Papers* illustrate the "state of the art" at that time. These "papers" were, in reality, a series of eighty-five lengthy letters to newspapers written in 1787–1788 explaining in detail the theory and operation of the new government proposed under the Constitution of 1787. The authors, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, sought, thereby, to influence the voters of New York to ratify the Constitution.

About fifty years later, the formal teaching of government entered "the higher classes in schools" through such books as *The Political Class Book*, written in 1831 by William Sullivan, a Massachusetts attorney, for use in the high schools of that state. It bears a remarkable resemblance to modern political science texts except for its addition of moral philosophy to the now standard American style of theory and pragmatism, resulting in a generally normative approach to the subject.

This overall approach continued into the late nineteenth century, when political science emerged as a distinct discipline. Woodrow Wilson's great work, *Congressional Government* (1885), is typical of the genre.

By the end of World War II, a basic change had begun to occur in the approach to the subject. In retrospect, its antecedents appear to have included Darwin's theory of evolution, the "scientific socialism" of Karl Marx, and the advent, in 1904, of what geographer Sir Halford Mackinder called "geopolitics" (a combination of geographical principles and those of political power). In addition, just as the advent of the twentieth century saw a greater use of empirical methods of observation, survey, and quantitative measurement in the natural sciences, so, too, were these methods being borrowed by many younger political scientists. The advent of the atomic bomb elevated nuclear physicists to a position of prominence in the military. At the same time, the writings of John Maynard Keynes gave birth to "economic policy"—the idea that governments, by manipulating such variables as taxes, spending, and the supply of money, could keep the entire economy on an even keel. They seemed to know something tangible and real. These "new economists" could calculate the effect of a given tax cut on jobs and economic growth with precision. Political scientists felt that they had to learn to do similar things.

One of the most dramatic applications of this new approach was a pioneering study of voting behavior in Ohio during the election of 1940. Thereafter, "voting statistics" became a staple form of data for certain kinds of political analysis. Bits and pieces of all these ideas and innovations ultimately evolved into what has come to be known as the "behavioral approach" to political science.

Unlike the older traditional approach, which emphasized institutions of government, behavioralism focused on individuals and their behavior in social circumstances. It continues to see politics and governments as operational systems made up of various subsystems, many of which can be studied, measured, and evaluated in terms of their operational qualities. Thus, a typical behavioral approach might involve a study, using exit polls at election time, of how people voted on a particular referendum such as a tax increase for public schools. The voters could then be divided by sex, age, occupation, economic level, and number of children. Analysis of these numbers could then suggest which groups are more likely to support such tax increases. With that data, supporters of such initiatives in the future could target groups more likely to be in their favor and work to get out the vote among such groups. The older search for norms has given way to the understanding of present realities. The method of measure and evaluation has become more and more mathematical. The evolution of the "math model" as a device for description and explanation of political phenomena is quite prevalent in the literature of political science today.

THE TRADITIONALISTS VERSUS THE BEHAVIORALISTS

With the advent of behavioralism has come controversy and confusion. Indeed, the definition of political science itself now seems to be in disarray, leading one despairing observer to note as early as 1953 that the discipline has become "a device, invented by university teachers, for avoiding that dangerous subject, politics, without achieving science."¹ Certainly, as traditionalists confront behavioralists, no single definition of the subject has gained general currency. Perhaps, to the teachers anyway, what we teach is, in the words of Alfred de Grazia, "political science as I would like it to be."

Even the new movement toward behavioralism is beset by problems of nomenclature. Is behavioralism different from "the scientific method"? If so, how? Are we speaking of an intellectual tendency or an academic movement? Is behavioralism the same as "behaviorism"? If not, what is the difference? Are behavioralists the true "social scientists," or are we all social scientists with different approaches? The student should be aware at the outset that we are dealing here with a phenomenon (behavioralism) still in its infancy and about which no single definition seems to exist—only different points of view.

The traditionalists have counterattacked the behavioral revolution almost from the beginning. They cite the complexity of human behavior and the near impossibility of fully explaining how political decisions are actually made. They also question whether total objectivity (required by "empir-

¹Alfred Cobban, "The Decline of Political Theory," *Political Science Quarterly* 48 (1953): 335.

ical" approaches) can be sustained when political scientists are attempting to measure things about which they, by virtue of their own orientation, are apt to hold strong views. In addition, the increasingly narrow focus of the behavioral approach has nettled some traditionalists who are used to thinking in terms of large organizations and structured power relationships. The charge has been made that behavioralists spend too much time measuring inconsequential aspects of government and that they offer no practical advice on how to govern *better*. Further, they are labeled as logical positivists, who, by definition, limit the scope of inquiry to observable behavior. The caveat has been raised that "when one undertakes to quantify, one can only study that which is quantifiable."

By the late 1950s, many traditionalists had gravitated toward University of Chicago professor Leo Strauss, who had led the traditionalist counter-attack almost from the beginning, giving the label "Straussian" to the older, institutional and normative school of political science. Strauss objected to the moral relativism of the behavioralists, and he has asserted that the fundamental purpose of the study of government remains to help people better understand government institutions and processes so as to operate them for the benefit of all and for the preservation of traditional values such as freedom. In other words, he seems wedded to a concept of political philosophy that he contrasts with the "political science" of the behavioralists. In later years, the strong normative approach of Strauss gained him as many traditional critics as behavioral ones.

More recently, especially in the area of national security, critics of the behavioralists have come to decry what they term the false appearance of precision that numbers tend to suggest, when the real variables are all too often people and their various ideas, intertwined with complex institutional settings and unpredictable events. Indeed, to some at least, the war in Vietnam stands as a grotesque monument to certain presumptions of the math modelers; to others, certain aspects of the strategic (nuclear) arms race between the United States and the former USSR illustrates the problem.

Behavioralists respond in various ways. They argue that measuring with numbers and symbols does not necessarily reduce what is measured *to* numbers and symbols. Rather, numbers and measurements enable one to view governmental phenomena in new ways and not in *substitute* ways. They assert that *all* knowledge is valuable, however derived, and note that it is far too early to evaluate fully what can be learned from the still relatively new techniques. Behavioralists note that the scientific method is accepted in other disciplines within the social sciences (especially psychology and sociology) and that some behavior is inherently amenable to measurement and quantification. They seek not only to measure and predict but mostly to explain. Further, political science, throughout its history, has lacked a unique methodology and needs one in order to advance beyond the limitations of the traditional approach, which still seems to borrow mostly from the historian and the philosopher.

The debate goes on, with one side fearing that the behavioralists will either reduce political science to nothing more than a mathematical exercise or else gain some new kind of arcane power with which to manipulate the minds, decisions, and actions of others, while the other feels that the methods of the traditionalists do not provide the kind of precise information needed by mass societies of infinite complexity with problems unanticipated by older assumptions. It is my own opinion that one should begin his or her study of political science with a traditional grounding in the basic concepts of the discipline and then proceed to a more behavioral approach as quickly as possible, gaining as many mathematical skills (including a knowledge of computer science) as one can develop so as to achieve the highest level of contemporary knowledge one can.

RESEARCH METHODS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Despite the apparent, though entirely unnecessary, incompatibility between the traditionalists and behavioralists, they have managed to coexist within the confines of a single discipline that operates under the same basic research methodology in spite of one's own orientation. Thus, some mention should be made about the techniques of inquiry germane to political phenomena.

Be the approach one of historical inquiry, philosophical speculation, or empirical and quantitative research, the approach to research remains essentially the same. First, an area of study is selected and a tentative **hypothesis** (however arrived at) is stated. Then comes observation (through reading, interviews, polling, experiments, etc.), followed by gathering data (in the form of "facts," numbers, ideas, etc.) and classifying and/or organizing it in such a way as to relate it in some meaningful way to the hypothesis. Next comes analysis and interpretation of the data in order to see what it seems to mean. Finally, conclusions are reached (by deductive or inductive reasoning) based on the logic (verbal or mathematical) of the data, and the hypothesis is either supported, modified, or abandoned.

In all research dealing with social phenomena, but with political science in particular, one is beset by several stumbling blocks, whose effects, if recognized early, can at least be lessened if not done away with entirely. Such problems include the complexity of political events, the bias of the researcher, the difficulties of measuring such things as motivations or intents, the tendency toward oversimplification in constructing verbal or mathematical models, and, in many cases, the impossibility of realistic experimentation on which to base or test the refined hypothesis.

Finally, despite the existence of alternative approaches to the study of political science, one must keep in mind that no one has ever succeeded in constructing a general theory of politics to serve political science in the way that the theories of Sir Isaac Newton (and later, Albert Einstein) served the subject of physics. All approaches are valid as long as they take reasonable care to avoid the research pitfalls mentioned and they allow their various hypotheses to be challenged by other researchers in a spirit of humility and common interest. When these conditions are met, our storehouse of knowledge is increased.