CHAPTER III
DEFINITION OF POLITICS :
THE JEVONIAN REVOLUTION IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Our analysis of Easton's concept of political theory has shown that despite his protestations he remains firmly in lines with logical positivism so far as the question of fact-value dichotomy is concerned. His definition of politics reinforces this position. Any attempt to build a political theory assumes that it is possible to define what is political. David Easton, while arguing for a revival of political theory, therefore, had to define political phenomena and distinguish it from other social phenomena. He observes that political scientists feel quite instinctively that research into the political aspect of life is sufficiently different from inquiry into any other aspects of social life to constitute a separate intellectual enterprise. He points out that political scientists have been acting on the unexpressed premise that the phenomena of politics tend to cohere. He says, "Such phenomena, form, in other words, a system which is part of the total social system and, yet which for purposes of analysis and research, is temporarily set apart."

He argues that it is artificial to isolate a set of social relations from the whole; but it is necessary for a simplification of political data. He further argues that political life could be looked upon as a sub-system which can be profitably examined, temporarily,

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apart from the whole social system. But viewing political life as a system does not solve the problem. Politics has to be defined.

The absence of an universally accepted definition of politics has been a perennial problem of political science. Since the days of the ancient Greek philosophers, scholars interested in the study of politics have been trying to define politics. As Herman Heller puts it, "the manifold constructs of political science and the controversy over its true content and method are not essentially different to-day from what they were in Hellenistic antiquity." Heller rightly points out that in Greek antiquity political science revealed, in content as well as in method, a marked diversity and range. Speculations in the field of political studies were in the nature of a guide to political power, a course of civic training, a moral philosophy, a historical metaphysics, a sociology or some other type of special discipline. These aspects of political science are to be found even to-day. As Easton shows, despite this diversity by the mid-twentieth century

2. Ibid., p. 97.
4. Ibid., p. 208.
two widely different sets of criteria have emerged for differentiating political life from all other aspects of society and, thereby for isolating the subject matter of political science. These are —

(1) Institutional criteria; which attempts to define politics in terms of either the governmental institutions or the state;
(2) Functional criteria which attempts to define politics in terms of power or decision making.\(^5\)

Political science has very often been described as the study of governmental or political institutions.\(^6\) Political scientists following this approach may find it easy to identify the institutions with which they are concerned but it is rather difficult to define the governmental institutions. Vandyke asks "What are the attributes of a government or of an agency or a sub-division of a government that justify the use of the label?"\(^7\) Unless the terms governmental and political can be

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defined this approach can not throw any light on the problem of differentiating political life from all other aspects of social life. To quote Easton "We are left as much in the dark about the subject matter of political life as ever, that is at the mercy of our institutions." 8

Another institution in terms of which political science has very often been sought to be defined is the state. This approach has a very long history. But even in 1928 after reviewing the literature of the definition of politics Garner comes to the conclusion that political science begins and ends with the state. 9 This definition of political science, of course, requires a definition of the state itself. If we can not define state its role and its area of jurisdiction fairly accurately, we can not define political science in terms of state. But political scientists seem to have failed to arrive at an agreed definition of state. As Easton points out even if we use the term in the most widely adopted meaning it can not help us to define political phenomena. Because,

it describes the properties not of all political phenomena but of only certain kinds, excluding for examples, the study of non-literate societies, it stands overshadowed as a tool of analysis by its social utility as a myth; and it constitutes at best a poor formal definition. 10

Easton has very correctly pointed out that basically the inadequacy of the state concept as a definition of subject matter of political science stems from the fact that it implies that political science is interested in studying a particular kind of institution or organisation of life, not a kind of activity that may express itself through a variety of institutions. Easton therefore, rightly, concludes that the institutional criteria of defining political science are not acceptable.

Politics is an activity. Therefore, 'political' must be seen as an activity. It may include the state but it is more than the activities encompassed by this institution. One approach which treats political life as an activity is the power approach. It views political activity as the effort to influence others and to control the behaviour of others. William Robson writes, "it is with power in the society that political science is primarily concerned, its nature, basis, processes, scope and result." Watkins also says, "The proper scope of political science is not the study of the state or of any other specific institutional complex, but the investig-

ation of all associations in so far as they can be shown to exemplify the problem of power. Though the attempt to analyse political life in terms of power emerged as a distinguished approach to the study of politics only recently, yet it could be traced back to the days of Aristotle. Aristotle used the location of power, authority, or rule among the citizens of a political society as a criterion to differentiate one constitution from another. In America the power approach could be traced back to the writings of C.E.G. Catlin. He points out that as a theoretical study, politics is concerned with human relations in association and competition, submission and control. Catlin argues that men seek power in their political negotiations. Catlin's work was immediately followed by a book by Merriam in which he took up the question of political power. He discussed how it originates, accumulates and disintegrates. Lasswell's Politics Who Gets What, When, How as Crick says, "is better known than Merriam's Political Power; but it is confessedly derived from Merriam's notion of

the concept. 17 Hans J. Morgenthau applied the concept of power to the study of international politics. 18 These writings rapidly diffused the idea of power throughout American political science.

The advantage of this approach is that the analysis of political life in terms of power can be applied to any kind of political system — international, national, or local, to groups of various kinds, such as family, kinship groups or clubs and to historical developments. Political scientists who use the concept of power to identify political activity are of the opinion that political science as an empirical discipline is the study of the shaping and sharing of power. 19 In this approach the purpose of politics comes to be viewed as a pursuit of power. But power is employed to attain some goal and this approach seems to ignore this aspect of the question. Easton rightly says,

The power approach must fail to convince us of its merits as an adequate, initial identification of the boundaries of political research. The reason for this is that power is only one of the significant variables. It omits an equally vital aspect of political life, its orientation towards goals other than power itself. 20

20. Easton, op. cit., p. 117.
Easton further points out that this definition of political activity is too broad. He shows by analysing the writings of Catlin and Lasswell that for the power approach the hierarchical arrangement of relationships within a criminal band or in a respectable paternal club both testify to the existence of political life there. To quote Easton,

The realization of this implication when politics is described as power, pure and simple reveals the excessive breadth of the definition. 21

He argues that political scientists direct their attention not to power in general but to political power. This view is also supported by Friedrich. While trying to define power and authority Friedrich says that Lasswell’s formulation shows that power can, will be and has, indeed, been, a subject that goes a good way beyond the field of politics. 22 This brings us back to the same tricky problem of defining politics. Easton’s first objection to the power approach is valid in the sense that power is used for some purposes. As we shall see, later in these pages, power could be seen only in its consequences. The purpose, for which power is used, is therefore of great importance for an understanding of political life. His second objection also holds

21. Ibid., p. 123
good because political scientists are not concerned with power relations of all sorts. Therefore, of course, are linkages between political and economic domain in social positions. Politics can't be understood in complete isolation from other social phenomena. But for the purposes of the study of the political life, political scientists must focus on the political phenomena. In this sense they are primarily interested in power so far as it plays a role in the political process. The concept power thus fails to serve as the key to the definition of politics.

Another way of looking at political life as an activity is to describe it as a process of decision making. Decision making as a form of analysis could be traced back to the late eighteenth century. Towards the mid-twentieth century it emerged in political science as a variation of the power approach. According to this approach, power is important only because it leads to control over the processes through which public decisions are made and executed. In fact, this is an approach which stresses that individual and group decision-making is the context within which political actions are to be observed. Easton correctly pointed out that this approach

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had led to the direct interpretation of political life as a set of relationships through which public decisions or policies are formulated and put into effect. He rightly argues that decisions, like power, are characteristic of all other spheres of life as well. Thus, the definition of political science as the study of decision making does not provide guidance in differentiating political decisions from other kinds of decisions. To sum up, in the words of Easton,

Institutional definitions such as government and the state merely serve to define one unknown, political science, by other unknowns. Functional conceptualizations based on power and decision making go well beyond any range of interests that political scientists would at least intuitively seek to embrace within their discipline.

After bringing out the deficiencies of these definitions of politics Easton makes an attempt to give a comprehensive definition of politics. He says that the adequacy of any formal definition will depend on the extent to which it gives a sufficiently general description of the subject matter. So that past and current content areas accepted by most scholars are not excluded or if they are, it is with convincing theoretical justification. It appears from this that Easton attempts to define political science as what political

27. loc. cit.
scientists study. This would be almost a tautology for it immediately necessitates a definition of a political scientist. The problem is how to define a political scientist? In other words this approach makes us ask the questions — Do we call it political science because a political scientist studies it? Or we call a person a political scientist because he studies political science? Though Haston's approach places him in this unenviable position yet, it is clear that actually he is in search of a definition of politics. This is evident from a paragraph that follows the above statement. In this paragraph he explains that political science can abstract, from all social interactions only those kinds which its theoretical perspectives dictate to be political in nature. Politics, for Easton, is a field of study analytically distinct from other disciplines. But as we will have occasion to note later in these pages the anxiety to conform to the long tradition of political research does affect Easton's view of political life.

Easton bases his own definition of politics on common sense idea of political life. He holds that the political life includes "an immediate awareness of the pervasiveness of a kind of activity that in our idiom we call politicking" — which actually means "maneuvering for position and power"— which when detected in large social groups is called the struggle for power; and an activity related in some vague way
to problems of government or the making of policy for the whole society in which we live. Such policies are considered to be authoritative for the society. He concludes, "political life concerns all those varieties of activity that influence significantly the kind of authoritative policy adopted for a society and the way it is put into practice." According to Easton, "Consists of a web of decisions and actions that allocate values." Policy includes the process of arriving at such a decision and its implementation. The study of policy to his definition includes an examination of the functioning and the determinants of both the legal and the actual policy practices. He is suggesting that political science is concerned with every way in which values are allocated for a society, whether formally enunciated in a law or lodged in the consequences of a practice.

This argument may lead us to a situation where political science will embrace all the spheres of social activity where values are allocated. Easton is aware of this danger. That is why he considers Lasswell's definition of politics far too broad. Lasswell describes political science as "the study of

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29. Ibid., p. 128.
30. Ibid., p. 130.
31. Ibid., p. 131.
change in the shape and composition of the value patterns of society". To delimit the scope of political science, maston brings in the concept of authority. He specifies that political science is concerned only with authoritative allocation or policies. He suggests that political research is distinctive because it has been trying to reveal the way in which values are affected by authoritative allocations. He is of the opinion that "a policy is authoritative when people to whom it is intended to apply or who are affected by it consider that they must or ought to obey it".

Authoritative allocations are rather common all throughout the social life. Maston is aware of the fact that in organizations that are less than society-wide, we have the existence of a variety of authoritative policies. Maston writes "political science is concerned rather with the relation of the authoritative policies made in such groups as associations, to other kind of policies, those that are considered authoritative for the whole society". Maston, thus, arrives at the conclusion "Political science is the study of the authoritative

34. Ibid., p. 132.
35. Ibid., p. 134.
The key terms in this definition, as Easton himself identifies them, are, policy, authority and society. A close look at these terms would reveal that this definition fails to fulfill the task of an adequate definition. The ambiguities of these terms have been very well brought out in an article by Michael Evans. He shows that Easton's concept of policy need not necessarily imply legal or administrative enactments, or indeed, consciously formulated decisions at all. Some policy will have legal force much will not. Because for Easton much value-allocation is lodged in the consequences of a practice also. Easton argues in *A System Analysis of Political Life* that political response should include modifications in social parameters not in fact generated by the political system but which simply affect the political system. Evans correctly pointed out that we could argue that such modifications might have political effects (for example, the invention of mass media) and that these should be investigated by the Political Scientist. But unless it could be shown that the effect was either intentionally produced by the members of the political system or the unintended out come of some activity within the political system it does not seem plausible or even useful to

36. Ibid., p. 146
regard all such influences as responses of the political system to stressful conditions. A political system may modify a social parameter or it may have to undergo change as the result of a social modification. We need to distinguish between the two. As Evans says,

Easton's notion of policy then has nothing in common with normal usage, and embraces a wide variety of activities, some of which at least should be distinguished. Further, his definition of policy, involving as it does both intended actions and unintended consequences is in logical conflict with his views on authority relationships. 39

The second key term authority is viewed by Easton as a power relationship which is intended in nature. 40 We have already noted that Easton describes an authoritative policy as one which the people to whom it is intended to apply or who are affected by it consider that they must or ought to

39 Evans, op. cit., p. 125.
40 In a discussion on authority Easton identifies power relationships (1) manipulation (2) Persuasion, (3) Force (4) authority. In Easton's sense if 'A' sends a message to 'B' and 'B' accepts, the message as the basis of his own behaviour without evaluating it in terms of his own standards, it is an authority relationship. Easton says "... The fact that in practice he does obey the other is sufficient, evidence for describing the power relationship, as one of authority." See, David Easton, "Perception of authority and political change" in C.J. Friedrich (ed.) Authority (Cambridge mass 1958), p. 178.
obey it. Easton does not, therefore, view authority as necessarily legitimate. It could be present both when the legitimacy of the rulers is accepted and where the rulers are obeyed only because they possess a predominance of effective violent sanctions. A quotation from *System Analysis of Political Life* will make this point clear beyond any doubt. He writes,

"Persons in position of political leadership and administration may be able to get others to carry out their intentions simply because on grounds of custom, expediency, self interest or fear it pays the others to do so."

If custom, expediency, self interest or fear could be the basis of authority then Easton's concept of authority cannot be solely dependent on legitimacy.

Easton, uses authority as the factor in identifying political phenomena because he considers it the necessary means of integrating any society. He says, "the fact that the other means of power are inadequate, either alone or in combination, for producing the necessary integration of society makes authority itself a necessary means." Easton, of course, does not think that authority itself is a sufficient device for interaction of a society. He believes that "In addition to authority probably only force .... would be essential for the survival of a society."

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43. Ibid., p. 57
It is clear that in addition to authority Easton considers force as a probable essential condition for the survival of society. This poses a problem. If compliance out of fear (as noted above) is considered authoritative then authority seems to include force. In this sense Easton appears to have contradicted himself. Because if Authority is considered essential condition for the survival of society and if force is a part of authority then force cannot be considered as another essential condition for survival of society.

However, the above discussion of Easton's use of the term authority shows that he views authority as a necessary condition of integrating society. It is a power relationship and is intentional in nature. It is not necessarily dependent on legitimacy. It follows that the authoritative allocation with which the student of politics is concerned must be intentional allocation. Yet by policy, as Evans shows, Easton means not merely consciously formulated plans and intentions but also allocations lodged in the consequences of a practice. Evans points out that Easton's arguments do not establish that authority is pre-eminent over the other relationships, because it is only a necessary condition and not a sufficient condition. He calls Easton's notion of authority "vacuous" because it is not distinguishable from other concepts of similar nature.\[44\]

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44. Evans, op. cit., pp. 127-23.
If we accept Easton's notion of authority, which is based on compliance, we cannot use this concept to identify political phenomena. Because in this sense obedience or compliance or at least the feeling that they shall obey becomes the criterion of deciding whether something is political or not. Any allocation or policy which is neither complied to, nor felt that it should be complied to will have to be considered non-political. Such an approach will have to treat all those policies and decisions which are not implemented as non-political. But for the purposes of identifying political phenomena, or the subjects of political research such a meaning of policy and decision will create problems.

As Frohock says, "we may on occasion wish to view decisions which are 'not' implemented (by either enforcement or acceptance) as quite political." Frohock mentions two ways of overcoming this difficulty; but he himself has found these unsatisfactory. First, we can exclude from the category of the political all decisions which people do not feel they ought to obey for one reason or another. But this will amount to assuming that there is a near unanimity about political decisions. Which in turn bring in a consensus bias. Secondly, authoritative policy may be considered as legitimate regardless of whether or not the members of a society feel at any given moment that they ought to obey it. But this begs the

question how can authoritative policy be legitimate if the members of a society do not feel that they ought to obey it?

Almond and Coleman seem to have adopted the second approach when they defined the political system as a system of interactions performing the functions of integration and adaptation by means of employment, or threat of employment, of more or less legitimate physical compulsions. This reminds us of Weber's approach to the problem. These scholars have not really gone for beyond Weber's definition of state as "a human community that 'Successfully' claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory". Force, for Weber, could either be legitimate or illegitimate, the legitimate force was called 'authority'. He tried to conceptualize the political phenomena by focusing on the events which participate in the exercise of ultimate force. But as Frohock shows the idea of ultimate force is close to the dead concept of sovereignty. Moreover, this will again drag the political scientist to the unnecessary debate over the distinction between power and authority.


49. Frohock, op. cit., p. 91.
thus, clear that Easton's notion of authority can not help us to arrive at an acceptable definition of politics.

The third important concept in his definition of politics is society. His idea of political would include only those phenomena which are related to the "Societal political system. This becomes clear from the distinction he draws between political and para-political systems. Para-political systems are aspects only of sub-systems in a society. They are sub-systems of sub-systems. Easton identifies para-political systems as internal systems of groups and organization. He chooses not to consider them co-ordinate with the more inclusive political system of a society, because "Para-political systems are concerned only with problems of authoritative allocations within the groups."\(^{50}\)

The societal political system, according to Easton, has three components: The authorities, the Regime and the political community. The political community consists of a group of person bound together by a "Political division of labour". In a later chapter when we examine his idea of the political system we shall discuss these components in details. Here it suffices to say that he views political community as one the scope of which varies with the scope of the political system under study. To quote Easton, "for a person to say that he is a Parisian, a Frenchman and a European indicates three different levels of

\(^{50}\) Easton, *A Frame-work of Political Analysis*, op. cit., p. 55.
political community to which he simultaneously adheres.51

In this sense the members of the political community, in
Eastonian scheme of things may each come from a quite different
society. They don't need to have a common cultural background.
Like his political system his idea of a society is also "cons­
tructive", i.e., constructed by the scholar for the purposes
of analysis. As Evans points out:

"On the constructivist view this is perfectly
sound. The society, of which the political
community is itself an aspect of that society's
political sub-system, would be some wider set
of variables selected by the observer for
description and explanation. On this view,
Easton's claim that the authoritative alloc­
ations which concern the political scientist
are those for a society as a whole simply
follows by definition"52

We have already noted that he excludes para-political
systems from the scope of political science because authorit­
ative allocations in such systems do not effect the whole
society. He, however, does not give us any theoretical reason
for doing so. He merely says that these are only aspects of
sub-systems in a society. Then he goes on to say:

The decision to confine the analysis to
political systems has the added virtue
that without sacrificing theoretical
criteria of selection, it conforms to a
long tradition of political research. This
has dictated that the subject matter of
political research, at its most general

51. Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life,
op. cit., pp. 171-72.

52. Evans, op. cit., p. 128.
level and broadest context should embrace the most inclusive political system of a society. 53

One wonders why Easton must conform to this "Long tradition of political research"? This tradition centres round the concept of state and Easton himself has successfully brought out the difficulties associated with the state concept. Moreover, a good definition of politics should be able to identify political phenomena so that we can delimit our field of study. If such a definition brings in even some traditionally non-political phenomena within the scope of politics that should not disqualify such a definition. A definition should be judged by its own merits and not by the fact of its conforming or not conforming to one or the other tradition.

It is thus clear that the key concepts in Easton's definition are ambiguous. Evans has legitimately concluded that Easton has not defined the term political and has therefore made no distinction between the political and the non-political. 54 Vandyke also holds a similar opinion. He maintains that Easton's definition is an improvement on Lasswell's definition of politics as the study of changes in the shape and composition of the value patterns of society; but even here the key words are difficult to define, or are so broad in their application that they are of dubious help in identifying the

54. Evans, op. cit., p. 129.
Though Easton's definition does not serve the important and declared task of distinguishing political phenomena from non-political phenomena; yet it seems to have served another purpose, an altogether different one. This purpose concerns the level of political research and consequently the types of questions a political scientist is expected to ask. We have seen that his definition emphasises the allocation of values. As a result his political science becomes the study of how 'values' are authoritatively allocated in the society. As Mitchell says, "this allocative framework is in many ways analogous to the theories of income distribution and the allocation of resources in economics." 

In Economics William Stanley Jevons was one of the early propagators of the allocative framework. As Keynes pointed out Jevons was alarmed and excited by the idea of the exhaustion of resources. He visualized the problem of allocation of resources as fundamental to economics. The problem with which Jevons thought economics ought to be mainly concerned was how to allocate a given set of resources among competing uses so that

a given set of desires would be most effectively satisfied.\textsuperscript{58} If this view is accepted then the boundaries of subject are fixed around the market. The system of economic variable and their area of determination is virtually identified with the market or with the set of interconnected markets that constitute the sphere of exchange. Thus economics of this kind enables the economists to confine their analysis to the distribution process without going into the sphere of production.

On the other hand economists like Ricardo and Marx view production as fundamental to the study of economics. In a beautiful passage Marx pointed out that one must begin with production and that study of distribution without linking it with production is futile. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Hunger is hunger, but the hunger that is satisfied by cooked meat eaten with knife and fork differs from hunger that devours raw meat with the help of hands, nails and teeth. Production thus produces not only the object of consumption but also the mode of consumption, not only objectively but also subjectively. Production therefore creates the consumer.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

Marx then goes on to argue that production produces consumption: (1) by providing the material of consumption; (2) by determining the mode of consumption; (3) by creating in the consumer a need for the objects which it first presents


as products. It, therefore, produces the object and the mode of consumption and the urge to consume. Marx further argues that similarly, consumption produces the predisposition of the producer by posing him as a purposive requirement. Consumption is only a phase of production. Therefore, production is fundamental to the study of economics.

The distributive or allocative theories, mainly identified with the neo-classical marginalist school of economic thought completely reject the idea that the economic system could be properly understood only and only if one starts with the relations of production peculiar to the particular mode of production under consideration. These theories emphasize the study of distribution, but distribution determines the individuals share in the world of products on the basis of social laws. It intervenes between the producer and the product, i.e., production and consumption. Therefore, distribution is not an independent sector along side and out side production. Both are closely linked. 61

However, the neo-classical distributive and allocative theorists in economics confine their attention to the distributive process and reduce the problem of distribution to the pricing of requisite inputs by a market process which simultaneously determines the interconnected system of out puts and

61. Ibid., p. 199.
inputs. As Economics of this kind does not enquire into the question of production, such a question as the origins of surplus could not even be raised within the stated terms of economic analysis. As Dobb shows, such a question will be considered meaningless or as falling outside the boundaries of the subject. If the question of surplus is not raised one cannot ask questions of property ownership or class-relations and conflict.

Similarities between Easton's approach to political science and this kind of economic analysis are obvious. Like Jevons Easton also starts with scarcity and alternative uses of scarce resources. He makes it clear when he says:

> It is patent that without the provision for some means of deciding among competing claims to limited values, society would be rent by constant strife; the regularised interaction which distinguish a society from a random mob of individuals could not exist. Every society provides some mechanisms, however rudimentary they may be, for authoritatively resolving differences about the ends that are to be pursued, that is, for deciding who is to get what there is of the desirable things. An authoritative allocation of values is unavoidable.


In his interview with the present author Easton reiterates this point and claims that his analysis shares the same premises as those of Hobbes and Karl Marx. See, Appendix.
Easton then assumes that authoritative allocation or politics becomes necessary in a society as a result of the inherent scarcity and the possibility of alternative uses of such scarce resources. In an article already referred to Mitchell shows that such a position involves five assumptions similar to those in allocative theories of economics. These are: (1) that resources available to a society are limited; (2) that limited resources may have alternative uses; (3) that men strive for different and conflicting ends; (4) that man is rational; and (5) that he is motivated to maximise his returns. The validity of these assumptions as Mitchell shows could be questioned. He expresses his reservations about the validity of these assumptions but does not examine the consequences of adopting such an approach. The point which we want to emphasize is that by opting for an allocative approach, political scientists, like allocative economists, shift the focus of the discipline to a plane where it is no more necessary for them to investigate the questions related to the sources of political power. The distribution and use of power is important. They do affect the allocation values. But if we want to understand the political life we must also ask why power is distributed in a particular manner. But like the allocative economists allocative political scientists also prevent the discipline from asking such fundamental questions.

64. Mitchell, op. cit., pp. 79-87.
As we have noted earlier in economics distributive processes comprising the allocation and consumption are closely related to production. In fact production determines their nature. This is not to rule out the fact that once produced such processes also influence the production. In the same way allocation of values and distribution and use of power in politics are closely linked to the sources and determinants of political power. Though like in economics here, too, these processes may in turn influence the sources of power. The allocative theories in both the disciplines do not go into the cores, i.e., the production in economics and determinants and sources of power in politics. We have already noted the consequences of such an approach in economics. Let us now examine whether Easton's approach to political science also produces similar consequences.

While discussing his definition of politics we have noted that he defines political science as the study of the authoritative allocation of values as it is influenced by the distribution and use of power. 65 Here in fairness to Easton it must be stated that his focus is not merely on the allocation of values, it is on the distribution and use of power also. Here even at the risk of digression we must also take note of his assertion that his political science does not confine itself merely to the allocative aspects of political

system. He says:

But the critical question that confronts political theory is not just the development of a conceptual apparatus for understanding the factors that contribute to the kinds of decisions a system makes, that is for formulating a theory of political allocation ... the theory of system can persist long enough to continue to make such decisions.66

But even when Easton proposes to examine how a system persists he actually proposes to examine only how the decisions regarding allocation of values enable the system to persist. It is rather intriguing to note that while trying to formulate a theory of system persistence Easton does not feel the necessity of looking into the nature and determinants of political power and therefore to the nature of the system itself. He seems to believe that an examination of the way in which policy decisions (outputs) effect the members and how these effects generate support and demand (inputs for the system) would enable us to understand how a system persists? Easton draws our attention to the continuous flow of information about the effects of 'outputs' on the members through a feedback system he says that this enables the authorities to adjust their behaviour to meet the needs of the system. He then concludes,

It is the fact that there can be such a continuous flow of effects and information between system and environment, we shall see, that ultimately accounts for the capacity of a political system to persist in a world even of violently fluctuating changes.67

66. Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life, op.cit., p.31
67. Ibid., p. 32.
Persistence in Easterns use of the term means the continuity of the process of authoritative allocation of the values.

His very definition of politics, as the authoritative allocation of values as influenced by the distribution and use of power fixes the boundary of the discipline in a manner that the political scientist is required to examine only how the distribution and use of power affect the allocation of values. Power itself is considered as given. Such an approach does not require them to examine the determinants and the nature of power. But distribution of power would always be effected or influenced by the determinants of power itself. The nature of the allocation of values in a feudal normarchy will be different from that of a bourgeois democracy. This difference is the effect of the difference in the distribution and use of power. But even this difference in the distribution and use of power is the result of the basic difference in the determinants of power. Unless we understand the various nature of these determinants we cannot understand the political life. In fact if we do not study this aspect of the question our study of the political system will remain confined to the existing power relations which are considered as given. This kind of analysis also views the values as given. But values like political system themselves are transitional in nature. To understand this transitional nature of the values, and therefore of their allocations, we must understand the
transitional distribution and use of power. To paraphrase Marx—power is power but the power of a tribal chief is different from that of the executive head of a bourgeois democracy. As production determines distribution in economics in politics also the determinants of power shapes the distribution and use of power which in turn effects the allocation of values. To understand politics, therefore, we must understand what determines power in the political system under study and how?

Power itself is an abstract term. There is no universally acceptable definition of power; but "clearly, the notion of a capacity to determine events and conditions is involved." Power is visible only through its consequences. They are the proofs of existence of power. The inequalities of wealth, income and welfare that divide the population are among the most crucial consequences. They are the most visible manifestations of division of power in a society.

It is possible for the allocationists to argue that even these inequalities are the results of the decisions taken to that effect and therefore the central problem of political science is to understand how these decisions are made. This would in fact bring us back to the question of allocation of values. But as Steven Lukes shows political power which effects such inequalities is not to be seen only in positive decisions.

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In a penetrating study of power, he discusses different views on power. He divides these into three — one dimensional, two dimensional, and three dimensional views. The one dimensional view, according to him, involves a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions or issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests seen as express policy preferences revealed by political participation. The two dimensional view of power, on the other hand, allows for consideration of the ways in which decisions are prevented from being taken on political issues over which there is an observable conflict of interests seen as embodied in express policy preferences and sub-political grievances. But Lukes points out that both these approaches follow in the steps of Max Weber, for whom power was the probability of individuals realizing their will's despite resistance of others, whereas power to control the agenda of politics and exclude political issues cannot be adequately analysed unless it is seen as a function of collective forces and social arrangements. It is clear that these two approaches to power believe that an actual conflict is always present in any power relationship. But two types of power, manipulation and authority may not involve such conflict. If we assume that power is exercised only when a conflict is present, we obviously ignore the most effective use of power. Power not only settles conflicts one way or the other, it also

prevents them from arising. This is the most effective use of power. This might of course give the impression that this kind of power exists when there are grievances but those are denied entry into the political process and as a result conflicts do not arise. But the most significant use of power is to prevent people from having grievances in such a manner that they accept their role in the existing order of things. This is very often called the process of political socialization which is defined as the process by which political cultures are maintained and changed. If a particular political culture fails to create a situation when people by and large accept their roles in the existing order the political culture and therefore the political system, of which this political culture is a part, will fail to maintain itself. This task of making people 'accept' their role in the existing order of things is fulfilled by what Ralph Miliband calls, "shaping of the consciousness." 70

This process contributes to the stabilization and legitimization of the system. The ideas which do this trick of shaping the consciousness are the ideas of the ruling class.

With the help of the ideas which become dominant as a result of their own dominant position the ruling classes try to run the society in a manner which does not permit even the emergence of grievances. Althusser has shown that this is

achieved through "the ideological state apparatuses"\textsuperscript{71} when Gramsci talked of hegemony he had this process in his mind. The idea is that the ruling classes do persuade the other classes to accept its own moral, political and cultural values.\textsuperscript{72} The ruling classes do not always use brutal force to maintain its rule over the rest of the society. They have subtle methods of preventing people from articulating and even realizing their own grievances.

A proper understanding of political power, therefore, requires an examination of this process also. We must examine the various ways in which political issues are kept out of politics, such ways may include operation of social forces, institutional practice or individuals decisions. The inequalities created by power are not to be seen as results of concrete decisions. These very often are the results of certain social mechanisms, principles and assumptions. These do favour the interest of one or the other group vis-a-vis the rest of the population. In a capitalist society for instance, the primary assumptions of this nature are private property and market. In such a society the idea based on these assumptions are diffused in such a manner that a large section


of the population tend to accept the resultant inequalities as legitimate. This is the most significant use of political power. "Power", to quote Westergaard and Resler, "is to be found more in uneventful routine than in conscious and active exercise of will."\(^{73}\)

The distribution and use of power in any society is directly related to such 'uneventful routine' which operates on the basis of the preventing assumptions. The authoritative allocation of values in any society, in the ultimate analysis, would also be determined by these assumptions. Power, in this sense, and the nature of its determinants are therefore central to political science. For Easton, however, Power is only of secondary interest he says:

we need merely to recognize that political life consists of those actions related to the authoritative allocation of values. Only upon closer inspection does it become evident that power is of derivative interest to political science; an understanding of who has power and how it is used helps us to understand how social policy is formed and executed.\(^{74}\) (emphasis added)

Therefore, even 'upon closer inspection' Easton finds power to be only of derivative interest. But as Gramsci says, "The first element (of politics) is that there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led."\(^{75}\) The rulers can't rule and

\(^{73}\) Westergaard and Resler, op. cit., p. 144.

\(^{74}\) Easton, The Political System, op. cit., p. 143.

\(^{75}\) Gramsci, op. cit., p. 144.
leaders cannot lead unless they exercise power.

Moreover, Easton's view of power does not allow the examination of the crucial assumption through which political power is used in the most significant way. His approach requires a political scientist to take note of power only where authoritative allocations were involved. Allocations involve decisions. Therefore, his view of power centres round the concept of decision. We have already seen that this amounts to taking an one dimensional view of power.

Power could be studied at two different levels. At one level the questions concerned 'core assumptions'. What are the implicit terms of reference within which conflict about policy is confined for all practical purposes; which exclude alternatives outside that range from consideration? Whose and what interest do the core assumptions favour? At a lower level the questions concern the conflict and outcome of pressures within the boundaries set by the core assumptions.\(^76\)

Under Easton's definition of politics the study of power will be confined to the lower level. As it concerns itself with issues related to policy decisions or allocation of values it will never question the 'Core assumptions'. Macpherson shows that the current empirical theorists view political power as power over others; but they do not go into its extractive nature in any unequal society. He maintains that at the most

\(^76\) Westergaard and Reeser, op. cit., p. 248.
they ask questions like—how power holders recruit power? What are the conditions for the maintenance of a stable system of inputs to and output from political power?77 For Easton, of course, it is not necessary to go into the determinants of power. His definition of politics delimits the field of political inquiry in a manner that he does not have to go into the 'Core assumptions'. Once political phenomena is defined in terms of allocation or distribution such questions as to the purpose of political power and its determinants do not any more fall within the jurisdiction of political science. Such an approach renders political science a merely descriptive discipline. In the case of Easton, of course, such an approach fits into his scheme of formulating a conceptual frame-work which he calls a political theory. Easton's definition, thus prevents his political science from examining the roots and the purpose of political power, in the political system under-study. This puts him squarely in line with Jevon's. Both of them delimit the scope of their disciplines in a manner which puts these questions beyond the boundaries of the respective disciplines. In this sense Easton seems to have brought a Jevonian revolution in political science.

CHAPTER IV
A MODEL OF POLITICAL SYSTEM:
AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY.

Easton, as we have noted in a preceding chapter, is of the opinion that politics is an activity and activity in real life arises out of an interactional relationship. An analysis of the political life is possible only if we view it as a system.

The concept of Political System occupies the Central Position in Easton's Political Science and his view of Political Theory. In all his works this concept remains the major point of focus. In fact it is this concept of political system in which he pins his hope for developing an empirical theory of politics. As early as 1953 in his book The Political System1 Easton used the term political system and pleaded for adoption of a systems approach to the study of political life, but he was not able as yet to build a proper framework for the study of political life. It was only in his later works that Easton tries to develop a framework for analysis of political life within the systems frame. In a paper published in 19572 he

1. Easton, The Political System, op. cit.,
tried to draw the outline of his framework. In 1965 Easton published two major books on this theme. These books give a detailed contour of his idea of the political system.

Easton points out that political scientists have been trying to develop concepts to describe the most obvious and encompassing properties of politics. According to him, "the idea of political system proves to be an appropriate and indeed unavoidable starting point in this search". Students of political life, assume that the phenomena of politics tend to cohere and to be mutually related. There are certain kinds of activities which are closely related to what may be called political life. The elements of political activity, such as governmental organizations, pressure groups, voting, parties, and the social elements related to these such as classes, regional groupings and so forth, all show close interactions. Easton says:

They (the elements of political activity) are, of course, part of the whole social process and therefore are parts of analytical systems other than the political. But they do show a marked political relevance more than purely accidental or random. If they were accidental there would be little point in searching for regularities in political activity. The search for recurrent relationships suggests that the elements of political life have some form of determinate relation. The task of research is to discover what these are. In short political life constitutes a concrete political system which is an aspect of the whole social system (emphasis added)

4. Easton, *The Political System*, op. cit., p. 96
5. Ibid., p. 97.
It is, therefore, clear that Easton proposes to view political life as a system. This system is viewed as a part of the whole social system. He does not think that this can be delinked from the social system. But he considers it possible and even necessary to set it temporarily apart for purposes of analysis. He of course, recognizes that all social life is inter-dependent and as a result it is artificial to isolate any set of social relations from the whole for special attention. But this artificiality, according to him, is imposed upon political scientists by the need for 'simplification' of their data. He says that political science is compelled to abstract from the whole social system some variables which seem to cohere more closely than others. He cites the example of economics where, price, supply, demand and choice among wants are looked upon as a sub-system which can be profitably examined, temporarily, apart from the whole social system. In political science the analytic tool for this purpose is a theoretical construct conceptualizing a political system. He says, "... it consists first, of a set of concepts corresponding to the important political variables and, second of statements about the relations among these concepts."6

This point becomes clear from his views about the social system. Basically, Easton puts in a system language what is generally accepted among social scientists, i.e., that the

6. Ibid., p. 93.
society consists of various aspects of life. Easton shows that over the course of time it has appeared useful to identify different kinds of interactions prevalent in the social life. He says, of the various sub-systems of the social system:

Since such systems do not represent the totality of the interactions involved in a society, but only parts of them that have been abstracted out of the apperceptive mass of behaviours, these systems are analytic in character. Political interactions constitute one kind of such systems.7

This analytic system is a unit of analysis. Evans rightly describes this system as one hypothetically "constructed by the observer."8 Easton is of the opinion that a system could be either "natural" or "constructive". A natural system is one in which a set of interactions naturally cohere. But he holds that the idea of natural system can serve little useful theoretical purpose. Thus he maintains that,

If we assert that our major and gross units of analysis are natural systems, this would in no way help us to locate such systems. We would still have the task of taking any set of political relationships and exploring their connectedness.9

Secondly,

... The search for natural systems would also create a virtually insurmountable difficulty... it opens the door to interminable dispute on as to whether or not a set of activities 'really' forms a system and we shall find this dispute to be totally unnecessary, spacious and distracting issue.10

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7. Easton: A Frame-work of Political Analysis, op.cit., p.38
8. Evans, op. cit., p. 119.
9. Easton, A Frame-work of political analysis, op.cit., p.29
10. Ibid., p. 30
Easton further points out that it leaves open the question as to whether the existence of what is only an apparent inter-dependence would thereby transform the elements into a system of some kind. He shows that if we accept the concept of natural system it would be necessary to demonstrate that the relationships among variables are relevant for an understanding of the operation of the system. He concludes, "It would still leave us saddled with the crucial problem of establishing the interconnectedness of a set of variables and demonstrating their theoretical relevance or meaningfulness."

In the face of such difficulties in viewing political life as a natural system, Easton postulates that any set of variables selected for description and explanation may be considered a system of behaviour. He believes that this will simplify the problems of analysis enormously. This is what he calls a 'constructive system'. Easton says:

It avoids and eliminates all possible disputes about whether or not the object of our analysis is or is 'really' not a system. Any set of political elements we wish to consider a system [for purposes of analysis] automatically becomes one. In addition this position permits us to change our minds about the importance of system. It enables us to say that one that was totally uninteresting because we could see very little inter-relationship among its parts has suddenly become significant, new data having suggested possible connection.

11. loc cit.
12. Ibid., p. 31.
In this approach, the only thing that commands our attention is whether a particular set of activities is an interesting one, in the sense that it is relevant and helps us to understand some theoretical problems, or whether it is worthless or trivial from this point of view. Easton hopes that such an approach will save the political scientist the trouble of deciding which is really a system and which is not. But it introduces an equally ticklish problem of deciding whether a set of variables is interesting or not. To paraphrase Easton himself, it would still leave us saddled with the crucial problem of establishing the interesting character of a set of variables by demonstrating their theoretical relevance or meaningfulness. It is, therefore, clear that Easton's claim that the 'constructive system' simplifies the problem of analysis is not tenable.

However, Easton builds up his systems analysis around this concept of the analytical political system. The general premises of this analysis are:

1. System: It is useful to view political life as a system of behaviour.
2. Environment: A system is distinguishable from the environment in which it exists and open to influences from it.
3. Response: Variations in the structures and processes within a system may usefully be interpreted as constructive or positive alternative efforts by members of a system to regulate or scope with stress flowing from environmental as well as internal sources.

13. Ibid., p. 30
4. Feedback: The capacity of a system to persist in the face of stress is a function of the presence and nature of information and other influences that return to its actors or decision makers. 14

By the time Easton stated the general premises of his analysis some other political scientists also had developed approaches which interpret political life as a system of behaviour. Easton claims that the third and the fourth of these premises fundamentally distinguish his kind of systems analysis from the other systems approaches to the study of political life. Almond and Coleman developed a model for a comparative study of political systems. 15 They attribute three major properties to the interactions which form the system. These are (1) Comprehensiveness; (2) Interdependence; and (3) existence of boundaries. 16 Their idea of the political system of course does not have the properties of response and feedback. In this sense Easton's concept of system in distinguishable from the Almond and Coleman model. But Easton's

14. Ibid., pp. 24-25


16. Ibid., p. 7.
claim that these two premises give his approach an unique position in political science is not maintainable because Karl Deutsch's approach seems to have used both of these concepts. Deutsch borrows his model from cybernetics — the theory of information, self-regulating machines, computers, and the physiology of the nervous system. A cybernetic system recognizes stimuli. It learns, adjusts itself automatically upon receiving feedback about its performance, and moves through a determined number of possible states. Karl Deutsch applies this model to describe a political system. Deutsch thus uses the concepts of response and feedback in his model. 17

However, Easton conceives political life "as a boundary maintaining set of interactions imbedded in and surrounded by other social systems to the influence of which it is constantly exposed". 18 He explains that this concept of system may mean either empirical or symbolic systems. In the empirical sense it refers to the empirical behaviour of the political life. In the symbolic sense it refers to the set of symbols through which the behaviour of the empirical system could be identified, described, determined or explained. He proposes to deal with the empirical or behaving system with respect to


18. Easton, A Frame-work of Political Analysis, op.cit., p.25
which he seeks to develop a theoretical construct. This theoretical construct is designated a political system. This approach views the political system as one that is capable of regulating its own behaviour though its internal mechanism which is at its disposal. Easton says:

> A political system is a goal setting, self-transforming and creatively adaptive system. It consists of human beings who are capable of anticipating, evaluating and acting constructively to prevent disturbances in the system environment.¹⁹

It appears that Easton has given a free hand to the members of the political system to deal with disturbances. It is true that the members of a political system may take steps to prevent disturbances; but they can act only within a particular range. We shall see during the course of our discussion that the members of the system, and in that sense the system itself, are not free to act in this manner to enable themselves to deal with disturbances.

These disturbances create stress on the system. Stress actually means pressure on the essential variables of the system. Easton holds that all political systems have two essential variables. These are, "the capacity of the system to allocate values for the society and ensure their acceptance"²⁰

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¹⁹. Ibid., p. 132.
²⁰. Ibid., p. 96.
decisions, or, if after making such decisions it fails to make these accepted it will not be able to function. Evans has rightly pointed out that the two variables are really one, for the only criterion Easton offers for allocations being authoritative is their being accepted. 21 A political system refers to authoritative allocations only. It is clear from our discussion of Easton's definition of politics, in the preceding chapter, that if allocations are made but those are not accepted by the populace they are not authoritative and, therefore, not political. Such allocations in fact will not fall within the boundaries of the political system. Easton is mistaken in considering the allocations and ensuring their acceptance as two variables. In the context of the political system all allocation will have to be authoritative and therefore, ensuring their acceptance is inherent to political allocations themselves that is if we accept Easton's definition of politics. There is actually one essential variable and that is authoritative allocation of values. For the purpose of this discussion, however, we shall continue to refer to them as two variables as Easton himself does.

Easton explains that as a result of the stress pouring in from the environment of the system. These variables may be pushed beyond the critical range. The question of stress coming from the environment takes us to the issue of boundaries.

21. Evans, op. cit., p. 132 22
Easton begins his discussion of the boundaries of the political system by pointing out that "political research seeks first and foremost to understand the way in which values are authoritatively allocated, not for a group within the society but for the whole society." Therefore, it becomes necessary for Easton to distinguish between what he calls the "political system" or "Societal Political System" and the "Para-Political systems." Political systems are sub-systems of the social systems. The Para-Political systems are aspects of sub-systems in a society. He argues that the members of para-political systems neither accept nor are expected to accept the responsibilities for dealing with the major problems generated by the fact that an aggregate of persons live together as a society, share some aspects of life and are compelled, thereby, to try to resolve their differences together. These responsibilities transcend the scope of any single organised group. Para-political systems are concerned only with problems of authoritative allocations within the group. These responsibilities are undertaken by political systems. He says, "The societal political system .... possesses a range of responsibilities that are far broader in scope than those of the para-political systems within the small groups of a society."  

23. Easton, A Framework of Political Analysis, op.cit.,p.52  
24. Ibid., p. 53.
Easton points out that the powers enjoyed by the two kinds of political systems also vary according to their responsibilities. This variation of power gives another distinguishable character to the political system. He writes,

A further major distinction between these two kinds of political systems is that the power available to the Societal Political system for attempting to regulate differences are usually broader, corresponding thereby to its greater range of responsibilities. 25

Easton, thus distinguishes the political system from para-political systems on the basis of the wider responsibilities it bears and the wider range of corresponding powers it exercises. Having distinguished the political and the para-political systems he goes on to identify the basic structural units of analysis in the political system. The political system reflects one aspect of the total interactions of the biological persons in a society. These persons, as they engage in political interactions of one sort or another, are referred to as members. This term identifies the general role of a person in a given society with respect to political life. Member is an analytical category. The societal political system comprising such members is placed in an environment. Easton shows that in the case of physical or biological systems the boundaries are simple enough to perceive. 26 They form the

25. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
26. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
spatial or material limits to the collection of variables in which we are interested. With the examples of the apple, the human body, the boulder, the waterfall and the solar system he shows that these variables could be seen clearly or it needs very little imagination to perceive them. Easton points out that the identification of such boundaries in the case of political systems is not as simple as it appears to be. He argues that a system of social interactions, such as a political system, is normally so diffused throughout a society that we have considerable difficulty in accommodating the same imagery to these actions, taken collectively, that we apply so easily to physical and biological systems. 27 Easton maintains that actually all boundaries are analytically selected. He says:

... The simplicity in conceptualization of the boundaries is quite deceptive. These boundaries are, in fact, not phenomenally out there waiting to be identified. They conform to our general conclusion about the character of systems, that they are products of analytic selection, this is also true with regard to the boundaries of political system. 28

Easton shows that geo-political boundaries of a society do not help us to identify the boundaries of a political system. In fact in their theoretical status boundaries need not always be spatial in nature. He says, "analytically

27. Ibid., p. 64
28. Ibid., p. 65
the boundaries of all systems may be interpreted as the criteria of inclusion in or exclusion from the system forming the focus of interest.29 This statement implies that, the boundaries like systems, in Easton's sense of the term, are purely analytical. But while the system may be an intellectual construct in practice this construct can be seen only in a spatial context. For instance when we speak of the Indian political system we can not avoid referring to the geopolitical boundaries within which this system operates. In this sense, the empirical aspects of the boundaries of a political system can not be ignored. Though Easton suggests that boundaries are not empirical he holds that there are empirical indicators of these boundaries. The key to these indicators, according to Easton, is the structural differentiation. The more differentiated the structures in a society are, the clearer are these indicators. He says that the clarity of the boundary between the political system and other social systems is signalized by the following properties. 1) The extent of distinction of political roles and activities from other roles and activities, or conversely the extent to which they are all imbedded in united structures such as the family or kinship groups (2) the extent to which occupants of roles form a separate group in the society and possess a sense of internal solidarity and cohesion (3) The extent to which

29. Ibid., p. 68
political roles take shape of a hierarchy which is distinguishable from other hierarchies based upon wealth, prestige or other non-political criteria; and (4) the extent to which the recruitment process and criteria of selection differ for the occupants of political as contrasted with other roles.  

Easton then goes on to describe the environment of the political system. The environment of the political system embraces the social as well as the physical environment. This environment is composed of two basically different types of systems, intra-societal and extra-societal. The intera-societal systems in the environment of political system are those which lie outside the boundaries of a political system and yet within the same society. Easton divides these intra-societal systems, falling outside the boundaries of political system, into the ecological, biological, personality and social systems. Social systems are further sub-divided into cultural, social-structural, economic and demographic.  

There are systems outside the society of which the political system itself is a social sub-system. These may have important consequences for the persistence or change of a political system.  

30. Ibid., p. 69  
31. Ibid., pp. 71-73  
32. Ibid., p. 73.
tical systems. 33 Like the intra-societal environment this extra-societal environment also has its own sub-systems. Easton writes:

... as components of the international society, we could find an international ecological system, international political system, and such international social systems as an international culture, international economy and international demographic system and so forth just as in the case of the domestic societies. 34

Easton, thus, conceives two distinct environments of the political systems, the intra-societal and the extra-societal. While the intra-societal environment is composed of sub-systems of a society which fall out side the political sub-system of that society, the extra-societal environment is the international society. It comprises the sub-systems of the international society. Recognition of this fact poses a problem for any one who wants to use Easton's framework. The extra-societal and the intra-societal environments have the same categories of sub-systems, i.e., cultural, economic and demographic sub-systems. The national parts of these sub-systems are inseparable parts of the international system. Therefore, one part of them cannot be placed in the intra-societal environment while the other is placed in the extra-societal environment. For instance, if we try to examine the

33. Ibid., p. 74
34. loc cit.
American Political System within Easton's framework, we are expected to place the American economy in the intra-societal environment and the international economy in the extra-societal environment. But under Easton's scheme as we tried to explain above the American economy is also a sub-system of the International economic system and as such falls in the extra-societal environment of the American political system. Even as a theoretical construct it will be impossible to place the same sub-system in both the environments, specially when in Easton's framework, there is no flow of inputs from the extra-societal to intra-societal environment. Easton's model aims at simplifying political data, but the intra-societal and the extra-societal environment in his framework overlap in such a manner that instead of simplifying political data it will add to the existing confusion.

Easton's political system is an open and responding system, it is an open system because, "it is a system imbedded in an environment and exposed to what happens there." It is a responding system because it "constitutes a set of behaviours through which positive action may be taken to cope with the influences operating on it." Such influences may at times become stressful, but the system does not collapse under such conditions. It is expected to respond in a manner so that the

35. Ibid., See, Diagram in p. 75
36. Ibid., p. 77
system can survive. The capacity to respond to stress is a remarkable feature of Easton's framework. He claims that what distinguishes his systems theory is that it presents a view of political life as a responding system. 37

Easton states that every political system faces stress; but because of the kind of system it is the members of the system have the opportunity to respond to stress in such a way as to try to assure the persistence of some kind of a system for making and executing binding decisions. Stress occurs "when there is a danger that the essential variables will be pushed beyond...their critical range." 38 (emphasis in original). For a responding, self-regulating system the ideas of the essential variables and critical range are, indeed of great importance. But these ideas are at the same time reminiscent of the idea of equilibrium which Easton himself shuns as impracticable on the ground that it requires a degree of quantification which is not possible to attain in political science, at least at its present stage of development. Easton seems to be unaware of the fact that the idea of the critical range also warrants quantification. After all unless we can measure the quantum of stress which may push the essential variables beyond their critical range, the concepts of essential variables and the critical range become redundant. Easton's concept of a political system with essential variables

37. loc cit.
38. Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life, on cit., p.24
and a critical range is open to the same criticism which he
himself offers against the equilibrium frame-work.

The concept of stress necessitates investigation of
its source. Easton maintains that the sources of stress could
be internal or external depending upon the position in which
they originate. The conflicts over political instrumentalities
are identified as internal stress. Any disturbance or stress
occurring in the political system as a result of influences
from outside the system is called external stress. Easton
views disturbance as the cause of all stress. "Disturbances"
according to Easton, "will refer to all activities in the
environment or within a system that can be expected to or do
displace a system from its current pattern of operations,
regardless of whether or not it is stressful for the system."
Such disturbances could be neutral, benign, or stressful
according to the degree to which they effect the chances for
some or any kind of political system to persist. Stressful
disturbance is one which threatens to prevent a system from
functioning. Stress for Easton is variation from the 'normal
range of operation.' As long as the 'essential variables'
could be kept operating within the 'Critical range' the system
persists. The question which naturally arises is how are the
sources of stress to be identified? In Easton's model they

39. Easton, Frame-work of Political Analysis, op. cit.,
    pp. 80-82.
40. Ibid., pp. 90-91.
41. Ibid., p. 91.
could be identified with the help of the concepts of 'inputs' and 'outputs'. These are the two linkage variables which link the political system and its environment. Easton visualizes the political system as a flow model. Trying to explain his idea of the flow model he says:

> What is happening in the environment affects the political system through the kinds of influences that flow into the system. Through its structures and processes the system then acts on these intakes in such a way that they are converted into outputs. These are the authoritative decisions and their implementations. The outputs return to the systems in the environment or in many cases they may turn directly and without intermediaries back upon the system itself.  

With the help of the concept of inputs Easton hopes to delineate how behaviour in the various sectors of society affects what happens in the political sector. "Inputs", according to him, "will serve as summary variables that concentrate and reflect everything in the environment which is relevant to political stress."  

He uses the concept of 'withinputs' to delineate the disturbances occurring inside the system itself. Both the inputs and withinputs are sources of stress. The outputs influence events in the environment of the political system, and thereby help to determine each succeeding round of inputs into the system. There is, thus,

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42. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
43. Ibid., p. 111
a feed-back loop in this model. The major inputs are demands and supports. He describes outputs as the decisions and actions of the authorities.

The disturbances created by stress are regulated by the political system through structural regulators, which he calls 'gate keepers', like interest groups, parties, opinion leaders or the mass media in the modern societies and notables, aristocracy, or military cadre in traditional ones. Cultural restraints and processes of combination of demands are also considered regulatory processes. Here, in his bid to give his model a systemic character, Kaston seems to have overlooked the fact that the agencies which combine demands, and as a result are expected to act as gate-keepers instead of regulating stress may at times contribute to intensification of stress on the system. Some purely pro-system gate-keepers, like cultural restraints, may be able to reduce pressure on the system; but in many cases the so-called gate-keepers may open floodgate of stress. He fails to note that gate-keepers like interest groups may reduce the number of demands but they do increase the intensity of demands by way of articulating them, and thereby increase stress on the system.

Not only an increase in demands but a fall in support may also lead to stress. It is, therefore, necessary for the

44. Ibid., p. 122
45. Ibid., p. 123
system to regulate stress by way of sustaining support. Easton says that a regulative response with regard to support may include efforts to change the structures and processes that characterise a particular type of political system. A system may also regulate this kind of stress by building a diffuse support on the basis of sentiments of legitimacy, recognition of general welfare and a sense of political community. Finally, a system may use inputs to generate specific support and thereby regulate stress.

Support is directed to the components of the political system. These components are considered to be the basic political objects. Easton writes:

> Our inquiry into support will be directed toward the way in which solidarity around these three foci or political objects, the authorities, regime, and political community may be stressed and buttressed.

In a detailed discussion of these three components of the political system Easton takes up the political community first. This term "will refer to that aspect of a political system that consists of its members seen as a group of persons bound together by a political division of labour". A political system under investigation could be a small municipality, a nation state or an international political system. Each one of these systems will have a different range. As a component

46. Ibid., p. 125
47. Easton, _A Systems Analysis of Political Life_, op. cit., p. 157
48. Ibid., p. 177
of the political system the range of the political community will very according to the range of the system under study. 49

A political community is distinguishable from a constitutional order. The constitutional order is now called a regime — another component of the political system. The members of any political system, "would need to accept some basic procedures and rules relating to the means through which controversy over demands was to be regulated and work out some ends that would at least broadly and generally guide the search for such settlements." 50 Regime is the order which encompasses these procedures and rules. Easton identifies three components of the regime; they are — values, which includes goals and principles; norms; and structures of authority. Easton says:

The values serve as broad limits with regard to what can be taken for granted in the guidance of day to day policy without violating deep feelings of important segments of the community. The norms specify the kinds of procedures that are expected and acceptable in the processing and implementation of demands. The structures of authority designate the formal and informal patterns in which power is distributed and organized with regard to the authoritative making and implementing of decisions — the roles and other relationships through which authority is distributed and exercised. 51 (emphasis added).

49. Ibid., p. 131
50. Ibid., p. 191
51. Ibid., p. 123
The third political object, authorities are the occupants of authority roles. Trying to be specific Easton says, "in practice, we frequently identify them as the government of a country or group but there is need for a term with a broader scope than that implied in the concept of 'Government'". Easton distinguishes between the occupants of authority roles and the roles themselves. Easton clearly states that to qualify for inclusion in this term the occupants of authority roles must engage in daily affairs. They must be recognised by most members of the system as having responsibility for these matters and their actions must be accepted as binding most of the time by most of the members as long as they act within the limits of their roles. Regulation of stress on these three components of the system enables the system to persist.

As a responding and self-regulating system the political system is capable of absorbing change. So long as it is able to absorb change, it may be considered to have capacity for persistence. A system may undergo changes; but so long as it continues to authoritatively allocate values for a society it is considered as persisting. Easton maintains that change of a system, in his approach, will mean change of one or another of these objects and only where all objects change simultaneously the former system will be considered to have totally disappeared. Conversely a system may persist 'In Acta' or only with respect to one of

52. Ibid., p. 212.
It will also become apparent that modification in one or another of the objects may represent a fundamental way through which systems are able to cope with stress from the environment and to keep some kind of political system in operation for the particular society.  

In other words — if a political system faces serious threat as a result of lack of support for the authorities the system may change the authorities while the regime and the political community may remain intact. The same thing may happen in the case of lack of support for any of the other two components of the political system also. If the regime or the political community of a political system fails to muster enough support and if its feedback loop works properly, according to Easton's scheme of things the system should be able to modify its regime or the political community as the case may be. But are these components of the political system as pliable as Easton considers them to be? As we have already noted that Easton himself explains that these components of the political system are political objects. What he seems to ignore is that as political objects they protect certain interests against others. Each one of these political objects are a part of an arrangement through which a particular political order is maintained. Authorities occupy a key role in the day to day affairs of this process. They take decisions and implement them. In this

53. Ibid., p. 172
sense they are the most obvious aspect of this process. Exceptions apart, they have to operate within the rules of the game set by the regime. The regime as Easton rightly points out is composed of the values, norms and the structures of authority. These are decided upon, in some sense, by the political community. Easton's use of the term suggests that the community develops some kind of a consensus about these things. This question we intend to take up when we discuss the roles of consensus and conflict in Easton's model. To come back to the question of political community, Easton defines it as a political division of labour. It is "a plurality of relationships through which the individual members are linked to each other and through which the political objectives of the system are pursued".54 Political objectives are of course instruments of material benefits; but that again is a separate issue. For the fulfilment of these political objectives the political community establishes, what Easton calls, the regime and the regime operates through the authorities. The structure could be understood with the help of the following diagram.

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54. Ibid., p. 177
The political community is the basis of this structure. It is the foundation, the basis, on which the rest of the structure is built and hinges. Any change in the political community will therefore affect a total change in the system. In fact the system will disappear. The authorities may come and go. They are instruments of the implementation of the regime goals. If the occupants of the authority roles prove to be inefficient and if they do not apply the basic rules there will be discontentment among the members of the political community. As a result, the old authorities may be replaced by new ones. Such changes are frequent in modern times. It is possible that in a certain political system the regime and the authorities become identical for a period and in that case a change in the authorities may bring a change in the regime also. But such incidents are exceptions only. The regime is a more important aspect of the political system. It determines the long term goals of the system. Therefore, changes in regime are not as frequent. If the political community finds that the present regime cannot fulfil its goals any longer or that it can't protect the interests, protection which is the basis of the community itself, it may decide to change the regime. A change of regime, in most cases, will force a change of the authorities. Because authorities, normally remain in their position only because they accept the regime.
However, such changes may not be as smooth as it appears to be. Since the regime protects vital interests any move to change a particular regime will be met with stiff opposition from those whose interests it protects. Sometimes even a change in the authorities may threaten to hurt so much of interest that it may even dismember a political community.

The most fundamental change that can take place in a political system is that of the political community. In comparison to this change the changes in the other two political objects are minor. In a sense Easton recognizes this. While discussing the use of the concept by K. W. Deutsch and H. B. Haas Easton maintains that these two authors used the term as some kind of a synonym of the political system. But his own use of the term is different from their use of it. He writes, "I wish to reserve 'Political Community' for the special purpose of identifying only one aspect of a political system, as one of a number of basic political objects towards which support may be extended or from which it may be withdrawn." He then explains that to enable itself to muster support the system may effect necessary changes in each one of these political objects. It is interesting to note that while he gives us a detailed discussion of how authorities and regimes change to enable the system to persist he does not do the same for political

55. Ibid., p. 57
56. Ibid., CP 179, 390.
The only place where he discusses the possibility of a change in the political community to facilitate system persistence is one where he cites the example of the American Civil War as a change of the political community. However, the example seems to be an unfortunate one. It is true that the defeat of the South in the Civil War enhanced the process of change in the American Society. But the changes that brought rapid industrialization should not be confused with a change in the political community. Actually, the prevailing 'political division of labour' even in the pre-civil war America was one that favoured industrialization. The political forces that came to dominate American politics ever since the adoption of the federal constitution were the forces that wanted development of industry and capitalism. The civil war...

57. Ibid., pp. 325-340
58. Ibid., p. 179
59. The tendencies of the political community to protect and foster the interest of the manufacturers were reflected in Hamilton's report on manufacturers in 1970. Hamilton's arguments could not clinch the issue at that time, but his ideas came to stay. Some of his policies as the Secretary of the Treasury set the ball rolling in favour of industry and capital. For a discussion on this point, see S.K. Morrison and H.S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1962), p. 327. Nye and Morpurgo also point out that "the American people have never accepted Government by aristocrats but they have maintained to this day the Hamiltonian faith in Government for Capitalists." R.B. Nye and J.E. Morpurgo, *A History of the United States*, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 260.
was infact the result of an attempt by the South to stall this trend. Therefore, if the farmers had won the war there would have been a major change in the American political community, or the political division of labour. In that case instead of protecting the interest of the manufacturers the political community in America would have come to promote the interests of the farmers. That would have changed the nature of the American political economy from one that wanted industrialization and associated changes to one that would favour an agrarian economy and associated stagnancy. The Civil War, therefore, was an unsuccessful attempt to change the prevailing political community only.

Conflicts about the nature of political community or the political division of labour may lead to such strifes that the old political community may disappear in the sense that a new political division of labour may emerge. This, of course, will mean a change in the regime and the authorities also. In other words the character of the whole political system will change. In such a case it will be difficult to maintain that the system has persisted. In fact it is not possible to view a situation when the political community under goes a change but the system persists.

Persistence is the central issue in Easton's analysis. He maintains that political science must understand the life processes of the political system as such. He writes:
He writes:

Just as natural science seeks to understand the fundamental processes underlying inorganic life, I shall propose that it is the task of Behavioural Science of politics to put kinds of questions that reveal the way in which the life processes or defining functions of political systems are protected regardless of time or place, what makes it possible for a system to assure the perpetuation of any means through which values may be authoritatively allocated, that is to permit the system to persist.\textsuperscript{60}

Easton defines persistence, as often happens in political thought, with the help of its negative non-persistence. He held that there is an advantage in doing so. He interprets the negative of persistence as the complete disappearance of a system.\textsuperscript{61} Disappearance, here, means a total destruction. He uses examples of natural calamities to explain such a situation. He writes:

\begin{quote}
This outcome [non-persistence] is neither impossible nor unusual. It has occurred when the membership of a society has been utterly destroyed through some natural catastrophe such as an earthquake or epidemic, or when the society has failed to reproduce itself biologically, as perhaps in the case of Mesawède Indians.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

In this discussion of "non-persistence" Easton seems to have missed the point that disappearance of a community during such natural calamities does not destroy the political

\textsuperscript{60} Easton, \textit{A Frame-work of Political Analysis}, op. cit., p. 78
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 82
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., op. cit.
community only; it destroys the community as such. The
disappearance of a political community must refer to a situa-
tion in which the political community disappears without the
disappearance of the people inhabiting that area.

Though Easton has referred also to the Russian and the
French revolutions, Germany at the end of the world War II
and the Belgium Congo as cases of failure to persist; his
main examples as converse shows are those of natural cata-
trophes. Converse rightly points out that Easton could not
afford to use the term persistence to mean stability, main-
tenance of specific structures or equilibrium because that,
he thought, may bring a status-quo bias. We shall, however,
see in the next chapter that despite his conscious bid to avoid
such a bias his model remains status-quoist in nature. More-
over, as Thorson shows, if we accept Easton's definition of
persistence even a situation like the French revolution will
have to be explained away as a change which enables the system
to persist. To quote Thorson:

Let us focus ... on what is an extreme
case of 'failure to persist' — France
in 1789 ... before 1789 a certain kind
of political order existed in France and
that some time after 1789 a very different
sort of political order came into existence.
We may say then that we have situation A,
the regime of Loins XVI and situation B,

63. Philip Converse, *Book Review in American Political
Science Review* (December 1965) Vol. LIX No. 4,
pp. 1001-1002.
The first Republic. Easton's completely general definition of the political system, of course, includes both A and B. There was an 'authoritative allocation of values' for France both in the time of Louis XVI and in the time of the First Republic, and we must conclude therefore that the 'very life Processes' of the French political system persisted — not, it must be said, because of anything that happened in France but because Easton's definition continues to apply.64 (emphasis in original)

If we accept Easton's definitions of the political system and his idea of persistence, a system will fail to persist only when the whole society disappears. Mackenzie also supports this view when he says "a break down of the political system involves a break down of the society."65 Easton lands up in this difficult situation because his definitions of the life processes of political system, which enables the system to persist and politics are identical. Politics for him is the authoritative allocation of values. The life processes of political system are the "allocative processes and structures." These are the life processes of any or all systems.66 Thorson makes the point succinctly

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66. Easton, A Framework of Political Analysis, op. cit., p. 73.
when he says,

.... Easton is obliged to say ... that, in his sense of the term 'persist' a political system fails to persist when and when only his definition of politics fails to apply. But — and this is all important — this definition of politics is meant to be general, to apply to any case whatsoever. We are led therefore, to the following conclusions. The political system fails to persist when there is no longer any politics, or politics fails to persist, when there is politics, or politics persists when it persists.67

It is only natural that such a framework will prove to be incapable of explaining anything worthwhile. Thorson shows that this framework is unable to explain basic changes that take place in the political life. According to Thorson Easton is contemptuous of a theory of change. He says that Easton's theory merely supplied terminology capable of describing that such and such changes occurred but it can explain no political change whatsoever.68 The futility of Easton's exercise becomes evident when Thorson quotes Easton himself to the effect that this approach to the analysis of political system does not help us to understand why any specific policies are adopted by the politically relevant members in a system.69 If a framework of political analysis cannot explain any change, if it cannot help us to understand why particular policies are adopted, what purpose does it serve?

67. Thorson, op. cit., pp. 64-65
68. Ibid., p. 68
69. loc cit.
What theoretically relevant knowledge does it give us? Nothing whatsoever. That is why Thorson calls Easton's enterprise futile. Thorson attributes this to Easton adoption of the prediction generalization model of science. According to Thorson the prediction generalization model of science is one which assumes that if a generalization is to quality as a law, as a universal generalization, it must by definition be timeless in the sense that it applies at any time whatsoever. Thorson maintains that Easton's idea of system is derived from biology, he further argues that the physiological system is a clear case of prediction generalization model. If we accept Thorson's argument that the failure of Easton's model could be attributed to its prediction generalization roots then systems approach in physiology, which also have met the same fate. But in Thorson's own admission systems approach is physiology does serve some purpose. It would, therefore, be wrong to conclude that the cause of the malady lies in the prediction generalization view of science.

The systems approach in Biology, from which Easton seems to have borrowed his model, is in fact, a branch of what is known as the general systems theory. Like the general system theory, systems thinking in Biology also aims at Unity of

70. Ibid., pp. 70-71.
71. loc cit.
72. Ibid., p. 81
73. Ibid., p. 89
74. loc cit.
Ludwig Von Bertalanfly, a pioneer in this field emphasizes the integration of scientific knowledge. He spells out the main objectives of this approach in five propositions.

1. There is a general tendency towards integration in the various sciences, natural and social.
2. Such integration seems to be central in a general theory of systems.
3. Such theory may be an important means for aiming at exact theory in the non-physical fields of science.
4. Developing unifying principles running 'vertically' through the universe of the individual sciences, this theory brings us near to the goal of unity of sciences.
5. This can lead to a much needed integration of scientific education.

Easton adopts the vocabulary of systems theory. But his approach does not follow the exact line of general systems theory. Evolution of Easton's ideas did produce some minor academic developments that are not fully identical with systems theory in its mature form. These developments include an extended flirtation with the movement known as behavioural science. Easton asserts that his is a behavioural science of politics, but the differences between his systems approach and that of the general systems theorists are of more serious nature with equally serious consequences.

We have noted above that a major objective of the general systems theory has been the integration of scientific knowledge. It will be unfair if we say that Easton is not aware of this tendency towards integration. In *A Framework of Political Analysis* he tried to explain that as an impact of the behavioural approach an integration of the social sciences was taking place at three different levels. At the applied level one could bring the data of social sciences together for the solution of whole social problems. At the level of research training students would be expected to address themselves not to a discipline but to social problems in the hope that they would learn to bear in mind the modes of analysis and data from any area of knowledge and research that seemed relevant and appropriate. At a third level training of a person in two or three disciplines might bring about a limited integration in the mind of a single individual. Easton maintains that this trend led to a search for a unit of analysis that could be utilized in many of the disciplines. He refers to the use of actions, decisions and function as alternative units of analysis and then says,

most recently, 'systems' have made their appearance as a focus, beginning with the smallest cell in the human body as a system and working up through even more inclusive systems such as the human being as an organism,

Easton explains this trend as an impact of the beha-
vioural approach. But he fails to realize that the trend towards
integration under the systems frame emanates from its holistic
roots. Systems approach is closely related to holism; because
it attempts to explain the phenomenon under study in terms of
a whole. There are three different types of holism. Holism I
believes in five inter-related ideas.

1. The analytic approach as typified by the physico-chemi-
cal sciences proves inadequate when applied to certain
cases for example, to biological organism, to society
or even to reality as a whole.

2. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

3. The whole determines the nature of its parts.

4. The parts can not be understood if considered in
isolation from the whole.

5. The parts are dynamically inter-related or inter-
dependent.

Holism II believes that a whole, even after it is
studied, cannot be explained in terms of its parts. Holism III
holds that it is necessary to have terms referring to whole

78. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
The founders of general systems theory propogate ideas which adhere to one or the other of these three holistic positions. They have a holistic, view of the reality. They use the concept 'system' to enable themselves to understand this reality. In other words they base their idea of the system on the empirical reality of the wholes. In this sense a systems approach is necessary to understand the phenomena under study.

Easton's approach is strikingly different from this position. He argues that if we look at the political life as a system it will be possible for us to isolate political phenomena for the purpose of study. We have already noted that he views political life as a system not because he believes that in reality it forms a system but because it is convenient to do so. This becomes evident also from what he says about political science. He says "at first sight, to be sure, and, for that matter, even upon closer examination, Political Science does not seem to possess this systemic coherence." He is aware of the fact that all social life is interdependent and it is artificial to isolate any set of social relations for specific attention. But he emphasizes that this artificiality is imposed upon political scientists by the need for a simplification of their data. Easton uses the concept of system

81. Ibid., p. 97
to serve this purpose. The difference with the general systems theory is, clear. The latter adopts 'system' as a part of a holistic approach which will ultimately lead to unification of scientific knowledge. Easton uses the concept to delimit the field of political science. He aims at isolating political phenomena for the purpose of study while general system theorists aims at its direct opposite.

Easton's model is meant to be analytical. It is not based on any determinate political system. It is an abstract theoretical construct. To put it in the words of Meehan, "Easton's Political System turns out to be an abstraction whose relation to empirical politics is virtually impossible to establish. The promise of a conceptual framework with 'high empirical relevance' simply has not been fulfilled."^{82}

Thus by breaking away from the holistic tradition of the systems thinking Easton has developed a framework which is so general in nature that his whole exercise turns out to be a futile one. Easton could have saved himself from this situation only if he had focused on the determined political systems. Because in that case he would not have tried to build an all time all place general theory of politics and as a result he would have developed an empirically relevant model. His effort at finding a general system makes his political science metaphysical. To quote Colletti...

... metaphysics never produces an effective analysis since for it, strictly speaking,
facts no longer exist; or, more precisely, because in the place of concrete historical phenomena it has interpolated the idea; in the place of a concrete determinate society it has substituted society in general.83

Easton does precisely this. Instead of focusing on determinate political systems he focuses on the political system in general. In the place of the historical phenomena of the determinate political systems he has interpolated the idea of a political system in general and thereby the carries his theory to the realm of metaphysics. Had he focused on the determinate political systems his idea of political system would have been closer to reality. But such an approach would bring a status-quo bias to his analysis. Easton, in his works published in 1965 and later, has been making a conscious attempt to save himself from the possibility of being branded as a status-quoist. Ironcally, despite all his attempts to rise above this bias his framework remains status quoist. This issue we propose to discuss in the next chapter.

83. Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1969), p. 4