



Political psychology: Its application in diplomacy

Meenu Kumari

Assistant Professor, Department of Law, B.S. Anangpuria Educational Institute, Haryana, India

Abstract

Understanding the human mind and behaviour is the main goal of psychology. Political psychology is more concerned in comprehending individual motives and behaviours than political science is, which traditionally focuses on structures and systems of government. A significant body of political psychology literature has emphasised the significance of personality factors for comprehending variations in political engagement. A new approach to diplomacy that is based on psychological knowledge encourages ambassadors to discuss their emotions. Political psychology has undergone several historically significant changes.

Keywords: political science, psychology, political psychology, political conduct, diplomacy

Introduction

Concept of Political Science

“The branch of knowledge that deals with the state and systems of government; the scientific analysis of political activity and behaviour.”

“A social science concerned chiefly with the description and analysis of political and especially governmental institutions and processes.”

It also has linkages to fields in sociology, philosophy, economics, and history of social sciences.

Political science deals with more than just the state and governance, according to contemporary political scientists including George Catlin, Charles Marriam, Almond, Powell, and David Easton.

It covers a wider range of topics, such as people's political conduct, political power, society, political culture, and political socialisation, as well as political systems, the political process, and other political organisations.

Concept of Psychology

Psychology is the name given to the scientific study of behaviour and mind. The term "behaviour" refers to all of our outward or overt actions, reactions, words, as well as our body language and facial expressions.

Mental processes like thinking, feeling, and recalling are all regarded as mental activities. It meets the criteria for a scientific study since psychologists employed scientific techniques to examine behaviour and thought patterns in order to get a more thorough and precise understanding.

Meaning of Political Psychology

An academic discipline known as political psychology focuses on the psychological aspect of political life. Its practitioners analyse the intricate and reciprocal relationship between politics and psychology by using psychological variables like as personality, attitudes, beliefs, values, needs, objectives, and expectations to explain political action. Political psychologists believe that, like all other types of human behaviour, political acts are the outcome of interactions between an individual's environment and themselves. Political science, which examines the relationships and interactions between people acting as

political agents, is inextricably tied to psychology, which studies human cognition and behaviour. The relationship between personality characteristics and political circumstances has piqued the curiosity of political analysts throughout history and throughout civilizations. They have employed a number of concepts and theories to explain why rulers and subjects think and act the way they do, as well as how their attitudes and actions affect politics. Political psychology thus emphasises the crucial role played by psychological elements in determining how well an individual responds to diverse contextual and environmental stimuli.

Stone W.F.; Schaffner P.E. (1988) defines political psychology as follows: “If psychology is the science of experience, behavior and the interaction of individuals and groups, then political psychology is the science of political experience, political behavior, and the political interaction of individuals and groups.”

Understanding the elements that influence who becomes a political leader is the goal of political psychology. It also focuses on the characteristics that a person must possess in order to be a successful political leader and explores how political leaders' personalities and experiences are likely to shape their political careers. Political science and psychology obviously have some intellectual borders that separate them.

But human behaviour is a common thread that unites the two sciences. “Political psychology explores the border that runs between the intellectual nations of political science and psychology. It is a dynamic subfield that addresses the ways in which political institutions both affect and are affected by human behavior” (Jost & Sidanius),

History Political Psychology

Political psychology is a relatively recent academic discipline. With a few notable exceptions, political psychology courses were not provided in the majority of American and European institutions until the 1970s, and it was also only about this time that scholars started to use the word. The first book of a later series, Early in the 1970s, a handbook on political psychology was released (Knutson, 1973). A professional foundation for the field of political

psychology began to take shape after the International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP) was established in the late 1970s. The group is still active today, and it has meetings in cities including Barcelona, Spain, and Portland, Oregon. In 1979, a new magazine with the well named title *Political Psychology* was also established, and it is increasingly acknowledged as a crucial branch of political science. Even though the term "political psychology" is less frequently used within the mother discipline of psychology—the majority of its supporters are still employed by departments of political science—the ISPP now includes a large number of professionally trained psychologists among its members in addition to policymakers, members of policy think tanks, and representatives of nongovernmental organisations. Over 45% of all political psychologists hold licences in political science, according to authors who have contributed to the journal *Political Psychology* since 1979, whereas approximately 33% work in psychology departments (Monroe *et al.*, 2009).

However, contrary to what its relatively recent status as a legitimate academic discipline might imply, political psychology has much older roots. In a way, its subject matter predates the study of politics itself since, for as long as people have thought about political matters, they have also thought about the underlying psychological questions that surround why individuals think and behave in the ways that they do. One of the first things one learns in beginning political theory seminars is that any political perspective ultimately rests on an understanding of human nature, even though conventional wisdom holds that the history of political thinking began with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In a broad sense, all political theory is based on a general psychological analysis of the nature of people. Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian conservative theorist who lived in the 16th century, for example, developed a notoriously pessimistic understanding of human psychology. This led him to argue in *The Prince* that the goal justifies the means and that rulers must be willing to do whatever is required, even murder, in order to maintain the stability of the state. On the other hand, classical liberalism, which is frequently represented by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in beginning political theory classes, is relatively positive about human nature, leading to a far more charitable notion of the role that government should play. These generalised notions of political man and debates on human rights were prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th century. Nature started to progressively develop into something more complex, especially when psychology became a legitimate academic field unto itself. Conservative philosophers like Gustave Le Bon and Hippolyte Taine, for instance, started to establish psychological theories for political conduct in France in the 1800s.

But Vienna and Frankfurt would be the places that made the biggest contributions to the early development of the field. The development of the field in the United States would be significantly influenced by thinkers like Sigmund Freud and Erich Fromm in particular. Freud may even be considered to be the field's founding father due to his early contributions to psychology and the influence of his theories on early political psychology research. Freudianism, often known as psychoanalytic theory, examines the drives or motivations that are thought to exist in all people.

Political psychology has gone through a number of historically distinct but overlapping periods during the last 80 years or so. Its evolution can be divided into three key phases:

1. The 1940s and 1950s era of personality studies, which was dominated by psychoanalysis;
2. The 1960s and 1970s era of political attitudes and voting behaviour studies, which was characterised by the prevalence of behaviourism and cognitive consistencies; and
3. The political behaviour research era of the 1980s and 1990s. These divisions will be created informally.

Political Conduct

Political behaviour refers to any form of action intended to further a political agenda. It includes actions like terrorism, voting, speaking out against human welfare, and pressuring the government to create laws that promote human growth. It is possible to evaluate and quantify cognitive psychological processes as a predictor of specific political behaviour.

Political behaviour involves the analysis of elite political decision-making as well as voting behaviour.

It also covers a range of inquiries, such as

- Why does Casteism Occur?
- What factors affect people's voting behaviour?
- Whether members of parliament (MP) genuinely serve the public or just their own interests?
- What part do politicians play in eradicating moral and social values?
- Why don't political parties practise internal democracy?
- How a politician's personality affects their ability to make decisions.
- A candidate's appeal to the general public psychological appeal.
- How do our feelings affect the decisions we make?
- Voter psychology, which is used to predict voting intentions and particular voting habits.
- How rhetoric and the media affect how people view situations psychologically.

Political psychology takes into consideration each of these issues.

These inquiries form the core of today's political psychology research. Some psychologists in the field of political psychology are interested in collective behaviour, such as voting patterns and the influence of public opinion on governmental decisions. On the other hand, some psychologists are interested in researching explanations of political behaviour that are influenced by cognitive psychology and the older tradition of abnormal psychology, which emphasises the significance of individual characteristics in determining how we behave, as well as those that are influenced by social psychology, which emphasises how social context influences behaviour.

- Political psychology enables us to comprehend how our mental representations affect how we behave politically. In other words, it aids in our understanding of not only our own political activities but also those of enterprises, organisations, and people.
- Overall, it affects decision-making. Why we believe some decisions are more significant than others and how we arrive at specific decisions.

Why do people vote in particular ways? Over the last 75 to 100 years, there have been a staggering number of various ways to respond to this seemingly simple issue. One of the most fundamental, long-lasting explanations of voting was provided by the basic stimulus-response model in psychology. Voters consider their political settings and base their choices on how they comprehend and interpret fundamental stimuli, such as parties, candidates, and topics. They make a vote choice in response to the stimuli (including the possibility of not voting). See *The American Voter*, the outstanding work by Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, for the traditional presentation and articulation of this approach. It primarily consists of a political science exercise that draws on a fundamental psychological understanding of reality.

What are some Diplomatic applications of Political Psychology?

Understanding political psychology can help diplomats better understand the leaders and authorities they work with. A study that was published in the *British Journal of Political Science* claims that a political leader's prior attitudes and beliefs can affect how they perceive and interpret information, much like those of the typical citizen, and may therefore have an impact on policy decisions. According to study, people are more likely to be adamant about something they are informed about.

This is in line with the idea of motivated reasoning and heuristic thinking, which contends that when confronted with difficult issues, people look for knowledge that would facilitate decision-making, regardless of its accuracy.

The psychological theory of moral foundations, which holds that humans have internal moral principles that guide their worldview, is another concept that anyone involved in diplomacy should be familiar with. As a result, those with opposing views are frequently unmoved by arguments that their supporters find persuasive.

When negotiating, psychological concepts can aid diplomats in comprehending the feelings, prejudices, and goals of political leaders. For instance, when people are more aware of cultural nuances and differences, international connections is more fruitful.

The importance of social justice in the negotiation process may also be better understood by diplomats with a working knowledge of political psychology. The parties concerned are more likely to react favorably when the outcome of talks is perceived as imperfect but fair.

It is even possible to use political psychology to fight terrorism. Experts can better understand how terrorist organizations function by using social psychological principles. They can also learn how terrorists are radicalized and deradicalized. The idea of cognitive rigidity has also been linked to a higher readiness to injure others in the name of an ideological group in addition to its connection to partisan identity.

Understanding cultural sensitivity and how it interacts with geopolitics will help us better understand the intricate problems that currently plague our planet. The most effective strategy to ease tensions and advance prosperity, particularly in the context of international terrorism, is to open a discussion between opposing parties. Numerous other facets of global relations can likewise be viewed via the lens of this perspective.

Conclusion

The study of the political elements of human psychology is the main objective of political psychology, which is neither a science of psychology nor a political science.

Political psychology is the study of how people behave within a given political structure.

In conclusion, political psychology will be able to examine state leaders' political attitudes, behaviours, and political qualities to determine their effect inside society, their decision-making process, and their similar and distinctive behavioural elements.

Diplomacy can benefit from psychoanalysis's capacity to listen intently. Theodor Reik, a psychoanalyst, described it as "listening with the third ear" to issues that are hidden beyond the language's surface, to things that are unsaid, disassociated, or even unthought.

Every ambassador should receive training in psychoanalytic listening as a tool of perception.

In order to provide psychological explanations for political phenomena, political psychology entails the construction of an entirely new theory.

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