

SERIES

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*A Framework
for Political Analysis*

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the examination of such structures, it is vital to explore the processual nature of these political interactions. This stress on the processes of political interactions lends a dynamic character to political analysis, as we shall see, that must be absent from any premature and undue emphasis on the forms or patterning of political behavior.

The test of political interactions

Furthermore, what distinguishes political interactions from all other kinds of social interactions is that they are predominantly oriented toward the authoritative allocation of values for a society. Political research would thus seek to understand that system of interactions in any society through which such binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented.

Briefly, authoritative allocations distribute valued things among persons or groups in one or more of three possible ways.² An allocation may deprive a person of a valued thing already possessed; it may obstruct the attainment of values which would otherwise have been obtained; or it may give some persons access to values and deny them to others.

An allocation is authoritative when the persons oriented to it consider that they are bound by it. There are many reasons why members of a system may consider themselves bound. Knowledge of these would help us to understand variations in the processes of different systems. Important distinctions can be attributed to the acceptance of allocations as binding on the grounds of fear of the use of force or of some severe psychological sanction, such as imprecations in primitive systems or social opprobrium in more complex ones. Self-interest, tradition, loyalty, a sense of legality, or sentiments of legitimacy are additional significant variables in accounting for a feeling of obligation to accept decisions as authoritative. But regardless of the particular grounds, it is the fact of considering the allocations as binding that distinguishes political from other types of allocations in the light of the conceptualization that I shall be using.

PARAPOLITICAL SYSTEMS

The political systems of groups

If political research confined itself to the investigation of the way in which binding allocations were made, regardless of the context, it would result in casting its net so broadly that it would include vast ranges of behavior normally not viewed as strictly political. Authoritative kinds of allo-

²I have examined this interpretation of political science in detail in *The Political System*.

cations are made in all types of groups, ranging from the family and lineages through fraternal clubs to religious, educational, and economic organizations. We might well ask whether, in my conceptualization, these too must represent political systems or whether, at the very least, they incorporate political systems as an aspect of their total behavior.

There is no absolute prohibition against adopting so catholic an interpretation of politics that it would permit us to discover political systems in all other social groups in addition to society itself. It is true that in doing so we might be violating the normal use of the term. Political research is not usually or especially concerned with the processes within groups for their own sake. Only insofar as they can be related to the larger political processes in society have the internal workings of organized groups—"private government"—attracted the attention of students of politics in the past. That this is not customary in the traditions of political research need not in itself deter us.

Indeed, we might be able to make a sound case for including aspects of the internal social interactions of all subgroups in society as examples of political systems in their own right. As Charles Merriam put it, "obviously there is governance everywhere—government in heaven; government in hell; government and law among outlaws; government in prison."³

Like the more inclusive society of which they are part, groups do make allocations that are accepted by their members as binding. In such subgroups as families, churches, or fraternal organizations we find constitutions, competition for control among dominant and aspiring elites, and pressure groups or factions. These subgroups have available, as well, potent sanctions to enforce compliance with their allocations, such as coercion through excommunication, ostracism, blackballing, or violence, as in the case of criminal organizations. Under the prevailing norms the bulk of the membership may consider the invocation of such sanctions to be legitimate. Clearly, there are parallel structures and processes present in the broader political system in or adjacent to which the subgroups find themselves.

Although, as I have suggested, for some purposes it may be useful to broaden the concept "political system" to include these aspects of groups and organizations, for our purposes they need be considered only analogous to rather than isomorphic with the political system of a society. For this reason, examination of the structures and processes related to the authoritative allocation of values in organizations and other groups can be quite helpful in shedding new light on the structures and processes of the more inclusive societal political system. To hold otherwise would run counter to an increasing body of evidence pointing up important similarities. The study

³ C. Merriam, *Public and Private Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).