

On the use of the Word “Political”

By Jan-Erik LANE †

Abstract. This paper explores the semantic complexities of the term "political" within scientific language. It identifies three distinct problems demanding separate analysis: (P₁) Identifying Definitions: The first problem focuses on uncovering the explicit or implicit definitions various authors use for "political." It seeks to identify the properties that define political behavior, actions, systems, etc., through language descriptions. The goal is to establish a comprehensive list of these definitions, acknowledging the potential for partial definitions specific to certain contexts (e.g., political actions vs. political corporations). (P₂) Conceptual Diversity: The second problem delves into the potential for distinct conceptualizations of "political" even when similar definitions are used. Here, the analysis ensures that definitions apply to the same range of entities and allows for the broadest possible interpretation (e.g., encompassing both behavior and action). This may involve creating a taxonomy of terms used alongside "political" to establish the level of complexity each definition introduces. (P₃) Explicating "Political": The third problem addresses the possibility of referential diversity, where the term "political" might encompass different sets of entities depending on the definition. If such diversity exists, the paper explores the possibility of constructing an "explication" – a single, overarching concept of "political" that fulfills specific criteria. These criteria encompass clarity, non-redundancy, inclusivity within the relevant domain, theoretical fruitfulness, and mutual exclusivity of sets defined by separate partial definitions. The paper focuses on analyzing specific definitions proposed by prominent scholars like Max Weber, David Easton, and Harold Lasswell & Abraham Kaplan. By examining these definitions through the lens of the proposed criteria, the research aims to determine their effectiveness in capturing the multifaceted nature of "political" within scientific discourse.

Keywords. Political Theory; Conceptual Analysis; Semantics; Definition; Explication.

JEL. A10; B15; B52; D01; D71.

1. Introduction

A semantic study of the word “political” as used in scientific language can be pursued along different lines. At least three problems are relevant, and these should be kept distinct since the answers to them have quite different conditions of validity. The first is: (P₁) What are the explicit or implicit definiens expressions in the use of “political” by various authors? (P₁ is a problem for empirical semantics and can be answered by language descriptions of the following type: (LD) According to the Group the sentence “x is a political behaviour/action/system/etc” is synonymous with the sentence “x has the properties (A), (B), (C), etc.” It goes without saying that it would be useful to have an exhaustive list of (LD)s, arranged according to the degree of precization of the definiens sentences with the aid of the methods of empirical semantics (Naess, 1966). In most definitions, “political” occurs in connection with other words. The term can be used about quite different types of objects: behaviour, action, relation of influence, corporation, etc. This state of affairs may give rise to partial definitions of “political”, excluding a geneml

† Professor Emeritus, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland. 

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

comparison between different (LD)s. For example, in (LD₁) it may be a matter of defining “political” in connection with “action”, but in (LD₂) in connection with “corporation”, without there being any indication as to what are the correlation properties in the definiens sentences in (LD₁) and (LD₂).

Thus, in order to make definitions of ‘political’ comparable, the various (LD)s must be broken down into non-partial definitions. This will be done by rendering the definiens sentences of the (LD)s into stipulative definitions of the following type:

Of course, the existence of different (LD)s, (LD₁), (LD₂), ... (LD_n), cannot without more be regarded as evidence for the presence of conceptual diversity, since in several (LD)s the same concept may occur. That is, it does not have to be the case that to each (SD) belongs one and only one (LD). Consequently, it is possible to answer a second type of semantic problem: (P₂) What concept of political is implied in an (LD)?

For all (SD)s it must be the case that. (i) the range of entities among which the variable “x” may take its values is the same; and (ii) the set of possible values of “x” must be as general as possible, i.e. behaviour or action. A necessary condition for the fulfilment of these two requirements is that the terms with which “political” occurs in combination in partial definitions can somehow be reduced to each other. If these terms (“behaviour”, “action”, “power”, “corporation”, etc.) could be introduced exactly in a taxonomy, it would be possible to state the level of each (LD) and by substitution to render them into (SD)s. Furthermore, a structuring of terms for types of entities in the social world is a necessary condition for a fruitful comparison between different (SD)s. If such a taxonomy is created it can be shown for each (SD) at what level of complexity the property political is introduced and what structure the entities in the set of political phenomena have. This problem of taxonomy will be dealt with below in connection with the discussion of Weber.

As in all conceptual analyses, the analysis of (SD)s has two objectives: (i) specification of meaning and (ii) specification of reference.

(i) *Specification of meaning.* It is often maintained that there are a number of different concepts of political denoted below by “PC₁”, “PC₂”,... “PC_n”. Provided that the (SD)s fulfil the usual criteria of adequacy, it would thus be possible to have a basic set of (SD)s, each different from the other in at least one property. This basic set of (SD)s could then be structured in a logically exhaustive way, from which it would follow exactly how one concept, PC₁, differed from another, PC₂.

The presence of conceptual diversity as regards the term ‘political’ on the level of meaning cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for the existence of separate references of the word. It may well be that different concepts, PC₁ and PC₂, delimit the same set of entities. This empirical question can only be settled by comparison of the sets belonging to each concept. Only if referential diversity prevails does the term “political” become ambiguous.

(ii) *Specification of reference.* This implies for each (SD) an empirical specification of the set of entities referred to by the concept of political in an (SD). The result will be a number of sets S₁, S₂, ... S_n corresponding to a number of concepts PC₁, PC₂, ... PC_n. It is then possible to state the set-theoretical relations between these sets. This gives our third problem: (P₃) Given the presence of referential diversity, is it possible to introduce an explication of “political”? (P₃) presupposes the presence of a number of

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

concepts PC₁, PC₂, ... PC_n with different references. And (P₃) asks for an explicans, the concept of political, which fulfils the criteria of adequacy for explication. An explication sentence may have the following form: (ES) According to criteria C₁, C₂, ... C_n, x is to be called “political” if and only if x has the properties (A), (B),(C),etc.

What are the criteria of adequacy that are relevant for an (ES)? We can say that at least the following four criteria must be met:

C₁: A concept of political must fulfil the standard rules for the introduction of concepts.

(i) It is neither the case that the definition is circular explicitly or implicitly, nor is it the case that the definiens term is ambiguous or more unclear than the definiendum term or that it is redundant.

(ii) It Is not the case that everything in the domain of discourse is political under the definition.

(iii) It is not the case that nothing in the domain of discourse is political under the definition.

C₂: A concept of political must not be too wide or too narrow in relation to what is considered political in scientific language.

C₃: A concept of political must be theoretically fruitful both in the construction of concepts and in the specification of sentences.

C₄: If more than one concept of political (e.g. two separate partial definitions) is introduced then the sets corresponding to these concepts must be mutually exclusive.

The relevance of C₁, C₂ and C₃ for (ES) need not be discussed. The importance of C₄ lies in the fact that if C₄ is not fulfilled it is possible to require a more exact statement of the relationships between the different concepts.

This paper will contain a first attempt to approach these problems (P₁)-(P₃). The emphasis will be put on analyses of a few definitions which are the result of theoretical work oriented towards the problem of defining “political” and which have had a central place in the concept formation of political science. The objects of analysis are (LD)s given by Max Weber, by David Easton and by Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan. More specifically, the objective will be to discover whether the (SD)s that can be constructed out of these authors’ (LD)s satisfy the criteria C₁-C₄ for an (ES).

2. Weber

Weber introduces explicit definitions of “political corporation”, “political action” and “politically orientated action” in his list of general concepts for the social sciences in “Soziologische Grundbegriffe” (Weber, 1964a, pp.3-41). (This was first published in *Wirtschaft & Gesellschaft* (1922) and later translated into English in Weber, 1964b, pp.87-157 and Weber, 1968). Thus, Weber does not give one definition of “political”, but three rules that govern the use of the term in connection with other terms. One problem is to investigate the relations between these partial definitions in order to find out if one of them is a complete definition of “political” to which the others are reducible, or if more than one (SD) can be constructed out of these (LD)s.

When the (LD)s drawn from Weber have been broken down into (SD)s, the next problem is conceptual analysis of these (SD)s: we ask what properties an

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

entity must have in order to have the property political and what there is in the set of political phenomena.

However, the discussion of Weber will start with the more general problem of structuring terms for types of entities in the social world. The objective will be to break down Weber's list into a deductive taxonomy. Such a taxonomy will not only clarify Weber's (SD)s, but will be used in the comparison of different authors' (SD)s.

2.1. The Weber taxonomy

According to Zetterberg, Weber's list of concepts is '... the most successful attempt so far to provide a taxonomy for sociology' (Zetterberg, 1965, p.43). It is true that Weber starts from simple terms and progresses towards more and more complex terms, as Zetterberg (1965, p.44) points out, but Weber's list does not satisfy the usual criterion for an adequate taxonomy: it is not built up deductively. An attempt will now be made to do this. As the objective is the systematic introduction of terms, Weber's definitions will not be followed in every respect, but whatever changes may be necessary from the point of view of deductive simplicity will be made.

I. Primitive terms

(a) Non-logical terms

(i) Minimum terms: "behaviour", "orientations", "neutrality", "approval", "responsible", "rule", "violence", "binding", "obedience", "staff"

(ii) Borrowed terms: "human being", "territory", "physical", "worldly", "condition"

(b) Variables: "x", "y", "z" and "w" (where "y" and "z" take as their values an actor or a group of actors, and where $y \neq z$)

(c) Logical terms: the standard logical terms, i.e. first order predicate logic with identity

II. Defined terms

(DF1) "x is an action by y"	=df "x is an oriented behaviour by y"
(DF2) "x is an activity by y and/or z"	=df "x is a set of actions by y and/or z"
(DF3) "y is an actor"	=df "y is a human being with activity"
(DF4) "x is a social action by y with regard to z"	=df "x is an action by y, oriented towards z"

The term introduced in (DF4) "social action", sets the limit of the possible range of entities belonging to social reality. A necessary and sufficient condition for an entity to be a social entity or part of a social entity is that this word can be used about it. The rest of the taxonomy introduces terms for different types of or sets of entities in the social reality on the basis of properties of these social entities or of sets of such entities and properties of these properties etc. "Social action" will be called a "basic term": it is true of each and every social unit, when analysed into its basic parts. The term in (DF4) introduces a basic property and stands for a set of basic units, which constitute the domain of discourse.

(DF5) "x is a social relation between y and z"	=df "x is an activity by y and z and where y is oriented towards z and z is oriented towards y"
--	---

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

In (DF5) a term of the first order is introduced. The emphasis in Weber's taxonomy lies on social relations and their properties and the combination of these-properties into more complex and thus higher order properties.

The definiens in (DF5) is vague, because it is not specified how many actions are to be included in an activity for an activity to be a social relation. However, the number of actions is a function of the type of social relation. Some types of relations consist by definition of several actions (e.g. friendship) while other types contain only a few actions (e.g. recruitment). A necessary restriction on (DF5) is that it should be empirically possible to distinguish between the existence and the persistence of a social relation.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (DF6) "y and z are members of a social relation x" | =df "x is a between y and z" |
| social relation x" | |
| (DF7) "x is complementary to w" | =df "x is a condition for w" |
| (DF8) "x and w are complementary" | =df "x and w are orientations
where the realization of x is
complementary to the realization
of w and vice versa" |
| (DF9) "x is a one-sided relation" | =df "x is a social relation between
y and z, and the orientations
of y and z are neither of the
same type nor complementary" |
| (DF10) "x is a two-sided relation" | =df "x is a social relation between
y and z, and x is not onesided" |

In the case of two people hating each other the orientations are of the same type and in the father-son relation the orientations are complementary. In (DF9) and (DF10) terms of the second order are introduced: terms for properties that consist of first order properties and their properties.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (DF11) "x is an endogenous condition" | =df "x is a condition for membership
in a social relation, which condition
is orientation only towards action in
the relation" |
| (DF12) "x is an exogenous condition" | =df "x is a condition for membership
in a social relation, which is not an
endogenous condition" |
| (DF13) "x is an open relation" | =df "x is a social relation, which
has no exogenous conditions" |
| (DF14) "x is a closed relation" | =df "x is a social relation, which has
exogenous conditions" |

As types of examples of closed relations Weber mentions the family, the emotional relation, the religious association and the monopoly. The market under conditions of free competition is an example of an open relation. Over time, some social relations hover between these two extremes.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (DF15) "x is a communal relation between y and z" | =df "x is a social relation between
y and z, whose condition is y's
approval of z and z's approval of y" |
|---|--|

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

(DF16) “x is a relation of interest between y and z” =df “x is a social relation between y and z, whose condition is neutrality by both y and z”

“Communal relation” stands for relations like relations of deference and erotic relations, whereas “relation of interest” refers to market relations, voluntary corporations and the like. Obviously, the terms in (DF15) and (DF16) are terms for two types of co-operation, one based on mutual feelings and the other based on shared interests or compromise of interests. As Weber points out there are seldom social relations that have only one of these two properties.

(DF17) “x is a relation of solidarity between y and z as regards w” =df “x is a social relation between y and z, where y and z are responsible for w by y or z”

(DF18) “x is a relation of representation between y and z as regards w and y represents z” =df y and z, where z is responsible for w by y, and x is not a relation of solidarity with regard to w”

The property solidarity is most usual among communal and closed relations like the family and the tribe. Representation occurs in rationally instituted corporations and mostly in organizations.

In (DF13)-(DF18) are specified the meaning of other second order terms. However, none of these terms are key terms in the definition of “political” in Weber’s taxonomy. There is thus no logical reason why an entity should be political and have one and not another of these properties in so far as the latter are not mutually exclusive. With the aid of the definitions given so far, other definitions can be made which contain key terms for “political”.

(DF19) “y has authority over z as regards w” =df “between y and z there is a social relation in which z is in obedience to y as regards w”

The second order term in (DF19) is of central importance for the definition of “political”: a social relation is political only if it is an authority relation. Weber’s term for the property specified in (DF19) is of course “Herrschaft” and he treats this term as synonymous with the term “Autoritat” (Weber, 1964a, p.157). The definition in Weber is equivalent to that of (DF19): ‘Herrschaft soli heissen die Chance, fur einen Befehl bestimmten Inhalts bei angebbaren Personen Gehorsam zu finden’ (Weber, 1964a, p.38). And in the translation of Weber into English the same concept is specified: “Imperative control” (Herrschaft) is the probability that a command with a specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons’ (Weber, 1964b, p.152).

According to Blau, Weber meant his concept of authority (DF19) to be a sub-category of his concept of power (Blau, 1974, p.40). Thus, if Blau is right, power must be a component of the concept of political in Weber’s taxonomy: political implies authority which implies power. But is Blau right? In order to settle this problem we turn to the definition of power in Weber.

(DF20) “x is a relation of selection between y and x as regards w” =df “x is a relation between y and z in which either y or z has/does or will have/will do w but not both”

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

- (DF21) “x is a relation of conflict between y and z as regards w” =df “x is a relation of selection between y and z as regards w, and x is a social relation in which y orients towards selection for y whereas z orients towards selection for z”
- (DF22) “x is a relation of competition between y and z as regards w” =dj “x is a relation of conflict between y and z as regards w in which there is no physical violence”

Weber distinguishes between biological and social selection and considers selection to be a fundamental property of every social relation. Conflict is the contradictory to co-operation as it involves a clash between opposite orientations in a relation of selection. Weber distinguishes between different types of conflict relations like competition and regulated conflict.

- (DF23) “y has power over z as regards w” =df “there is between y and z a social relation in which y realizes his orientation as regards w at the expense of the possibility of z realizing his orientation as regards w”

Thus a power relation is such a social relation in which one party carries through his will against the will of the other party. If the definitions (DF19) and (DF23) are compared, it is obvious that the concept of authority and the concept of power are not logically related in the way asserted by Blau. A relation of authority can be a relation of power and a relation of power can be a relation of authority. How these matters stand is an empirical question and cannot be decided by investigating definitions only. A person can obey a command by another person and at the same time realize his orientation; and a person can have power over another person without obtaining obedience to his commands. A social relation can be a relation of authority and at the same time not a relation of power. Consequently, authority is not a sub-category of power for Weber and a political relation is not by definition a power relation.

Blau makes conflict a part of Weber’s concept of power (Blau, 1974, p.40). The same thing is also done in Talcott Parsons’s edition of Weber (Weber, 1964b, p.152). This is not correct. The property in (DF23) can occur in combination with the property conflict in (DF21), but whether or not it does is an empirical question. There can be a relation of power without there being a relation of conflict—for example, when there is a relation of authority that is also a relation of power. One can carry through one’s will against the will of another person without resistance from the latter.

In his comment on Weber’s concept of authority Blau furthermore claims that the concept of legitimacy as specified by Weber is a part of the concept of authority (Blau, 1974, pp.41, 50). If this were the case a political relation would always be legitimate. Is this really so for Weber? This problem can be decided by introducing a few definitions containing terms that occur in the definition of “political”.

- (DF24) “x is legitimate for y” =df “in y’s orientation x is binding for y”
(DF24’) “x has legitimacy for y” =df “x is legitimate for y”
(DF25) “x is a system of norms” =df “x is a set of rules, in terms of which action is oriented”
(DF26) “x is a legitimate system of” =df “x is a system of norms whose rules

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

norms for y” (DF27) “x is a system of norms, guaranteed by the actions w by w”	are legitimate for y” =df “x is a system of norms towards the rules of which there is obedience, and a condition for the obedience is the actions w by y”
--	---

It can now be shown that the concept of authority does not imply the concept of legitimacy. It is an empirical question whether or not a social relation having the property specified in (DF19) also has the property specified in (DF24). As Weber states, a person can obey a command from many different motives, where one is a belief in the command as binding, that is to say legitimate (Weber, 1964a, p.157). If Blau were right, Weber’s theory of authority would be a tautology, since it states a relation between authority and legitimacy, as we shall see.

On the basis of the definitions of “authority”, “power”, “conflict” and “legitimacy” in Weber, it is clearly possible to make distinctions between basic concepts in political science. Of these concepts, only that of authority and that of conflict are logical opposites in the sense that they are contraries. It is an empirical question whether or not a relation of authority is legitimate, whether a relation of authority is a power relation or not, and whether a relation of power is a relation of conflict or not.

After this digression on the relation of authority to other concepts it is possible to proceed with the introduction of the definition of “political”. An entity is political only if it is a social relation and a relation of authority. Now, what are the other conditions for the application of “political”?

(DF28) “y is a leader for z as regards w”	=df “there is between y and z a relation of representation as regards w, and y represents z”
(DF29) “x is a corporation”	=df “x is a social relation with a system of norms guaranteed by the leader(s) or the staff of x”

The term in (DF29) is a third order term: a term for a property that consists of second order properties and their properties. Thus, a corporation is the combination of three properties: social relation, system of norms and guarantee by leader(s) or staff. As examples of corporations Weber mentions the family, the organization, the State and the Church. The concept of corporation has a central place in Weber’s taxonomy. It is a necessary part of the concept of political: an entity is political only if it has the property specified in (DF29). And, on the basis of this property, Weber introduces other important concepts.

(DF30) “x is a system of norms, which governs the action(s) w of y”	=df “x is a system of norms, which y obeys in the action(s) w”
(DF31) “x is an administrative action in a corporation w”	=df “x is either an action by the leader(s) or the staff of a corporation w, which is oriented towards the guarantee of the system of norms of w, or an action by the members of w for which the

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

	leader(s) or the staff of w is/are responsible”
(DF32) “x is a regulated action in a corporation w”	=df “x is an action by the members of a Corporation w which is not an administrative action in w, but which is governed by the system of norms of w”
(DF33) “x is an introduced system of	=df “x is a system or norms in a corporation w, norms in a corporation w” which comes into existence through action by the leader(s) or the staff and the members of w oriented towards that state of affairs”
(DF34) “x is an imposed system of norms in a corporation w”	=df “x is a system of norms in a corporation w, whose introduction is conditioned by the authority or power of the leader(s) of w over the members of w”
(DF35) “x is a system of norms voluntarily agreed to in a corporation w”	=df “x is a system of norms in a corporation w, whose introduction is conditioned by the approval of the members of w”
(DF36) “x is an administrative system of norms”	=df “x is a system of norms which governs administrative action”
(DF37) “x is a regulative system of norms”	=df “x is a system of norms which governs regulated action”

In his comment to these concepts Weber points out that a laissezfaire state would be a corporation with a minimum of administrative action and a maximum of regulated action, whereas a communist state would imply the exact opposite. The distinction between an administrative and a regulative system of norms is a generalization from the distinction between public and private law. Further, some relations between a corporation and its environment can be analysed on the basis of these concepts. A corporation is autonomous or heteronomous depending on whether or not its system of norms is introduced by the corporation itself or imposed from the outside. A corporation is autocephalous or heterocephalous depending on whether or not the recruitment of its leader(s) is decided by the corporation internally or decided externally. These dichotomies give a 2x2 table and the possibility of defining a corporation as part of another, if it is heteronomous and heterocephalous.

Weber introduces not only terms for properties of corporations but also terms for types of corporations. Whereas a political entity may have all the properties specified in (DF30)-(DF34) and in (DF36) and (DF37), a political unit must be of a certain type of corporation. It remains to specify this type.

(DF38) “x is a territorial corporation”	=df “x is a corporation whose system of norms governs the actions of the corporation only within a territory”
(DF39) “x is an organization”	=df “x is a corporation which is a relation of interest between the members of x”

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

- (DF40) “x is a compulsory corporation” =df “x is a corporation in which the system of norms of x governs the members of x whether or not they approve of being thus governed”
- (DF41) “x is a voluntary corporation” =df “x is a corporation in which the system of norms of x governs the members of x in so far as they approve of being thus governed”
- (DF42) “x is an authority corporation” =df “x is a corporation whose system of norms governs a relation of authority”

The properties: specified in (DF38)-(DF41) are not necessary nor sufficient conditions for the applications of “political”. It is thus an empirical question whether or not a social relation that is political is voluntary or compulsory or whether or not it occurs within an organization. Matters are different with regard to the property specified in (DF42). This term, “authority corporation”, is a fourth order term adding the property specified in (DF19) to the property specified in (DF29). And for Weber a social relation is political only if it is an authority corporation. The property in (DF42) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the definition of “political”. The problem is, of course, to specify the property or properties that distinguish political authority corporations from non-political authority corporations.

- (DF43) “y makes a threat against z” =df “y does a social action towards z, which is oriented towards a relation in which y has power over z, and which is Oriented towards future action by y of which z disapproves”
- (DF44) “x is a political corporation” =df “x is an authority corporation, whose system of norms is guaranteed within a territory by physical violence and threat of physical violence by the leader(s) or the staff of x”

The word “political” is thus a fifth order term. The sufficient conditions for an authority corporation to be political are that its guaranteed system of norms has the properties of territory and physical violence. The basic principle is that the use of “political” about a unit requires a certain structure, a combination of properties in a set of basic units. The word does not stand for all the units in the domain of discourse. It requires of a unit a type of structure specified as a combination of five properties in order to be a political unit. Only those basic units that are part of such a unit having these five properties in the combination specified are political units. The hierarchy in Weber’s taxonomy can be rendered in Figure 12.1.

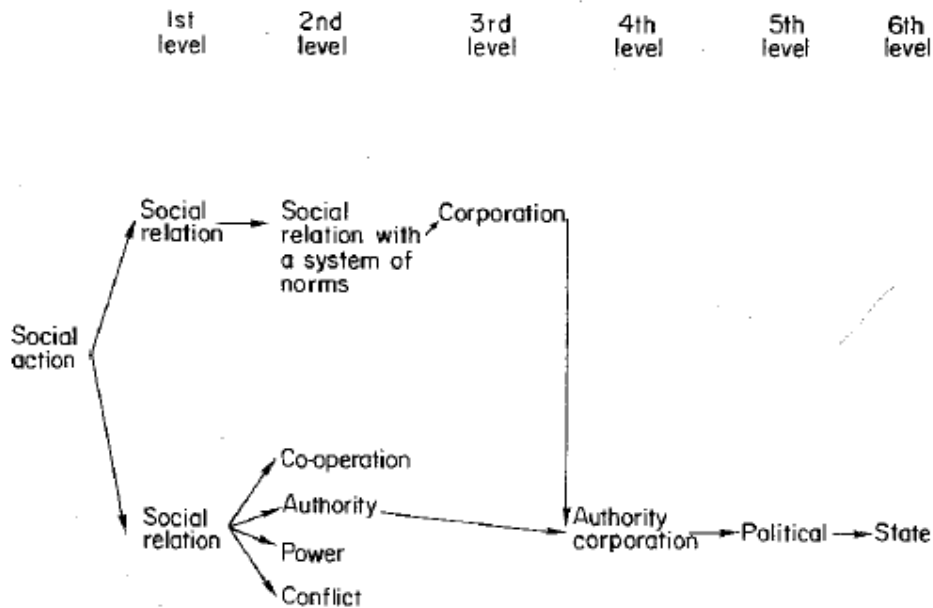


Figure 12.1. The structure of a political unit

It is now clear what properties a social relation has if and only if it is to count as political. Of course, it would be possible to introduce the term at a lower level. (DF44) would then be a partial definition. However, this is not done by Weber. (This point will be discussed in the following section.)

Weber defined other terms of central importance, especially for his theory of authority (“Herrschaft”).

(DF45) “y has a monopoly on w in a set of the persons y and z”

=df “y has w, and for all z it is that z does not have w and there is at least one z”

(DF46) “x is a state”

=df “x is a political corporation and a compulsory corporation and the leader(s) or the staff of x guarantee(s) the system of norms of x by a monopoly on legitimate physical violence”

The word “state” is a sixth order term and is to be used about political corporations. Though every state is a political corporation, it is not true that every political corporation is a state, or that the two concepts are identical. In contemporary theoretical works on political systems and their properties it is usual to make some distinction between a concept of the political system and a concept of the state in order to be able to speak of the politics of stateless societies. Sometimes such distinctions start from the distinction between (DF44) and (DF46). However, the result is often a confusion of these definitions. (See for example Almond & Coleman, 1960, p.5, Almond & Powell, 1966, pp.17-18, Eisenstadt, 1969, p.5, and Schapera, 1963, pp.94-134.) Accordingly, since the concepts refer to different entities, the result is confusion as to what is a political system.

(DF47) “x is psychic violence”

=df “x is non-physical violence”

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

- (DF48) “x is a hierocratic corporation” =df tion, whose system of norms is guaranteed by psychic violence of a non-worldly nature”
- (DF49) “x is a church” =df “x is a hierocratic corporation and a compulsory corporation and the leader(s) or the staff of x has/have a monopoly on legitimate psychic violence of a non-worldly nature”
- (DF50) “x is a regularity among y” =df “x is a type of social action or social relation for which it is true that there are several values of ‘x’ by y over time or there are several values of ‘x’ among y at the same time”

The definiens expression in (DF50) contains vague terms and the probability of intersubjective agreement on the application of the word is not great. But it can be used to describe phenomena that neither are only a single particular action nor constitute an uniformity (i.e. law) of action. To Weber, the social sciences have as their object the explanation of regularities, not particular actions. Weber has the following division of regularities:

- (DF51) “x is a usage among y” =df “x is a regularity among y, whose condition is a great number of values of ‘x’ among y”
- (DF52) “x is a custom among y” =df “x is a usage among y, whose condition is orientation by y towards the fact that there are values of ‘x’ over a long time”
- (DF53) “x is a fashion among y” =df “X *s a usaSe Y’ whose condition is orientation by y towards the fact that there are values of ‘x’ over only a short time”
- (DF54) “x is a state of interest among y” =df “x is a regularity among y, and the values of ‘x’ are relations of interest”
- (DF55) “x is a valid order among y” =df “x is a regularity among y, whose condition is orientation by y towards the system of norms of x as legitimate”
- (DF56) “y has a relation of disapproval towards z” =df “y does not approve of z and y is not neutral to z and y is oriented towards z”
- (DF57) “x is a convention among y” =df “x is a valid order which is guaranteed by approval or disapproval among y”
- (DF58) “x is a law among y” =df “x is a valid order among y which is guaranteed by violence by a leader or several leaders or a staff”

The words defined in (DF50)-(DF58) are key words in Weber’s theory of the property of stability of social relations and thus also of political corporations (Weber, 1964a, I, p.3 and II, pp.8~9). The two basic sentences in this theory are: (S1) it holds generally that a valid order is more stable than a custom, which is more stable than a state of interest; and (S2) it holds

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

generally that if a political corporation has stability, then it is a valid order. Weber's theory of authority is based in the hypothesis that the set of political units that have stability is included in the set of valid orders. Hitherto the discussion has been oriented towards a solution of a general theoretical problem, viz. the deductive specification of words for types of entities in the social world, among which "political corporation" occurs. Perhaps Weber's taxonomy contains the most fertile attempt to deal with this problem.

2.1. Weber's (SD)s: "territory" and "physical violence"

As mentioned above, Weber defines the term "political" in connection with two other terms, "corporation" and "action", and he distinguishes between "political action" and "politically oriented action". The three definitions can be rendered in the following (LD)s, constructed on the basis of the German original (Weber, 1964a, pp.39-41):

- (WD₁) For Weber the sentence "x is a political corporation" is synonymous with the sentence "x is an authority corporation, whose system of norms is guaranteed within a territory by the use of and threat of physical violence by the leader(s) or the staff of x".
- (WD₂) For Weber the sentence "x is a political action" is synonymous with the sentence "x is an action which is part of a political corporation".
- (WD₃) For Weber the sentence "x is a politically oriented action" is synonymous with the sentence "x is an action which is oriented towards the influence of political action".

The relation between these three (LD)s is the following: the definition of "political action" is completely reducible to the definition of "political corporation"; and "politically oriented action" is partly through the definiens of "political action". Thus, since the definiens sentence in (WD₂) is defined in terms of the definiens sentence in (WD₁), and the definiens sentence in (WD₃) in terms of the definiens sentence in (WD₂) and thus in terms of the definiens sentence in (WD₁), we can say that (WD₁) in fact contains a complete definition of "political". There is no action that is political that is not part of a social relation that is political. The basic (SD) in Weber is:

- (SDW) "x is political" =df "x has the properties (a) social action that is part of a social relation that is (b) a relation of authority with (c) a system of norms guaranteed within (d) a territory by (e) use and threat of physical violence"

To this definition can be added another important (SD) in Weber, namely

- (SDW["]) "x is politically oriented towards y" =df "x is not political, but x has the property (a) orientation towards the influence of y, which is political"

These two, (SDW) and (SDW^f), are the two fundamental (SD)s to be treated below. (SDW) is the basic one, but (SDW^f) has independent status, since it is not conceptually or referentially reducible to (SDW).

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

We begin with specification of meaning. Both the concept of political and the concept of politically oriented are complex and they require quite a number of properties of an entity for it to be political. With these properties it is possible to sort out from the set of political units some types of entities. How far could this division proceed? Let us take first the SDW political and then the SDW' politically oriented.

According to (SDW) an entity x is political if and only if x has the following properties.

(a) *Social action that is part of a socialrelation.* A political entity is an entity or part of an entity including at least two persons between whom there is a particular relation, namely that their actions are both oriented towards each other. If this orientation component is missing the term is not applicable. A non-oriented behaviour, a behaviour oriented towards non-actors or a social action that is not part of a socialrelation can never be political.

(b) *Authority.* With this property Weber separates from the set of political entities all one-sided social relations and all conflict relations. Though an authority relation cannot be a conflict relation, it may be a relation of co-operation or a relation of power—these being empirical questions. Thus, the fact that there is a power relation is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the application of “political”. The concept of power is not a part of the concept of political, since authority does not imply power. The property authority may be combined in different ways with the property power. In a social relation both properties may occur at the same time or at separate times. A person who obeys a command against his will would be an example of the last case. However, the properties may also be causally related. A person may base his authority on his power, exclusively or otherwise, and a person may rest his power on his authority.

(c) *Guaranteed systems of norms.* The concept of political requires not only intentional behaviour, but behaviour oriented in terms of rules which are enforced by a leader or staff. According to Weber it is important to distinguish between sociological rules and juridical ones. A rule is a sociological rule if and only if there is at least one action that is oriented towards the rule—either towards its preservation or towards its neglect. A juridical rule may also be a sociological rule, but the two are by no means conceptually identical, nor do they always go together empirically. It is easy to distinguish between a political entity and a number of other types of social relations on the basis of (c). For example friendship relations do not usually have this property. With the aid of (c), Weber separates from the set of political entities all social relations that are authority relations but are not corporations. Simple exchange relations involving authority would fall outside the scope of political by this criterion, as would all types of regulated actions (DF32).

(d) *Territory.* There are social relations that are authority relations with a guaranteed system of norms (that is to say, authority corporations). Examples are family relations or economic corporations. But not all of these authority corporations are political according to Weber. In order to make this distinction between authority corporations that are political and those that are not Weber resorts to two criteria, territory and physical violence. Can they serve this end? According to Weber, one distinguishing mark of a political corporation is not only that it has a guaranteed system of norms but also that this system of norms is guaranteed within a territory. Political corporations are territorial corporations in the terms in which this property is specified in

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

(DF38). For any political corporation it is thus always possible to tell for what geographical area its system of norms holds. What is the distinguishing power of this criterion? Weber does not observe that this property territory may be specified in a way which makes it trivial and useless as a criterion. If the geographical area is specified by disjunction (“or”) then certainly the criterion loses all distinguishing power. If the geographical area is delimited as that area within which the authority corporation occurs then the same thing happens. A necessary restriction on this property is that such applications are prohibited—but Weber makes no restrictions. The property territory is introduced in order to qualify the property (c), a guaranteed system of norms. And the combination of (c) and (d) gives a property that Weber believes to be fundamental to political units, the principle of territoriality, as follows. If a unit, of whatever kind it is, is political, then it has a system of norms, which is guaranteed within exactly one nontrivially specified geographical area. However, this will not do what Weber wants it to do. If only there were enough knowledge of a family relation, the principle of territoriality could be applied to it. And in the case of certain economic corporations it is actually possible to apply it. Furthermore, for many political corporations it is not possible to state the borders exactly. The property specified in the principle is not a distinguishing mark in the way that Weber believes it is.

(e) *Use and threat of physical violence.* There are entities that have the properties (ci), that is orientation towards the influence of such a structure. According to (SDW) an action is political only if it is part of a type of social relation. This is by no means necessary as regards (SDW'). The term “politically oriented” is a term of the first violence. It is the fact that the system of norms is guaranteed by this means that is the final distinguishing mark of political corporations. Now, will this property do the trick, separating those authority corporations that are political from those that are not? What does this criterion of physical violence imply? The criterion of physical violence runs as follows: Tf a unit, of whatever kind it is, is political, then its system of norms is guaranteed by the leader(s) or the staff of the unit by the use and threat of physical violence, actually or hypothetically.’ But why could not any family relation, economic corporation, organization like a workers’ association or an employers’ association satisfy this criterion? If the criterion of physical violence is to have any distinguishing power it has to be interpreted to mean that the leader(s) or the staff of the unit themselves guarantee the system of norms by physical violence. Alas, this would turn many political corporations like government bureaux and local administrative units into non-political units.

We thus conclude that (SDW) is not satisfactory. Two of the properties specified in (SDW) lack distinguishing power. They are in fact redundant. Weber does not achieve his end, namely to make a fundamental distinction between types of authority corporations. While the property (e) does weed out a few units, those that do not use physical violence or the threat of physical violence, it in no way accomplishes what it is meant to accomplish. The property (d) is redundant.

Let us now turn to the (SDW) politically oriented. This concept presupposes (SDW) and it admits of application on a unit even though this unit does not have a complex structure of the properties (a)~(e). The concept requires only the property (a), that is orientation towards the influence of such a structure. According to (SDW) an action is political only if it is part of a type

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

of social relation. This by no means necessary as regards (SDW*). The term “politically oriented” is a term of the first order-, an entity need be only a social action for the property politically oriented to be relevant. For this concept no such requirements as hold for political can be stated: an entity is politically oriented if and only if it has a certain type of orientation—no matter what other entities it is part of.

After specification of meaning we move to specification of reference. The word “political” refers to those social relations in which there is authority having a system of norms guaranteed within a territory by physical violence. The set of entities that have these properties will be denoted “(WS₁)”. What types of entities are there in (WS₁)? In (WS₁) there are at least the following types: (i) states; (ii) local administrative units like different types of communes; (iii) social relations like patriarchy, patrimony, decentralized authority based on legal privileges (“ständische Herrschaft”) and feudal relations; (iv) primary groups like villages, clans, tribes and families; not all may be political as the property (e) may be lacking; and (v) corporations: parties, interest organizations and factories. Though the definition of “political” satisfies criterion C₁ set out in Section 1, it is very questionable whether it satisfies C₂. The set of political units is very inclusive with regard to scientific usage. The failure of the properties (d) and (e) explains why the concept is too wide.

The word “politically oriented” refers to those actions that satisfy the definiens conditions in (SOW’). Let “(WS₂)” denote the set of such actions. A central problem concerning the set (WS₂) is its set theoretical relations to (WS₁): can an entity E be both political and politically oriented? (SDW) and (SDW’) explicitly forbid this: thus, the sentence “An entity E is political and politically oriented” is a contradiction. If this were not the case, there could be two referentially non-exclusive concepts and according to C₄ it would then remain to inquire for the exact relations between the entities that are political and politically oriented and those that are not.

In WS₂ there are entities of all types in the social world with the exception of those entities that are in (WS₁): actions that are not part of social relations like certain assassinations, one-sided social relations like deceit, conflict relations like war or competition, non-authority power relations like coercion, authority corporations that lack of property (e).

For (WS₁) and (WS₂) the following hold:

- (i) $(WS_1) \neq \emptyset; (WS_2) \neq \emptyset$.
- (ii) $(WS_1) \cup (WS_2) \neq V$ (V = the domain of discourse, namely the entities in the social world)
- (iii) $(WS_1) \cap (WS_2) = \emptyset$.

2.3. Weber’s (ES)

The conceptual analysis of (SDW) and (SDW*) has shown that these (SD)s are not quite satisfactory from the point of view of the criteria C₁—C₄. The cause of the difficulties lies in (SDW). It can be argued that (SDW) does not satisfy C₁ (i) or C₂. Weber needs some criterion to separate authority corporations that are political from those that are not, but the properties introduced to this end will not do. As a consequence, the concept becomes unclear and too wide. Thus, we can say of Weber’s definitions: (ESW)

According to criteria C₁ - C₄ there is no satisfactory definition of “political” in Weber.

3. Easton

3.1. Easton’s (SD)s: “authoritative”, “society” and “allocation”

Easton has dealt with the problem of defining “political” in a number of works (Easton, 1953, pp.125-48; 1965a; 1965b, pp.17-33). Easton’s explicit definitions can most readily be found in A Framework for Political Analysis (1965a), which contains a discussion of the central concepts of his theory of the persistence of political systems, among which the concept of political is a key concept. I have constructed the (LD)s and the (SD)s on the basis of this book, which will be referred to as FPA.

Three (LD)s may be distinguished.

(ED₁) To Easton the sentence “x is a political system” is synonymous with the sentence “x is a set of interactions, through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society” - (Easton, 1965a, p.57).

(ED₂) To Easton the sentence “x is a parapolitical system” is synonymous with the sentence “x is a set of interactions, through which values are authoritatively allocated for a social system that is not a society” (Easton, 1965a, pp.50-6).

(ED₃) To Easton the sentence “x is a political interaction” is synonymous with the sentence “x is an interaction predominantly oriented towards a political system” (Easton, 1965a, p.50).

It is possible to break down these (LD)s into (SD)s. An elimination of terms that occur both in the definiendum and the definiens in (ED₁)~(ED₃) gives three (SD)s:

(SDE) “x is political”	=df “x has the properties (a) allocation of values which is (b) authoritative for (c) a society”
(SDE') “x is para-political”	=df “x has the properties (a) allocation of values which is (b) authoritative for (c) a social system that is not a society”
(SDE'') “x is political”	=df “x has the property (a) predominant orientation toward a political system”

(SDE). Consequently, (SDE) and (SDE') are fundamental. (SDE'') will not be discussed at any length here, since the use of “political” in this sense makes the concept of political ambiguous. There are entities that have the property (a) but not the properties (a), (b) and (c) and consequently there are at least two concepts of political in FPA. The same term is used for the concept of a legitimate allocation for a society and the concept of an orientation towards such an allocation. The exact relation between these two concepts is not stated and not possible to state on the basis, of FPA. The combination of (SDE) and (SDE'') does not satisfy criterion C₄ set out in Section 1.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

We now take up the specification of meaning. According to (SDE) and (SDE) the following properties are key properties in the concepts of political and parapolitical.

(a) *Authoritative*. Easton gives the following definition sentence for “authoritative”: ‘An allocation is authoritative when the persons oriented to it consider that they are bound by it.’ (Easton, 1965a, p.50.) In this the meaning of “authoritative” is identical with the meaning of “legitimate” in Weber’s taxonomy (DF24). A consequence is that political systems are always legitimate systems and thus one of the basic sentences in Weber’s theory of authority—(S2) in Section 2A—becomes trivial. However, Easton’s use of “authoritative” is not consistent. Sometimes “authoritative” means the same as “legitimate” in Weber (Easton, 1953, pp.132-3; 1965a, p.50; 1965b, pp.29- 30). Sometimes the word stands for all types of command-obedience relations (Easton, 1965b, pp.207-8), so that it means the same as “authority” in Weber. The concept of authoritative is fundamental in Easton, but it is not possible to decide unambiguously whether it is a question of the concept of legitimacy (DF24) or of authority (DF19). Of course, only as used in connection with legitimacy does the word give any indication of the way in which political allocations differ from other types of allocation.

The status of the concept of authoritative in relation to the concept of political is not exactly stated. Easton writes as if the concept of authoritative allocation is a necessary as well as a sufficient component of the concept of political: ‘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.’ (Easton, 1965a, p.50.) If this were the case, (SDE) and (SDE’) would be reducible to one basic (SD):

(SDE ₀) “x is political in y”	=df “x allocates values authoritatively for a society y or a social system y that is not a society”
---	---

(SDE) and (SDE’) and consequently (SDE’’) would then be versions of this definition (SDE₀) by changes of the values of the variable “y”. Of course, the term “political” in (SDE) would have to be replaced by something like “political 1”.

Against (SDE₀) it can be argued that it is not clear why the fact that an allocation is legitimate should separate a political allocation from a non-political one such as certain economic allocations, or why the fact that an allocation is non-legitimate should by definition make it non-political. If the two criteria C₂ and C₃ are applied to (SDE₀), it can be maintained that (SDE₀) does not satisfy them. As Easton states, the property political according to (SDE₀) occurs in all types of social entities (Easton 1965a, pp.50-2). Then the problem remains: which of these are political and which are not? It is not theoretically advantageous to introduce a concept of political that is so wide as to include all legitimate allocations. The concept is also too narrow, since it is obviously relevant to use the word about other types of entities than legitimate allocations. For the property specified in (SDE₀), there already exists an expression “legitimate allocation”. The problem is to specify when a legitimate allocation is political and when not political, and this problem is not one of definition if the criteria C₂ and C₃ are adhered to. Consequently,

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

according to C₂ and C₃ the property (a) is neither a necessary nor a sufficient component of the concept of political.

It is perhaps Easton's intention that (SDE) and not (SDE^o) should be the complete definition of "political". The property society would then presumably make the concept more discriminative. However, this solution is inadequate because the concept of para-political then falls under the concept of non-political. It then remains to specify what it is about para-political entities that makes it necessary to speak about the property (para)political.

(b) *Society*. In both (SDE) and (SDEZ) "society" is a key term. It is a necessary condition for the application of "political" about an allocation that it is authoritative for a society. And the term is used to distinguish between para-political and political entities. One explicit definition of the term in FPA is: "To put this in a formal and more general sense, in the way I am using the term here society encompasses the social behavior of a group of biological persons, conceived in their totality." (Easton, 1965a, p.38.) This is inadequate, since it is obvious that not every group of persons is a society. How is the distinction between (SDE) and (SDE') to be upheld?

Another sentence—definition or empirical sentence—is the following: 'Society, as the most inclusive social system, is the only one that encompasses all the social interactions of the biological persons involved.' (Easton, 1965a, p.47.) This is also inadequate, because no distinct units can be specified by using this description. By the relation of inclusion between sets it is possible to put together social systems into increasingly wide social systems. But the basic question is, of course, when it is adequate to stop the inclusion. And that question is a question for Easton's definitions of "society". The term "society" must be defined with properties that specify when the inclusion has reached a level where it is adequate to stop. And these properties should unambiguously delimit a set of definite entities in the social world. This is never done by Easton. For example, what properties delimit the American society from the Mexican society or from any other society between the members of which there is a certain amount of interaction? It is to be hoped that Easton will not fall back on properties like political boundaries. How could the word "society" as Easton wants to use it be defined without the word "political" or some sort of principle of territoriality as implicit in such concepts as the nation or the state? Against the use of the word "society" as a definiens term of "political" in (SDE) and (SDE') it can be argued that on the one hand the term is not at all satisfactorily introduced. On the other hand, it is probable that the term "society" requires "political" and not the reverse, which would render all Easton's definitions circular. On the basis of FPA it is not possible to state of what nature the property (b) is.

(c) *Allocation*. A necessary condition for a unit being political or para-political according to (SDE) and (SDE') is that it has the property allocation. Apart from the fact that the meaning of "allocation" cannot be exactly stated on the basis of FPA, it is not intuitively clear why a concept of political should contain a concept of allocation. 'An allocation may deprive a person of a valued thing already possessed; it may obstruct the attainment of values that would otherwise have been obtained, or it may give some persons access to values and deny them to others.' (Easton, 1965a, p.50.) On the basis of this it is difficult to see in what way 'allocation' differs from 'social action' in Weber's taxonomy (DF₅), and thus to state the nature of the property (c). If a term "allocation" is to be introduced, it must be possible to separate those social

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

actions that are allocations and those that are not. The sentence quoted does not permit this. Furthermore, the connection between “interaction” and “allocation” is not clear in (EDI) and (ED₂). Is a political system those interactions that are also allocations with certain properties? Or is a political system those interactions that result in allocations with certain properties? On the basis of FPA it is not possible to decide this problem. Obviously the definition is inadequate.

We now turn to specification of reference. The terms “political” and “para-political” in the fundamental (SD)s are third order terms. A social action is political/para-political if and only if it has the property part of a social relation that has the property legitimate that has the property for a society/for a social system that is not a society. The term “political” in (SDE”) is a first order term.

Let (ES₁) be the set of entities that have the properties in (SDE), (ES₂) the set that have the ones in (SDE’) and (ES₃) the set that have the ones in (SDE”). Then the following set theoretical relations hold:

- (i) $(ES_1) \neq \emptyset; (ES_2) \neq \emptyset; (ES_3) \neq \emptyset$
- (ii) $(ES_1) \cup (ES_2) \cup (ES_3) \neq V$
- (iii) $(ES_1) \cap (ES_2) \neq \emptyset; (ES_1) \cap (ES_2)_3 \neq \emptyset; (ES_2) \cap (ES_3) \neq \emptyset$

3.2. Easton’s (ES)

The discussion of the definitions of Easton, (SDE^o), (SDE), (SDEZ) and (SDE”), can be summarized as follows: they do not satisfy the criteria C₁— C₄. As was stated above, they do not fulfil C₂ and C₄. While they satisfy C_x (ii) and (iii), this is not so for C₁ (i), since ‘society’ is not introduced in an adequate way. The application of C₄ to Easton’s definitions results in the following destructive dilemma:

- (1) If p, then q, and if r, then s
- (2) Not q or not s
- (3) Not p or not r

Where: p = (SDE) is applied
q = all allocations which are not authoritative for a society are not political
r = (SDE’) and (SDE”) are applied
s = all allocations which are authoritative for a social system that is not a society or oriented towards a political system are (para)political

There is thus an inconsistency between the definitions and it can be stated generally about these definitions: (ESE) According to criteria C₁ — C₄ there is no satisfactory definition or combination of definitions of “political” in Easton.

4. Lasswell and Kaplan

There are in Power and Society (1950) a number of partial definitions of “political”. Here, the analysis will start from the following (LD)s:

(LKDI) For Lasswell and Kaplan the sentence “x is a political interaction” is synonymous with the sentence “x is constituted by a pattern of influence and power” (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.53).

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

(LKD₂) To Lasswell and Kaplan the sentence “x is a political process” is synonymous with the sentence “x is a shaping, distribution and exercise of power (in a wider sense, of all the deference values, or of influence in general)” (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.75).

Though these (LD)s are not equivalent in any way, they both relate “political” to “influence” and “power” in some way. At least two (SD)s can be constructed out of the (LD)s, one of which (according to Lasswell and Kaplan) is wide, and one of which is narrow.

(SDLK) “x is political”	=df “x has the property (a) influence”
(SOLK) “x is political”	=df “x has the property (a’) power”

The problem concerning these (SD)s is to specify the meaning of the definiens terms “influence” and “power”. Only if this is done can the above problems under (P₂) be solved. Now, the terms “influence” and “power” are introduced in a definition structure starting from the most general social science concepts. This structure is quasi-systematic or quasi-deductive (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.4). One objective here will be to set out the general structure of this series of definitions in order to state where the word “political” becomes relevant. Another objective will be to point out certain deficiencies in this definition series, which makes it difficult to render it into a taxonomy. A third objective will be to analyse the concepts of power and influence and thus the concepts of political.

4.1. The Lasswell-Kaplan taxonomy

Given an unspecified number of words borrowed from the non-social science and the standard logic, the taxonomy starts from the two minimum terms “act” and “actor”. With the aid of these a possible world consisting of actors in types of environments who react in different ways with different relations between their acts is describable. By adding “symbol” and “statement” it is possible to turn the actors into egos and selves, thus to describe a world with persons having personalities, that is to say behaviour regularities and identifications. This world is very meagre, as it is not possible to state anything about the types of symbols and statements of the persons. By adding the words “value”, “valuation”, “sentiment” and “sentiment symbol”, terms such as “demand”, “expectation”, “interest”, “faith”, “loyalty” and “perspective” are defined. There is now a world of an elementary social nature, containing properties of actors and of simple relations. However, this world is still meagre.

Possibilities for more interesting descriptions open up when the word “group” is introduced. The world now contains more complex units like organizations, associations, interest groups, cultures, institutions, societies, mores and social orders, as well as properties of such entities as opinion, consensus and morale. No doubt complexity has increased, but, from the fact that the word “political” is not yet relevant for predication on to the units of this world, it follows that it still has a low order of complexity.

To make “political” relevant the taxonomy needs new primitives “welfare value” and “deference value”. By defining the words “value pattern”, “value position” and “value potential”, concepts for influence and class are introduced. The world is now increased as regards processes and structures.

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

There are not only social processes and class structures, but also more refined terms for interactions like “policy” and “exercise of influence”. According to (SDLK) “political” is now definable: the world needs no more properties for the property political to be analysable in terms of these. However, according to (SDLK’), there is more to political than mere influence. The introduction of the concept of power takes place through the definitions of “decision” and “decision-making process”, which require of political more properties than those involved in (SDLK). The world of the Lasswell-Kaplan taxonomy (LKT) is then further augmented by the introduction of words for types of symbols, types of functions, etc. However, for the purpose of the analysis of the concept(s) of political in (LKT) it is adequate to stop here in the definition series.

Compared with Weber’s, this taxonomy shows a number of deficiencies. If the terms are arranged deductively on the basis of those primitives explicitly mentioned, it is easy to show that the number of primitives is too small and that in fact certain definitions require quite a few new minimum terms. As regards parsimony, Weber’s taxonomy is to be preferred to that offered by Lasswell and Kaplan. Furthermore, certain definitions are inadequate since they are either too wide or too narrow. An example of this will be given below in the analyses of the concepts of influence and power.

4.2. Lasswell and Kaplan’s (SD)s: “influence” and “power”

We begin with the specification of meaning. Let us recalled Lasswell and Kaplan’s (SD)s:

(SDLK) “x is political”	=df “x has the property (a) influence”
(SDLK’) “x is political”	=df “x has the property (a) power”

Clearly, these make the properties influence and power key properties of the concepts of political. Thus, the fertility and clarity of the concepts of political in Power and Society depend on the nature of these properties. To deal with this problem presupposes in turn that the meaning and reference of “influence” and “power” are known. This problem will be treated below, since it is by no means clear what properties these words stand for in the Lasswell and Kaplan taxonomy.

(a) “*influence*” (SDLK). The term “influence” occurs explicitly with two meanings in LKT, on the one hand as a word for social actions that are part of social relations, and on the other hand as a word for a type of causal relation.

(DI) “x is influence”	=df “x is a value position and value potential” (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.60)
-----------------------	---

The definition of “value position” is non-controversial, since it is based on two primitives “value” and “pattern”. The definition of “value potential” is as follows: ‘DF. The value potential is the value position likely to be occupied as the outcome of conflict.’ (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.58.) This exemplifies the deficiencies mentioned above. The taxonomy assumes that there are other relations between acts than those of conflict but then it must be unsatisfactory to restrict the definition of “future value position” to “conflict”. Such positions may be the result of non-conflict relations.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

This concept of influence is a very general one, since for each actor there is at least one position as regards several values. More specific is the other concept of influence:

(DI) 'DF. The exercise of influence (influence process) consists in affecting policies of others than the self.' (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.71.)

One key term in (Di') is "affecting". One possible interpretation of (Di') is that "influence" is a term for all types of causal relations in which one actor's policy or several actors' policies are affected by another actor. However, in the commentary to (DI) there is a precization and (DI) can be replaced as follows:

(Di") "x exercises influence over
with regard to z" =df "x's possession of influence y
affects the policy(ies) z of y"

Now "influence" stands for those causal relations where an actor's policy(ies) are affected by the possession of influence (according to (DI)) of another actor. However, not even this interpretation is adhered to. Out of the commentary a further precization can be constructed:

(Di") "x exercises influence over y
with regard to z" =df "x's possession of influence the
policy(ies) z of y on the basis of
anticipated reactions of y"

That is, "influence" is a concept for those causal relations where y's policy(ies) are affected by y's anticipations concerning the behaviour of the actor who possesses influence. In (DI''') the concept of influence is a specific concept for a type of causal relation, whereas in (DI) it is a general concept for a social action that is part of a social relation. These concepts are not hierarchically related in such a way that one falls under the other. It is not conducive to conceptual clarity when "influence" stands for different types of properties, just as the distinction between "exercise of influence" and "influence" is not maintained. When "political" is defined by "influence" the result is, of course, at least two concepts of political. When is it a question of "political" as defined by (DI) and "political" as defined by (DI*) or (Di") or (Di''')? One specific concept of political is not specified in (SDLK). It would be possible here to continue with the analysis and maintain that these definitions have deficiencies, that alternative concept formations are more fruitful and in accordance with linguistic usage. However, it will suffice to have shown that (SDLK) does not satisfy the criterion C1. On the basis of the taxonomy it is not possible to state the nature of the property (a) unambiguously.

(b) "Power" (SDLK1). The exact definition of "power" reads as follows: 'DF. Power is participation in the making of decisions: G has power over H with respect to the values K if G participates in the making of decisions affecting the K-policies of H.' (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.75). Out of this quotation a definition can be constructed, and this will be analysed:

(DP) "x has power over y with
Regard to z" =df "x participates in a decision making
process, which affects the policy(ies) z
of y"

(DP) is adequate only if the meaning of the key terms in the definiens either is intersubjectively given in linguistic usage or can be stated in the taxonomy

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

through other definitions. Key terms are “decision” and “policy”. Given a common-sense interpretation of the definiendum and the definiens in (DP) it can be shown that it is deficient. Suppose that A commands B to do C and B refuses to obey, which causes A to do C himself voluntarily. Take A as a value of “y”, B as a value of “x” and C of “z”. Then the definiendum is false, whereas the definiens is true—given the same substitution for the variables. Consequently, the definiens is not an adequate definition of the definiendum.

Let us consider the definition of “decision”. ‘DF. A decision is a policy involving severe sanctions (deprivations).’ (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.74.) This definition exemplifies a deficiency in the taxonomy pointed out above. The definition of “sanction” is not made in terms of the primitives or the defined terms. (DP) can now be replaced by:

(DP) “x has power over y with regard to z”	=df “x participates in the making of a policy involving severe sanctions, which affects the policy(ies) z of y”
--	---

One of the key terms of “power” has now been reduced to the other key term. In order to know what is meant by “political” one must know the meaning of “power”, which presupposes that also the meaning of “policy” is clear. Let us therefore look at “policy”. ‘DF. Policy is a projected program of goal values and practices: the policy process is the formulation, promulgation, and application of identifications, demands, and expectations concerning the future interpersonal relations of the self.’ (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.71.) This explicit definition is followed by the following commentary: ‘Projected action may be either private or social: it may concern either the actor alone or his relations with other persons. A course of action in relation to others we call a “policy” of the actor. The field of policy is constituted by interpersonal relations.’ (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.71.). Taken together, these two quotations exemplify the inadequacy of the Lasswell and Kaplan taxonomy. In Weber’s taxonomy, by contrast, the rules that govern the use of key terms are unambiguous and the meanings of “policy” can be rendered in terms of the words in the taxonomy. Here, “policy” first means orientation, then it means social relation or at least it stands for some type of interpersonal relation. Next, “policy” means social action, and then it means social relation. Of course, this makes it impossible to state exactly what is the meaning of “policy” and consequently to arrive at the meaning of “political” in (SDLK).

However, as the meaning of “policy” I will choose one of the proposed definiens terms, viz. “social action”, in order to show other deficiencies of (DP). As “social action” is the basic term it cannot be maintained that it is too narrow.

(DP) “x has power over y with regard to z”	=df “x participates in a social action involving severe sanctions, which affects the social action(s) z of y”
--	---

It is now clear that the explicit definition of “power” in (DP) takes the word as referring to a type of casual relation between social actions involving severe sanctions and social actions. Given a wide meaning of “casual relation” the reference of “power” is great, but the word is not ambiguous. Correspondingly the field of political is great.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

The analysis of (SDLK) and (SDLK') has given the result that neither of them satisfies C_j since both key terms are ambiguous. Instead of one concept of political there are at least three: at least two in terms of "influence" (DI) and (DI') plus one in terms of "power" (DP). Before these are analysed in relation to the criteria, a few comments will be made on a sentence in Lasswell and Kaplan about the relation between the concepts of influence and power. Now it is obvious that only the relation between exercise of influence in the sense (Df') and power in the sense of (DP) is a problem. Lasswell and Kaplan maintain that: 'Power is a special case of the exercise of influence: it is the process of affecting policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) severe deprivations for nonconformity with the policies intended.' (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950, p.76).

This main sentence about the relation between the concepts can be formulated as follows: (SI) Every relation of power is a relation of influence, but not every relation of influence is a relation of power. (SI) states that the concept of power implies the concept of influence but not the other way around. Now, suppose that A affects a social action of B by a decision, for example by assassination of a friend of B. Then there is a relation of power according to (DP), but there is not a relation of influence according to (DI'). The relation between the concepts of influence and power is not thus stated exactly by Lasswell and Kaplan.

Let us now move on to specification of reference. The analysis of Power and Society resulted in three definitions of "political":

(D1) "x is political"	=df "x is a social action that is part of a social relation" "x is a causal relation in which an actor's possession of influence affects a (several)
(D2) "x is political"	=df social action(s) of another actor on the basis of anticipated reactions" "x is a causal relation, in which an actor participates in a social action involving
(D3) "x is political"	=df severe sanctions which affects an (several) action(s) of another actor"

"Political" in (D1) refers to social actions of a certain type and is thus a first order term. In (D2) and (D3) the term refers to causal relations of certain types. In (D2) it is a matter of a third order term, whereas the term in (D3) is a second order term.

To each of these definitions there corresponds a set of entities. Let "(LKS₁)" stand for the set that has the properties in (D1), "(LKS₂)" those in (D2) and "(LKS₃)" those in (D3). Then the following set-theoretical relations hold:

- (i) $(LKS_1) \neq \emptyset; (LKS_2) \neq \emptyset; (LKS_3) \neq \emptyset$
- (ii) $(LKS_1) \cup (LKS_2) \cup (LKS_3) \neq V$
- (iii) $(LKS_1) \cap (LKS_2) \neq \emptyset; (LKS_1) \cap (LKS_3) \neq \emptyset; (LKS_2) \cap (LKS_3) \neq \emptyset$

4.3. Lasswell and Kaplan's (ES)

The main objection against the concept formation in Power and Society as regards "political" —(SDLK) and (SDLK')—is that it does not satisfy C₁ (i) of the three definitions (D₁)-(D₃), which is the definition of "political"? Against each

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

of the definitions objections can be raised. Not one of them satisfies C_3 , and probably none satisfies C_3 . Furthermore, the definitions do not satisfy C_1 (as stated in (iii)).

Consequently, it can be stated: (ESLK) According to C_1 - C_4 there is no satisfactory definition or combination of definitions of “political” in Power and Society.

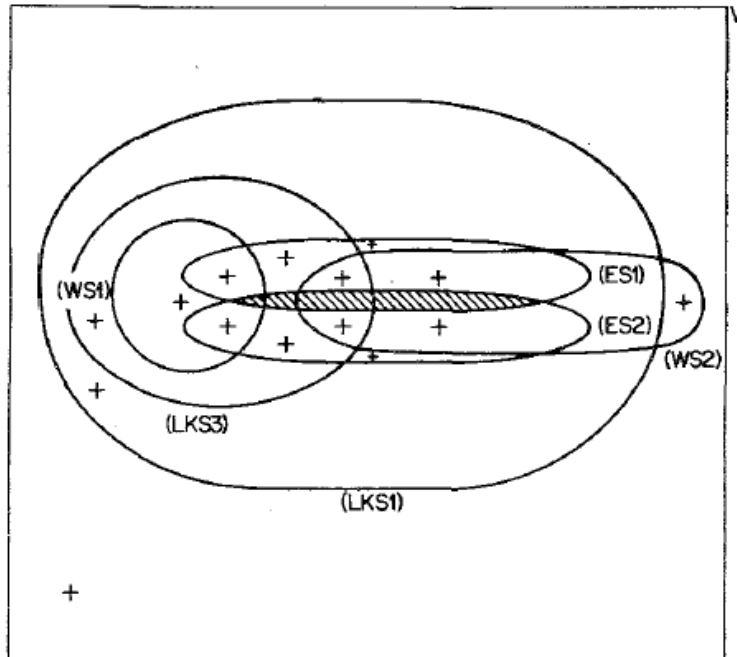
5. Conclusion

A comparison between the concept formations of Weber, Easton and Lasswell and Kaplan concerning the concept of political confirms the assumption that there is little agreement on the use of the key term of political science.

(a) *Meaning.* There are few common properties in the concepts:

Weber	Easton	Lasswell and Kaplan
authority	allocation	social action that is part of a social relation (D1)
Guaranteed system of norms	legitimate	types of causal relations that satisfy (D2) and (D3)
territory	society	
physical violence		

The discrepancy between Weber and Easton is smaller than that between Weber and Lasswell and Kaplan on the one hand and that between Easton and Lasswell and Kaplan on the other. But in any case the differences are profound. Weber approaches the problem by a definition of a word for a complex structure, which he supplements by a word for an orientation towards such a structure.



V = the domain of discourse, i. e. social actions.
 += there is at least one entity in this set.
 ≡= empty.

Figure 12.2

J.E. Lane, JEPE, 11(1-2), 2024, p.28-55.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

Easton starts with social relations and proceeds to the property legitimate for a society in the attempt to discriminate within the set of basic units. Weber requires neither legitimacy nor such a social entity as society. On the other hand Easton requires neither authority nor physical violence. Lasswell's and Kaplan's concepts contain on the one hand properties for general types of social entities, (D1), and on the other hand properties for certain types of causal relations in the social world, (D2) and (D3).

(b) *Reference*. The set-theoretical relations between the sets distinguished are schematically represented in Figure 12.2.

(c) *Explication*. Of the definitions investigated in this chapter none satisfies the criteria of adequacy for turning the definition into an explication. Weber is unclear about the nature of territory, and the property physical violence will not serve the end Weber thinks it is a means to. Easton uses the word "authoritative" ambiguously, defines "society" inadequately and ends up in confusion about the relations between his concepts. Lasswell and Kaplan give several definitions of the same word and do not indicate which is the definition.

There are some words that may be designed as the fundamental terms of political science, like "political system", "state", "society", "nation", "authority", "power", "conflict" and "cooperation". To introduce precise, clear and fruitful definitions of these words is the basic task of political theory as I conceive it. Unquestionably, that part of political science has a tremendous task to fulfil.

References

- Almond, G.A., & Coleman, J.S. (1960). *The Politics of the Developing Areas*. Princeton University Press.
- Almond, G.A., & Powell, G.B. (1966). *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.
- Blau, P.M. (1974). *On the Nature of Organizations*. Wiley.
- Easton, D. (1953). *The Political System, an Inquiry Into the State of Political Science*. Knopf Pub.
- Easton, D. (1965a). *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Easton, D. (1965b). *A Framework for Political Analysis*. Prentice-Hall.
- Eisenstadt, A. (1969). *American History Recent Interpretations Book 1 To 1877*. Crowell Publications.
- Lasswell, A., & Kaplan, H.D. (1950). *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry*. Yale University Press.
- Naess, A. (1966). *Communication and Argument: Elements of Applied Semantics*. Scandinavian University Books.
- Schapera, I. (1963). *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies*. Watts Books.
- Weber, M. (1964a). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Verlag: Voltmedia.
- Weber, M. (1964b). *Theory of Social and Economic Organization by Max Weber*. Talcott Parsons.
- Zetterberg, H.L. (1965). *On Theory and Verification in Sociology*. Bedminster Press.



Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>).

