

# The Theoretical Field of Political Analysis

01. Theories and approaches of Political Analysis can be sorted according to the dimensions they are operating in: Thinking only under power aspects (politics dimension) shows a poor concept of political affairs; theories that reflect also the independency or dependency of institutions (polity dimension) as well as policy aspects (policy dimension), in contrast, operate with a rich concept.

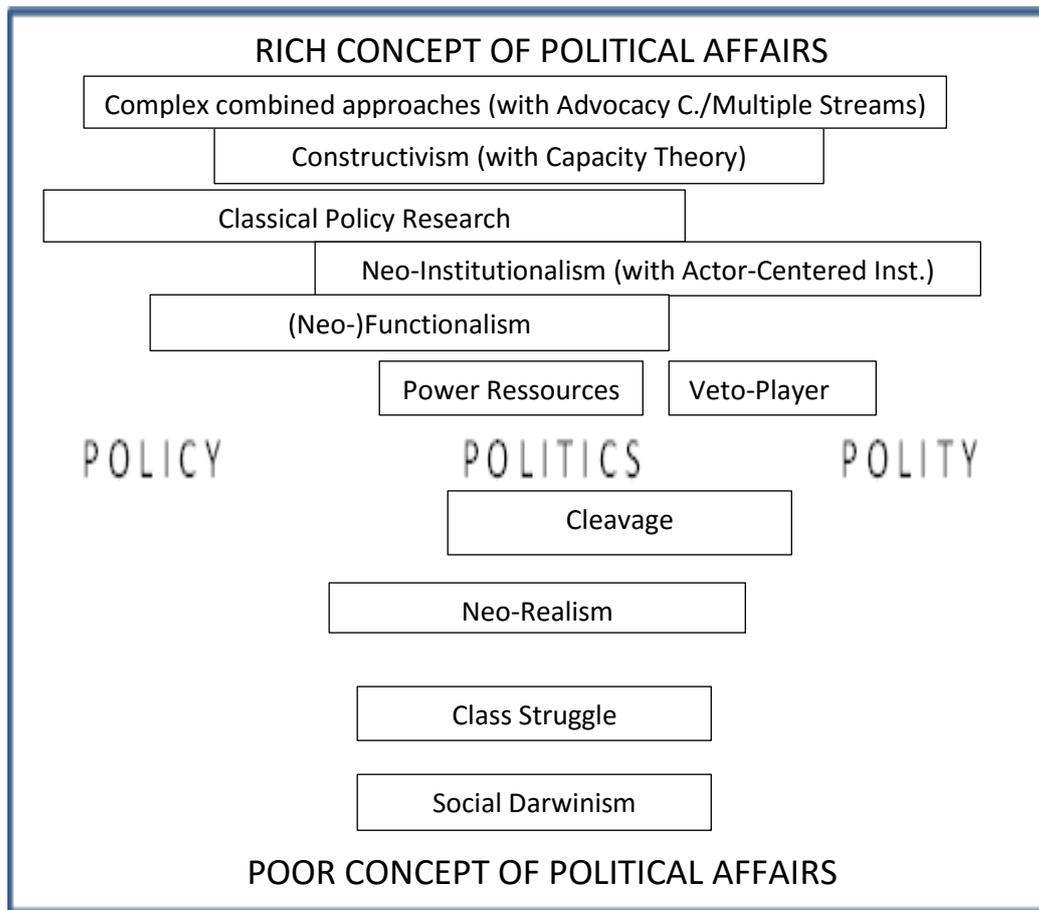
02. Whereas poor political theories are focused on power variables, rich theories can operate with diverse variables and combinations of them. Thus mainly institutional patterns and interest constellations are issued in neo-institutional theories; the classical policy research, in contrast, operates with policy variables such as ways of public action, challenges of problem-solving, and criterions of success.

03. Starting from these ideas, a theory field of Political Analysis results - corresponding with the following criterions:

1. The richer a political theory/approach, the closer it is located to the pole of RICH POLITICAL CONCEPT (above).
2. Je poorer a political theory, the closer it is located to the pole of POOR POLITICAL CONCEPT (below).
3. According to what extent policy variables (POLICY), power variables (POLITICS), or/and variables of institutional independency (POLITY) are processed, an approach is located close to this individual area more or less left or right.

04. In this field poor approaches appear below centered; rich approaches, in contrast, are located more or less left or right above - see the figure on the following page.

**Figure 1: Selected approaches in the analytical theory field**



05. In **Social Darwinism** political affairs appear as nothing but an existential fight about power up to the annihilation of the weaker ones.<sup>1</sup> Politics in that sense serves as means of suppression and annihilation - an extremely poor ideology that has inspired many totalitarian regimes.

06. Also Marx' **theory of class struggle** operates without any dimension of independent institutions (The ruling law is the law of the ruling ones...) and without being aware of independent policy discourses; Politics rather appears to be nothing but a struggle among representatives of conflicting classes, concretely between bourgeoisie and working-class. Whatever may take place in other dimensions is considered to be negligible or a camouflage of the basic

<sup>1</sup> Charles Darwin used the term *survival of the fittest* - following a proposal of Herbert Spencer - since the fifth edition of his fundamental book *On the Origin of Species* referring to the best adaptation to given environments. This meaning differs fundamentally from social-darwinistic ideas - comprising the assumption and normative implication that the stronger one should prevail. See in short:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On\\_the\\_Origin\\_of\\_Species](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/On_the_Origin_of_Species)

<http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/214188/was-ist-sozialdarwinismus>

conflict between capital and working class - a poor model of political affairs, too. Hence it is not surprising that Marx's concept of political affairs has found most enthusiastic reception in low developed countries and diverse totalitarian systems (Stalinism, Maoism, Pol-Pot-Regime, even fascisms such as the Hitler-Regime). At it, the fact that Marx has mostly dealt with economic issues and contended normative ideas of general emancipation in communism - such as by removing the division of labor - does not change that assessment. In the contrary, the try to deduce political solutions immediately from the study of economy exhibits even more clearly how poor Marx's model of politics has been.

07. Also the **Neo-Realism** in Political Science does not consider any institution (within or without of nation-states) significant for political behavior. The international system does function by power. Indeed - the main difference to classical realism - politics does not strive after power as such, but after realizing functional goals, particularly security, by gaining and using power. That pattern implies a tendency to national self-aid and permanent uncertainty about the ends of other actors – resulting in the danger of arms races, high risks of warfare, exorbitant security costs, and corresponding welfare-losses.<sup>2</sup>

08. The **Cleavage-Theory** explains election results and the development of party systems in European states by referring to long-term social conflict lines:

- Capital versus labor
- Church versus state (government)
- Urban versus rural areas
- Center versus periphery

According to Lipset and Rokkan, those four basic conflict lines have developed in complex processes and battles since the early modernity in Europe; they reflect interest and value conflicts of diverse organized groups - resulting in parties. Results of elections usually correspond with whichever of these conflict subjects, social groups, and respecting parties get dominance.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, neo-realism used the Prisoners' Dilemma as illustration of its fundamental assumptions. For an overview see: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neorealismus\\_\(Internationale\\_Beziehungen\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neorealismus_(Internationale_Beziehungen))

<sup>3</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, Stein Rokkan: Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments. An Introduction. In: Idem (Eds.): Party Systems and Voter Alignments. Cross-National Perspectives. Free Press, New York 1967, S. 1–64 (PDF; 6,8 MB);

11. Also according to the approach of **power-resources**, politics is determined by the economic and political distribution of power among social groups or classes with contradicting interests. Hence crucial success factors consist in skills of organization and conflict exertion.<sup>4</sup> Starting from the same idea, the Finnish Political Scientist Tatu Vanhanen has developed the approach of power dispersion. According to this approach, the degree of democratization corresponds with the degree power resources are distributed in a society.<sup>5</sup>

12. **Functionalism** is a theory of international (particularly European) integration. According the main line of this theory, institutional patterns follow policy function. Thus policy functions and areas are step by step coordinated and merged; institutional and contractual solutions result from situative functional demands.<sup>6</sup>

13. **Neo-functionalism** is a further development of functionalism; it emphasizes the significance of autonomous supranational agencies for consciously developing of integration. The spreading and extension of supranational ruling and the corresponding increase of power for supranational bodies such as the EU- Commission are explained by *spill-over-effects*.<sup>7</sup>

14. **Policy research**, particularly in its traditional form of policy studies, is characterized by a clear priority of policy aspects - see the central model of this approach, the Policy Cycle conceived of as a series of functional demands of problem-solving:

---

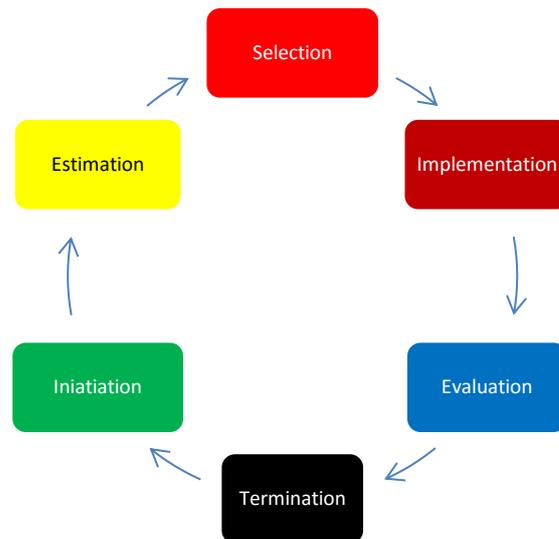
<sup>4</sup> See particularly opinions near to trade unions, for instance: [http://www.hampp-ejournals.de/hampp-verlag-services/get?file=/frei/IndB\\_3\\_2014\\_217](http://www.hampp-ejournals.de/hampp-verlag-services/get?file=/frei/IndB_3_2014_217)

<sup>5</sup> Tatu Vanhanen: A new dataset compared with alternative measurements of democracy, in: Hans-Joachim Lauth, Gert Picke, Christian Welzel: *Demokratiemessung. Konzepte und Befunde im internationalen Vergleich*, Wiesbaden (Springer) 2000, S. 184-206. Online: [https://books.google.de/books?id=c6fzBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&dq=Vanhanen+1984&hl=de&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjyif\\_N6\\_rNAhXDJMAKHThNBNMQ6AEIKTAC#v=onepage&q=Vanhanen%201984&f=false](https://books.google.de/books?id=c6fzBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA188&dq=Vanhanen+1984&hl=de&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjyif_N6_rNAhXDJMAKHThNBNMQ6AEIKTAC#v=onepage&q=Vanhanen%201984&f=false)

<sup>6</sup> David Mitrany: *The Prospect of European Integration: Federal or Functional*, Journal of Common Market Studies, 1965

<sup>7</sup> Ernst B. Haas: *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1964.

**Figure 2: The *Policy Cycle***<sup>8</sup>



15. Although the reference to policy areas is still dominating in policy research, meanwhile a bunch of diversely **combined theories and models** have been developed in this area of research - a consequent development towards a rich concept of political affairs.<sup>9</sup>

16. **Neo-Institutionalism** stresses the significance of rules and norms as well as the significance of norm-oriented patterns of behavior. May be the most significant issue of reference is the analysis of **International Regimes und international organizations**.<sup>10</sup>

17. A policy-related partial theory of political neo-institutionalism, the theory of conflict issues, explains the probability of conflict-solving through reference to different conflict issues: Whereas a cooperative way of conflict-management is improbable in cases of value-conflicts, conflicts about the adequate means to realize a common goal are likely to be managed in a constructive manner. Also interest-conflicts about absolutely assessed (scarce) goods can be more easily solved than conflicts about relatively assessed goods (where one actor tries to get more of a good than the other) - a combination of policy-aspects and institutional aspects.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Garry D. Brewer, Peter DeLeon 1983: The foundations of policy analysis, Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politikfeldanalyse>

<sup>10</sup> Robert O. Keohane (Hrsg.): *International Institutions and State Power. Essays in International Relations Theory*. San Francisco/London, 1989, S. 1–20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem

18. Following the **Vetoplayer-theorem**, a political status quo can be left the easier, the lower the number of mighty actors (veto-player), the bigger the conformity of opinions of these actors, the smaller the cohesion of the veto-player, the bigger the difference to the previous government, and the longer a government is in office.<sup>12</sup> Based on this approach, certain interest and power constellations are issued as main determinants in decision-making processes, linked with institutional elements.

19. **Actor-Centered Institutionalism** issues rule complexes with individual actor-constellations. The approach mainly deals with the question whether certain institutional designs (ways of governance) fit with certain interest-constellations. Doing so, both actor-constellations as well as types of governance are studied and linked particularly in practically addressed ways.<sup>13</sup>

20. **Constructivism in Political Science** - mainly developed since the 1990s - emphasizes the fact that identities and interests of political actors are built through common ideas. Further issues refer to the question how institutions and actors are socially constructed. A special field of investigation is processes of information and communication.<sup>14</sup>

21. The **Capacity Theory**, an empirically based constructivist approach following the theory of cognitive dissonance, stresses the significance of practical capacities to solve public problems for being aware of them. Following the theory, the public perception of public problems does not simply correspond with the objective increase of precarious loads; individuals and public, rather, perceive problems as such only if they see given capacities of action to cope with the problem - a rational way of processing reality since otherwise the involved actors would lose their cognitive and psychological stability, and they would have no political chance to prevail.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> George Tsebelis: *Veto Players. How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton UP/Russell Sage Foundation, 2002; idem: *Decision Making in Political Systems: Veto Players in Presidentialism, Parliamentarism, Multicameralism and Multipartyism*, Cambridge UP, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Seiten 289-325, 1995

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.mpifg.de/pu/mpifg\\_book/mpifg\\_bd\\_23.pdf](http://www.mpifg.de/pu/mpifg_book/mpifg_bd_23.pdf)

Überblick: <http://gedankenstrich.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Kurzskript-Akteurzentrierter-Institutionalismus.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Summarized: <https://www.uni-due.de/politik/politische-theorie/konstruktivismus/pdf/programmatik.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Volker von Prittwitz: *Das Katastrophenparadox. Elemente einer Theorie der Umweltpolitik*, Opladen (Leske+Budrich) 1990 following Leon Festinger: *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. (deutsch: *Theorie der kognitiven Dissonanz*. Huber, Bern [u.a.] 1978, ISBN 3-456-80444-X.) Summarized: <https://ethologiepsychologie.wordpress.com/2011/11/15/festingers-theorie-der-kognitiven-dissonanz/>

22. Finally more or less complex **combined approaches** have developed:

- a) The **Advocacy-Coalitions-Framework** issues broad actor-coalitions and learning potentials of them in forming processes of policies and decision-making processes - a combination of policy aspects, processual aspects, and learning theory.<sup>16</sup>
- b) The **Varieties-of-Capitalism-** research issues characteristic economic cultures with specific governance structures and specific realms of incentives - a combination of cleavage ideas, policy ideas, and neo-institutional ideas.<sup>17</sup>
- c) The **Multiple-Streams Framework** profiles the openness of political processes and the significance of individual situational constellations - systematically differentiating between problem-streams, policy-streams, politics-streams, windows of opportunity, and policy entrepreneurs.<sup>18</sup> Altogether this approach can be considered particularly rich.
- d) The **Punctuated Equilibrium theory** contends that ruling policies do change only in incremental ways because of diverse restrictions. Long periods of stability are only punctuated by - rarely processing - changes based on fundamental structural changes in society and government - a quasi-theoretical assumption that mainly reflects the situation in the US - see environmental policy, energy policy, gun control policy, and tobacco policy there.<sup>19</sup> The type of observation, however, is relatively rich - comprising policy structures, policy processes, political and socio-cultural backgrounds.

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2013/10/30/policy-concepts-in-1000-words-the-advocacy-coalition-framework/>

<sup>17</sup> For an overview: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varieties\\_of\\_Capitalism](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varieties_of_Capitalism)

<sup>18</sup> John Kingdon: *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Little, Brown & Co. 1984...  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUlvyBVoJil>; <https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2013/10/31/policy-concepts-in-1000-words-multiple-streams-analysis/>

<sup>19</sup> Baumgartner, Frank and Bryan D. Jones (1993). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Cioffi-Revilla, Claudio (1998). "The political uncertainty of interstate rivalries: A punctuated equilibrium model." In Paul Diehl *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 64-97; Pierson, Paul. (2004). *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Givel, Michael (2006). "Punctuated Equilibrium in Limbo: The Tobacco Lobby and U.S. State Policy Making From 1990 to 2003." *Policy Studies Journal* 43 (3): 405-418. Zum Überblick: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punctuated\\_equilibrium\\_in\\_social\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punctuated_equilibrium_in_social_theory)

23. **Altogether** we see (**results and conclusions**):

- All presented models and theories can be sorted according to the presented criterions; that is: the theoretical field of political analysis can be effectively used as pattern of order for theories related to political affairs.
- There are some theoretical intersections - see for instance intersections of the theory of class-struggle, the Cleavage approach, and neo-realism or intersections of functionalism, classical policy research and constructivist approaches - that may stimulate theoretical discussions.
- Not only separate theories, but also theory bulks (closely located in the theory field) can be systematically differentiated based on reciprocal knowledge.
- The presented usage of the theoretical field does not render an integrated theory of Political Science; since the approaches have not been developed based on the knowledge of the field and without a corresponding communication.

24. By communicating the presented theories, by systematic supplements, and by creative thinking according to the criterions of the theoretical field, however, **such a theory could be developed**. By doing so impacts and preconditions of poor policies as well as chances of developing rich policies could be understood much better - a precondition of doing politics better.