

What is Political?

01. Political processes form generally binding decisions starting from competing actor motives. They comprise not only the formation of will and decision-making processes, but also all moments of them such as interests and values of the involved actors.

02. If political actors are not institutionally protected, if they are suppressed or - as enemies that may be annihilated - existentially threatened, the peculiar character of political affairs gets lost; since politics presupposes the legitimate opportunity for competing actors to pursue their interests. Specifically political processes and solutions require that all involved actors are respected as involved parts of a common decision-making process - a fundamental difference to war thinking in terms of friend or foe and to reciprocal or one-sided annihilation.

03. Politics also differs from religion or hierarchy through the fact that competing actors can and wish to pursue their interests. Who simply believes in something and follows hierarchical prescriptions does not act politically. Indeed, political actors like it to use the support of believing supporters; insofar faith and unconditional following can get political significance in an overarching frame.

04. Political affairs are a complex issue that can be understood only in diverse dimensions. Those dimensions are tools for measuring facts independently. Measured facts, indeed, can nevertheless be compared - at least regarding their significance in terms of the whole entity.

05. Since the 1980s three political dimensions have usually been differentiated: *policy*, *politics*, *polity*. *Politics* stands for **interaction**: Who participates with which motives in a political process, and who prevails to what degree and by what means towards other actors (influence/power)? *Polity* denotes the **institutional dimension**, particularly referring to the question how far independent institutions such as protected freedoms and rights for everybody exist. In the **policy-dimension**, finally, quality aspects of programs and decisions are issued.

06. Additionally other dimensions can be taken into consideration such as the dimension of social levels (micro-level around persons, meso-level of associations, and macro-level of society), the dimension of spatial levels (local, subnational, national, inter-, trans-, supranational, global) as well as the dimension of time (situations, processes, süeed, dynamics).

07. Politics varies in the outlined basic dimensions resulting in two basic types:

Table 1: **Poor and Rich Politics**

	Interaction (Power)	Independent institutions	Substantial discourse
Poor politics	X		
Rich politics	X	X	X

Whenever politics is oriented only to gain and to preserve power, it operates only in the dimension of interaction, that is, it does not use capacities of independent institutions and substantial discourses; that's why it is **poor politics**. **Rich politics**, in contrast, operates in all dimensions, uses also potentials of institutional independency and substantial discourses - a stimulation and capacity of better performance and higher welfare.