**POL 444 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS**

1. **Neo-Institutionalism**

a.What is an institution?

It can be defined as “a rule that has been institutionalized’

b.Types of Institutions: Hard & Soft Institutions

Hard institutions comprise formal rules that characterize a political system.

Soft institutions include the practices that institutionalized via informal rules and practices such as cultural traditions, linguistic modes, habits etc.

1. **Types of Neo-Institutionalism**

a.Rational Choice Institutionalism

Individuals always make their choices as maximisers of benefits over costs, but outcomes of these choices are affected by institutions that are present.

b.Cultural Institutionalism

Institutional practices are the embodiment of cultural values and beliefs.

c.Structural Institutionalism

Institutional structures determine the content of people’s interests and beliefs.

1. **Nation-state and Nationalism**

a.Nation-state:

The terms “nation” and “state” are co-dependent: Nations seek statehood and states try to enhance their stability and legitimacy by constructing or enhancing a national identity among its population.

A nation differs from an ethnic group in that an ethnic group do not aspire to separate statehood but instead are usually willing to settle for recognition and protection of minority rights within existing nation-states.

b.Nationalism:

Nationalism as an ideology is a theory of political legitimacy which requires that a cultural group within a given state should not separate power-holders rom the rest.

c.Types of Nationalism

c1.Liberal nationalism: The nationalism that emerged in Europe from the end of the 18th century, initially associated with the liberal principle of popular soveregnty, as a secular replacement for traditional forms of authority.

c2.Risorgimento nationalism: This form of nationalism emerged in the early 19th century as “national awakenings” led mainly by bourgeois and intellectuals who demanded emancipation from the rule of absolutist imperial rulers.

C3.Integral nationalism: It is a counter-type to Risorgimento nationalism because it subsumes the individual into serving the nation-state.

C4.Reform nationalism: It is generally a product of state ellites, bureucrats, military leaders who develop a top-down programme to reform an existing nation-state from within.

d..Theories of Nationalism

d1.Modernist theories

Modernists agree that nations and nationalisms are by-product of the modern era.

d2.Pre-modernist theories: primordialists, perrenialists and ethno-symbolists

They tend to emphasize the continuous effects of pre-modern ethnicity, including kinship, collective myths, symbols, legents and conceptions of territoriality.

1. **Electoral Systems**

The nature of electoral systems and their relationship with the broader political arena affect party systems and government formations.

a.Electoral formula I: majoritarian and plurality systems

Elections which require the victorious candidate to hold a majority f votes cast is the simplest definition of majoritarianism.

b.Electoral formula II: proportional representation systems

It is designed to ensure that as far as possible the proportion of votes recieved by a party will be reflected in the proportion of seats held in the legislature.

c.Electoral formula III: mixed systems & single transferable vote

Mixed systems contain both candidate-base and party-based votes, thus corresponding both to microcosm and principal-agent models.

In the singla transferable vote, the election is held across a number of constituencies, each containing multiple seats. There is freedom of choice of candidates and party affiliations can be entirely ignored.

1. **Legislative-Executive Relations**

The division of povers between the legislature and the executive is one of the most important institutional variable in distinguishing between states.

Legislatures would debate and make laws, executives would implement and enforce them and judiciaries would interpret and apply the laws.

In understanding legislative and executive roles, it is also important to keep in mind the distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems. In presidential systems, the executive is separately elected and holds office independent of the political composition of the legislature. In parliamentary systems, the executive is appointed on the basis of gaining support from a majority of the legislature and holds office only so long as that supports continues.

Analyses of legislative-executive relations have tended to see the powers of legislatures as declining in relation to those of executives over the last hundred years.

1. **Territorial Dimension**

As apolitical idea, federalism can be defined as the belief in the principle of ‘diversity in unity’, maintained by constitutional relations between centralised and decentralised institutions of government within single, territorially bounded state.

Federations have tended to evolve as alternatives to absolutist, unitary forms of imperial statehood. As such, federations should be understood and analysed as constitutional methods of power-sharing that intentionally pluralise sovereignty.

The difference between unitary and formally federal states are more of degree rather than of kind. Federal states can develop unitary characteristics in the form of fiscal centralisation and executive authority while unitary states can develop federal-like fiscal and administrative decentralisation.

By dividing power, federal systems do have potential to enhance the liberty of individual citizens. Rational choice institutionalists focuse on the performance of federal systems in preserving individual liberty through the separation of powers and especially through the economic efficiency promoted by fiscal federalism. Structural factors like the size and resourcefulness of the state, levels of economic development and the left-right character of governments are also significant in explaining the performance of federal versus unitary states.

The distinction between mono-national and multinational federations is a significant factor. Mutlinational federations have to balance the preservation of individual liberty with the recognition of collective identities and interests.

1. **The Bureaucracy**

Most political scientists recognise that while the role of prime ministers, parliaments and political parties are crutial to an understanding of the macropolitical environment, when it comes to the day to day process of decision-making and especially the implementation of public policy, attention should turn to the critical role played by the public bureaucracy.

Having a clear hierarchy of officials within an organisation, each with their own specified role, might be considered to aid efficiency in two significant ways:

First, the rank-structured nature of the organisation reduces the need for negotiations regarding the performance of tasks.

Second, the clear assignment of specific tasks to specific individuals, may impruve the output of an organisation owing to the productivity-enhancing effects of the division of labour.

The proportion of GDP absorbed by government expenditure provides an indication of relative size of the state sector and hence of the extent to which public bureaucracies play a determining role in the allocation of resources and the delivery of services. We can identify three key types of intervention that have an important bearing on the extent of public bureaucracy in a given society: Direct production, regulation, transfer payments.

1. **The Courts**
2. Judicial Review

It means that a court can review a parliamentary statute to see if it is compatible with the constitution. If it is not, the court has the power to invalidate it.

1. Rule of Law

It is a crucial element in any theory of democracy. Essentially a system based on the rule of law is one in which individuals as such do not have power over other individuals.

1. **Interest Groups**
2. Defining Interest Groups

Interest groups account for a substantial proportion of civil society. Those are organisations that seek to influence government policy, but which do not formally become part of the apparatus of political parties and the state.

Economic/sectional interest groups focuse on predominantly material interests and such economic interests are to a large degree ‘exclusive’, while cause/attitude groups are organisations lobbying for a set of values or attitudes rather than the interests of a particular segment of society.

1. Forms of Interest Representation

Pluralist forms of interest group participation refers to those where particular sections of society such as those representing employers, labour interest or the environment tend to be represented by a multiplicity of different organisations, none of which is considered by politicians and civil servants to constitute the definite ‘voice’ for the segment of society/issue concerned.

In contrast to pluralist model, in corporatist forms of interest group participation, the organisation of interest is much less competitive with particular societal interests such those of employers and of workers grouped together to represent the vast majority of actors within the sector concerned.