

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2015 · 15 marks

Discuss David Easton's model of system analysis.

FLOW SNAPSHOT

how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1: politics as one living whole → Easton builds on **Bertalanffy + Parsons** → biological analogy. **R2:** the aim — how a system survives and converts pressures into decisions.

Body flow

System within environment + boundary → inputs (demands/supports) → conversion → outputs = authoritative allocation of values → feedback keeps it dynamic.

Counter-view

Too abstract, equilibrium-fixed, weak on conflict and change; **Miller:** a status-quo ideology of American capitalism.

Conclusion routes

R1: a systematic, dynamic map — but mapping is not judging. **R2:** its strength (survival, feedback) is also its limit (silence on conflict).

The systems approach studies politics not as separate institutions but as one living whole. David Easton built this into a full model, drawing on Ludwig Bertalanffy's general systems theory and Talcott Parson's structural functionalism. The analogy is biological: as organs work in a body, institutions interact within one system. Easton's aim was to explain how the system survives and turns social pressures into binding decisions.

For Easton, political system makes and executes social policy. It works within an environment of social, economic and cultural variables, with a boundary. Into it flow inputs - demands and supports - which the conversion process handles through debate and policy. The result is outputs - decisions, laws and policies - the authoritative allocation of values. Feedback keeps it alive, as outputs return to shape the next round of inputs.

The model has drawn strong criticism. It is faulted as too abstract and fixed on equilibrium, weak on conflict and change. By taking the system as given, it leans toward the status quo and claims a neutrality it cannot hold; the Marxist scholar Eugene Miller calls it a status quo ideology shaped by American capitalism.

Easton's model gave political science a systematic, dynamic way to study political life. Its neglect of conflict suggests a system can be mapped without being judged - and politics needs both.