

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q1(a)

Normative approach in Political Science.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

Core demand of the question

- **Comment on the following in about 150 words:** Normative approach in Political Science. (10 marks)

Revision summary

The normative approach asks what political life ought to be and argues about justice, liberty, and obligation.

Plato, Aristotle, the contract theorists, Mill, and Rawls are central practitioners.

Easton and Dahl supply empirical maps of systems and decisions that cannot replace the question of right.

Communitarian critics warn that abstract persons can hide real communities.

Indian Parts III and IV show that a constitution is itself a public set of ought-statements.

Introduction

The normative approach in political science asks what political life ought to be, not only what rulers and voters in fact do. It treats justice, authority, liberty, and obligation as claims that can be argued, not only as survey items.

Body**What the approach does**

- A normative inquiry defines concepts such as the state, right, and legitimacy, and then tests a claim against a rival claim.
- Plato and Aristotle set the pattern by asking which regime is just, not only which city was strong.
- Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau used contract arguments to say when coercion is justified.
- John Rawls rebuilt that tradition as justice as fairness: equal basic liberties, fair opportunity, and the difference principle.
- J. S. Mill treated liberty of thought and discussion as a condition of human development, which is a value claim, not a vote count.

Contrast with empirical work

- David Easton defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values and asked for observable systems of demand, support, and output.
- Robert Dahl asked who actually prevails in decisions, which is a behavioural test of power.

- The normative approach does not replace those methods. It supplies the standard by which an allocation or a decision can be called just or unjust.
- Behavioural critics said norms were untestable metaphysics. The reply is that measurement cannot invent the question of right.

Limits

- Normative theory can ignore institutions and history if it stays with ideal persons only.
- **Michael Sandel** and **Michael Walzer** later showed that abstract persons may hide the communities in which people actually live.
- The approach remains necessary because a constitution, including India's **Parts III and IV**, is itself a set of ought-statements that courts and legislatures must interpret.

Flow diagram

Normative approach -> Ought claims
Normative approach -> Plato Mill Rawls
Easton Dahl -> Is: systems and decisions
Ought claims -> Justice and legitimacy
Is: systems and decisions -> Justice and legitimacy

Conclusion

The normative approach studies politics as reasoned argument about what ought to bind. **Easton** and Dahl describe allocation and decisions; **Plato**, **Mill**, and **Rawls** judge them. Political science needs both, because facts do not by themselves yield justice.

Facts & figures

Easton

Defined politics as the authoritative allocation of values; the definition describes allocation, it does not say which allocation is just.

Rawls, 1971

A Theory of Justice restated social-contract argument as equal basic liberties plus fair opportunity and the difference principle.

Mill

On Liberty treats freedom of thought and discussion as required for human development, a classic normative claim.

Parts III and IV

Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles are written oughts that Indian courts and legislatures apply.

ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com

WRAP Exams