



POLITICS AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON IN THE CONTEXT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Obidova Ruxshona,

1st-Year Student of Political Science, Faculty of International
Relations and Socio-Political Sciences, O‘zJOKU

Abstract

This article discusses the concepts of politics and anthropology, their meanings, and the areas they cover. It also briefly outlines the role and significance of politics in the social life of society. The main content of the article demonstrates how politics can be considered a social phenomenon within the context of the science of anthropology.

Keywords: Politics, anthropology, social, society, science, governance.

Introduction

Since ancient times, individuals with more strength, knowledge, and experience have led others. Some established dominance over their peers through power, while others did so with consideration for the people. Although it is not entirely correct for one person to dominate another, the existence of laws that regulate the relationship between rulers and the ruled can make such dominance beneficial for both sides. Laws coordinate the relationship between the ruler and the people, and politics implements these laws to ensure balance between the state and its citizens.

The term “politics” has numerous classifications and definitions. Clarifying this term and understanding its essence has been an evolving process, particularly through studies of governance systems, religious institutions, and their interactions with socio-economic structures.

The word “politics” originates from the Greek word polis, meaning "city." This concept first emerged in ancient Greece and was used to describe various forms of state governance. The appearance of this concept in Greece is associated with



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the emergence of the state, power, and governance systems such as democracy, monarchy, and others.

Politics has always manifested in human life and activities, across various fields of science. It is sometimes defined as the art of cunning used to realize personal interests. Even wars between nations are often seen as a form of politics. Politics can also be defined as the ability to find a way out of any situation, to gain control over others, and to wisely use available opportunities.

Politics is mainly used by states to govern and control society. According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, politics is the art of ruling a state based on justice and ensuring the happiness of citizens. Although this definition is ideal, it is not always applicable in real life.

To fully understand politics, it should be studied in connection with other sciences, which reveals the multifaceted nature of politics and its close ties to societal and state life. Anthropology — derived from the Greek *anthropos* (human) and *logos* (science, doctrine) — studies human development, nature, physical characteristics, and behavior. It plays a significant role in showing the role of humans in politics. The disciplines of politics and political anthropology complement one another and help clarify their essence.

Theories of anthropological politics have developed somewhat independently of political science. However, contemporary political science literature shows that the mechanisms of formation in both ancient and modern political institutions share many similarities.

Political anthropology emerged as a branch of anthropology, and despite being considered a young discipline in local literature, especially in the fields of social and cultural anthropology, it has a long history. Although many believe research in this area began in the 20th century, the field was already forming in the 19th century. The first department of social anthropology was founded in 1908 by J. Frazer at the University of Liverpool. Despite having a history of over two centuries, the field is still perceived as a new concept in some regions, largely due to restrictions during the Soviet era on the study of power theories. Only after the collapse of the USSR did newly independent states begin to develop their own political systems and sciences.



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In Western societies, anthropology holds a more significant position, emphasizing human freedom and participation in state governance. Therefore, political and social sciences developed earlier and have continued to advance. There is a considerable difference between the Western understanding of “anthropology” and the interpretation commonly used in our society, where anthropology is often equated with ethnography. However, anthropology is a broader concept. While ethnography focuses on the cultures and traditions of ancient and tribal peoples, anthropology studies all aspects of human life, from its origins to the present day, including the struggle for survival and preserved characteristics.

Political anthropology, as a part of anthropology, examines political behavior throughout human history, the role of individuals in governance, leadership traits, and the political life of societies. It also explores how the appearance and physical stature of leaders might influence their leadership.

Political anthropology primarily studies the evolution of state and society governance, the influence of culture and traditions, and politics as a social institution. It investigates not only formal aspects of society but also how everyday life, family roles, societal traditions, and symbols contribute to legitimizing authority.

When politics is defined as a social institution, it moves beyond formality, exploring daily power relations — such as parental authority over children, masters over slaves, or social hierarchies.

In essence, political anthropology is a social science, as it examines human and societal characteristics, forms of governance, their origins, implementation, and development. Anthropology and political science together study these topics in an integrated manner.

The role of politics as a social institution within anthropology includes how traditional values, customs, and national symbols influence state governance, demonstrating the harmony between government and people, as well as the impact of family relations on leadership practices.

Political anthropology offers tools to analyze existing political structures within a state or society. One commonly used method is ethnographic research, where the researcher lives within the society being studied. Another is comparative analysis, which highlights similarities and differences between political systems



across societies. Comparing different states helps identify both strengths and weaknesses in governance and points toward improvement.

In conclusion, the integration of politics and anthropology significantly contributes to the evolution of governance. Politics as a social institution in anthropology reveals the importance of traditions, customs, and family values in state governance. In this context, politics becomes less formal and more engaged with social matters.

Today, political anthropology is actively researched and taught to students studying political sciences. Numerous scholars are producing works and conducting research in this field. As its importance grows, political anthropology becomes not only a historical and theoretical subject but also a practical tool for understanding current political processes. As the social role of politics within anthropology increases, it becomes evident that power does not solely rest in the hands of state leaders — people are also becoming the creators of their own destiny.

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