The use of “politics” and “political science” is interchangeable in common instances, but it seems, both terms are distinct from each. Perhaps, politics is better understood as the “actual participation of a population in the activities or affairs of the state; it is governance, public affairs, compromise and consensus, and power in practice.” Political Science, on the other hand, could be understood as “the study of politics,” as Robert Dahl [of Yale University] would put it. Clearly, the distinction of the two terms lies in the use of the word “science” in the term ‘political science.’ Hence, Encyclopaedia Britannica defines political science as: “the systematic study of governance by the application of empirical and generally scientific methods of analysis.” It should be noted; however, that the ‘science’ in ‘political science’ is social in nature, not physical or natural. Hence, the object [or subject] of political science is not to be treated as an “specimen in a laboratory.” The laboratory of political science is the social world. As a social science,

Political Science deals with those aspects of individuals in society which relate to their activities and organizations devoted to seeking of power, resolution of conflicts and all these, within an overall framework of the rule and law as laid down by the state. (National Institute of Open Schooling)

Particularly, we may say that if politics is the actual ‘shaping of power’ or ‘sharing of power,’ we could say then that political science is “the study of shaping and sharing of [such] power”[as asserted by Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan].

Generally, we could then say that when citizens cast their votes during elections, when public officials do their functions as legislators or administrators, when special-interest groups lobby for the enactment of some laws, these are what we call politics [or political activities]. And when certain individuals analyze and interpret elections, legislation, administration, lobbying based on careful hypotheses, observation, and examination of data about political activities, there is political science.

Broadly speaking, political science studies:

a. Political theory—political views and thoughts or doctrines (ideology) relating to the state
b. Public law—study of government powers, duties, its organization, and the limits of its authority in relation to individual rights. Included in this are: Constitutional law (laws resulting from interpretation of written constitutions), Administrative law (laws regarding conduct of government officials and agencies), International law (laws regarding conduct of sovereign states to one another)
c. Public administration—study of methods and techniques in the management of state affairs by the three branches of government

Traditionally, political science is defined as the “systematic study of the state and its organs and institutions.” This view, which is reflected in many textbooks on political science, leads us to the discussion of the “state” as the focus of political study.
J.W. Garner contends that “politics begins and ends with the state.” This idea comes close, if not, is a rephrased version of Aristotle’s statement: “That the city is both by nature and prior to each individual, then, is clear. For if the individual when separated [from it] is not self-sufficient. [It should be remembered that the “Polis” of ancient Greece has evolved to mean the “State” in modern parlance.] Along this vein, our understanding of politics should basically be rooted in understanding the State. The State, Garner defines,

is a community of persons, more or less numerous, permanently occupying a definite portion of territory, independent (or nearly so) of external control and possessing an organized government to which the great body of inhabitants render habitual obedience.

The aforesaid definition gives us four essential elements of a State: (1) people; (2) territory; (3) sovereignty; and, (4) government. An absence of one of these elements would mean that there can be no state. These elements will be part of our framework in discussing the contents of the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

People or Population. “There can be no state without population. But no limit can be suggested about the necessary number of population of a state.” A state could have a population of less than 1,000 like Vatican City or more than 1 billion like China and India.“ According to Aristotle, the population of a state should be large enough to make the state self-sufficing while it should be small enough to make it fit for good government.”

Territory. This is the geographical surface of the earth on which a state is located. “There can be no state if the people do not occupy a definite territory on a permanent basis.” Nomadic people cannot, in this sense, be considered as having a state because they are “not permanently settled”. “The territory of a state includes the rivers, hills, and mountains, lakes, forests and mineral resources; the air space over the territory; an area of the sea to a certain distance from its coast.” Just like in population, there is no exact requirement as to the size of a territory. It could be as small as dot in a world map (e.g. Monaco in Europe--1.95 square kilometers) or as big as the 17, 075, 400 square kilometers Russian Federation.

Government. “In the absence of a government, chaos and anarchy are bound to occur in the state. It may be considered as the agent of the state through which the will of the state is translated into action. It its narrowest sense, government means the ruling authority.” There are ways of classifying a government. It may be viewed as to the number of people controlling it (e.g. monarchy, democracy); it may be seen according to the relationship between executive and legislative branches (e.g. presidential, parliamentary). This section would be further elucidated in our lesson on governance.

Sovereignty. “Sovereignty is the most distinctive mark of statehood.” It means “supreme power”—“the power which makes the state free in determining its relations with other states and maintaining its supremacy within its territorial boundary.” Freedom from interference from other states is its external property (i.e., independence) and its “unquestionable authority over all individuals within the boundary of the state is its internal property. It is said that “sovereignty is
the very life-breath of the state; a community cannot attain statehood unless and until it attains sovereignty.”

Theories on the evolution of a State

1. **Natural Theory.** “Every city, therefore, exists by nature... and that man is by nature a political animal.” These words of Aristotle’s *Politics* explain that men are inclined to associate with others. It could be said that men “by instinct” interact with each other to satisfy their common needs. And as men naturally interact with one another, family is formed, then villages, then cities (state).

2. **Divine Theory.** This theory explains that God or gods established the state and appointed someone to rule over it. “This view lends credence to the concept of Divine Right of Kings, in which Monarchs rule with absolute power since they were ordained to rule by God.”

3. **Force Theory.** This idea purports that a state is created by conquest, force or coercion. Through war, strong leaders and their followers “battled” it out with each other, and after which, the victors ruled over the losers.

4. **Social Contract Theory.** This explains that states were formed by “deliberate and voluntary agreement among the people.” The experiences of people, as they interact with each other, made them realize that for “order and harmony and progress” to be achieved, there is a need for individuals to come into an agreement to define and determine what is best for each and every one. Consequently, such agreement led to the establishment of the state.

References:


