Debating Research Philosophy in Political Science: A Critical Outlook

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Abstract

This paper conceives a philosophical position of research and states clearly that political science research is not a static science. Pivotal to this research question is the assessment of diverse philosophical standpoints through the perspective of political science. Following a systematic review method, the study brings certain propositions, which place the philosophy of political science in the context of the metaphysical concept, based on the interaction between political ontology and epistemology. These constructs are by no means fixed though, and current controversies and discussions include the very definition of reality and its location at the bedrock of political science research. The paper then reviews these debates within the context of the dominant Western research paradigms (positivism, post-positivism, social constructionism, criticalism, pragmatism and postmodernism) and Eastern paradigms (Vedanta, Buddhist, Confucianism and Taoism). Each of these paradigms provides specific methods for viewing political phenomena in empirical contexts. The paper highlights the need to look at political phenomena from a diverse set of research paradigms taking emerging issues and case studies. Finally, the study gathers that the concern with these paradigms is important because it expands scholarship for the political science to progress paradigm in a diverse and interconnected world.

Keywords: Research, Paradigms, Philosophy, Political Science.

Introduction

Research philosophy has a vague connotation in social science. It is often manifested in terms of research paradigms, which are largely rooted in the transaction of knowledge with contested claims and counterclaims. The knowledge leads to reality, i.e., Gyān, and the process of gaining the Gyān is often described as Mīmāṃsā in Vedic philosophy. Political science research is also a part of the philosophical debate of Gyān as it entails a critical study of politics and power from different dimensions, including domestic, international, and comparative. Politics is a power niche embedded with access to power, its holding, negotiation, execution, and control. Analysis of political events in their given context is a tricky question when approaching reality. The research in political science entails understanding political ideas and transactions of ideologies that represent different institutions, policies, processes, and behaviours, as well as groups, classes, government, diplomacy, law, strategy, and war (1).

However, what research includes and what does not is a contested issue to delineate for the researchers working in political science. Because of the complex metaphysical construction of political reality coupled with nothing beyond 'politics', everything is a 'political construction.' However, the research in political science begins with the political worldview, which is levelled as research philosophy. The philosophy of research in this discipline is much needed in higher-level studies, including analyzing complex phenomena in society (2, 3). It draws questions about the trinity of metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology, further informing the formation of research paradigms and research methodology in political science. In this context, this paper is rooted in the research question: whether and how different paradigms of research philosophy can be interpreted from the disciplinary perspective of political science.

Methodology

The present study follows a systematic review method and synthesis writing technique relying entirely on secondary data and information. This approach, distinct from the traditional use of empirical data, allows for the review of multiple

scholarship works. Following a scientific protocol, the PRISMA model (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) was used throughout the systematic review and at the first stage, a hundred articles, papers and scientific readings were identified (4). After scrutinizing, 55 articles related to the topic of the study were selected using the words including; research, research philosophy, research paradigm, and political science. The following themes of research philosophies were critically analyzed and synthesized into conceptual frameworks cutting across the essential debates, arguments, and methodologies present in these readings on research philosophy; the ontological and epistemological perspectives; the various methodological paradigms available; and the relationship between theory and practice. As inclusion criteria concerned the articles, their relevance to the views on research philosophy, paradigms or methodologies in political science were included, while exclusion criteria excluded readings that were less relevant, contained outdated information or had inadequate academic tone.

By adopting a synthesis approach, the paper merges different voices to advance a scientific argumentation on the inherent relationship between philosophical speculation and methodological expansion. It offers theoretical frameworks, contested issues, and paradigmatic engagements in political science research, thereby broadening the consideration of topics and exploring the interconnection of philosophical considerations with the methodology of studying political phenomena. This, therefore, not only critically examines the epistemological and ontological foundations of political inquiry, but also makes a significant attempt to reformulate the paradigms informing the conduct of social science research. The paper presents a reflective discourse based on a critical pedagogy framework and links theory to the more significant methodological issues in political science and social research.

Results

Characterizing the Research in Political Science

Research has been defined from different perspectives, taking diverse interpretations of the research problem, the way of solutions, and the generation of knowledge. Research is a never-ending, non-linear, and helical process equipped with a systematic design, scientific method, logical propositions, valid instruments, and reliable findings. Research is a complex matrix that entails empirically contextual and ontologically diverse issues that are hard to generalize as more significant deductive conclusions (5). In political science, the research incorporates characteristics similar to those discussed above. However, the disciplinary characteristic is that it is equipped with political theories, political processes, and political ontologies. Political science research can be done on social, political, economic, cultural, developmental, or other issues. However, the central question is whether the methodological and theoretical approach to analyzing those issues should be based on political science. Therefore, it is a myth to conceive that political science research can only be done over any political event. The disciplinary nature of research in political science has been further crossing its boundaries and being compared to other social science disciplines, i.e., multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary. Political science research is not the sole property of political science, and it has been inclined to analyze the complexity of world affairs at macro and micro levels (6).

The subject matters for political science research, therefore, include social-cultural organizations, political organizations/ institutions, production systems, changing power order of society, political economic analysis of any event (local or at any levels), political culture and socialization, comparative state systems, governance, politics of representation, identity politics, globalization, migration, liberal/ neoliberal trend of society/ world, international relations, market (and its relations with the state), changing nature/ practice of socialism and capitalism, urbanization, civil society, political parties, state and non-state actors, politics of foreign aid and dependency, democracy (its nature, scope, and paradigms), politics of world tourism, changing class relations and nature of movements/ revolutions, politics of constitutionalism, politics of gender (gender relations, patriarchy and feminism), politics of education and health systems of society, and so on. Listing research agendas can be many more, though the scientific approach (methodology) is the most significant part of political science

research (7). Therefore, I would define research in political science as the scientific process of approaching reality, which encompasses either of the following three conditions (8): First, as a construction or building of new knowledge/ practice about any political phenomena; Second, as a deconstruction of existing knowledge/ practice of political science that could not function anymore in a new context; and/ or Third, as the re-construction of conventional knowledge (practice or theory) with the addition of new insights gained from the new context of the political world.

Research Philosophy in Political Science

In political science research, philosophical methods of inquiry into political events are largely state-centric political thoughts (9). The history of such thoughts can be broadly categorized into different categories, including Ancient Greece, Ancient China, Western (Medieval and modern), Eastern philosophy and political thoughts, and Statecraft (Western and Eastern). In a specific way, the key contributors to the philosophy of political science and research can be listed as Plato on ideas state; Ramayan (*Ramrajya*); Gandhi (*Swarajya* and non-violence); Aristotle (ethics, knowledge, and government); Cicero (law); Montesquieu (sovereignty and separation of power); Locke (democracy and rights); J.S. Mill (liberty); Machiavelli and Chanakya (Statecraft); Marx (Dialectics, materialism, and class struggle); John Rawls (justice as fairness); Amartya Sen (social/ economic justice and development as freedom); Max Weber (bureaucracy, legitimacy, Weberian state, and social class); Woodrow Wilson (democracy and war politics); William Kymlicka (multiculturalism and animal ethics); and Harold Nicolson (history and diplomacy).

The research philosophy in political science can be defined as approaching potential realities, their contexts, conditionality, and characteristics that are rooted/ associated with the political world (10). It can be either theoretical, empirical, or both, which is determined by the characteristics of reality and the analysis methodology. However, research philosophy in political science can be taken as a simulation of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. I have presented this in Table 1 and discussed it in the following sections.

Table 1: Research Philosophy and Their Questions in Political Science

	Major question	**Supportive questions**
Metaphysics	Is there politics? If not, what other?	What is the fundamental existence or no-existence of political events?
Ontology	What is politically real and unreal? (science of reality; seeks answer of what)	What is the nature of reality and how is it structured (singular or multiple, absolute or relative; objective or subjective)?
Epistemology	How do we know about the political reality? (Seeks answer of how and why?)	How do we know the reality of any political events (as real or unreal), or the science of knowledge of politics?
Axiology	How do we create values over political realties?	How do we make value systems and judgments about the nature of political events?
Methodology	How are the political realities and knowledge acquired?	How do we deduce the epistemologies into operational strategies (methods, tools and techniques) and how do we acquire the data/ information?

Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the construct of what is and what is not. It discusses the nature of reality and the manifestation of the existence of being before and after the perceived reality (11). Taking the root of these basic questions, some issues can be developed as metaphysical questions in the philosophy of political science research (12-14). First, there is a debate about how a political scientist can best explain the manifestation of political reality with different contexts, forms, and nature.

Second, a contestation also prevails in articulating the commonalities and differences between the

different kinds of being, their features, and how they differ from one another from a political science perspective. It is associated with the doubtful exploration of the things/ realities of the material and the theoretical world: What goes beyond political science and its philosophy? Third, an unanswered question might be about analyzing what makes a thing or any event political. What is its driving force in making or unmaking the 'political'? How does power affect the political nature of the material and theoretical world? Fourth, characterizing the state and its system is complicated and may encounter metaphysical mysticism, such as whether the states are eternal, fundamental, or provisional. Similarly, a question may lie whether the statecraft is a construct of human political motives (either in terms of consensus or coercion).

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology and epistemology can be considered the foundations upon which research design is set and built (15). In political science research, ontological considerations guide how researchers perceive and define political phenomena in terms of different realities they could carry or have been manifested with (16, 17). In its broader perspective, political ontology entails political beings to what seems to be political, exists politically and builds political reality to its approximation (18). However, a researcher should first take the ontological position, bracketing it into political subjectivism or political objectivism. While subjectivity belongs to the anti-positivist worldview, objectivity is rooted either in positivism (with certainty) or post-positivism (with possible falsification).

The subjectivism of political science philosophy conceives that reality is plural, dependent, and subjective. They can be constructed, deconstructed, and negotiated from the perspective of the 'listener, observer, and doer.' This position belongs to qualitative mainly as it cannot be quantified/ measured in exact terms, e.g., welfare state, good governance, etc. On the other hand, objectivism in political science assumes that political reality is singular/ factual, independent, and objective. It cannot be constructed, deconstructed, and negotiated with

the listener/ observer. Instead, objective reality exists as the object remains as it is. It belongs to quantitative methodology as it can be quantified/ measured in exact terms, e.g., voting trend, inclusion trend, etc.

Epistemology is often described as the science of knowledge and the process of knowing it as it exists (19). This informs that political epistemology is the theory of knowledge applied to politically relevant aspects or political dynamics of our lives or political systems (20, 21). For instance, assuming that one aim of politics should be to bring about just societies and a just world, the question of political epistemology will remain to answer whether and how to acquire knowledge of what is just.

Blended Issues for Ontology and Epistemology

The relationship between political ontology and epistemology is dialectical; one's reality matters to the reality of another in shaping the metaphyseal order of the political event. Their relationship is inseparable and unavoidable. However, the relationship between political ontology and epistemology is less addressed in political science research due to the subjectivity, sensitivity, and volatility of the political issues. A researcher can observe various issues illustrating the continuum of ontology and epistemology in political science research. For instance, the relationship between structure and agency; the causal and constitutive role of ideas in the determination of political outcomes; political systems and their constituent units; the relationship between mind (leader) and body (structure); the relationship between state and market, and the nature of the human (political) subject and their behavioural motivations.

While going into the depth of philosophical inquiry, political ontology seeks an answer to the what (real nature of things) by examining the things themselves. Similarly, epistemology often focuses on more than what, but how, questions we can answer with operational methodologies. That is why the ontological question (OQ) informs the epistemological question (EQ). For instance, operational deductions of OQ and EQ have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of Ontological and Epistemological Questions in Political Science Research

Ontological Question	Epistemological Question
What is politics? Is there something beyond politics?	How is the politics formed and operated? How can we know that as politics?
What are the constituents of politics, and how do they hang together? What general principles govern politics, politics, political change, and behaviour?	Why do its constituents make, and how do they hang together? How do the general principles govern the functioning of politics and its change and behaviour?
What drives political actors, and what kinds of capital, including political capacities, do them possess?	How and why do political actors enact? What are the ways of assessing those capitals and drives?
Do individual preferences and social institutions/ structures exist, and in what sense?	How do the individual preferences and social institutions/ structures matter in politics? How do they interact?
Is the politics historically and culturally inherited or contextual?	How is politics constructed historically, culturally, or contextually?

Discussion

Paradigms are philosophical standpoints. A paradigm can be understood as a method, model, or pattern for conducting research that indicates the researcher's worldview. It indeed rings in a political world primarily due to the nature of politics (and political science), which is changing and shifting gradually with the innovations of new knowledge and different practices. Therefore, a paradigm shift in political science can be articulated as a fundamental change in this scientific discipline's basic concepts, approaches, and empirical issues over time. The shifting of divine theory to the contract theory, the shifting of the monarchy to a republican system, and the drive of liberalism into neoliberalism can be some examples of paradigm shifts. Various types of such paradigms are popular in social science research. A political scientist can choose any of them or a mix of a few with a clear justification and implication (22-24). Political science researchers often debate which philosophical stances best suit the nature of political inquiry and the complexity of political phenomena. In the following discussion, I have illustrated different types of research paradigms and their respective philosophy from the political science perspective.

Positivism

Positivism is a typical study of single and objective reality. It is sometimes referred to as the 'scientific method' or 'scientific research,' which is "based on the rationalistic, empiricist philosophy (25) and "reflects a deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes"

(26). It takes political science as perfect, just as pure science does. Methodologically, it is inclined to the descriptive studies of quantitative method, experimental empiricism, realism, and structuralism. Advocates that neutral knowledge is possible in political science. Metaphyseal realism. For example, positivist political scientists might use surveys and statistical analysis to study public opinion on government policies.

- The causes of any political event will determine the consequences (effects or outcomes)
- Reality can be broken down into trim and specific levels of political measurement
- Empirical observation or sensual experience is dominant in defining the political reality
- The realities and manifestations of political events can be measured and verified
- The realities of the political world should be described 'as it is, 'not making any amendments or interpretations of the observer/ researcher.

In many political science issues, including international relations, realism is considered a very close paradigm to the positivist approach. The realist ontology believes that there are objective, external realities that exist independently of the observer, i.e., human perceptions. The researcher, therefore, aims to explore these objective realities in their research. For example, a realist might study trilateral power dynamics between China, India, and Nepal based on the assumption that

these power relationships are objectively conditioned in the international system.

Post-positivism

Post-positivism is a transitional move of positivism into the anti-positivism or metaphysical anti-realism. The reality of the political world is objective but can be questioned and doubted with a given context and sometimes falsified (27). It advocates that political science is not absolute and perfect, as there may be errors and incompleteness. In a way, post-positivists are critical realists. It is inclined to the subjective worldview, where realities of political science are treated as probable truths. However, most scholars agree that post-positivist epistemologies recognize the limitations of pure empiricism (or sensual knowledge) in political science while acknowledging the importance of further possibilities of realities. The post-positivist researchers may use qualitative and quantitative methods while remaining critical of any claims of absolute objectivity with valid approaches (28). With these, I offer the following claims of post-positivism in political science research:

- **Political Ontology:** A reality exists in the objective world, but, unlike positivists, reality can be assessed or known only imperfectly or partially just as 'probable truth.'
- **Political Epistemology:** Post-positivists believe that human knowledge about the political event or political process is based not on a priori assessments or more significant deductive conclusions from an objective individual but upon human assumptions and estimations (i.e., conjectures).
- **Relation to Political Positivism:** Post-positivism is not a form of political relativism, and it generally recalls objective reality as positivists do. However, it is skeptical and rejects determinism. This is how political realities are relatively distributed and not absolute.
- **Reasoning:** Political science research is largely deductive, i.e., reasoning from the above, along with the essentialism of grand theories at the macro-level analysis of political science. This is followed by the predetermined hypothesis and theoretical framework.

Social Constructionism

This paradigm argues for the multiplicity of realities and subjective metaphysics, which are socially constructed (or deconstructed). The epistemological position of constructionism is interpretivist. Therefore, the paradigm of social constructionism is also used synonymously with 'interpretivism' (29). It argues that reality is not given within the object, rather than a subject of interpretation in different ways by different observers in diverse socio-political contexts. Quantitative and mixed designs are rarely used in social constructionism, as they are primarily rooted in qualitative designs.

In political science, constructivist ontology believes that political realities are socially formed, deformed, and shaped by human perceptions, ideas, and interactions rather than predetermined by the 'objective reality.' They might study how norms and identities influence political events (culture, socialization, and behaviour, including international relations) or how shared meanings and values in society shape political institutions. This is suggested by different literature (30-32). The key positions of social constructionism in political science research can be summarized as:

Knowledge about the political world is not absolute and objective; it is constructed through subjective conditions, including social interactions and cultural and historical constructions. Politics is the key driver of these interactions (among the people and between the people and the state).

The research of political science needs to be shifted from grand narratives to micro-narratives (specific observations) as there is a weakening relevancy and scope of the metatheories of Marxism, functionalism, liberalism, and democracy. Yet, there is the possibility of generating specific theories at the micro-level of political contexts.

There is no single and absolute reality. Gender, race, caste, and class, for example, are different social constructs. These constructs are valid in the given contexts only (with different constructions/ reconstructions or deconstructions).

The research aims to understand particular situations or phenomena in detail and multiple ways (understand the meaning and experiences of

research participants rather than giving conclusions and leveling or quantifications).

Inductive reasoning from the below, i.e., constructivists more often start with a broad question of the political world and allow participants to drive the research. It rejects the essentialism of predetermined hypotheses and theoretical frameworks.

Transformative and Critical Paradigm

A critical research paradigm argues that realities are multiple and subjective, shaped by social, political, cultural, and other values. Knowledge lies between individuals and within groups, so its nature is politically inclined to domination and discursion (33). The hegemony of big data in research significantly disagrees with criticalism (34). Critical theorists often adopt a different ontological stance, emphasizing the role of power, ideology, and historical context in shaping political reality. They might examine how certain groups dominate or oppress others and how social structures maintain inequality. Critical researchers often challenge dominant power structures and narratives. They may adopt a more reflexive approach, acknowledging their positions and biases as researchers to uncover hidden power dynamics and marginalized voices. From a political science perspective, the philosophical position of the critical paradigm can be justified as follows:

Political Ontology: Multiple realities emerged with discourse/ power rooted in the status quo of political, cultural, social, and economic oppressions (advocacy of transformative knowledge)

Political Axiology: Collaborative learning; advocacy for change and justice; emergence of researcher and research participants as change agents of movement

Political Epistemology: linkage of power; knowledge is socially and historically located

Methodology Used: qualitative or mixed (the best way of dialogic with dialectical)

The critical research paradigm is rooted in critical theory (Frankfort School, critical theorists, and neo-Marxists). It is also called the participatory and advocacy paradigm due to its collaborative nature and the pursuit of raising voices for policy reforms and against the existing domination. A critical paradigm, also called a political paradigm, considers politics in the gravity of inquiry. Therefore, criticalism is defined as the

advocacy perspective and participatory worldview which holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda (35). The inquiry must be intertwined with politics and a political agenda, advocating an action agenda or intervention for immediate reform or transformation. Such changes are claimed in favor of the lives of the participants and the institutions in which the individuals work or live (and occasionally the lives of researchers, too). At the outset, I would offer the following three claims in the critical paradigm of political science research:

- Questioning dominant cultural/ hegemonic narratives and promoting the voices of oppressed/ marginalized groups that are far from the mainstream politics/ history (subaltern studies)
- Understanding power and inequality (there is uneven power to reproduce elites for the continuation of the existing regime of socio-economic inequalities)
- Transforming the existing power relations for greater social justice and equality with a new political order/ regime (not only understating; but how to empower and transform the socio-political issues)

A critical perspective assumes that political realities are created with different political hegemons and political regimes and systems (36). Following this, the primary methodological agenda of critical paradigm in political science may include (but is not limited to hegemonic power, regime, identity politics, political systems, privilege, cultural supremacy, identity, racism, oppression, patriarchy, heteronormativity, intersectionality, sexism, queer theory, social movements, Indigenous knowledge/ technology, etc.

Pragmatism

The paradigm of pragmatism claims that reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, and interpreted. Therefore, the best method to use is the one that solves the problem in the given context. Pragmatists prefer efficient and immediate 'contextualization' of the research context rather than digging into depth and investigating long-term research. Pragmatist researchers prioritize practical solutions and flexible methods (37). They are flexible in methodological approaches to address complex political issues effectively. Research problems in political science based on the pragmatic paradigm offer practical solutions,

reassuring us about the effectiveness of these methodologies. It focuses on use-value in decision-making and the real-world applications of governance, policies, and politics, such as conflict, digital governance, and citizenship.

In political science research, pragmatist worldview is such a philosophical position that views research as a tool for prediction, problem-solving, and action rather than detailing and interpreting reality. Meanwhile, I would propose the following three propositions of pragmatists in political science research:

- There is a cause of the political event, and it can be solved in the given context;
- Socio-cultural problems can be solved with a flexible methodological approach where the research is being conducted;
- The nature of political reality is impermanent, so a researcher need not worry about its nature, prioritizing the outcomes and achievements more than the process.

Post-modernism as a New Research Paradigm

Postmodern epistemology is based on postmodern ontology. It urges no permanent existence of reality and its pure structure (38). It reflects that the present world is tired of big data and needs to move for the small data within particular historical, political, and cultural discourses. In political science research, it is a fundamental shift from the conventional wisdom of macro politics (including grand theories) to micro-politics (including small theories and narrations). It also tends to the post-structural era where grand narratives or big solutions are doubtful. The rise of populism, along with new political parties and leaders or actors, is another characteristic feature of this era, which shapes populism study in political science (39). As suggested by different studies (40-42), political science research can be asserted with the following four paradigmatic positions of postmodernism:

First, the authenticity of political realities or claims may be and may not be too (theory of probable truth). The reality is diverse, plural, and constantly in flux. The concept of singular and fundamental reality is a falsification of political science.

Second, the science is fuzzy and superficial; so is the case of political science. The science of politics does not carry such a deep meaning and permanence of reality. Discovering an absolute truth or knowledge in political science through any research is a myth. The claims of researchers are just "claims" to the truth until a more widely accepted claim arises. The power structure of society can shape the validity of such a claim. As the power changes, the discourse of society will change, and hence, the validity of political claims ceases. Third, the knowledge claims of grand narratives or theories in political science are weakening. They are subject to debate and question, so political science should not only study the state and its systems. This science needs to focus on micro-narratives, small theories, and differentiated experiences, such as people's daily lives, changing power structures, Indigenous culture and knowledge systems, language, and art. Fourth, the meaning and experience of political realities are relative and open-ended, and meaning is more important for understanding, though it cannot be judged and fixed at once.

Employing Different Paradigms in Empirical Contexts, Research Paradigms and Examples of Different Issues in Political Science Research

Paradigms in political science are not isolated entities. They are intricately interconnected with methodological approaches. Case studies, a common research strategy in political science, provide a valuable tool for analyzing diverse political processes and phenomena. These paradigms offer unique perspectives on governance, policy-making, and political behaviour. For instance, positivists delve into measurable structures and cause and effect, dissecting the extensive mathematical formula of the mode of analysis. Constructivists, on the other hand, are more focused on the social construct of political occurrences. With pragmatic and critical paradigms, researchers are equipped to respond to practical problems and analyze power relations in contemporary society, thereby enhancing the methodological and theoretical perspectives of political science. These model applications ensure a comprehensive analysis of political systems in their local, national, and international contexts.

Positivism: A survey study of national voter turnout in the national election to establish the correlations between the socio-economic variables about the level of political participation.

Post-Positivism: A study that uses quantitative data to understand the antecedents of media framing and how such framing influences people's perceptions of government policies through qualitative analysis.

Constructivism: Delving into the profound influence of cultural narratives on national identity, particularly in the context of shaping foreign policies among nations.

Pragmatism: Showcasing the successful application of participatory governance approaches in effectively managing urban infrastructure problems, as evidenced by interviews and performance indicators.

Criticism: Criticizing power relations and institutional racism about voting rights and discriminative electoral systems with the lens of systematic marginality.

Postmodernism: Unmasking relations of power and fragmented realities in constructing the meaning of 'fake news' in social media politics.

Non-Western Perspectives and Paradigms in Political Science Research

Various regions of the world offer distinct research philosophies that serve as vantage points, challenging the dominance of Western political science. Vedanta, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism present unique epistemological and ontological perspectives on governance, power, and society. Vedanta, for instance, advocates for holism as a means of comprehending the functioning of existence. It suggests that politics and political science, morality and spirituality are interconnected; politics, therefore, should be rooted in the pursuit of the good and truth, and the concept of dharma or duty (43). Similarly, Buddhism, as a political system, highlights the impermanence and interdependency of nature, and the Middle Way in conflict resolution. It promotes ethical governance, with its principles of impermanence, interdependency, and the Middle Way of non-discrimination and harmonic national/ international relations (44). These perspectives replace the traditional structural-/positivist-paradigm mentalities that dominate dogmatic-political research with a sensitivity for self-reflection and the context in which these studies are conducted and should be conducted, offering a transformative potential for the field.

Two additional sources of early Chinese teachings, Confucianism and Taoism, contribute to the discourse by focusing on harmony, morality, and flexibility in leadership. Confucianism underscores an ethical concept of governance where other relationships should also be well balanced, with the main virtues being benevolence (ren) and righteousness (yi) across governance (45). Taoism, on the other hand, supports non-action or non-interference (Wu Wei) and staying in harmony with the natural way (Dao with Ying and Yang). It advocates for efficient and flexible structures with minimal interference from the authorities to align with societal and environmental cycles (46). Together, these perspectives offer comprehensive ways of knowing, including process-relational, ethical, and spiritual knowing, challenging Western epistemological imperialism in the discipline. This reassures scholars of politics that they can advance epistemologies that are not only culturally sensitive but also comprehensive in their approaches to political investigation and administration.

Critical Issues and Implications of the Paradigms

The evolution of political science research paradigms, from positivism to postmodernism and from positivism and interpretivism, is a significant and engaging aspect of our field. These changes have allowed us to explore modern political issues such as digital governance, global crises, and social media politics in a more comprehensive and nuanced manner. The historically influenced early political science research, the positivist approach to scholarship, predisposes the students to quantify research questions, expecting to identify normative relationships between variables. This paradigm is functional when studying digital governance when its efficiency can be assessed with the help of such approaches as analyzing the systems of e-governance, Big data, algorithmic decision-making, and performance of digital public services (47). Still, the challenges of positivism through the reductionist approach to the phenomena under analysis have stimulated the emergence of a new paradigm, interpretivism, emphasizing the meanings and cultural framework of political behaviours. Thus, in social media politics, interpretive perspectives can enrich the understanding of the place of narratives, discourse

and identity construction within the communities, which the quantitative methods do not reveal.

Postmodernism extends the field of political science studies because it does not recognize meta-narratives and truths that previous paradigms presuppose. It focuses on the dynamics and distribution of power, plurality and relativity of politics and political matters. This point of view is most relevant to global problems associated with the climate shift and pandemic because governance structures are developed and exist in multicultural, political, and institutional contexts. It also portrays structural discrimination, a form of discrimination that is embedded in the structure of society, using Information Communication Technologies and social media interfaces to sustain and increase inequality (48). Integrating the positivist, interpretivist, and postmodernist paradigms of political science research is beneficial because many modern-day phenomena are complex and cannot be fully understood and addressed by one particular research paradigm.

Conclusion

Metaphysically, nothing lies beyond the politics. However, political science research is constantly evolving. The paper articulates a thorough discussion and synthesis of evolution and implications of political science research from the perspectives of different contrasting paradigms. Yet, there is a growing emphasis on the importance of validity and reliability in political science research to investigate the reproducibility and replicability of scientific knowledge (49). In this context, the characteristics of contemporary political science research include an increasing focus on social media research (50), the use of a mixed method approach along with a critique of the methods (51, 52), and the exploration of the gender dimension in political science research (53, 54). Innovation of scientific methods and techniques and the assessment of big data in the digital age is another critical issue in this regard, which tends to shift the diverse philosophical paradigms from macro to micro political contexts. However, challenges related to ontological coherence are critically important in political science research (55). The most pertinent formula for the research in political science in university education is that a research paradigm is neither superior nor inferior; rather, they have distinct ontological roots, sometimes never comparable.

Instead, they have certain contestations, strengths, and weaknesses. The ontology and epistemology of each paradigm need to be justified by the research problem and conceptualization of reality in the political world. Therefore, this paper concludes that the paradigmatic shifting of political science research and triangulation of different scientific methods should be welcomed in this complex and diverse world of political realities. This study suggests that opportunities for future research should aim at studying micro-politics, party systems and gender relations, digital capitalism, big data, and neoliberal globalization. However, these areas require well-thought-out paradigmatic discussions and better political science theories for critical analyses.

Abbreviation
Nil.

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This paper is solely based on the single authorship of the writer who has contributed to conceptualization, data analysis, and manuscript writing for this study.

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