

Comparative Politics: Nature & Scope

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Abstract

The paper attempts to focus on the nature, scope and utility of comparative study of politics. so that one will be able to look for queries like what is that gives comparative political analysis its specificity: its characteristics, elements, constituents, perspective, purpose and ideological structural/contextual framework within which these are realized what constitutes its scope that is the range, field or area of activity that it encompasses and, its utility, i.e. its usefulness and relevance for enhancing our understanding of political reality or how does comparative study help us understand this reality efficiently. For proper understanding of the nature, scope and utility of a comparative study of politics one has to look at the latter's development historically and see how its attributes evolved with changing time, contexts and concerns.

Keywords: Comparative Politics, Empirical Approach, Traditional Approach, Inter-disciplinary Investigation, Characteristics of Comparative Politics, Political system.

Introduction

Comparative politics involves conscious comparison in analyzing political experience, institutions, behavior and process of major systems of government in a comprehensive way. It is concerned with significant, regularities, and differences in the working of political institutions and in a pattern of political behavior. Comparative politics has appeared as a subject of momentous significance on account of this vital reason that a great deal of experimentation is now going on with new approaches, new definitions, new research tools. Probably the main reason for the present intellectual ferment is a widespread feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction with the tradition descriptive approaches to the subject.

Aristotle was the first political philosopher who had carried out study of 158 constitutions of the world to understand different political systems, comparative study of various structure and functions of political systems. Even the classical political thinkers, from Aristotle and Machiavelli to Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, made an effort to construct a set of theoretical propositions that could explain political life; that is, the fundamental of political obligation and its consequences. The classical political theory started with a particular conception of human nature. With different tools and with a different data-set for one, we have some information about how real democracies work in practice, all these micro models are, in the end, grounded on specific assumptions about human behavior. These assumptions are still deeply contested in comparative politics: They span from a purely instrumental conception of political sectors intent to analyze survival and maximizing power to a notion of individuals that may consent to particular structures contingent on others cooperating to, finally, visions of politics that appeal to the inherent sociability of humans.

Comparative politics frequently entailed not making comparisons but studying the politics of at international level, it is becoming a key contributor to empirical or scientific enquiry as contradictory to normative or philosophical or traditional political enquiry. For organizational and administrative levels, comparative politics is likely to remain a separate field in the discipline of the subject as in US. But from an epistemological point of view, comparative politics is turning into a true science of politics.

The contributions of David Easton, Gabriel A. Almond, James C. Coleman, Karl Deutsch, G.B. Powell, Harold Lasswell, Robert A. Dahl, Edward Shils, Harry Eckstein, David Apter, Lucian W. Pye, Sidney Verba, Myron Weiner is rightly be tagged as the mark of an increasingly sophisticated phase in the growth of comparative politics. The political scientist belonging to this phase have made use of interrelated set of concepts for the sake of presenting their contributions on the basis of comparative analyses, though



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They have provided a specialized vocabulary in their own ways. According to David Easton talks of inputs, outputs, demands, gatekeepers, supports and stresses, environment, feedback, values, critical ranges and political authorities. At the same time Gabriel Almond offers a set of input and output functions; Deutsch borrows a cybernetic language which applies to political systems the concept of feedback of various types—autonomy, memory, load, lag, lead and gain, receptors, communication, selective screening of information and so on.

In simple words comparative politics involves a comparative study of political system either as a whole or through a comparative analysis of their structure and functions. Traditionally it involved a comparative study of various political institutions of different governments of mostly western world. But comparative politics, in contemporary involves a comprehensive, actual and systematic study of various political phenomenon's found in different political system with a view to enrich knowledge of politics and for developing scientific political the

Comparative Politics Characteristics

The subject of comparative politics as developed, in the latest phase, has these main characteristics Analytical and Empirical Research

This contemporary comparative politics studies give more emphasis on empirical approach. This method is no related with descriptive studies. It includes analyzing, empirically and analytically. It deals with actual activities of governments and their functions and structures. In short it stands for scientific and empirical studies of politics. Facts of human political behavior is the main concern. The political scientists belonging to the this phase 'has definitely enlarged the field of our enquiry In this realm of comparative government political scientist turned from a concern for the evaluation of governmental forms to a pure description. By and large they retained the analytical categories developed by their predecessors, but began to shape their meanings to fit descriptive rather than normative study

Study of Infra – Structures

Comparative politics involves analyzing the real behavior of groups, individuals, structures, sub-structure, systems and sub-systems in connection with the external environment, in which the individual behavior manifests. The study of comparative politics is not confined to the formal structures of government as was the trend with the traditional political scientists. If instead of 'government' the term 'political system' is used, naturally it becomes a part of the entire social system and the input-output process includes all those forces of the environment that have their effect on the decision-making process. Thus, the role of political parties and pressure groups, for example, becomes as significant as the role of legislatures and executives in the study of modern political systems. It totally rejects the classical or traditional way of dealing with any problem. It is confined to the study of formal structure of government in terms of legal powers and functions. The study of decision making process is an integral part study.

Study of Developing Political Systems

One more significance of the study of comparative politics is the emphasis on the politics of the developing and developed societies, in contemporary it lays great stress on the study of political system of developed societies. The study of comparative government is no longer a study of the selected European or American governments; it is as much a study of developed western governments as those of the developing political systems of the poor and backward countries of the Afro-Asian and Latin American world. The importance in this regard is given to the fact that more and more attention will be given to the study of politics of developed world for the reason of making this subject of universal importance. It has been accepted by all the political scientists that comparative politics must include all political systems of our times developed as well as developing. In short Europe as well as non Europe, minor as well as major. Every political system should be a laboratory which can provide information and data, which can help in the formation of theory building in the subject of comparative politics.

Focus on Inter – Disciplinary Focus

Modern political science gives first preference to the inter-disciplinary investigation. In other words the study of comparative politics involves political process with the assistance of knowledge of sociology, anthropology, economics and other social sciences. A study of new topics like political development, political modernization, political socialization, political change, political leadership and the like shows that now political science has become the application of sociological and psychological analysis to the study of the behavior of government and other political structures. Political behavior is a part of a general social behavior and is intimately related to the all aspects of human behavior. As it can be systematically analyzed only with reference to the other sciences.

Value – Free Political Theory

The subject of political science has lost its normative aspect or Value – laden study and assumed empirical dimensions Or fact-laden study in the sphere of comparative politics. The result is that value - laden political theory has replaced fact- laden political theory. Only those values were accepted which were scientifically demonstrated. It involves the study of what is and what should be. Hence it rejects the normative prescriptive approach of the traditional political science. Hence comparative politics was confined with study of constitutions and political institutions. In other words it involves study of European and British constitutions and emphasis was given to foreign governments rather than comparative politics. This method includes collection of facts rather than to testing of hypothesis about political behavior.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to explain the nature and scope of comparative politics and how comparative method of political structure, systems and sub systems help to constitute relevant political theories. How this particular method includes

collection of facts rather than to testing of hypothesis about political behaviour.

Conclusion

In conclusion comparative politics is the study of similarities, regularities and differences of systems and sub systems structures at international level. It involves struggle for power in any organisation. The search for making comparisons is central point of study in comparative politics.

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