CHAPTER 2
Comparing Political Systems
Why We Compare

- Alexis de Toqueville
  - Comparison is fundamental
  - Real-World situations
- Comparison inherent in past figures
  - Aristotle compared Greek city-states
  - Dahl compared characteristics of upbringing of political systems
- End of the Cold War
Why We Compare

- Governments grappling with many issues
  - Preservation of the environment
  - Opportunity and economic security
  - Conflict between ethnic groups and beliefs
- Many issues spill across nation’s borders
  - Allows us to formulate general theories
How We Compare

- 3 ways of studying politics: describe it, explain it, and predict it
- Political relationships are put in causal terms
How We Compare

- Demographic Studies
  - “N” studies
    - Large number of people
    - Variety of cases of researchers
    - I.e. form of government, democracy of dictatorship, income per capita
  - “n” studies
    - Small group of people – (case studies)
    - Identification of particularities and clinical details
3 General Concepts to Comparative Politics

- **System** - object of having moving parts, interacting with a setting or environment
- **Structure** - specialized agencies like parliaments, bureaucracies, administrative agencies, & courts
- **Functions** - enable govt. to formulate, implement, & enforce policies which reflect goals
Systems: Structure & Function

Terms:

- **Government/States** - policy making parts of political systems
- **Political Systems** - set of institutions and agencies concerned with formulating and implementing collective goals of a society or of groups within it
- **Political Regime** - structural-functional policy configuration governments take on at different times

Generate causes and consequences of political change by comparing countries at different historical periods
Systems: Structure & Function

- Structural Functionalism
  - an approach to politics that discovers how a political system functions, and is somewhat biased in favor of the status quo, since it describes a set of institutions at a particular time

- Dynamic Developmental Approach
Political Systems exist in BOTH a domestic and international environment

Ex: America (political system with domestic environment)
- rise of high-tech info based economy & increase in international trade
- composition of labor force dramatically changed
- improvements in education level of pop.
- transformed social bases of party system
Structure and Functions

- 6 Types of Political Structures
  - Political Parties
  - Interest Groups
  - Legislatures
  - Executives
  - Bureaucracies
  - Courts

Political structures can’t be used to compare between political systems because the structures have different functions.
Structure and Functions

- **Britain**
  - Ceremonial executive - monarch
  - Political Executive - Prime minister
    - Has policy making power
  - Legislative Body - House of Commons (key in policymaking)

- **China**
  - No ceremonial executive
  - State council
    - Supervised by the general secretary of Communist party
  - Legislative Body - National People’s Congress (only meets to ratify decisions made by Communist Party)
Structures and Functions

- Britain
  - Competitive party system
- Trade Unions
  - Interest groups play role in polity and economy

- China
  - Only Communist Party controls political process
- Trade Unions
  - Have to be part of Communist Party
Structures and Functions

- Process Functions play a direct role in making policy
  - Interest articulation -> Interest
  - Aggregation -> Policy Making
  - Policy Implementation -> Adjudication

Individuals decide what they want to get out of politics and the political process begins.
Structures and Functions

- For the political system to be effective, policy alternatives need to be created that will have political support.
- Policies are then considered, government backs one policy nad policymaking takes place

Policy enforced → Implementation → Adjudication (if challenged)
Structures and Functions

- Process functions are performed by political structures such as:
  - Parties
  - Legislatures
  - Political executives
  - Bureaucracies
  - Courts
Structures and Functions

- The significance of the structural functional approach is that it shows that the institution does not have a monopoly over function.

- **System Functions** will determine whether or not the system will be maintained or changed.
Structures and Functions

- **Terms:**
  - **Political Socialization** - involves families, schools, communications, media, churches, and political structures that develop, reinforce and transform attitudes of political significance in the society.
  - **Political Recruitment** - selection of people for political activity and government offices.
  - **Political Communication** - Flow of info through the society and various structures that make up political system.
  - **Outputs** - Implementations of political process.
  - **Policy Functions** - The substantive impacts on the society, the economy and the culture.
  - **Outcomes** - of all political activities result in new inputs, new demands for legislation or administrative action, and in an increase/decrease in amount of support given to political system and incumbent officeholders.
Structures and Functions

- Why Use Functional Categories?
  - To determine how institutions in different countries compare in the making and implementation of different kinds of public policy.
An Illustrative Comparison: Russia in 1985 & 1998

- Figure 2.4 & Figure 2.5

- 2 revolutionary changes:
  - end of single-party political system dominated by communist party
  - dissolution of Soviet Union --> 15 Republics
An Illustrative Comparison: Russia in 1985 & 1998

- **1985 Soviet Union**
  - Communist Party
  - General Secretary most powerful
  - No independent party involvement
  - Little Parliament involvement

- **1998 Russia**
  - Boris Yeltsin
  - Parliament involvement rises
  - Independent political parties rise
  - Communist Party loses power
An Illustrative Comparison: Russia in 1985 & 1998

- Structural Formal Approach
  - Enables us to examine how similar functions are performed in different countries, or in the same country at two different points in time
The Policy Level: Performance, Outcome, and Evaluation

- How does the structure and function of a government work with the interest of the people?
  - Structural/functional differences determine the give and take between politics & environment
The Policy Level:
Performance, Outcome, and Evaluation

- First...
  - input, support, and work
    - citizens and political leaders
  - outputs (extractions, distributions, regulations, symbolic acts)
    - government

- Factors that affect political effectiveness
  - government efficiency
  - corruption
  - underlying cultural, economic and technology
ELMO ❤️ ‘s Comp Govt!