

# CHAPTER 2

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## Comparing Political Systems

# Why We Compare

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- 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

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- 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

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

# How We Compare

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- 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

# Systems: Structure & Function

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- 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

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- 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

# Systems: Structure & Function

- 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)

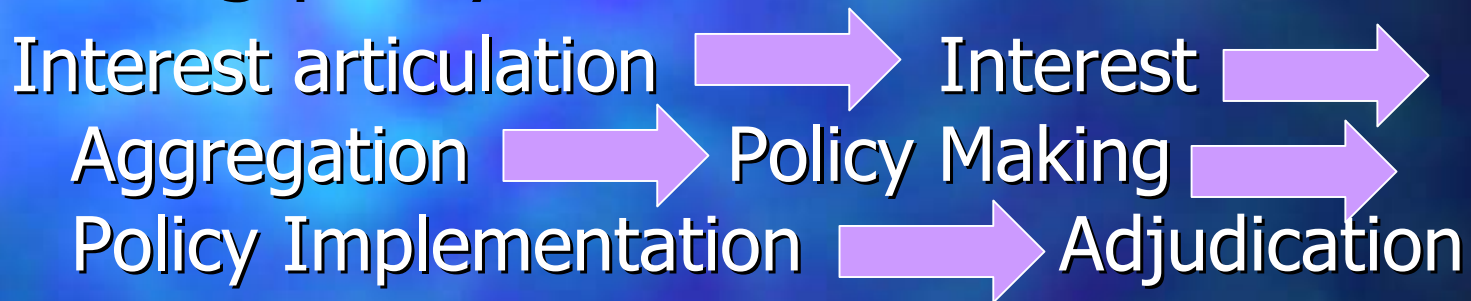
# Structures and Functions

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- 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



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 and policymaking takes place

Policy enforced  Implementation   
Adjudication (if challenged)

# Structures and Functions

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

# Structures and Functions

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- 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 & 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

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- 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

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- 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

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## ■ 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

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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!

