

System, Process, and Policy

# Comparative Politics

Gabriel A. Almond

G. Bingham Powell, Jr.

SECOND EDITION

AN ANALYTIC STUDY

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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*Under the Editorship of*

**GABRIEL A. ALMOND**

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## Preface

THE TWELVE YEARS which have elapsed since the publication of the first edition of *Comparative Politics* have been highly productive years for political science research and theory. In the first edition we spoke of an intellectual revolution in the study of comparative government. This revolution consisted of a fourfold innovative search for (1) a more comprehensive coverage of the variety of human experiments with politics, (2) a more realistic and less formal-institutional approach to political description and analysis, (3) greater rigor and precision in our descriptive and theoretical efforts, and (4) more adequate theoretical frameworks to encompass and order this growing body of knowledge. We are fortunate in being able to draw in this edition upon many of the fine studies produced in pursuit of these goals in the last decade.

This book is not a marginally revised edition. It has been rewritten from first to last. We have attempted to incorporate the newer literature of the discipline of comparative politics as it begins to move into the 1980s. Yet the reader familiar with the first edition will recognize the clear continuities in the present version. The intellectual structure in the earlier work has been more fully elaborated, and analytic approaches proposed then are more completely implemented now.

We spoke of three levels of political functions in the 1966 edition. In this book the three-level approach has provided the organizing principle of the work as a whole. After an introductory discussion of political culture and political structure in Part I, we proceed from *system* analysis in Part II to *process* analysis in Part III to *policy* analysis in Part IV. In Part I we define what we mean by political culture and political structure, and specify their varieties and forms. We then discuss in Part II the principal system maintenance and adaptation functions of socialization, recruitment, and communication. In Part III we define and elaborate on the conversion or process functions of interest articulation, aggregation,

policy making, and implementation. This part deals with the varieties of political structures that formulate and combine political demands and supports, convert them into authoritative policies, and implement them in the domestic and foreign environment. We describe and analyze such structures as interest groups, political parties, political executives, legislatures, and bureaucracies.

Part IV, dealing with policy, represents the most notable change in the book. This aspect of politics — capabilities, outputs, and outcomes — was treated briefly in one chapter in the first edition. In the present book we treat output and outcome in separate chapters and introduce rich empirical materials descriptive of the political performance of varieties of political systems — advanced industrial and developing ones, democratic and authoritarian ones. A chapter on political development discusses the dilemmas and strategies of third world nations in system, process, and policy terms. A final chapter deals with the important question of evaluating the political characteristics of nations, again in system, process, and policy terms.

This threefold analytic structure enables the reader to move easily and logically from institution to institution and from process to process without losing the essential thread of connection and meaning. In a discussion of political parties, for example, the reader is not simply confronted with descriptive detail but is led back to the socioeconomic and political phenomena which help explain the characteristics of a particular party system on the one hand, and led forward to some of the policy consequences of that party system on the other. The same approach illuminates our discussions of political socialization, recruitment, policy making, and implementing processes and institutions. It is our intention to sustain the reader as he seeks to see the connection among the human meanings of political processes.

The new edition also reflects intellectual growth in the way it deals with problems of explanation, understanding, and interpretation of political phenomena. In the first edition we stressed sociological, anthropological, and psychological modes of analysis, seeking to explain the characteristics of politics in terms of constraining social structural and cultural conditions. In the present edition, the political system as often becomes the independent variable and the social and international environment the dependent one, as we elaborate our treatment of public policy. Our discussion of policy and its consequences leads us to adopt a political economy approach in a fuller sense of the term, dealing with political structure and process from a creative perspective and elaborating the consequences of political choice.

Thus, from a methodological point of view, the second edition provides an interface for political phenomena with the analytic approaches

of sociology, psychology, and anthropology on the one hand and economics and philosophy on the other. Only this full range of analytic modes makes it possible to capture the significance of the realm of politics, that which shapes and constrains it, but more importantly the moral opportunities and potentialities which it holds out to humanity.

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**PART I**

**Introduction**



## CHAPTER I

# An Overview

IT MAY BE HELPFUL to introduce at the outset the principal concepts we use in this book. They will be elaborated and illustrated in later chapters. But here they are presented in compact form and in logical order so that they may serve as a guide to what follows, as a way of relating the various chapters to one another. We shall also spell out more fully our approach to comparative analysis and its uses in description and theory in comparative politics.

### THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The principal concept is the political system. The term *political system* has become very common in the titles of recent texts and monographs in comparative politics. The older works used such terms as *government*, *nation*, or *state* to describe what we call a political system. The new terminology involves more than a change in style; it reflects a new way of looking at politics. It includes some new names for old things and some new terms that refer to activities and processes not formerly recognized as aspects of politics.

The older terms — *state*, *government*, *nation* — are limited by legal and institutional meanings. They direct attention to a particular set of institutions usually found in modern Western societies. If one believes that the study of these institutions is the proper and sole concern of comparative politics, one can avoid many problems, including the thorny question of limiting the subject matter of the discipline. But the costs of such an approach are high. The role played by formal governmental institutions, such as legislatures and courts, varies greatly. In many societies, particularly non-Western ones, they may play a less important role than other institutions and processes will. And in all societies, their role will be shaped and limited by informal groups, political attitudes, and a multitude of interpersonal relationships. If political science is to deal

effectively with political phenomena in all kinds of societies, regardless of culture, degree of modernization, and size, a more comprehensive framework of analysis is needed.

To use *political system* as our most general term does not mean that we view the older language as obsolete. *State*, *government*, and *nation* are useful to refer to more limited or special aspects of politics. *State* connotes institutional specificity, authority, and legitimacy. *Government* has slightly different formal-legal-institutional connotations. A *nation* is a political system in which the citizens share a sense of historic identity and destiny. We shall use these terms when we discuss these specific aspects of political systems and political development. But the concept of political system has acquired such wide currency because it directs attention to the entire scope of political activities within a society. It is also an ecological concept, emphasizing the interactions between the political sphere and the environment.

#### THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF POLITICS

What is the political system? How are its boundaries defined? What gives the political system its special identity? Many political scientists have dealt with these questions; and although the precise language of their definitions varies considerably, there is some consensus. Common to most definitions is the association of the political system with legitimate physical coercion. Easton speaks of the "authoritative allocation of values"; Lasswell and Kaplan, of "severe deprivations"; Dahl, of "power, rule and authority."<sup>1</sup> All these definitions imply the rightful power to punish, to enforce, to compel. We agree with Max Weber that legitimate force is the thread that runs through the action of the political system, giving it special importance and coherence as a system.<sup>2</sup> The political authorities, and only they, have some generally accepted right in a given territory to utilize coercion and to command obedience based upon it.

Thus, the demands that enter the political system are all related to legitimate physical compulsion, whether they call for war or for the taking of real property for recreational facilities. The policies of the political system are also related to legitimate compulsion, however remote the relationship may be. Thus, public recreational facilities are

<sup>1</sup> David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 130 ff.; David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 50 ff.; Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 5 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 77-78.



usually supported by taxation, and any violation of the regulations governing their use is a legal offense. When we speak of the political system, we include all the interactions that affect the use of legitimate physical coercion. The political system includes not only governmental institutions, such as legislatures, courts, and administrative agencies, but *all structures in their political aspects*. Among these are traditional structures, such as kinship ties and caste groups; anomic phenomena, such as riots; and nongovernmental organizations, such as parties, interest groups, and communications media.

We are not, then, saying that the political system is concerned solely with force, violence, or compulsion; rather, its relation to coercion is its distinctive quality. Political elites and citizens are usually concerned with goals such as national expansion or security, social welfare, increased popular participation in politics, and the like. The political system is not the only system that makes rules and enforces them, but its rules and enforcements may be backed up by compulsion.

There are societies in which the accepted power to use physical compulsion is widely diffused: shared by family, clan, religious bodies, or other groups, or taken up privately, as in the feud or duel. But even these societies are political systems, and they are still comparable with those polities in which there is something approaching a monopoly of legitimate physical coercion. In any political system, moreover, when disagreement exists about the circumstances of using coercion or about the nature of the legitimate authorities, one may assume that there exists a challenge to the regime and a potentially serious political conflict.

#### SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENTS

If what we have said defines the "political" half of our concept of political system, what do we mean by "system"? A system implies some interdependence of parts and some kind of boundary between it and its environment. By interdependence we mean that when the properties of one component in a system change, all other components and the system as a whole are affected. Thus, if the rings of an automobile erode, the car burns oil, the functioning of other aspects of the system deteriorates, and the power of the car declines. Or, as another example, there are times in the growth of organisms when some change in the endocrine system influences the overall pattern of growth, the functioning of all the parts, and the general behavior of the organism. In political systems the emergence of mass parties or of media of mass communication changes the performance of all other structures of the system (although to varying degrees) and affects the system's domestic and foreign capabilities. In other words, when one variable in a system changes in mag-