

Unit 1: Nature and Scope of Comparative Politics

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Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Explain the definition of Comparative Politics.
- Understand the development of Comparative Politics.
- Discuss the Comparative Politics and Comparative Government.

Introduction

The subject of comparative politics virtually constitutes a study in the direction of the 'expanding horizon of political science' wherein we seem to have emerged from the 'plains of doubts and darkness' to a 'higher plateau' to see what our passionate endeavours, particularly of the skeptical decade of the 1950's and the 'determined decade' of the 1960's, "have produced, in which the earlier high points of the discipline have lost some of their erstwhile importance or at least are now seen in a new light, and those whose significance suffered by neglect, have emerged in our perspective and awareness in the vale of political knowledge, which contains both rushing torrents (i.e., political process as a whole) as well as limped pools (i.e., speculative political thought)". What has played the role of a motivating force in this important direction is the quest to study 'political reality' by means of new techniques and approaches in a way so that the entire area of 'politics' may be covered. As a result, not a study of the 'government' but of the 'governments' has become the central concern that implies the taking of 'decision' whether "in the United Nations, or in a parish council, in a trade union or in a papal conclave, in a board room or in a tribe." 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. Perhaps the main reason for the present intellectual ferment is a widespread feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction with the traditional descriptive approach to the subject."

1.1 Definition, Meaning, Nature and Scope of Comparative Politics

The term 'comparative politics' is of recent origin and came into vogue in the fifties of the present century and is indicative of the expanding horizon of political science. The political scientists made a bid to study the political reality through a new techniques and approaches. The old concepts were also seen in new light. One of the main reason which encouraged the development of new approach for the study of politics was dissatisfaction with the traditional descriptive approach to the subject. The scholars laid greater emphasis on informal political process rather


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than political institutions and state. They borrowed a number of ideas and concepts from other social sciences and provided the political studies a new empirical orientation.

Before we proceed further to draw a distinction between comparative government and comparative politics, it shall be desirable to define comparative politics. According to Freeman "Comparative politics is comparative analysis of the various forms of government and diverse political institutions." Braibante says comparative politics is "identification and interpretation of factors in the whole social order which appears to affect whatever political functions and their institutions which have been identified and listed for comparison."

Distinction between Comparative Government and Comparative Politics: Scholars have tended to use the terms 'comparative government' and 'comparative politics' for each other without realising the difference between the two. For example Prof. S. E. Finer does not consider the two as different when he argues that "politics is neither the same thing as government nor is it necessarily connected only with those great territorial associations which have a government and which are known as 'State'. For if we use government in the sense of 'governance' or the 'activity of governing' we shall find that government exists at three levels (1) by far the vastest area of human conduct and activity in society proceeds quite unregulated by the public authorities. It forms a coherent set of patterns and regulates itself. (2) The second chief mode by which society forms its own patterns and regulates itself is the process of so-called 'socialisation' of the individual, with which is associated the concept of 'social control'. Most societies in the modern world, however, are equipped with governments.

However, Edward Freeman is conscious of the fact that these two terms are not identical and tries to draw a distinction between them.



Did u know? "By comparative government I mean the comparative study of political institutions or forms of government, And, under, the name of comparative politics I wish to point out and bring together many analogies which are to be seen between the political institutions of times and countries most remote from one another. We are concerned with the essential likeness of institutions to keep us from seeing essential likeness."

The main differences between 'comparative politics' and 'comparative government' are as follows:

1. Firstly, while comparative government is concerned with the study of formal political institutions like legislature, executive, judiciary and bureaucracy alone in comparative politics the other factors which influence the working of the political institutions are taken into account. In other words 'comparative politics' makes a study of the formal as well as informal political institutions. This point has been summed up by a scholar thus: "The scope of comparative politics is wider than that of comparative government despite search for making comparisons which is central to the study of both. The concern of a student of comparative politics does not end with the study of rule making, rule implementation and rule adjudicating organs of various political systems or even with that study of some extra constitutional agencies (like political and pressure groups) having their immediate connection, visible or invisible with the departments of state activity. In addition to all this, he goes ahead to deal with...even those subjects hitherto considered as falling within the range of Economics, Sociology and Anthropology."
2. Secondly, comparative government was chiefly confined to the study of the political institutions of western democratic countries. On the other hand comparative politics concentrates on the study of political institutions of all the countries of the world. It has laid special emphasis on the study of political institutions of the states which have emerged in the twentieth century.
3. Thirdly, comparative government involves only descriptive study of the political institutions and makes only formal study of the political institutions provided by the constitution. On the

other hand comparative politics concentrates on analytical study of the various political institutions. Investigation and experimentation constitute prominent features of comparative politics.

4. Finally, comparative government concerns itself only with the political activities of the political institutions, while comparative politics also takes into account the economic, cultural and social factors. In other words it tries to examine the political institutions through interdisciplinary approach.

Politics is a continuous, timeless, ever-changing and universal activity having its key manifestation in the making of a decision to face and solve a 'predicament'. It "flows from a special kind of activity, a form of human behaviour." It refers to the making or taking of a decision in which some political action is involved. It is a different thing that political scientists define and interpret the term 'political action' in their own ways that ascribes to them the title of being a conservative, or a traditionalist, or a modernist. It is for this reason that while Oakeshott defines political activity as "an activity in which human beings, related to one another as members of a civil association, think and speak about the arrangements and the conditions of their association from the point of view of their desirability, make proposals about changes in these arrangements and conditions, try to persuade others of the desirability of the proposed changes and act in such a manner as to promote the changes"; David Easton treats it as an action for the 'authoritative allocation of values'; Harold Lasswell and Robert Dahl describe it as 'a special case in the exercise of power'; and Jean Blondel lays emphasis on the point of 'decision taking'. However, a fine interpretation of the term 'political activity' is thus given by Oakeshott who says: "In political activity, then, men sail a boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for shelter nor floor for anchorage; neither starting place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel; the sea is both friend and enemy."

In the field of comparative politics, the term 'politics' has three connotations—political activity, political process and political power. As already pointed out, political activity consists of the efforts by which conditions of conflicts are created and resolved in a way pertaining to the interests of the people, as far as possible, who play their part in the 'struggle for power'. The reduction of tensions or the resolution of conflicts naturally takes place through the operation of permanent mechanisms of tension reduction as well as, from time to time, by the introduction of further 'reserve' mechanisms designed to reduce the amount of tensions and conflicts in emergencies. If politics means the authoritative allocation of 'values', some measure of conflict is bound to arise between 'values' as desired by the people and 'values' as held by the men in power. Thus arise conflicts that demand their solution and what leads to efforts in this regard constitutes political activity. It is the government that "has to solve these conflicts by whatever means are at its disposal, the only limitation being that in so doing it must prevent the break-up of the polity. Politics ceases where secession, and indeed civil war begins, as, at that point, there is no longer an authoritative allocation of values, but two sides allocating their values differently". It should, however, not be inferred from this statement that there is nothing like political activity during the days of civil war or some revolutionary upheaval, it simply means that as such an eventuality "constitutes a high point of tension in the life of a community, the role of political action must consist of preventing the community from reaching such a point.

Political activity emanates from a situation of 'predicament'—a form of human behaviour in which the interests of persons, more than one, clash or interact for the purpose of having an allocation of binding values in their respective favours. The moment a voice is raised in a group or a community of people for a common rule or policy on any issue whatsoever, a predicament is created in the sense that even to decide against the demand requires to take a decision. The matter does not stop here. Further problem arises when the members of a group or a community advocate mutually exclusive policies. The result is clash of interests and the stage of resolution of conflicts can be achieved either by peaceful means of reasoning, persuasion, adjustments, diplomacy or compromise or by the violent means of force and coercion. While, in the former case, competing agents may come piecemeal to abandon a part of their demands in order to have a mutually acceptable solution, in the latter case, the policy of one section may, wholly or largely,

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prevail over the desires of another. The former position may be called the state of 'spontaneous unanimity', the latter as imposed consensus. The common point is that political activity stops at the point of 'political rest.' "So, just as a situation of political rest does not start up any political activity, it also closes down a cycle of political activity."



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Politics not only connotes 'political activity', it also implies a 'train of activities', i.e., efforts directed towards creating the conditions of tension and having their resolution until the point of 'spontaneous unanimity' is achieved.

Political process is an extension of the sense of political activity. Here the case of all those agencies figures in which have their role in the decision-making process. The study of politics is thus broadened so as to include even 'non-state' agencies. A study of the way groups and associations operate shows that they are not free from the trends of struggle for power; they have their internal 'governments' to deal with their internal conflicts and tensions. What is particularly important for our purpose is that these 'non-state' associations influence the government of the country for the sake of protecting and promoting their specific interests. Thus, there occurs a very sharp process of interaction between the groups *inter se* and between the groups and the government of the country. Finer is right in saying that clearly a private association's hope of success in its competition with other groups is maximised if the full power of the state, as mediated through the government, is put behind it. And so it is that, once such competition takes place within the framework of the state, what would otherwise have to be a private and intermittent struggle of one group against another now becomes a public competition with other groups, either to get the government to espouse its policy and enforce it, or else to go forward and become the government. And the set of procedures whereby the private associations existing in a state seek to influence the government, or participate in policy formation by the government or become the government, is the 'political process'.

Since comparative politics includes all that comes within the scope of political activity and political process, it is said to 'drown' the national governments "among the whole universe of 'partial governments' which exist in any community." It is needed that the study of the government (as an element of the state) should be made *vis-a-vis* the 'governments' of non-state associations that operate in a way so as to influence the government of the country and also be influenced by it in some way or another. As Blondel says: "Government is the machinery by which values are allocated, if necessary by using compulsion: what is, therefore, important is to examine the three stages of the operation by which these values are allocated. Firstly, we must see the way in which the values come to be formulated and government is made aware of them. Secondly, we must see how the machinery of government 'digests' and transforms these values into decisions applicable to the whole community. Thirdly, we must see how these decisions come to be implemented down the level of governmental command. The whole operation of government thus takes the form of a two-way operation, or, perhaps more appropriately, of a machine which receives signals and transforms these signals into others."

Finally, the scope of comparative politics includes the subject of 'political power'. The term 'power' has been defined by different writers in different ways. For instance, while Carl J. Friedrich describes it as 'a certain kind of human relationship', Tawney regards it as 'the capacity of an individual, or a group of individuals, to modify the conduct of other individuals or groups in the manner in which he desires. Referring to the role of power in the matter of decision-making, Lasswell says: "The making of decision is an interpersonal process: the policies which other persons are to pursue are what is decided upon. Power as participation in the making of decisions is an interpersonal relation." Politics thus connotes a special case in the exercise of power—an exercise in the attempt to change the conduct of others in one's own direction. To define the term precisely, one can say that power "is taken to denote the whole spectrum of those external influences that, by being brought to bear upon an individual, can make him move in a required direction."

It is the study of the subject of politics from the standpoint of 'power' that has widened the scope of comparative politics so as to include a study of the infra-structure of the political systems. It is on account of this that politics "cannot be studied properly without identifying the ruling class, or the governing and non-governing elites, and measuring their respective roles. Politics also functions, by and large, within groups, though as we have seen earlier, however important in themselves the group may be, neither the individual nor the society can be left out." The subject of 'authority' becomes the handmaid of power. The rulers in a democratic system try to justify their authority by means of having the title of 'consensus', those of a totalitarian system resort to the naked use of power for achieving the superficial title of legitimacy. Thus, it becomes a celebrated principle of comparative politics: "Where consensus is weak, coercion tends to be strong, and *vice versa*."

It is on account of these important connotations that the term 'politics' has come to have its peculiar definition in the realm of comparative politics. Here politics has been made free from the shackles of normative dimensions and restated in empirical terms. The result is that it is not merely a study of the state and government, it is a study of the 'exercise of power'. As Curtis says: "Politics is organised dispute about power and its use, involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands. The study of politics is concerned with the description and analysis of the manner in which power is obtained, exercised, and controlled, the purpose for which it is used, the manner in which decisions are made, the factors which influence the making of those decisions, and the context in which those decisions, and the context in which those decisions take place."

1.2 Development of Comparative Politics

The study of comparative politics became highly significant in the 1950's when a good number of leading American political scientists sought to 'transform the field of politics' by taking the study of this subject 'from foreign to comparative political phenomenon' and 'from the study of the governments to the study of the political systems'. In broad terms, the transformation which "has taken place has been from a field which would most appropriately be labelled 'foreign governments' to one which might most adequately be called comparative political systems." However, the historical development of this subject may be roughly put into three phases – unsophisticated, sophisticated, and increasingly sophisticated.

The contributions made to the study of politics by great figures like Aristotle, Machiavelli, de Tocqueville, Bryce, Ostrogorski and Weber belong to the first phase who simply utilised the comparative method for the primary purpose of understanding better the working of the political organisations. These writers employed, what was called, the comparative method that "aimed through the study of existing politics or those which had existed in the past to assemble a definite body of material from which the investigator by selection, comparison, and elimination may discover the ideal types and progressive forces of political history." John Stuart Mill undertook to show that the comparative method "may assume several forms, the 'most perfect' of which is the process of difference by which two politics, identical in every particular except one, are compared with a view to discovering the effect of the differing factor." Lord James Bryce preferred comparative method and designated it as scientific by adding: "That which entitles it to be called scientific is that it reaches general conclusions by tracing similar results to similar causes, eliminating those disturbing influences which, present in one country and absent in another, make the results in the examined cases different in some points while similar in others."

The contributions of some important recent writers like Samuel H. Beer, M. Hass, Bernard Ulam and Roy C. Macridis may be included in the second phase who made use of the comparative method with a good amount of self-consciousness and also with a deliberate mood to present a more useful study of different political institutions. As a matter of fact, the writers belonging to this category, unlike political thinkers and writers belonging to the first, applied the instruments of institutional comparisons in a quite rigorous manner to present a better (in the sense of realistic) study of the governments what they desired to address as 'political systems'. This may

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be called the 'sophisticated' phase in the growth of the subject of comparative politics inasmuch as these writers "were concerned with the various strategies of comparison: area studies, configurative approach, institutional and functional comparisons, a problem-based orientation, and with various methodological problems: conceptualisation, the establishment of agreed categories for comparison, validity as a problem, cross-cultural difficulties and the availability of data."

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 and a host of others may be included in the final phase. It may rightly be described as the mark of an increasingly sophisticated phase in the growth of comparative politics. The writers 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 they have provided a specialised vocabulary in their own ways. As Roberts says: "If Easton talks of inputs, outputs, demands, gatekeepers, supports and stresses, environment, feedback, values, critical ranges and political authorities; 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. Almond's aim of 'universality' sums up the purpose for the choice of such languages – they are sufficiently general to be applicable to any political unit, regardless of size, period, degree of development or other factors."

The subject of comparative politics as developed, in the latest phase, has these main characteristics:

1. **Analytical and Empirical Investigation:** The analytical-cum- empirical method adopted by the writers belonging to the latest phase "has definitely enlarged the field of our enquiry as it has cleared up the mist in which many helpful distinctions within the framework of political studies lay obscured." Eckstein has referred to the late decades of the nineteenth century as a period in which Political Science, influenced by a 'primitive positivism' "effected a divorce between its normative and its descriptive concerns." He further says that in the realm of 'comparative government', more and more writers "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 purposes. Thus, for example, a pure ideal-type democracy, while it continued to be a tool employed in normative political theory, no longer had utility for specialists in comparative government, and the definition of democracy was loosened to permit inclusion of a congeries of actual governmental forms and socio-political conditions."
2. **Study of the Infrastructure:** The study of comparative politics is not confined to the formal structures of government as was the trend with the traditional political scientists. Here a student is concerned 'with inquiry into matters of public concern, with the behaviour and acts that may concern a society as a totality or which may ultimately be resolved by the exercise of legitimate coercion.' Instead of remaining concerned with the formal structures of government alone, he "has to be concerned with crystallised patterns of behaviour, with 'practices' since these are parts of the living structures of government." 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. As Blondel says: "Structures of government exist; they have to exist because this is the way in which tension is reduced and delayed and thereby tension decreases and the polity is maintained. But structures change gradually and in a complex fashion. Thus, if we are to understand how governmental systems operate, we have to note that the 'law' (in the general sense of the rule of procedure) is an indispensable element of the life of governmental systems; it makes political life possible and maintains politics."

3. **Emphasis on the Study of Developing Societies:** What has added more to the significance of the study of comparative politics is the emphasis of more writers on the 'politics of the developing areas'. It has occurred as a result of the realisation that the subject of comparative politics must include all governments along with their infra-structures that "exist in the contemporary world and, where possible, references to governments throughout time." 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.

However, what is of striking importance in this regard is that more and more attention is being paid to the study of the politics of developing societies both for the reason of making this a subject of universal study and for building theories and models so that the 'system of democracy' prevailing in these countries could be saved from being subverted by the forces opposed to it. As Wood says: "One could not help being aware of the fact that there existed in the recent political experiences of dozens of countries a veritable laboratory in which to test propositions about the way governmental systems behave under stress and the factors which bring about changes in political forms. What was more, there were appearing on the scene or waiting close by in the wings dozens more of the formerly colonial countries of Asia and Africa, for which political institutions were being carved out with or without concern for the well-catalogued experiences of their older brethren. Political scientists were worried about the preservation of democracy as the dominant form of government in the world or simply about the best way of assuring that the newly emerging fragile systems would have the best opportunity for stable development. They found ample reason to build theory to help find answers to the problems immediately at hand, because they found themselves woefully bereft of a body of theory upon which to draw for adequate leverage over the question of how to provide new nations with stable democracy."


4. **Focus on Inter-Disciplinary Approach:** What has really enriched the field of comparative politics and, at the same time, made it a 'complex subject' is the focus on inter-disciplinary study. Writers have made more and more use of tools that they have borrowed from the disciplines of sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology and even from natural sciences like biology. For instance, systems analysis with its two derivatives in the form of structural-functional and input-output approaches owes its origin to the discipline of biology that has been borrowed by the leading American political scientists like David Easton from sociologists like Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons. The result is that comparative politics has come to have much that makes it look like political sociology and political psychology. A study of new topics like political development, political modernisation, political socialisation, political acculturation, 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 behaviour of government and other political structures." A modern political scientist interested in the subject of political development "has learned that he cannot treat this topic without looking for the conditions of social mobilisation; men cannot become citizens in political sense without changing their values and personality orientations." A well-known writer in the field of comparative politics has thus pointed out that classical political theory "is more a political sociology and psychology and a normative political theory than a theory of political process. What goes on inside the black box of the political system and its consequences are inferred from the ways in which the social structure is represented in it." It is certainly on account of the adoption of this interdisciplinary approach by the writers on comparative politics that the subject of political science is said to have "undergone a revolution of sorts."
5. **Value-Free Political Theory:** Finally, the subject of political science has lost its normative aspect and assumed empirical dimensions in the sphere of comparative politics. The result is that value-free political theory has replaced value-laden political theory. The concern of the students of comparative politics is not with the things as they ought to be in their ideal forms;

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it is with what they are. There is hardly any place for the rules of history or ethics in the subject of comparative politics as the entire field has been covered by the rules of sociology, psychology and economics. There is thus hardly any place for a man like Leo Strauss in the field of comparative politics who, while sticking to the traditions of Plato and Aristotle, contends that political theory cannot eschew 'values' and thus a value-free political science is impossible. It should, however, be made clear that the use of the term 'values' by Easton (when he defines politics as 'the authoritative allocation of values') or of 'value system' by Almond (when he identifies it with a system of ideas and beliefs) has an empirical, and not a normative, connotation. We may say that the term value is used by the writers on comparative politics in the sense of a 'price' or 'worth' that a thing gets after it is recognised by the policy-makers. There is no value in a thing unless it is allocated by those who are in authority. Political science, thus, becomes *inter alia* a study of the distribution by persons in authority of things which are valued, or the attribution by such persons of value to things, or the deciding by such persons of disputes relating to things which are valued.

In fact, the study of comparative politics in its latest form includes significant contributions of those recent writers who have broadened the scope of this subject by taking into their areas of study more and more countries of the world, particularly of the Afro-Asian and 'Latin-American regions better known as the' world of developing areas'. These writers, in a way, have paid their sincere heed to the counsel of Lord James Bryce who once said that 'the time seems to have arrived when the 'actualities' of government in its various forms should be investigated." The eminent writers on comparative politics have not only endorsed but also improved upon the observation of James T. Shotwell that as "we pass from France to Italy, Switzerland, Germany and USSR, there is no common thread, no criterion of why these particular countries were selected and no examination of the factors that account for similarities and diversities."

Most of the states of the world are engaged in activities of their development in social, economic and political spheres. Non-state institutions are also playing their role in this regard that naturally strengthens the case of a civil society in 'non-western' countries. The result is growing interaction between state and non-state actors that provides a kind of interesting material to the study of comparative politics in present times, particularly after the disintegration of the socialist world what Fukuyama calls the 'end of history'. Thus, the study of comparative politics has become widespread and highly diversified. Apter prefers to rechristen it as 'new comparative politics'. It has its emphasis on growth and development and thus involves within itself the trends of decolonisation and democratisation having their manifestation particularly in the 'undeveloped' or 'under-developed' parts of the world. Politics "is no longer Euro-centred; it is more concerned with how to build democracy in countries in which it is not indigenous." Apter calls it 'neo-institutionalism' that "combines older institutionalist concerns with developmentalism."



Did u know? "Politics is the struggle for power in any organisation, and comparative politics is the study of this struggle around the world."

Civil Society" is meant" a society in which people are involved in social and political interactions free of state control or regulation. . . . participation in associational or institutional groups socialises individuals into the types of political skills and cooperative relations that are a part of well functioning society. People learn how to organise, how express their interests, and how to work with others to achieve common goals. They also learn the important lessons that the political process itself is as important as the immediate results. Thus, a system of active associational groups can lessen the development of anomie or non-associational activity.

Problems in Study of Comparative Politics

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The study of comparative governments, however, involves many difficulties. Some of the difficulties faced in the study can be described under the following heads:

1. **Difficulty in collecting information.** The major difficulty in collecting information and getting data about individual governments is that sometimes the facts and figures are simply forbidden by the country or countries under study. Specially, information in the totalitarian countries is very meagre. But it does not mean that these countries are totally closed to investigation. Many facts come out and some others are published by their governments to show the achievements that they make during a particular period. Moreover, a careful study of the members of the government over a time is revealing in many ways, for example, it can be known whether the government is stable or unstable, what kinds of men lead the country and also what are the various factions, if any, that exist in the ruling group. Information-gathering in the democratic countries is easy. Information can be gathered readily both from the news-papers, reports etc. and from those who are running the government. But even in a democratic country full information may not be available. Many facts are got given by these countries on the pretext of "public interest" specially those dealing with the security of the country or the defence, or the foreign affairs. Similarly the decisions of the Cabinet are not 'leaked' out; the decisions reached at the closed door meeting of the party are also kept a secret. So even a democratic country is not absolutely "open" to the investigator.

Another difficulty faced in the field is that data are difficult to gather because they are sometimes difficult to measure. In fact, many political decisions defy accurate measurement and hence can hardly be put to comparative use.

Still another difficulty that faces a student of comparative politics in collecting information is that many events seem to be 'unique' and a comparative analysis appears consequently inappropriate. One may study the chief executives of different countries, say, the British Prime Minister, the Indian Prime Minister, the American President. But the studies of these executives without other "unique" influences would prove futile. For these studies in true perspective it is, therefore, essential that the forces of decision-making must be taken into account and these forces consist of voters, legislators and many other factors in each country under study.

Finally, the unwillingness of the governments to give complete details is another hurdle in collecting information.

2. **Difficulty faced due to the background variables.** In addition to the above difficulties, the background variables create some problems for the student of comparative governments. In every country, the pattern of thinking and acting of the masses as well as of those who are in power depends on different factors known as variables. These variables range from economic conditions to the climate of a country or its geographical conditions or certain historical happenings. These variables have a complex influence on the politics of an individual country. Earlier attempts were made to explain the influence of these variables on a very small scale. For example, explanation on the basis of economic factors divides the countries on the variables of those who possess capital (capitalistic system of society) and socialists. A similar attempt was made to simplify the influence of variables on the basis of seafaring countries *vs.* land-based states, i.e., the influence of climate or geography.

It is, however, futile to look for a factor accounting for all the variations between governments. Students of comparative governments have now turned their attention to a better and maturer approach i.e. they now measure the relative weights of all variables and describe as precisely as possible the extent to which a particular variable accounts for the characteristics of a political system. This approach is called the multi-variate analysis.

3. **Problems as a result of the role of norms, institutions and governmental behaviour.** Nearly all the countries have the government of their own choice. They decide in advance what type or form of government they should have. This decision to have a particular type of government introduces the element of *value* or *norm* in the governmental system. It is also decided as to

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what the government should do and about how it should do. In other words, we have to see *whether the norm corresponds to the behaviour*. The question of the relationship between norms and behaviour is complex. These norms are usually to be found in Constitutions or the various practices which become “solidified” and become the conventions (as in the British Constitution). Different kinds of norms can be found in different societies and political systems could be compared in terms of the relationship between norms and behaviour. Thus for the study of comparative governments it is essential to look into the relationship of norms with institutions and with behaviour. However, the relationship between these three elements is not simple.

1.3 Comparative Politics and Comparative Government

The study of comparative government and politics in its latest form includes significant contributions of those recent writers who have broadened the scope of this subject by taking into their areas of study more and more countries of the world, particularly of the Afro-Asian and Latin-American regions better known as the ‘world of developing areas’. These writers, in a way, have paid their sincere heed to the counsel of Lord James Bryce who once said that ‘the time seems to have arrived when the ‘actualities’ of government in its various forms should be investigated.” The eminent writers on comparative politics have not only endorsed but also improved upon the observation of James T. Shotwell that as “we pass from France to Italy, Switzerland, Germany and USSR, there is no common thread, no criterion of why these particular countries were selected and no examination of the factors that account for similarities and diversities.”

Although the two terms ‘comparative politics’ and ‘comparative government’ are used loosely and interchangeably, there is a point of distinction between the two. While the latter covers a comparative study of different political systems with special emphasis on their institutions and functions, the former has a broader scope so as to cover all that comes within the purview of the former and, in addition to that, all else that may be designated as the study of ‘non-state’ politics. In other words, the scope of comparative politics is wider than that of comparative government despite the fact that the search for making comparisons is central to the study of both. The concern of a student of comparative politics does not end with the study of rule-making, (legislature), rule-implementing (executive) and rule-adjudicating (judicial) departments of the political systems or even with the study of some extra-constitutional agencies (like political parties and pressure groups) having their immediate connection, visible or invisible, with the principal spheres of state activity. In addition to all this, he goes ahead to deal, though in a particular way, with even those subjects hitherto considered as falling within the range of economics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. As Sidney Verba concisely suggests: “Look beyond description to more theoretically relevant problems; look beyond the formal institutions of government to political processes and political functions; and look beyond the countries of Western Europe to the new nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America.”

The meaning and nature of comparative politics as distinguished from that of the comparative government is well brought out by Curtis in these words: “Comparative politics is concerned with significant regularities, similarities and differences in the working of political institutions and in political behaviour. Meaningful analysis requires explanatory hypotheses, the testing of sentiments, categories and classification by the collection of empirical data, observation, experimentation if at all possible; and the use of research techniques such as sampling, and communications data to increase knowledge.” Curtis, however, makes it quite obvious that the inquiry into similarities and differences is not a search for certainty or predictability, nor does it start from the premise that what is not ‘scientific’ is not knowledge. Systems classification and categories are always tentative: they cannot claim finality. Politics cannot be reduced to a series of involuntary and automatic responses to stimuli. Sometime the most significant political phenomena are those changes in the mood of the times that are impossible to quantify. It is

affirmed by Chlicote in these words: “Comparative government usually refers to the study of institutions and functions of countries or nation-states in Europe with attention to the executives, legislatures and judiciaries as well as such supplementary organisations as political parties and pressure groups. Comparative politics, in contrast, studies a broader range of political activity including the government and their institutions as well as other forms of organisations, not directly related to national government for example, tribes, communities, associations and unions.”

From the above, it infers that the term ‘comparative politics’ should be preferred to the term ‘comparative government’, as the scope of the former is wider and more comprehensive to include all the essential characteristics that we have discussed above. One may, however, agree with the observation of Blondel that the term ‘comparative government’ has two aspects—horizontal and vertical—and this term may be identified with ‘comparative politics’ if both the aspects are taken into account. Vertical comparison is a comparative study of the state vis-a-vis other associations and groups that have their ‘political character’ and cast their impact upon the functioning of a political system; horizontal comparison is a comparative study of the state vis-a-vis other national governments. Blondel may be justified to some extent in saying that comparative government becomes comparative politics when both the vertical and horizontal aspects of comparisons are taken into account that lead to this definition: “Comparative government can thus be defined in a preliminary fashion as the study of patterns of national governments in the contemporary world.”



What do you mean by Civil Society?

Though one may, or may not, fully agree with the view of Blondel, it may, nevertheless, be added that it is always safer to use the title ‘comparative politics’ in preference to ‘comparative government’. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Edward Freeman makes an attempt to bring out a distinction between the two in these words: “By comparative government I mean the comparative study of political “institutions, of forms of government. And under the name of comparative politics, I wish to point out and bring together many analogies which are to be seen between the political institutions of times and countries most remote from one another... We are concerned with the essential likeness of institutions and we must never allow incidental traits of unlikeness to keep us from seeing essential likeness.” It may, however, be added with a word of caution that comparative politics, though concerned with significant regularities, similarities and differences in the sphere of political institutions and human behaviours, the work of comparison should neither be done half-heartedly to ignore much that is really useful, nor should it be taken to the extremes of over-simplification making the whole study vulgar and implausible. We should be guided by the counsel of Roberts that any lesser conception of comparative politics “tends to lack either clear identity or criteria of selection and exclusion.” We should also pay heed to the warning of Eckstein and Apter that “too broad a conception of comparative politics would widen it to encompass political science.”

Case of Developed and Developing Countries

Distinguished writers on the subject of comparative politics like Herman Finer, C.F. Strong, FA. Ogg, Harold Zink, W.B. Munro etc. had confined their attention to the study of the developed or industrialised countries of the West that came to be known as the ‘first world’. It is a different matter that they included in their study the political system of the Soviet Union in view of some of its peculiar features though they made derogatory reflections by regarding a communist system as a piece of the ‘second world’. The trend saw a remarkable change after the second World War when a number of new states emerged in the regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America that came to be known as the ‘third world’. To a student of comparative government and politics, the ‘third world’ has appeared as a vast area of investigation and empirical research.

Notes

The developed countries of the world are those which are highly industrialised and politically modernised in which democratic system has come to stay. In the view of recent writers like Lucian W. Pye, David E. Apter and S.P. Huntington, these countries have achieved the goal of political development, while the countries of the 'third world' are economically backward and they are ridden with political instability that enacts the drama of political development and political decay at different intervals. In the view of A.G. Frank, Samir Amin and Immanuel Wallerstein, they are at the 'periphery' of the modern world system and they cannot be developed countries on account of their exploitation by the core countries' as well as by the 'semi-peripheral' countries of the world.

D. Rustow and R.E. Ward lay stress on the following characteristics of a developed and modernised polity:

1. A highly differentiated and functionally specific system of governmental organisation.
2. A high degree of integration within the governmental structure.
3. The prevalence of rational and secular procedures for the making of political decisions.
4. The large volume, wide range and high efficacy of the political and administrative decisions.

A Modern Classification of Governments

<i>Types of Governments Participation Policy</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Opportunities for Contest</i>	<i>Direction or Mass</i>
1. Traditional	Closed	Negligible	Conservative
2. Competitive Conservative/ Adaptive	Open Oligarachy	Limited	
3. Military	Closed	Negligible	Conservative/ Reformist
4. Populist/ Mobilising	Closed	Moderate	Transformative/ Adaptive
5. Communist Transformative (Regimented)	Closed Party State	Multiples	
6. Liberal Democracy	Open	Multiples	Reformist (Voluntary)

5. A widespread and effective sense of popular identification with the history, territory and national identity of the state.
6. Widespread popular interest and achievement in the political system though not necessarily in the decision-making aspects thereof.
7. The allocation of political roles by achievements rather than by ascriptions, and
8. Judicial and regulatory techniques based upon a predominantly secular and impersonal system of laws.

S.P. Huntington describes the following characteristics of the modernizing process:

1. It is a *revolutionary* process. Change from tradition to modernity consequently involves a radical and total change in the patterns of human life.
2. It is a *complex* process. It cannot be easily reduced to a single factor or to a single dimension.

3. It is a *systemic* process. Changes in one factor are related to and affect changes in the other factors.
4. It is a *global* process. Though originated in Europe, it has now become a world-wide phenomenon.
5. It is a *lengthy* process. The totality of the changes which modernisation involves can only be worked out through time. Transition from tradition to modernity will be measured in generations.
6. It is a *phased* process. It is possible to distinguish between levels or phases of modernisation through which all societies will move.
7. It is a *homogeneous* process. It produces tendencies towards convergence among societies.
8. It is an *irreversible* process. There may be temporary breakdowns and occasional reversals in the elements of modernising process, as a whole it is essentially a secular trend.
9. It is a *progressive* process. In the long run, it enhances human well-being culturally and materially.

To a student of comparative government and politics, the states of the 'third world' have these striking features.

1. In such countries politics and government are shaped by the basic facts of scarce economic resources, extensive poverty and inequality, and a relatively weak position in the international system.
2. The political legitimacy of most of the countries is very weak. Most of the citizens have no faith in their political leaders or perhaps in the very nature of the political system of their country.
3. The effective power of governance in these countries is very limited. The state may have little real ability to exert its authority much beyond the capital city and a few large urban centres.

The countries of the 'third world' suffer from what is given above in spite of the fact that their political systems have the marks of diversity as an established secular democracy in India, a theocratic authoritarianism in Pakistan, a semi-democracy in Bangladesh, a budding democracy in Nepal, a military regime in Myanmar, a communist party-state in China, a new democracy in South Africa and the like. And yet to one degree or another all experience this problem in ways that make the 'third world' state a distinctive and important entity in the study of comparative government and politics.

Self-Assessment

1. Choose the correct option:

- (i) Comparative government is concerned with the formal political institutions like
 - (a) legislature and executive
 - (b) judiciary
 - (c) bureaucracy
 - (d) all of these.
- (ii) Politics has the connotations like
 - (a) political activity
 - (b) political process
 - (c) political power
 - (d) all of these.
- (iii) "The First World War" known as:
 - (a) Industrialised countries
 - (b) developing countries
 - (c) developed countries
 - (d) none of these.
- (iv) The comparative politics became highly significant in
 - (a) 1945
 - (b) 1950
 - (c) 1919
 - (d) 1990
- (v) Populist government has leadership.
 - (a) closed
 - (b) open
 - (c) oligarchy
 - (d) none of these

1.4 Summary

- The term 'comparative politics' is of recent origin and came into vogue in the fifties of the present century and is indicative of the expanding horizon of political science.
- One of the main reason which encouraged the development of new approach for the study of politics was dissatisfaction with the traditional descriptive approach to the subject.
- "Comparative politics is comparative analysis of the various forms of government and diverse political institutions."
- Politics is a continuous, timeless, ever-changing and universal activity having its key manifestation in the making of a decision to face and solve a 'predicament'.
- Political activity as "an activity in which human beings, related to one another as members of a civil association, think and speak about the arrangements and the conditions of their association from the point of view of their desirability, make proposals about changes in these arrangements and conditions, try to persuade others of the desirability of the proposed changes and act in such a manner as to promote the changes.
- In the field of comparative politics, the term 'politics' has three connotations—political activity, political process and political power.
- The reduction of tensions or the resolution of conflicts naturally takes place through the operation of permanent mechanisms of tension reduction.
- If politics means the authoritative allocation of 'values', some measure of conflict is bound to arise between 'values' as desired by the people and 'values' as held by the men in power. Thus arise conflicts that demand their solution and what leads to efforts in this regard constitutes political activity.
- Politics ceases where secession, and indeed civil war begins, as, at that point, there is no longer an authoritative allocation of values, but two sides allocating their values differently".
- The common point is that political activity stops at the point of 'political rest.' "So, just as a situation of political rest does not start up any political activity, it also closes down a cycle of political activity."
- The set of procedures whereby the private associations existing in a state seek to influence the government, or participate in policy formation by the government or become the government, is the 'political process'.
- It is needed that the study of the government (as an element of the state) should be made *vis-a-vis* the 'governments' of non-state associations that operate in a way so as to influence the government of the country and also be influenced by it in some way or another.
- The whole operation of government thus takes the form of a two-way operation, or, perhaps more appropriately, of a machine which receives signals and transforms these signals into others."
- The scope of comparative politics includes the subject of 'political power'. The term 'power' has been defined by different writers in different ways. For instance, while Carl J. Friedrich describes it as 'a certain kind of human relationship', Tawney regards it as 'the capacity of an individual, or a group of individuals, to modify the conduct of other individuals or groups in the manner in which he desires.
- Politics thus connotes a special case in the exercise of power—an exercise in the attempt to change the conduct of others in one's own direction. To define the term precisely, one can say that power "is taken to denote the whole spectrum of those external influences that, by being brought to bear upon an individual, can make him move in a required direction."
- Politics "cannot be studied properly without identifying the ruling class, or the governing and non-governing elites, and measuring their respective roles.

- The subject of 'authority' becomes the handmaid of power. The rulers in a democratic system try to justify their authority by means of having the title of 'consensus', those of a totalitarian system resort to the naked use of power for achieving the superficial title of legitimacy. As Curtis says: "Politics is organised dispute about power and its use, involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands. The study of politics is concerned with the description and analysis of the manner in which power is obtained, exercised, and controlled, the purpose for which it is used, the manner in which decisions are made, the factors which influence the making of those decisions, and the context in which those decisions, and the context in which those decisions take place."
- The transformation which "has taken place has been from a field which would most appropriately be labelled 'foreign governments' to one which might most adequately be called comparative political systems." However, the historical development of this subject may be roughly put into three phases – unsophisticated, sophisticated, and increasingly sophisticated.
- The comparative method "may assume several forms, the 'most perfect' of which is the process of difference by which two politics, identical in every particular except one, are compared with a view to discovering the effect of the differing factor."
- The 'sophisticated' phase in the growth of the subject of comparative politics inasmuch as these writers "were concerned with the various strategies of comparison: area studies, configurative approach, institutional and functional comparisons, a problem-based orientation, and with various methodological problems: conceptualisation, the establishment of agreed categories for comparison, validity as a problem, cross-cultural difficulties and the availability of data."
- As Roberts says: "If Easton talks of inputs, outputs, demands, gatekeepers, supports and stresses, environment, feedback, values, critical ranges and political authorities.
- Almond's aim of 'universality' sums up the purpose for the choice of such languages – they are sufficiently general to be applicable to any political unit, regardless of size, period, degree of development or other factors."
- 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 has occurred as a result of the realisation that the subject of comparative politics must include all governments along with their infra-structures that "exist in the contemporary world and, where possible, references to governments throughout time." 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.
- Political scientists were worried about the preservation of democracy as the dominant form of government in the world or simply about the best way of assuring that the newly emerging fragile systems would have the best opportunity for stable development.
- Political science has become the "application of sociological and psychological analysis to the study of the behaviour of government and other political structures.
- The subject of political science has lost its normative aspect and assumed empirical dimensions in the sphere of comparative politics. The result is that value-free political theory has replaced value-laden political theory.

Notes

- We may say that the term value is used by the writers on comparative politics in the sense of a 'price' or 'worth' that a thing gets after it is recognised by the policy-makers. There is no value in a thing unless it is allocated by those who are in authority.
- The study of comparative governments and politics can be traced back to the fourth century B.C. when Aristotle made a study of 158 constitutions of Greek city-states and offered classification based on the principles of number of people wielding power and the nature of government.
- After Aristotle Polybius, Cicero, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, J.S. Mill, Freeman, James Bryce etc. also made contribution to comparative study. In present century main contributions were made by Herman Finer, Friedrich, Sait etc.
- In the post-World War II period comparative politics has assumed more importance and various writers evolved new techniques and approaches for the study of comparative politics. There is a feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction with the traditional descriptive approach to the subject of comparative politics and hence much experimentation is now going on with new approaches, new definitions and new research tools. The study of individual political systems, though of great educational value, has some serious draw-backs.
- The comparative method does not consist in just studying the different constitutions in different order but consists in interpreting political data in terms of hypothesis or theories. Interpretation must deal with institutions as they really function. Thus comparative method lays emphasis on scientific nature of inquiry, on political behaviour and orientation of research within a broad analytic scheme.
- The study of comparative government and politics in its latest form includes significant contributions of those recent writers who have broadened the scope of this subject by taking into their areas of study more and more countries of the world, particularly of the Afro-Asian and Latin-American regions better known as the 'world of developing areas'.
- The two terms 'comparative politics' and 'comparative government' are used loosely and interchangeably, there is a point of distinction between the two. While the latter covers a comparative study of different political systems with special emphasis on their institutions and functions, the former has a broader scope so as to cover all that comes within the purview of the former and, in addition to that, all else that may be designated as the study of 'non-state' politics.
- The meaning and nature of comparative politics as distinguished from that of the comparative government is well brought out by Curtis in these words: "Comparative politics is concerned with significant regularities, similarities and differences in the working of political institutions and in political behaviour.
- Sometime the most significant political phenomena are those changes in the mood of the times that are impossible to quantify. It is affirmed by Chlicote in these words: "Comparative government usually refers to the study of institutions and functions of countries or nation-states in Europe with attention to the executives, legislatures and judiciaries as well as such supplementary organisations as political parties and pressure groups.
- "Comparative government can thus be defined in a preliminary fashion as the study of patterns of national governments in the contemporary world."
- By comparative government I mean the comparative study of political "institutions, of forms of government. The developed countries of the world are those which are highly industrialised and politically modernised in which democratic system has come to stay. The countries of the 'third world' suffer from what is given above in spite of the fact that their political systems have the marks of diversity as an established secular democracy in India, a theocratic authoritarianism in Pakistan, a semi-democracy in Bangladesh, a budding democracy in Nepal, a military regime in Myanmar, a communist party-state in China, a new democracy in South Africa and the like.

1.5 Key-Words

Notes

1. Adjudication : The final judgement in a legal proceeding, the act of pronouncing judgment based on the evidence presented.
2. Political communication : It is a sub-field of communication and political science that is concerned with how information spreads and influences politics.
3. Regim : It is a form of government, the set of rules, cultural or social norms that regulate the operation of government and its interactions with society.

1.6 Review Questions

1. What is politics? Discuss nature and scope of Comparative Politics.
2. Explain the development of Comparative Politics.
3. Distinguish between Comparative Politics and Comparative Government.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (i) (d) (ii) (d) (iii) (a) (iv) (b) (v) (a)

1.7 Further Readings



1. Almond, G.A. et., 2000: Comparative Politics: A World View, New York: Harper/Collins.
2. Palekar, S.A., 2009: Comparative Politics and Government, New Delhi, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
3. Johari, J.C., 2006: New Comparative Government, New Delhi: Lotus Press