

The Comparative Study of Politics

Author(s): Sigmund Neumann

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## THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POLITICS

### I

The newly awakened interest in the comparative study of politics is part and parcel of a silent revolution that has taken place in the social sciences during the last decades. Such a re-orientation in turn is in part due to the radical social and political transformations in this era of total wars and revolutions. Because as Aristotle knew all too well, and peaceful periods in history all too often tried to forget, the social sciences are disciplines of "ethics", spelling out man's deep involvements and demanding decisions at critical turning points of history.

Times of crisis not only try man's soul but also challenge his accustomed ideas and interests. No wonder that it is exactly at these breaklines of time and space that the social sciences flourish and the quest for comparison becomes the natural vista of seeking man.

"To know thyself, compare thyself to others." The comparative approach is, above all, an eye-opener to a people's self-recognition and to its taking a stand. It is not accidental that great civilizations, like the Renaissance, were developed at the crossroads of mankind and articulated by the meeting of contrasting systems. This encounter alone made an awakening Western Europe fully aware of her own character and qualities.

We are again living in such a period of open frontiers which will force us to recognize the values and concepts we live by and to test them anew against their challenge from abroad. It is in this crisis in our own time that Comparative Government – only yesterday to many a remote discipline of curiosity collectors – receives a new impetus and becomes for the mature citizen an imperative interest.

What are the specifics of mid-twentieth century comparative studies? They reflect the main features of this global, dynamic and complex world of ours. A continuously shrinking planet has brought far-away areas into our compass and has made them a matter of our daily concern. The great ills of wars and revolutions that befall people in distant corners can no longer be kept from our shores. Isolation is dead, and so must be a parochial view of politics in terms of traditional tenets and familiar locale.

The awakening peoples of the East force the Western world to reconsider

its prevalent patterns of government and society. The end of colonialism and the vexations of Westernization have unsettled the hitherto taken-for granted attitudes of the Old World. Moreover this clash of contrasting systems, in part unleashed by the white man's civil wars, calling on the non-Western colonials for support and sacrifice, has put into motion (and in a continuously accelerating fashion) a stable system of governmental institutions. Their whole existence has been put into jeopardy by the persistent pressures of the Soviet Revolution. Western Democracies must constantly renew themselves if they are to meet its challenge. Thus politics has changed from an almost static preservation of carefully balanced positions to the interplay of dynamic drives of unpredictable forces. Hence our concern has turned away from a merely descriptive analysis of formal, legalistic, and constitutional forms to a prime consideration of political dynamics and the processes of decision-making.

This very task of comprehending and controlling our complex contemporary scene forces the policy-makers to call upon expertise from many quarters. It spells the end of strict departmental borders, only yesterday rigidly patrolled against incorrigible inter-departmental snipers and intruders. War emergencies, no doubt, served as a major impetus to persuade difficult people to work together. The office of Strategic Services, Foreign Area Studies and Military Command Posts compelled reluctant specialists to serious interdisciplinary cooperation. It is here to stay. In any case, the surprising academic break-throughs (for which this Journal may eventually be a telling example) would have been impossible without radical changes in the moods of the world at large and consequently in the attitudes of contemporary scholarship.

## II

Recent developments in the USA are a case in question. Not so long ago Comparative Government in teaching and research played the pathetic role of a Cinderella, cornered by its proud sister disciplines, a positivist Public Administration and an equally self-assertive International Relations.

The change in the academic climate of opinion surely did not come overnight and not without the persistent efforts of some die-hards who through an arid period of unrelated fact gathering insisted on the validity of comparative conceptualization and thus kept the channels open for new springs of integrative research.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> They carried on indeed a proud traditional theme from Machiavelli and Montesquieu to Bagehot and Bryce, Woodrow Wilson and Lowell, Burgess and Goodnow. To this distinguished list should be added the rich literature growing out of the response to totalitarianism, – red, black, and brown – during the inter-war period. One may also be reminded of the suggestive Chicago series of comparative *Studies in the Making of Citizens* edited by C. E. Merriam, and the monumental *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* which contains numerous articles of systematic and comparative classics.

Among single-handed comprehensive contributions on Comparative Government the

In the United States the new mood and methods are best illustrated by the concerted efforts of the Committee on Comparative Politics of the Social Science Research Council established in 1954 to stimulate research in this much neglected field. It not only sought out and supported so far about thirty individual field studies of political groups in foreign areas,<sup>2</sup> but also helped in developing a common framework and approach. Such coordination, while fully respecting individual initiative and direction, could at the same time foster mutual awareness and increasing comparability of the results deriving from these diverse field studies. Cautious check lists and group research designs may thus prevent the mere amassing of unrelated data – that nightmarish fate of many a scholarly enterprise that began with great promise of raising scholarly vistas and ended unhappily with undigested ballast chained to footnotes.

Indeed, a thinking team of cooperative coordination – without setting itself up as a traffic police or court of magistrates – can encourage the furthering of research in “underdeveloped” areas and help in preventing the dispersion of precious research energies. Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that while the discipline demanded from its field workers first of all the opening of the non-Western virgin territories, it soon realized the need for a fresh look at the seemingly familiar landscapes of the old world, too.

Such reappraisal is not the least brought about by the development of new research methods and suggestive models in cooperation with neighboring fields. Interdisciplinary teams across the whole gamut of the social sciences – political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, economists and historians – have started tackling together the complexities of modern political society.

In fact, one of the early findings of the newly activated Comparative Studies

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following books stand out: Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (Rev. ed., Boston, 1950), Herman Finer, *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government* (New York, 1949) and Karl Loewenstein, *Political Reconstruction* (New York, 1946) and his most recent *Political Power and the Governmental Process* (Chicago, 1957).

For an overall analysis of the consequential stages of Comparative Politics, in the U.S.A. see Sigmund Neumann, “Comparative Politics: A half-Century Appraisal”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 19, pp. 369–390 (August, 1957).

<sup>2</sup> A complete list of these projects in process could well illustrate the sweeping outburst of research interest. Here are a few field topics: The Roles of Political Parties and Interest Groups in Policy Making in Great Britain since 1945 (Samuel H. Beer); The Bureaucracy of Pakistan (Ralph Braibanti); Interest Groups and the Governmental Process in France, Germany and Italy (Henry W. Ehrmann); The Contemporary Transition in the Pattern of Group Participation in Cuba (Federico G. Gil); Interest Group Organization and Political Behavior in Selected Administrative Settings in Italy (Joseph LaPalombara); Society and Politics in Spain (Juan Jose Linz); Social Determinants of Support of Political Groups in Western Democracies (Seymour M. Lipset); Relationships of Trade Unions and Political Parties (Val R. Lorwin); Political Consensus, Group Interaction and Group Ideology in France (Roy C. Macridis); The Political Role of Bureaucracy in Thailand (Fred W. Riggs); and Interest Groups in India (Myron Weiner).

in Political Science was the realization that the analysis, especially of non-Western areas, made the appeal to unaccustomed auxiliaries an imperative prerequisite. Oriented at the key groups of policy decisions, the field workers soon confirmed that political parties, which are the natural lifeline of Western Democracies, are not everywhere the crucial forces of the community pattern. Very often they do not even exist, or only in a very preliminary fashion, in the politically awakening territories, and tradition-bound agents (tribes, local community groups, religious and military organizations) take their place instead in primitive societies. The study of developing nations, therefore, follows an intricate interweaving of customs of olden days with the inflowing forces of a new world, and this process is frequently helped by extraneous elements such as armies, bureaucracies and economic pressure groups. Thus it is not surprising that the Committee found itself confronted with a wide array of approaches to the study of Comparative Politics. And even where the political parties are still at the center of consideration, their significance has to be weighed in relation to manifold influences if one wants to ascertain the true power equilibrium of political societies today. Such confusing diversity of hitherto untapped sources, to be sure, upsets the traditional norms of Comparative Government, i.e. the British model as the ideal type of political order and development. It certainly forewarns the student of politics against a prevalent one-sided European-centered view.<sup>3</sup>

In this enthusiasm of newly discovered worlds, however, Comparative Politics has to guard against an equally naive parochialism, namely, the insistence on the incomparability of the unique phenomena of every new frontier of knowledge. Such a reaction would spell the end of any systematic discipline. Indeed, dangerous trends of this kind were reflected in earlier experiences of Far Eastern History studies and seemed to be repeated in the plight of many recent area specialists. They either became new imperialists, operating and reforming the globe from their freshly conquered bastions, or retreated to their tight little island, being lost to the world and to the social sciences at large.

What becomes imperative at this stage of Comparative Government strategy is the selection of proper research sites and of crucial political forces which in terms of meaningful comparability suggest the most fruitful channels of investigation. The functional approach seems to hold the greatest promise.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a well-balanced plea for a thorough reorientation in the discipline, taking serious account of the non-Western world, see Dankwart A. Rustow, "New Horizons for Comparative Politics", *World Politics*, Vol. 9, pp. 530-549 (July, 1957) and his "Politics and Westernization in the Near East", *Center of International Studies* (Princeton 1956); cp. also James S. Coleman, "The Problem of Political Integration in Emergent Africa", *Western Political Quarterly*, 8:44-57 (1955).

<sup>4</sup> The Committee on Comparative Politics of the SSRC has given much attention to these problems and expects to present in the near future a series of papers on such "New Aspects of Comparative Politics".

It allows for an open-minded awareness of the specific character of each political culture and still presents material and concepts of cumulative comparability. While concentrated field work in developing political systems is primarily called for, these overwhelming data of our ever-expanding universe fall into a conceivable pattern only if seen through the controlled order of a conceptual framework, which in turn can be grasped only in a full appreciation of the rich texture of reality. This inter-relation, in fact, poses a fundamental dilemma of the social sciences. The task of attempting to systematize our knowledge is confronted by almost insurmountable difficulties and can proceed only by a simultaneous attack on both systematized theory and concrete observation. Social concepts evolve by stages, remaining necessarily fragmentary and tentative and, at best, present only useful working hypotheses for an ever-changing reality.

Hence, conceptualizing must be a constantly renewed effort. It definitely can never be a one-man job; it must be the work of proven experts, who by pooling their substantive findings in the special areas, can contribute to the laying of the foundations for a concrete theory. This is the major task of Comparative Politics today.<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime one can register a veritable renaissance of monographic area research and beyond that (and largely based on such growing material)

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Preliminary reports of its research conferences and analytical memoranda may be found in the following: George McT. Kahin, Guy J. Parker, Lucian W. Pye, "Comparative Politics of Non-Western Countries", and Gabriel A. Almond, Taylor Cole, Roy C. Macridis, "A suggested research strategy in Western European Government and Politics", *American Political Science Review*, 49:1022-49 (December 1955), and in the summary analysis of a planning seminar (held at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Palo Alto, April 1957) presented in the *American Political Science Review* (May 1958) by the Committee's Chairman Gabriel A. Almond; see also his "Comparative Political Systems", *Journal of Politics*, 18:402ff (1956), and Roy C. Macridis, *The Study of Comparative Government* (New York, 1955).

<sup>5</sup> At this stage of a concerted comparative research attack it will be wise to beware of premature generalizations while awaiting a richer harvest to be fully assessed by a more circumspect theory. True, such a self-imposed reserve may tax the patience of the enterprising researcher, yet the later returns will be the more rewarding. For such a preliminary set of propositions see the author's concluding chapter, "Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties" in *Modern Political Parties* (Chicago 1956).

At the same time one will appreciate the currently revived interest in earlier books that had a thesis (true classics that they are: always quoted and never read, and indeed, until recently, hard to get hold of) such as: M. I. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (New York, 1902), and Robert Michels' *Political Parties* (new ed., Glencoe, Ill., 1949). Equally challenging are current systematic attempts such as Maurice Duverger's bold *Les Partis Politiques* (Paris, 1951; English translation: New York, 1954). The resulting discussion is full proof of the widespread awareness of comparative data and the deep interest in a theoretical underpinning. Substantive progress will demand a continuous confluence of field findings and systematic penetration. For a general survey of the current literature compare Frederick C. Engelmann, "A Critique of Recent Writings on Political Parties", *Journal of Politics*, 19:423-440 (August 1957). and Stanley Hoffmann, "Tendances de la Science Politique aux Etats-Unis", *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 7:913-932 (October-December 1957).

of first attempts at systematic approaches to substantive theories of political parties, interest groups, bureaucracy and public opinion.<sup>6</sup>

### III

A similar and almost more dramatic outburst of research activities in the comparative field can be observed beyond the United States and naturally for the same reasons. The need for re-orientation is obvious in areas even closer to the firing line of this age of revolution, as the Old World indeed is. Besides there is some catching up to do after decades of intellectual isolation.

And the record of the last decade is indeed most encouraging and exciting. It calls for careful analysis which must be reserved for a later issue of *Comparative Studies*. A mere enumeration of crucial points of crystallization in comparative work must suffice.

Again one may well start out by focusing on organized research efforts, namely, the work of the International Political Science Association. Fortunately some of its proceedings are now available in print. Foremost among the publications is the volume of Gunnar Heckscher, *The Study of Comparative Government and Politics* (London, 1958), which reviews the discussions of the

<sup>6</sup> Apart from the rich output of established area institutes such as Harvard's Russian Research Center, Columbia's Russian Institute, Princeton's Center of International Studies and Duke's Commonwealth Institute, the following random selection of substantive studies might be indicative of the productive variety in recent American Political Science: Gabriel A. Almond, *The Appeals of Communism* (Princeton, 1954); David Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition* (Princeton, 1955); Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Russian Nationalism* (New York, 1956); B. R. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, W. N. McPhee, *Voting* (Chicago, 1954); Gwendolyn M. Carter, *The Politics of Inequality* (New York, 1958); Bernard C. Cohen, *Peace Making in a Democracy: The Political Process and the Japanese Peace Settlement* (Princeton, 1956); Allan B. Cole and others, *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions: A Documentary History, 1945-55*; Henry W. Ehrmann, *Organized Business in France* (Princeton, 1957); Mario Einaudi and Francois Goguel, *Christian Democracy in Italy and France* (Notre Dame, 1952); Rupert Emerson, *Representative Government in South East Asia* (Cambridge, 1955); J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (new edition, New York, 1956); G. E. von Grunebaum (ed.), *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization* (Chicago, 1955); George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (2nd ed., Ithaca, N.Y., 1956); S. M. Lipset and others, *Union Democracy: The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union* (Glencoe, Ill., 1956); Louise Overacker, *The Australian Party System* (New Haven, 1952); Lucian W. Pye, *Guerilla Communism in Malaya* (Princeton, 1956); Dankwart Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise* (Princeton, 1955); Robert A. Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Pre-War Japan* (Berkeley, 1953) and Hans Speier and Phillips Davison (eds), *West German Leadership and Foreign Policy* (Evanston, Ill., 1957); Philip W. Thayer, *Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia* (Baltimore 1956) and W. F. Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change* (New York, 1956).

To assess the exciting effects of this new comparative turn in United States political science one ought to analyze its repercussions on the study of American institutions proper. Increasingly it has become truly comparative, as it should. To mention only two of the most recent publications see Avery Leiserson, *Parties and Politics* (New York, 1958), and Austin Ranney, *The Governing of Men* (New York, 1958).

IPSA conference at Florence (1954). It is requisite reading for any student of comparative politics.<sup>7</sup> The same should be said about the report of the Pittsburgh Conference of 1957, edited by Henry W. Ehrmann under the title *Interest Groups on Four Continents* (Pittsburgh, 1958).

Among the national research enterprises three centers may be singled out for having done impressive spade work: Oxford's Nuffield College, *La Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques* at Paris and the *Institut für Politische Wissenschaft* of Berlin. The exemplary British election studies, the many-pronged volumes of the French *Cahiers* and the substantive publications of a revived German political science (reconnecting the broken ties with pre-Nazi traditions) have brought on fresh techniques of quantitative and qualitative investigations and thus have raised the empirical research to new levels of sophistication.<sup>8</sup>

These pioneering institutes do not stand alone, but have found a vigorous response in numerous research enterprises. To give only a few landmarks: R. T. McKenzie's *British Political Parties* has thrown new light on an institution which had been almost taken for granted as the ideal type and stable point of reference of the functioning two-party system and possibly for this reason has rarely been studied, and if at all, primarily by non-British scholars, such as A. L. Lowell and Ostrogorski. On the French scene one should mention Duverger's spirited *Les Partis Politiques* and the concise criticism of George

<sup>7</sup> For a concise and original evaluation of this study see Leslie Lipson, "The Comparative Method in Political Studies", *The Political Quarterly*, 28:372-382 (October-December, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> Here are a number of the outstanding books of the Nuffield College groups: R. B. McCallum and A. Readman, *The British General Election of 1945* (Oxford, 1947); H. G. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1950* (London, 1951); D. E. Butler, *The British General Election of 1951* (London, 1952) and *The British General Election of 1955* (London, 1955); and the equally impressive monograph by D. E. Butler, *The Electoral System in Britain, 1918-1951* (Oxford), which, incidentally, gives valuable insights as to the possible effect the much discussed proportional representation would have had if it had been introduced in Great Britain. The comparative approach across national frontiers, which is characteristic for the college's work and staffing, is highlighted by a study in progress on the West-German Bundestag elections of 1957.

A sample selection of the rich output of the Paris *Fondation* might mention the following: C. Morize and others, *Etudes de Sociologie Electorale* (Paris, 1947); J. Cadart, *Régime Electorale et Régime Parlementaire en Grande-Bretagne* (Paris, 1948); A. Siegfried, *Géographie de L'Ardèche* (Paris, 1949); M. Duverger, F. Goguel, and others, *L'Influence des Systèmes Electoraux sur la Vie Politique* (Paris, 1950); A. Latreille and A. Siegfried, *Les Forces Religieuses et la Vie Politique: Le Catholicisme et le Protestantisme* (Paris, 1951); G. Dupeux and F. Goguel, *Géographie des Elections Françaises de 1870 à 1951* (Paris, 1951). For a report and discussion of the steady flow of publications see *Revue Française de Science Politique*.

The *Institut* has so far published ten major monographs all of them oriented toward a comparative analysis. The following may be of special interest to the student beyond national lines. M. G. Lange, *Totalitäre Erziehung, Das Erziehungssystem der Sowjetzone Deutschlands* (1954); Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie* (1955); *Parteien in der Bundesrepublik, Studien zur Entwicklung der deutschen Parteien bis zur Bundestagswahl 1953* (1955); Joachim Schultz, *Der Funktionär in der Einheitspartei*; Wolfgang Hirsch-Weber, *Wähler und Gewählte, Eine Untersuchung der Bundestagswahlen 1953* (1957).



Lavau, *Les Partis Politiques et Réalités Sociales* (Paris, 1953), a controversy in the grand style with all the eloquence and elegance of the French *homme de lettres*, symbolized by the victim's magnanimous preface to this challenging treatise. A revived political science in Germany has also brought forward significant contributions which open new vistas such as Dolf Sternberger's *Lebende Verfassung: Studien über Koalition und Opposition*, (Meisenheim-am-Glan, 1956) and Gerhard Leibholz's *Der Strukturwandel der modernen Demokratie*.

That international cooperation in Political Science is more than a hope can be seen in numerous concurrent concerns, developing spontaneously in different areas and immediately reaching out for response in other nations.<sup>9</sup> It speaks well for the comparative approach in the field of politics and therewith gives great promise for the future of the wider field of Comparative Studies.

SIGMUND NEUMANN  
Wesleyan University

<sup>9</sup> Beyond the advanced comparative inquiries on political parties, that have made great strides in the last decades, one can now add similar progress reports in the field of comparative bureaucracy and especially in research on pressure group activities. For a small sample of the rich harvest, giving testimony of the concerted efforts on an international plane see Jean Meynaud "Les groupes d'intérêt et l'administration en France", *Revue Française de science politique*, 7:573-609 (Juillet-Septembre 1957); Rupert Breitling, *Die Verbände in der Bundesrepublik* (Meisenheim, 1955); Theodor Eschenburg, *Herrschaft der Verbände?* (Stuttgart, 1955); Theodor Eschenburg, *Staat und Gesellschaft in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1956); Joseph Kaiser, *Die Repräsentation organisierter Interessen* (Berlin, 1956); W. J. M. Mackenzie, "Pressure Groups: The Conceptual Framework", *Political Studies*, 3:247ff (1955); S. E. Finer, "The Political Power of Private Capital", Part II, *The Sociological Review*, 4:5-30 (July 1956), and "The Federation of British Industries", *Political Studies*, 4:61-84 (1956), Samuel H. Beer, "Pressure Groups and Parties in Great Britain", *American Political Science Review*, 50:1ff. (1956).