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The Future of the Comparative Method

Harold D. Lasswell

I

It is tempting to say that the first prediction to be made about the comparative method is that after a brief flare-up of attention it will not be heard of again. Like many flip assertions this statement buries a needle of probable truth in rhetorical fluff. Can we identify the needle and dispense with the burial? Perhaps. Anyhow, it's worth a try.

For anyone with a scientific approach to political phenomena the idea of an independent comparative method seems redundant. Isn't the scientific approach unavoidably comparative, since to "do science" is to formulate and attempt to verify generalizations by comparing all relevant data? True enough. But this objection overlooks the peculiarities of the intellectual life. One man's semantic anomaly is another man's illumination. And if we examine the circumstances in which students of government, politics, and law have emphasized the pursuit of comparative information, we shall perhaps find a clue.

Examine the recent past. Why has there been a revival of the term "comparative"? Why has the search after new information become a major activity? The principal point is not obscure: political scientists have been belatedly responding to the accelerated interdependence of the world arena, an interdependence that was shockingly dramatized by World War II, by the bipolarized tensions between the Communist and the non-Communist worlds, and by the anticolonialist emergence of new nation-states in Africa and Asia. When the United States became involved in World War II, we discovered, for instance, how few American scholars were specialists on India. And after the war the discovery was repeated, notably with reference to Africa. Small wonder that the foundations and the government at last began to do the thinking and giving that they might well have done many years before. As in other cases, their crash programs have testified to dribble-thinking and dribble-giving in the past.

The inference would appear to be that an effective demand for more comparative knowledge depends on the shared expectation of political elites that they will be better off if they broaden the territorial scope and depth of their political information. Further, some political scientists see an opportunity to improve the stock of knowledge available to the discipline and to raise their own value position in reference to colleagues; hence they initiate the programs or accept the economic and other assets offered by official or unofficial sources.

How representative is the World War II case? Consider World War I, together with the Russian Revolution, and its aftermath. The response was much the same—though less drastic, partly because American political

scientists and historians were relatively better prepared to cope with the demand for information about a Europe-centered world. Further, the controversies over the League of Nations emphasized the task of perfecting the legal and organizational structure of the world, which was less obviously a "comparative" problem than the recent challenge to study new nations outside Europe. Nevertheless, World War I and its aftermath did broaden and deepen territorial studies. (For example, the Institute of Current World Affairs was initiated by Walter Rogers and financed by the Crane family.)

Only one more instance: the impact of European expansionism in the eighteen-nineties, and the Spanish-American War. The example here is the work of Paul S. Reinsch of the University of Wisconsin and the comparative study of world politics and colonialism.

It is, I think, evident from available studies of intellectual history that when imperial powers are part of a civilization, rather than of a tribal or folk culture, they encourage some study of comparative government, even though some of the results may be buried in intelligence archives and not made available to private scholars. A political scientist thinks of the expansion of Macedonia and the role of Aristotle and wonders whether, if the history of Western political theory were less parochial, he might be well supplied with corresponding instances from all the great empires of history.

The concern of imperial elites for comparative knowledge is not limited to the phase of expansion. Recent decades have been a period of relative decline for the empires of Britain, France, and other European states. However, both official and private agencies have encouraged the gathering of information about the forces of dissolution. (In passing I might note that the respect connotations of identifying symbols rise as power rises and provide a further base of expanding power. Not long ago the world contained "savage" societies; a little later these were upgraded to "primitive" or "folk" cultures of "underdeveloped" or "developing" peoples.)

Pluralistic as well as territorial elites have a thirst for comparative intelligence. Any transnational organization, whatever its status in international law, encourages the gathering of information on a broad territorial base and stimulates at least partially systematic analysis. Missionary enterprises, foreign trade, and other activities have occasioned the preparation of current reports and the formation of comparative propositions.

The comparative study of institutions is no monopoly of established elites. It also occupies revolutionary movements in a civilization in which literacy is sufficiently common to enable print to play a part in dividing elite elements from one another. Karl Marx is a formidable case in point. So were the Encyclopedists in the eighteenth century; or the budding nationalists, like Machiavelli, in Renaissance Italy; or the scholars and prophets of anti-British India. Concern for an expanded frame of reference in space carried with it concern for an extended frame in time.

Is the inference that when political scientists study comparative institutions they are following the headlines or the rumors about the spread or constriction of power? Short-range changes in political inquiry lend support to this proposition. There is nothing necessarily discreditable in the fact that keen minds respond to altered circumstances. On the contrary,

as scholars we welcome initiative and ambition when it leads to new knowledge, even though we may agree with critics who warn that quick-moving scholars often distort rather than select. The criticism is softened by the fact that slow-moving scholars are not exempt from similar failings.

We have been examining the circumstances in which relatively rapid expansion occurs in the acquisition of comparative knowledge, whether the participants characterize this expansion as an exercise in "the comparative method" or not. What of the permanence of this rapid acceleration? Is the phenomenon cyclical in the sense that innovation is invariably followed by return to the previous preoccupation with more parochial phenomena? Do most of us return to American government after a brief tour of a newer world? Are there circumstances in which structural changes occur, so that a permanent difference is made in the spatial and temporal dimensions of political knowledge? A perfect cycle would move from comparative knowledge at time 1 to new knowledge at time 2, and then back to the earlier level. A structural sequence moves from the original situation to a new level at time 2, which is retained at time 3.

Can we formulate the circumstances in which a structural change occurs in evaluating the importance of comparative knowledge? The principal hypothesis I would suggest is this: *If "crisis expansion" changes the "core knowledge" that is regarded as necessary for professional training, the innovation will endure.* Otherwise there will be an early attrition of interest in comparative studies.

How do we identify the "core knowledge" of political science at any given time? An obvious indicator is the information called for by the questions asked in examinations for professional degrees. A content analysis of these questions provides a convincing measure of the accepted range of comparative knowledge. Other eligible indicators are the titles of courses; the content of textbooks, journal articles, treatises, and dissertations; and the topics on the programs of professional meetings. The organization of new professional societies is another convincing indicator.

Once the professional core of political science is established, there is no mystery about how it is maintained. Vested and sentimental interests are generated in its transmission. Since the overwhelming fraction of those who receive professional training do little subsequent research, once a given conception of comparative government is crystallized, it provides the frame of reference within which subsequent teaching and consultation is carried on.

Can we be more explicit about the circumstances in which a core change is perpetuated or, on the contrary, undergoes attrition? The essential factor, I suspect, is *whether expansion of the stock of "facts" accepted as relevant is accompanied by "methodological" changes that render the facts indispensable to a command of political science.* There must be a demand to think comparatively, which is obviously different from a simple demand to memorize comparative information. For enduring innovation the personality system of the professional political scientist must come to include a demand "on the self by the self" to raise theoretical questions requiring comparative answers. If the political scientist performs at a lesser level he arouses his own guilt and contempt and evokes similar evaluations from others.

It is common knowledge that "the behavioral revolution" has contributed mightily to the institutionalization of the scientific pattern of thought among political scientists. It is therefore plausible to predict, and I do, that the recently expanded emphasis on comparative data will be firmly established as the professional core of the discipline, since the scientific frame of reference insists on theory formation and modes of data-gathering and data-processing that will keep alive the demand for comparisons.

II

This rather bland forecast can be made more interesting and no doubt more controversial by considering specific recommendations about the way in which the comparative method ought to be understood and applied. My view is that the shortcomings attributed to the comparative method in the past, together with most of the disappointments arising from its use, can be overcome by a configurative conception of the approach appropriate to political science. I am proposing that the comparative method as applied has been insufficiently contextual, inadequately problem-oriented, and unnecessarily restrictive in technique. In brief, it has been insufficiently configurative.

Future applications of the comparative method can benefit by adhering to the requirement of contextuality. To choose the relevant setting for a disciplinary field of inquiry is to select the setting that includes all the phenomena to be investigated. In order to discover the principal likenesses and differences to be studied, the entire context must be continually scanned. For political science it is not difficult to identify the appropriate frame of reference. All past political phenomena must be included. So, too, must all contemporary politics. Moreover, so must all future developments. The pertinent context within which to discover the most rewarding patterns to compare with one another is the manifold of events that comprises the past, present, and future of the world social process.

The social process of mankind includes the interactions of human beings with one another and with the environment. From the broadest standpoint, we are concerned with comparing the political component with the other components of the social process. More than that, we are interested in the understanding that may be added if we compare the social process of man with the corresponding processes in other advanced forms of life, notably the apes and monkeys. In this way we discover significant questions about the genetic predispositions of man and about their possible impact on human politics and society. Besides the bio-environment, it is relevant to compare natural environments as potential habitats of advanced living forms. In the future, then, we can fruitfully examine the social process of human beings and of other species in the bio-environment, as well as the interaction between advanced forms of life and the actual or potential habitats in the natural environment.

Prehistory and history Implied in the contextual approach to the study of past events is ready recognition of the role of the political process in prehistoric as well as in historic times. Such recognition requires a view of the

innovation, diffusion, and restriction of political institutions that keeps abreast of the progress of archaeology and related specialties and is prepared, for instance, to revise the parochial outlook that has prevailed until recently about the evolution of man and culture in Africa (as shown, for instance, in Leakey's discoveries). No doubt there will be more recognition of the dependence of many political phenomena on the relatively sudden emergence of "civilization" from the largely anonymous sea of tribal or folk societies. According to V. Gordon Childe, for instance, civilization arose concurrently in three river valleys (the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates, and the Indus) about the third millennium B.C.¹ Every value-institution sector of society was affected: in terms of *wealth*, the new urban division of labor greatly enhanced productivity and widened the gap between rich and poor; as to *enlightenment*, the advent of literacy provided the means of storing and retrieving information on an unprecedented scale; in regard to *respect*, social classes were highly differentiated along occupational and income lines; in matters of *rectitude*, such as religion and ethics, the local gods were subordinated to the high gods of the rulers, and in the long run secular norms gained impact; in the sphere of *affection*, kinship and extended family units were weakened by individual mobility and the territorial state; in reference to *skill*, the expansion of education gave rise to new intellectual specialists whose decisive role is only now becoming obvious; in all that touches on *well-being*, such as safety, health, and comfort, civilization implied almost incredible extremes; in the realm of *power*, urban civilization marked the emergence of institutions such as the territorial state, formal legislative codes of law, regular taxes, bureaucratized civil and military operations, monumental public works, complex systems of taxation, and official records. (Perhaps it is a consoling reflection that man had operated in small bands or tribes for at least half a million years and that he has had a relatively short time in which to master the civilization that is his own invention.)

Human and nonhuman societies In recent years there has been a formidable expansion of research on nonhuman societies. The aim has been to examine the consequences of contrasting genetic constitutions and to explore the nature and consequences of interactions within the social process. The results have already broken down many stereotyped images of the supposed gulf between man and other advanced forms of life. For instance, there is great variability, even within the same species, in the relative contribution of genetically defined patterns of predisposition and of environmental factors in the determination of various categories of responses. Monkeys that are raised in social isolation fail to mate normally, an activity that many observers have assumed to be instinctive. The grasping-clinging response of infant monkeys, on the contrary, is patterned by predisposition rather than by social environment.²

¹ For a general view, see Stuart Piggott, ed. *The Dawn of Civilization: The First World Survey of Human Cultures in Early Times* (New York, 1961); and Edward Bacon, ed. *Vanished Civilizations of the Ancient World* (New York, 1963).

² A critical introduction to current knowledge can be obtained from Irven DeVore, ed. *Primate Behavior: Field Studies of Monkeys and Apes* (New York, 1965). See esp. Ch. 15, William A. Mason, "The Social Development of Monkeys and Apes."

Strict comparative criteria must be applied in making sure that the patterns found in one context are not uncritically extrapolated across species and varieties. For instance, highly suggestive findings about "the territorial imperative" will undoubtedly inspire researches designed to assess the extent to which such a predisposition is present in man and the extent to which it is neutralized or overcome in various sociopolitical environments. Many competent biologists are skeptical of the role of this supposed imperative, since it is known to play an insignificant part in the lives of some species. The same combination of renewed interest plus critical reserve can be wisely adopted in connection with comparative studies of aggressive behavior among species members or among groups of different species.³ Some investigations of man tend to suggest that he won out not because he was bright, but because he was timid. (And his timidity has an important genetic determiner.) Comparative studies further point to a fundamental source of anxiety in man, namely, the inner tensions generated by a cortex that is superimposed on an automatic system that it feeds with stop-start signals that multiply contradictions and confusions.

Genetic engineering is upon us, and new knowledge will affect the length and quality of life, posing questions that comparative inquiries can partly answer.

A social process model The contextual requirement calls for a theoretical conception of the social process that enables a political scientist to identify his distinctive frame of reference in every social context whether past, present, or prospective. To operate with a definition of politics that excludes the political scientist from exploring and illuminating the phenomena found in every social context is to adopt a policy that cuts off in advance the specialists in this field from the systematic pursuit of meaningful comparisons.

Meaningful comparisons ultimately involve assessing the significance of political systems and specific political practices for man. If we have learned anything from the several versions of the comparative method that have been pursued in the past, it is that an institution-bound item-by-item procedure is inadequate. It does not provide the data necessary to answer the questions of a political science concerned with man—which is to say, with his experiences, favorable and unfavorable, with institutional contrivances. Institutional practices are relevant to man insofar as they contribute to the optimization of his opportunities for value-shaping and value-sharing. The key question about political institutions in the world arena is, To what extent do they contribute to, or stand in the way of, value realizations? Who are the participants in the political process? Whose value demands and expectations are realized? Which values have priority? These are the fundamental descriptive questions to be raised in comparing one institution or set of institutions with another.

Itemistic versus functionalist methods In the nineteenth-century study of government, law, and politics, the item-by-item comparison of institutional

³ Contemporary research is reported and evaluated in Carmine Domenic Clemente and D. B. Lindsley, eds. *Aggression and Defense: Neuromechanisms and Social Patterns*, UCLA Forum in Medical Sciences, No. 7 (Berkeley, 1967).

details became the dominant mode of organizing knowledge. It was exemplified in practically every "dictionary," "encyclopedia," or "handbook" published then in any of the social sciences. The contents of such works were organized around terms chosen to refer to institutional phenomena found in more than one society or body politic. For example: "chieftainship," "monarchy," "republic," "political party," "bicameral legislature," and so on. The relevant sections summarized available scholarship, perhaps tracing a supposed line of "evolution" or formulating a few propositions about the causes and consequences of the phenomena referred to. The data were sometimes quantified, charted, and mapped. At best these compilations made it feasible to obtain a preliminary view of the points of origin and the routes and zones of diffusion of the patterns in question.

However, the whole procedure was fundamentally incomplete, even misleading. No criteria of comparison were consistently applied to establish more than formalistic equivalences among the phenomena labeled with the same word. This was true whether the label referred to the communicated symbols of a political formula ("doctrine"), to the operational routes of collaboration ("balloting"), or to the resources adapted to political uses ("public monuments").

The "itemistic" version of the comparative method was vulnerable to objections that led to the "functionalist" innovation, which took most explicit and stimulating form among anthropologists.⁴ The functionalists were determined to adopt research methods that would make it possible to show how specific details of a cultural pattern were interrelated with other details, and especially how the pattern was experienced by those who were socialized in any position in a society within a given culture. Two societies might have an "origin myth" whose manifest content was about the same. Research might show that the significance of the two myths—their function—differed drastically. In one society the myth might be an occasional bedtime story for children, while in another it might be invoked to justify the prevailing distribution of power and other values.

Parallel developments in the study of "living law" underlined the importance of going beyond the text of written or orally transmitted prescriptions to discover under what circumstances, if ever, the ostensible norm was invoked, by whom, how, and with what value consequences for those immediately concerned for the stability of the public order. Similarly, among political scientists the "realistic" study of government led to the confrontation of formal expectations about authority with the facts of control. This led in turn beyond descriptions of the flow of formal decision by official organs (as conventionally defined) to the study of the flow of the choice and decision outcomes by other than governmental officials, or by such officials acting in an unofficial capacity.

The functionalist emphasis was contextual, and it was fed by intellectual currents from many sources. Psychoanalysis was one procedure for obtain-

⁴ Among the anthropologists the liveliest writer of the functionalist group was Bronislaw Malinowski. Radcliffe-Brown was so absorbed in examining the interconnections among operational routines in society that he played down the perspectives acquired by those who experienced these routines and who contributed to their continuation, rejection, and supersession.

ing nonconventional data and for relating each detail of language, gesture, or deed to the total context of personality. Gestalt psychology emphasized the dependence of the perception of detail on the setting of which it was part.

Value-institutional analysis Contextuality requires a map of the whole social process as a means by which the investigator can identify the category of events for whose description and explanation he takes primary responsibility. Such a map will distinguish between "values" and "institutions," using a short, fixed, and hence manageable list of values to delimit the principal features of the field of observation, together with an ever changing list of terms to refer to the institutions (the patterns of interaction specialized to value-shaping and -sharing). This "double reference" technique enables two investigators to match their observational standpoints in reference to any conceivable field of observation and hence to establish genuine equivalences (that is, comparisons).

Among our colleagues in the social sciences the economists are the most accustomed to operate with value and institution categories. Most of the imperfections that remain in their fieldwork arise from failure to be explicit about the context—hence the wavering between highly delimited phenomena and imperialistic eclecticism. The impact of "other sectors" on the production, distribution, investment, and enjoyment of wealth cannot be clearly worked out in the absence of a model of "other sectors." Nor can studies of the consequences of economic processes be adequately completed in the absence of such a map.

Political scientists have been in the process of learning how to distinguish between the power value and other values and how to identify the political institutions of power, in both the conventional and the functionally defined sense. Hence, they have been learning how to refrain from confusing political with nonpolitical institutions. The lesson has not yet spread widely enough, although the line of march is usually in the right direction. We still lack landmark studies that painstakingly demonstrate, on the basis of empirical research, the extent to which the conventionally defined political system is part of the functionally defined power system and the extent to which the power process is affected (and in turn affects) the other social sectors (enlightenment, wealth, well-being, skill, affection, respect, rectitude). We continue to tell one another that a "legislature" is indeed a legislature, without demonstrating to what extent it also performs other functions in decision, such as intelligence, promotion, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination. It may turn out that for comparative purposes the institution requires a different name.

Small wonder that conceptions of structure and function are so often left ambiguous. These two terms are manageable if they refer to "process" in a given time-space setting. Unless these limits are expressly characterized (defining structures as the "stable" features, and other activities as functions), structures cannot be satisfactorily described. Since stability is a frequency generalization, it must be specified in detail by the observers who take up observational standpoints in regard to it.

Comparisons within the social process, when thoroughly carried out, call

for the comparison of policy-making and policy-executing processes in every value-institution sector. Only when the data about the map as whole are at hand is it possible to arrive at provisionally final appraisals of the functional role of the political system with the total context. A systematic study of decision shows the interplay of the several structures and functions concerned with subfunctions such as intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination, and appraisal. Corresponding models can be empirically demonstrated in the choosing process of all the other sectors. Within each component process we can examine the participants, with their perspectives, in organized or unorganized arenas, utilizing base values through various strategies to influence outcomes and effects. The outcomes are value accumulation, distribution, investment, or enjoyment; in institutional terms, they include innovation of the new and diffusion and restriction of both the new and the old.

III

The configurative conception is problem-oriented as well as contextual. The future application of comparative methods can be wisely guided by the five components of the problem-solving attack on political science (goal clarification, trend description, analysis of conditions, projection, alternatives).

Clarification of goal values In the past, comparative methods have often been perverted rather than guided by goal considerations. Hence the over-reaction in many quarters against the traditional subjects of political philosophy, such as the ends proper to the state and government and the quest for the best form of government. Sometimes the proposed answers to questions about these subjects were "definitional," not empirical. If the ends of the state were defined in a certain way, answers could be given without resort to empirical investigation. Postulate, for instance, that the end of the state is to develop a commonwealth of freely choosing individuals. Is not the ideal form of the body politic then "democratic," defined as free government? The literature of political science is full of litanies of praise or dispraise of the state and of preferred forms of government. Sometimes these litanies make sweeping allusions to empirical situations. But the allusions are designed to add interest to the text or to improve the persuasiveness of the preferential position, rather than to contribute to empirical knowledge. Fifth-century Athens has had a preferred position in eulogies of "democracy." The Roman Republic is celebrated for "representative" institutions, and Great Britain for limited government.

Such dialectical use of pseudoempirical references has built up animosity against evaluative thinking among scientifically minded students of government. Nevertheless, it is important to see that problems of value goal can provide criteria for identifying the choice of issues to be illuminated by empirical research. Granting that an "ought" cannot be formally derived from an "is," once an "ought" is postulated as a goal (and is not made definitionally identical with an existing set of "perfect" arrangements), empirical research is necessary to obtain knowledge of the constellation of factors that precondition the sharing of power or of other chosen objectives.

And the quest for conditions is a scientific question (the third of the five intellectual tasks mentioned above).

The new knowledge of molecular biology poses a problem of value goal that has often been raised in the past, but must be faced in the emerging future in a radically different frame of reference. What is man? More generally, whom shall we admit as authorized participants in the social and political processes of the globe?

Man is distinguished by his problem-solving capacities, and these are bound up with a network of communication channels that allow for the storage, retrieval, and versatile manipulation of symbol-events. The result is that individuals learn by experience, especially by the flow of value indulgences and deprivations from their social environment. Hence man is often characterized with some exaggeration as the culture-making mammal. But it is not to be forgotten that not only can changes be induced in genetic constitution, but also machines may be modified in ways that qualify them to be accepted as advanced forms of life. They can learn from experience, and built-in dispositions can be made sufficiently complex to allow for the equivalent of diffuse mood tones to affect the flow of inner events.

Shall we attempt to control such new knowledge as a means of realizing human dignity (for example, by removing incapacities), thereby enlarging the range of environmental opportunities that individuals are enabled to use to advantage? In view of the parochialisms of caste and race now prevailing there is danger that the new knowledge will be turned into a base of power for the perpetuation of ascendant groups, presumably by creating permanent castes (or varieties) of limited functional adaptation and non-aggressive disposition. The comparative study of animal societies can be used to suggest means not only of liberating talent but also of operating a segmented and stratified system after the model of ants or bees.

Recognizing such dangers, the friends of human dignity will need to intensify comparative investigation of the strategies by which the predispositions transmitted in a caste-bound or race-oriented society can be permanently transformed. (In passing I note the challenge of some researches on India that emphasize the self-perpetuating and self-restorative potentialities of caste in a society in which caste practices were once deeply imbedded.)⁵

Description of trend: chronology and evolution In the examination of past trends, a major distinction must be drawn between chronological and evolutionary sequences. If we consider history as a whole it is possible to characterize the past as a movement from regional to global arenas of power. I have referred before to the evolution from folk societies to civilization. Within the context of a given region we may identify the passage from tribe to state; and within the frame of reference provided by the state, from city-states, empires, and feudal principalities to nation-states. It is not to be assumed that the stages observed in any one context are necessarily connected, so that monarchy, for example, is "inevitably" followed by oligarchy

⁵ See Ramkrishna Mukherjee, "Some Observations on the Diachronic and Synchronic Aspects of Social Change," *Social Science Information*, VII (February 1968), 31-53.

and then by democracy. The stages are "structural" changes, since they mark the appearance of important modifications in previously stable features of public order. They are not, however, inevitable in the sense that B can always be predicted if A occurs. Analysis indicates that B appears if a specific constellation of conditioning factors appears, but such constellations are not inevitable. However, evolutionary sequences often follow a regular order: either constellations of relevant factors occur more than once or variable constellations occasionally produce equivalent results.⁶

Explanatory models It is worth observing that in the past, comparative studies have often been disappointing to ambitious political scientists who set themselves the task of discovering universal laws of politics. Some of the difficulty is to be attributed to lack of data. Suppose we set out to formulate the conditions under which city-states appear and the circumstances of their disappearance. We have only two great instances that are sufficiently well documented to allow even a preliminary reconnaissance to be made. City-states abounded in the Mediterranean world around 500 B.C. and again two thousand years later. If we compose a model of the political process it is immediately evident that many relevant variables cannot be described in the pertinent historical situations. For instance, we cannot satisfactorily specify the changes that took place in the focus of attention of elites, mid-elites, and the rank and file as a result of altered routes of trade. Nor is it possible to follow in requisite detail either the changes in identity by which tribesmen or peasants became absorbed into an adjacent (or sometimes a distant) metropole or the shifts in value demands and expectations affecting the acceptance or rejection of an established myth.

Some models are successfully used to predict many of the political responses that occur under a designated set of environmental circumstances in a given context. The inference is that some predispositions are so well organized in the lives of those who are brought up in a specific political culture that responses to a given set of environmental conditions occur in predictable ways. Results cannot be foreseen in such detail, however, either if previously uncontrolled factors modify predispositions or if previously uncontrolled factors modify environments.

The inference is that so long as comparative methods are applied only to the past, and are not included in programs to observe the future, the results are bound to be more disappointing than it is necessary for them to be. This brings us to the last two intellectual tasks: the projection of future events (assuming that we have no influence on the future) and the invention, evaluation, and selection of policy options, including estimates of the self as a factor in the future.

Future projections and policy alternatives Consideration of the future must be contextual if it is to guide the investigator's effort to locate in the relevant setting the specific phenomena in which he is interested. For this purpose a developmental construct is required. Such a construct proceeds

⁶ A handy guide to the literature that deals with the appearance of the state is Lawrence Krader, *Formation of the State* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968). Following a common tradition, the state is defined somewhat narrowly.

by generating a model of the possible sequence of significant past, current, and future changes, seeking to view the future with impartiality. One technique is to extrapolate quantified trends and distributions, to locate zones of probable contradiction or conflict, and to utilize available knowledge of the interdependencies among conditioning factors to make an estimate of the probable outcome. The hypotheses thus developed can be evaluated in the light of nonquantified information provided by competent observers.

The consideration of policy options calls for (1) the specification of particular terminal situations as interpretations of overriding value goals; (2) the invention of strategies by which the likelihood of the occurrence of the preferred terminal situations is increased; and (3) the evaluation of value costs and benefits at given levels of risk.

IV

If political scientists are to execute comparative investigations on the scale required by an interdependent world arena, institutions must be perfected to provide for continuing observation of significant political changes throughout the globe. The observational techniques must be multiple. What is regarded as significant will be affected by comparative considerations (by context and similarity) and by accessibility for study. The sort of development that is necessary is not a project for a single "Political Science Year"; rather, it is a projected process of institution-building that is planned to enable professional students of government to perform the intelligence and appraisal functions in the official or unofficial decision processes of the globe.

The counterpart seminar technique The planned study of the future calls for the modification of traditional seminar technique. Relevant seminars should be *continuing*. If political scientists are to focus on the frame of reference with which they are most familiar, the seminars should be counterparts of decision processes. The primary focus of a counterpart seminar, if explicitly comparative, brings the problem of explaining degrees of likeness and difference into the center of attention. A seminar on supreme courts would bring into view the highest judicial structures of the United States, Canada, Australia, and other nations with a relatively independent judiciary. Courts are specialized to the *application* phase of a seven-phase model of the decision process. If the *invocation* phase is selected, comparative police systems would be the appropriate subject matter, especially those systems in which the police are largely confined to provisional rather than final action. Comparative legislative structures are the obvious content of a seminar specialized to *prescribing*. Similarly the study of *promotional* activities would take off from political-party and pressure-group structures. The *intelligence* phase of decision would be dealt with by taking overt and covert fact-gathering and -planning operations as the subject matter. Analysis of the *appraisal* component of decision could begin with commissions to report on the integrity and efficiency with which policy has been executed. A study of *termination* brings into view, for example, the comparative role of agencies to compensate those whose established expectations are

disappointed by such shifts of policy as the expropriation of a given industry. Thus, comparative studies of decision can usefully cut across the arenas of government—national, subnational, and transnational.

These examples are chosen from among *official* organs of government. The counterpart approach can instead concentrate on *unofficial* agencies and groups who engage in a given function identified by the scientific observer. The intelligence phase of decision, for instance, includes the private press to the extent that it is specialized to politics.

The scope of counterpart seminars can be adjusted to combine the study of particular phases of decision in the conventionally identified structures of government with comparative studies of the corresponding phase of the policy process in each of the principal value-institution sectors of any given society. The intelligence (fact-gathering and planning) operations of government can be illuminated when examined in a context that includes institutions of enlightenment (e.g., the research community), wealth (agriculture and business), well-being (private hospitals), skill (private schools), affection (kinship associations), respect (social ranks and orders), and rectitude (ecclesiastical organizations). In many societies these various value-institution sectors have no overriding organizations or have only a few; but they may also be carried on through a plural or multiple network of associations (such as the market system of a competitive private enterprise economy). As I have suggested before, a thorough functionalist approach to the study of power calls for studies of the entire context of the social process in order to delimit the actual locus of important decisions (decisions involve total contexts, which implies that important values are at stake and that severe sanctions are expected to be, and in fact are, effectively mobilized against challengers).

The counterpart seminar program has been outlined in reference to a functional and systematic model of decision. Obviously, it may include the comparison of the total decision processes of territorial and pluralistic groups. It is not essential that a specific seminar take responsibility for obtaining original data on more than a single organization or group. It may operate as part of a network of intercommunicating seminars that are specialized to selected comparative tasks.

The counterpart seminar is likely to be most effective when it is planned to be continuing, that is, to have a core of political scientists (and others) who propose to work together for years. Also, the seminar can wisely take advantage of audio-visual aids and of data-storage and -retrieval instruments. The agenda should include estimates of the future as well as feedback of information as the future comes into view.

The contemplated net of counterpart seminars in political science is intended to be unofficial and therefore to serve the principal responsibility of the profession to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The recommended approach is contextual, problem-oriented, and multiple in technique. These seminars can improve public order by strengthening civic order and especially by contributing to the intelligence and appraisal phases of decision.

Within the modern university, political science departments are appropriate locations for counterpart seminars concerned with the making and

execution of policy. It is also appropriate for law schools to adapt their growing use of seminars to such a program.⁷ Some courses and seminars on the Supreme Court or on a regulatory agency such as the Federal Communications Commission are presently operated in ways that approximate the specifications of a full-scale decision seminar.

Historians concerned with contemporary history can add discipline to their interpretation of dynamic factors by adapting the counterpart seminar. Projecting the future of "Jim Crow" is a means of raising new questions about the past of Jim Crow, which is one of the scholarly payoffs of configuratively oriented methods.

The neighboring social and behavioral sciences are other appropriate centers of initiative for counterpart seminars. Departments of economics and schools of business contain many policy-oriented specialists who can make their assumptions more explicit by the contextual requirement. Not only interactions with the economic system are pertinent, but also interactions between the economic sector and all the other sectors. Specialists on the science of science and of education can fruitfully explore the contingent future of both scientific and educational decision-makers in the light of world interdependence. Specialists on population and health are more accustomed than many to think inclusively, but they, too, have been handicapped by the carry-over of piecemeal methods of training, research, and consultation. Specialists on religion and ethics have a complex tradition that ranges from dispassionate universality to self-serving declarations.

All who focus on psychology are stimulated by the challenge of disentangling the impact of diverse environments on genetic dispositions. Disciplines such as psychiatry, which originated in one-to-one therapeutic situations, are reaching out to discover and to affect society. For these specialists a counterpart seminar is a means of orientation toward the larger community process.

In many universities the initiative for continuing seminars can be taken on an interdisciplinary basis from the beginning. The focus may be on a problem or an area rather than on a specific set of decision-makers. The problem may be one of policy options: how to manage genetic engineering and so on.

I have been referring to universities and academies. It may be that new institutes—whether university-connected or independent—will continue to multiply in the more developed nations. Future-directed institutes (now being proposed) may exercise an influential role by outlining a critical map of coming events and thereby affecting the recognition of comparative problems by the scholarly and educated public.

Another existing structure may include counterpart seminars. Political science associations are organized at transnational, national, and sub-national levels. Their programs could provide a forum for a network of decentralized seminars that share results periodically and join in assessing the future. Instead of hearing dreary papers in large lecture halls, associations could meet in seminar rooms that contain maps and charts to remind the

⁷ See Harold D. Lasswell, "Toward Continuing Appraisal of the Impact of Law on Society," *Rutgers Law Review*, XXI (Summer 1967), 645-677; and Lasswell, *The Future of Political Science* (New York, 1963).

participants of previous sessions. Computer consoles could be provided in order to ensure instant access to stored information.

Integrating available procedures All the data-gathering and data-processing methods at the command of political science (as of the social sciences generally) ought to be mobilized to provide the information pertinent to the theoretical models formulated at any time. The item-by-item details can be processed in ways that factor analyze the results and seek to connect the factors with rational systems. *Experimental studies* provide means of describing the direction and strength of predispositions to respond to selected environments. Experiments also generate hypotheses about the interconnections among variables, and these will stimulate the study of the factor combinations that account for institutional change.

Prototyping deals directly with institutional practices, without resorting to the reductionism involved in breaking them into variables and forgetting the larger patterns to be compared. Prototypes that are controlled by intellectuals for enlightenment purposes can stimulate inquiries that use other methods of attack. *Intervention* refers to innovations by the use of power that are relatively subject to power considerations rather than to the pursuit of enlightenment.

Besides the procedures that are largely quantifiable, *case studies* will continue to play a principal role in comparative research, since they result in panels of scholars who have been intensively exposed to the data pertaining to a specific context.⁸ It would make no sense to think of superseding the type of scholar who saturates himself in the details of a single nation, personality, period, or situation. His judgment is the most expert available about the phenomena in question. For comparative purposes he can become a panel member with his fellow case specialists to provide the expert testimony required to establish, for example, what words mean to various audiences at specified places and times. Such meanings provide the dictionary essential to studies of comparative political communication.

Maintaining motivation How is motivation to be mobilized and sustained on a scale big enough to realize a nationwide and worldwide network of counterpart seminars adequate to the needs of comparative political science? The general answer is clear enough: cooperation must appear to be, and in fact must be, advantageous to the scholar, whether he is a faculty member, a student, or a player of some other role in society. One advantage of professional training and organization is that these create a community of scholars who are sensitive to the good opinion of their colleagues and who will therefore engage in respected activities. One mark of respect is the recognition given to the scholar for publication. Hence the timeliness of initiatives that multiply the outlets open to those who engage in comparative investigations.

The management of publication is a more complicated matter today than it was a few years ago. Data-processing procedures are being adapted to the

⁸ Concerning some "case matching" problems, see the methodological criteria discussed on pp. 3-6 of George P. Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas* (Pittsburgh, 1967).

requirements of political science as centers are founded for the exchange of primary observation. Journals will play an important role in providing media for theoretical interpretation and evaluating the past and proposed work of the centers, as of individual contributors.

At this moment in time, the knowledge core of political science is at least partially adequate to the development of the full-scale implications of comparative method. New institutional practices, such as the proposed counterpart seminars, will provide a means of utilizing the configurative approach with its contextual, problem-oriented, and multitechnical elements.