

Comparative Politics - Fundamentals

POL10500

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February 25, 2020

Overview

The module introduces the fundamentals of comparative analysis of political systems. It focuses on the main concepts, theories and methods of comparative analysis of political systems. Different political system types, and particularly democracies, will be systematically presented and analyzed comparatively in terms of their structures and institutions (polity), actors and processes (politics) and policies and policy content (policies). The content emphasized is thus: the methods of comparison, system theory, comparative political regimes, majority and consensual democracies, parliamentary and presidential democracies, veto players theory, electoral and party systems, political values and attitudes, interest group and social movement influence, and policy analysis in selected policy areas.

Note that this document was intended as a cram-sheet summary of the course for last-minute reading. It didn't really turn out that way, and now it's a document for learning/revision, with last-minute quiz questions in the margin.

Attribution

These notes are based off of the readings and lecture slides from the course. I was unable to include links to the relevant readings or lecture slides, but if you look on Moodle they should be fairly easy to find.

Contribution

Pull requests are very welcome: <https://git.sr.ht/~todd/University/tree/master/POL10500/review-notes>

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QQ: Try to list the syllabus of the course. What would you write if the only question on the exam was 'Write down everything you learned on the course?'

1 Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices

1.1 Science and Scientific Research

Notes from 'Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices' (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 1. Block 1.

Science: Is the systematic and organized body of knowledge in any area of inquiry that is acquired using the "scientific method".

Natural Sciences: Are the sciences of naturally occurring objects or phenomena, such as light, objects, matter, earth, etc. Natural Sciences can be further broken down into physical sciences, earth sciences, life science, etc.

Social Sciences: Are the sciences of people or collections of people (such as groups, firms, economies, societies) and their behaviours. These sciences include psychology, sociology and economics.

(Scientific) Laws: Are observed patterns of phenomena or behaviour.

(Scientific) Theories: Are systematic explanations of the underlying phenomenon or behaviour.

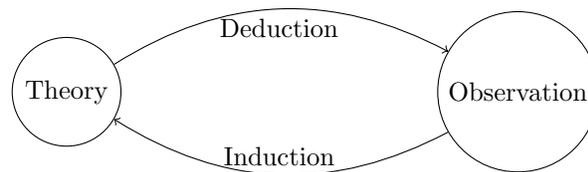
Sometimes, there may not be a 'single universal truth', rather there could be an equilibrium of 'multiple truths'. We arrive at scientific laws and theories through logic (theory) and evidence (observation). Theories provide meaning and significance to what we observe, and observations help validate or refine existing theory, or construct new theories. As such, science operates at two levels; the **theoretical level** and the **empirical level**.

Inductive Research (theory building): Involves the researcher inferring theoretical concepts and patterns from observed data.

Deductive Research (theory testing): Involves the researcher testing concepts and patterns from a known theory using new empirical data.

QQ: Give an example of a inductive and deductive argument.

You can think of inductive research as 'inducing' a theory from data.



Theory building and theory testing are especially hard for social sciences, since theoretical concepts in the social sciences are usually imprecise, with inadequate measuring tools and many unaccounted factors.

1.1.1 The Scientific Method

The Scientific Method refers to a standardized set of techniques for building scientific knowledge. It allows researchers to independently and impartially test preexisting theories and prior findings and subject them to open debate, modifications or enhancements.

The scientific method must have four characteristics:

Logical Scientific inferences must be based on logical principles of reasoning.

Confirmable Inferences derived must match with observed evidence.

Repeatable Other scientists should be able to independently replicate or repeat a scientific study to obtain similar or identical results.

Scrutinizable The procedures used and the inferences derived must withstand peer review by other scientists.

1.1.2 Types of Scientific Research

There are three types of scientific research:

QQ: Try to think of examples of each type of research.

Exploratory research is usually conducted in new areas of inquiry, where the goals are to scope out a phenomenon, generate some ideas, or test the feasibility of undertaking a more expensive study.

Descriptive research is directed at making careful observations and detailed documentation of a phenomenon of interest. This is the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ questions.

Explanatory research seeks explanations of observed phenomena, problems or behaviours. The ‘why’ and ‘how’ types of questions.

1.2 Thinking Like a Researcher

Notes from ‘Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices’ (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 2. Block 1.

Researchers must constantly move back and forth between the *empirical plane* where observations are conducted and the *theoretical plane* where the observations are abstracted into general laws and theories.

Unit of analysis: Refers to the person, collective, or object that is the target of the investigation.

You should always measure variables at an appropriate level of semantic meaning to the unit of analysis. For instance, if your unit of analysis is an organization (a charity, corporation, NGO, etc), then the variables you might measure could be the size of the organization, revenue, hierarchy, employee pay ratio etc.

Concepts: Are generalizable properties or characteristics associated with objects, events or people.

Construct: A construct is an abstract concept that is specifically chosen (or created) to explain a given phenomenon. Constructs can be **unidimensional** such as somebody’s weight, or **multidimensional** such as somebody’s communication skills.

Operational definitions: Are used for scientific research (in place of dictionary definitions), and define constructs in terms of how they will be empirically measured. For example, the operational definition of temperature will explain what unit it will be measured in.

Variable: A variable is a measurable representation of an abstract construct.

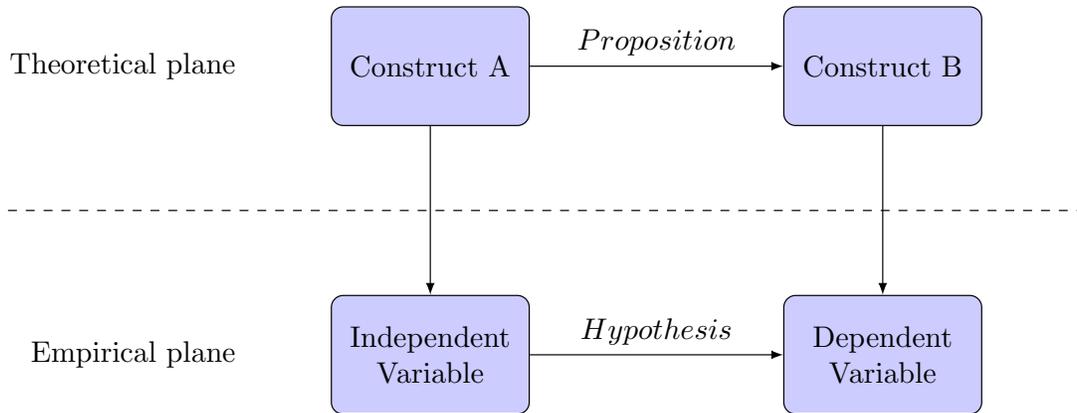


Figure 1: The theoretical and empirical planes of research.

Try to give an example of each type of variable.

Depending on their use, variables may be classified into different types:

Independent Variables: Are variables that explain other variables.

Dependent Variables: Are variables that are explained by other variables.

Mediating Variables: Also known as intermediate variables are those that are explained by an independent variable, but also explain a dependent variable

Moderating Variables: Influence the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Control Variables: Must be monitored or kept constant during a scientific study.

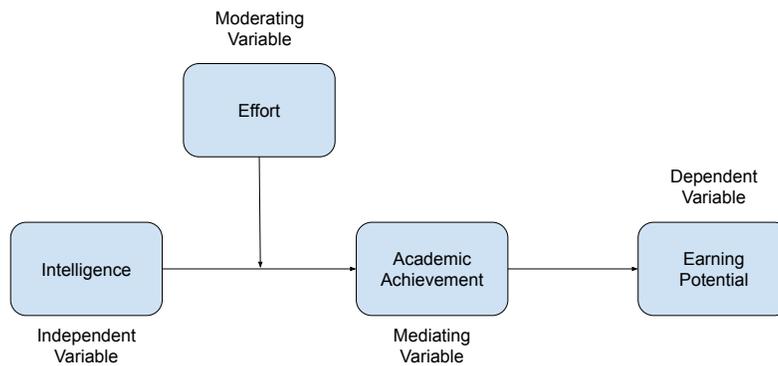


Figure 2: An example of different kinds of variables.

Normological Network: The overall network of relationships between a set of related constructs.

Proposition: A tentative and conjectural relationship between constructs that is stated in a declarative form. E.g. “An increase in student intelligence causes an increase in their academic achievement”. It does not have to be true, but does have to be empirically testable using data.

Propositions (on the theoretical plane) are tested indirectly by examining the relationships between the variables (on the empirical plane) that relate to the constructs involved.

Hypothesis: A hypothesis is the empirical version of a proposition, that is to say that it says something about the relationship between variables, with the dependent and independent variables clearly specified.

Strong Hypothesis: Is a hypothesis with its directionality and causality specified (as opposed to a *weak hypothesis*, which specifies neither).

Theory: A theory is a set of systematically interrelated constructs and propositions intended to explain and predict a phenomenon or behaviour of interest, within certain boundary conditions and assumptions.

A good scientific theory should be well supported using observed facts, and should also have practical value, while a poorly defined theory tends to be lacking in these dimensions.

Model: A model is a representation of all or part of a system that is constructed to study that system. While a theory tries to explain a phenomenon, a model tries to represent a phenomenon.

Models can be descriptive, predictive or normative. Descriptive models are used for representing complex systems and for visualising variables and relationships in these systems. Predictive models are used to forecast future events, and normative models are used to guide activities along commonly accepted norms or practices.

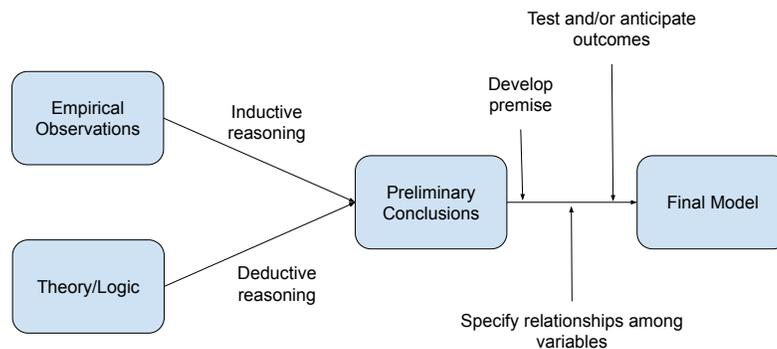


Figure 3: The steps required to build a model.

1.3 Doing Research

Notes from ‘Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices’ (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 3. Block 1.

Paradigm: A paradigm is a mental model or frame of reference that we use to organize our reasoning and observations. They are often hard to recognize because they are implicit, assumed and taken for granted.

Looking at the same problem through different ‘lenses’ can give different conclusions. Looking with a rational lens may produce rational explanations, looking with a social lens may produce explanations focusing on social deficiencies, and looking through a political lens may produce political solutions. As such, a ‘lens’ is like a subconscious paradigm that constrains the concepts that researchers attempt to use when understanding a phenomenon. Often, multiple paradigms or lenses will be simultaneously and partially correct; only by applying several can a researcher gain a full appreciation of the problem.

Positivism: Says that knowledge creation is restructured to what can be observed and measured, tending towards theories that can be directly tested (and positively confirmed).

Post-positivism: Post-positivism argues that one can make reasonable inferences about a phenomenon by combining empirical observations with logical reasoning.

Ontology: Refers to our assumptions about how we see the world.

Epistemology: Refers to assumptions about the best way to study the world.

Methodology: Concerns the ways in which knowledge of the political world is acquired.

As such, these three concepts have a 'directional dependence'; ontology establishes what is knowable, epistemology establishes how it is knowable, and methodology establishes how the knowledge is systematically acquired.

Micro-political analysis: Examines the political activity of individuals such as respondents in a mass survey or politicians.

Macro-political analysis: Focuses on groups of individuals, structures of power, social classes, economic processes, and the interaction of nation states.

1.3.1 The research process

Research is an iterative process, characterized by **observation** where phenomena are observed, **rationalization** which tries to make sense of these phenomena, and then **validation** which tries to confirm that the outcome of the rationalization stage correctly confirms the phenomena from the observation stage.

Functionalist research has three stages, **exploration**, **research design**, and **research execution**.

The **exploration** stage consists of three components:

Research questions Figuring out specific questions you want to answer

Literature review Surveying the current state of knowledge, identifying key authors, theories and articles, and identifying gaps in knowledge.

Theory Finding a theory to help answer the research questions (which helps figure out how constructs are interrelated to the target phenomenon).

Research design is concerned with figuring out *how* the research will be carried out. It has three components:

Operationalization The process of designing precise measures for abstract theoretical constructs, including specifying 'operational definitions' for each construct in the theory in the context of the observed phenomena.

Research method What method will be used for collecting data; including quantitative (experiments or surveys) and qualitative methods (e.g. case studies).

Sampling strategy which is a method to select individual entities from a population to study.

Once the research is designed, a **research proposal** will be written, explaining the decisions made so far, and their rationale.

Once the research proposal is accepted, the research execution phase begins. This includes:

Pilot testing which helps detect potential problems in the research design or instrumentation.

Data collection from the sampled population.

QQ: Draw a diagram of the research process.

Data analysis which includes interpreting the data and drawing conclusions about it.

Research report which could be a dissertation, paper, etc. It should details the whole process, from the start to the analysis of the results and the conclusion.

1.3.2 Common research mistakes

Insufficiently motivated research questions The research question must be related to a real problem that affects real people.

Pursuing research fads Popular topics often have a limited shelf life, and by the time the paper is published, the topic might have become boring again. Timeless topics are better research areas.

Unresearchable problems These include problems without much evidence, ambiguously defined problems, or problems that cannot be solved with currently accepted methods and procedures.

Favoured research methods Research methods should be chosen to best fit a research problem, and not the other way around.

Blind data mining The researcher should not collect the data first, and try to fit a theory to it later. The data collection must be directed by the planning stages of the research, and an abundance of data cannot make for deficits in the research planning stage.

1.4 Theories in Scientific Research

Notes from 'Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices' (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 4. Block 1.

Idiographic explanations: Are those that explain a single situation or event in idiosyncratic detail, e.g. if you failed an exam because you forgot it, because you arrived late, you panicked, or had a hangover. They are not generalizable.

Nomothetic explanations: Are explanations that seek to explain a class of situations or events rather than a specific situation or event. E.g. generally, students can fail exams because they don't spend enough time studying. They are less precise and less complete than idiographic explanations, but are also economical in their explanations and use few variables. Theories are usually nomothetic.

Theories are useful, since they provide the underlying logic of what's happening by explaining key drivers and outcomes, and why they occur. They also help synthesize prior empirical findings into a framework, reconcile contradictory findings, provide guidance for future research, and bridge gaps between other theories to connect different areas of research.

1.4.1 Building a Theory

There are four building blocks of a theory:

Constructs which capture the "what". They are abstract concepts that are chosen specifically to explain the phenomenon of interest. They must have a clear operational definition, and their real-world forms on the empirical plane are variables.

Propositions which capture the "how", are associations between constructs based on deductive logic, and stated in declarative form (i.e. if X happens, then Y follows). They must be testable, and their real-world forms on the empirical plane are hypotheses.

Logic which is the "why", provides a basis for justifying the propositions, and explain the core of the theory.

QQ: What are the four building blocks of a theory? Don't look!

Boundary conditions or assumptions which are the “who”, “when”, “where”, etc (i.e. all the circumstances that the reified instances of the theory occur in). The boundary conditions say when and where the theory can be applied to practice.

1.4.2 Attributes of a Good Theory

A good theory has the following attributes:

- It is logically consistent, and all its parts fit together in a reasonable way.
- It can explain or predict reality well, or at least better than rival theories.
- It must be falsifiable, ensuring that it's possible to find data that contradicts the theory, in which case the theory would be disproven.
- Good theories are parsimonious, and explain a phenomenon with few variables.

Occam's razor: States that among competing explanations that sufficiently explain the observed evidence, the most simple theory is usually the best.

1.4.3 Approaches to Theorizing

Grounded theory building: Is building theories based on observed patterns of events or behaviours. The theory is 'grounded' in empirical observations. The researcher must provide a consistent explanation for all the patterns.

A **bottom-up conceptual analysis** can identify different sets of predictors relevant to a phenomenon by examining different inputs/variables, and describing the underlying processes that link them to the target phenomenon.

Another approach, can be to extend or modify existing theories to explain a new situation. This can be very efficient. Or, existing theories can be applied in an entirely new context, by drawing similarities between the original context of the theory and the new context where it is applied.

1.5 Research Design

Notes from 'Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices' (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 5.
Block 2.

Internal Validity: Examines whether the observed change in a dependent variable is indeed caused by a corresponding change in the independent variable, and not by other variables. Internal validity requires that the effect happens if the cause happens (covariation), the cause must precede the effect (temporal precedence) and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

External Validity: Refers to whether the observed associations can be generalized from the sample to the population.

Construct Validity: Examines how well a given measurement scale is measuring the theoretical construct that it is expected to measure. E.g. if empathy is being measured, it must be asserted that it's not actually compassion being measured.

Statistical Conclusion Validity: Examines the extent that conclusions derived using a statistical procedure are valid.

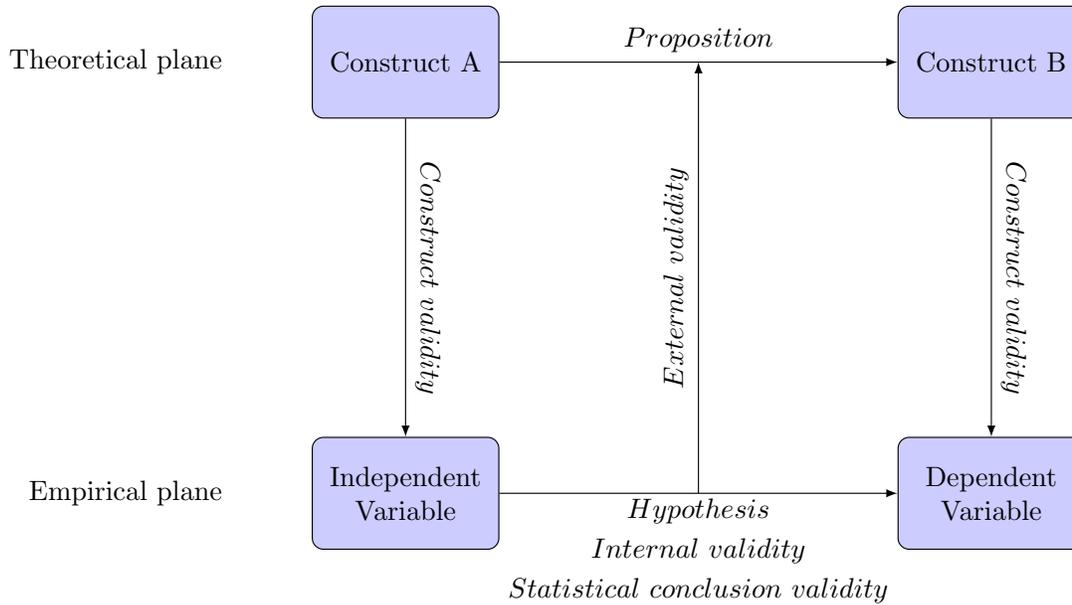


Figure 4: The theoretical and empirical planes of research, annotated with the different types of validity.

In order to improve validity, the following controls can be implemented:

Manipulation The researcher manipulates the independent variables and compares the effects against a control group.

Elimination Tries to eliminate extraneous variables by making them constant, e.g. by restricting a study to a single gender.

Inclusion Is when the researcher tries to account for the effect of extraneous variables by estimating their effects on the dependent variable, then accounting for the effect in the results.

Randomization Is when random sampling is used to cancel out the effects of extraneous variables. This can take the form of random selection (choosing a sample at random), or random assignment (selecting a sample, but randomly assigning them to the experiment or control groups).

Randomization assures both internal validity and external validity, since inferences drawn from a random sample of a population can be generalized to the whole population.

1.5.1 Different Research Designs

Experimental studies Are studies intended to test cause-effect relationships in a tightly controlled setting, using an experiment group and a control group.

Field surveys Do not control for independent variables, but measure them and test their effects using statistical methods. Cross-sectional field surveys measure the independent and dependent variables at the same time, while longitudinal field surveys measure the dependent variable after the independent variable.

Secondary data analysis Is analysis of data previously collected by other sources.

Case research Is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings.

Focus group research Involves bringing a small group of subjects into a discussion where they talk about a phenomenon of interest.

Action research Assumes that complex phenomena are best understood by introducing interventions (actions) into them, and observing the effects of the interventions.

1.6 Measurement of Constructs

Notes from 'Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices' (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 6. Block 2.

Conceptualization: Is the process by which fuzzy and imprecise constructs (concepts) are defined in concrete and precise terms.

Conceptualization is important in social science, since concepts are often vague or ambiguous. Sometimes, concepts are treated as real, in which case they are said to be 'reified'.

Operationalization: Refers to the process of developing indicators or items for measuring a construct, which are called variables. These variables operate at the empirical level, while their corresponding constructs exist on the theoretical level.

Indicators can be *reflective*, meaning that they reflect a measure of the underlying construct, or *formative*, which means that they contribute to the definition of the underlying construct.

1.6.1 Rating scales

Rating scales: Refer to the values that an indicator can take (kind of like the *type* of a variable in a programming language).

Nominal scales Measure categorical data (e.g. gender or religion).

Ordinal scales Measure values that can be ordered (e.g. first, second, third), but the actual values cannot be assessed.

Interval scales These scales are rank ordered, but are also bucketed.

Ratio scales Have all the qualities of the above scales, but additionally with a 'true zero' point.

Binary scales Are yes/no values.

Likert scale Measures ordinal data, and consists of a statement and an extent of a respondent's agreement with the statement from 1-5 or 1-7.

Guttman scale Uses a series of yes/no questions arranged in increasing order of intensity, (e.g. do you think Government should be involved in healthcare, do you think Government should have financial programmes to fund healthcare, etc).

1.7 Qualitative Analysis

Notes from 'Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices' (2012) by Anol Bhattacharjee, Chapter 13. Block 2.

Qualitative Analysis is the analysis of qualitative data such as text data from interview transcripts. The emphasis is in making sense of a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining it.

QQ: What are the qualitative analysis methods?

1.7.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory: Is an inductive technique of interpreting recorded data about a social phenomena to build theories about it. The interpretations are 'grounded in' the observed empirical data.

Grounded theory works in stages:

1. **Open coding:** Involves the researcher examining raw textual data line-by-line, and identifying discrete events, incidents, ideas, actions, perceptions, etc that are coded as concepts. Each concept is linked to a specific portion of the text for later validation. The

technique is called ‘open’ because the researcher is open to finding new concepts in the text.

2. Concepts are grouped into higher-order categories that are more broad and generalizable than the concepts from open coding. Each category has characteristics and dimensions that help fit new concepts from the open coding into it.
3. These categories are then grouped in a process called *axial coding*, which should start to show their causal relationships so a tentative hypothesis can be formed.
4. Finally, *selective coding* is used to identify a central category, and relate that to the other categories.

This process is repeated (with new data being added, and new concepts being created) until *theoretical saturation* is reached and new data doesn’t yield new concepts.

1.7.2 Content Analysis

Content Analysis: Is the systematic analysis of the context of a text (e.g. who says what to whom, why, what are the effects, etc).

The process is like this:

1. The researcher chooses a sample set of texts for analysis.
2. The researcher splits each text into chunks which can be treated as separate units of analysis. This is called unitizing.
3. The researcher then constructs and applies one or more concepts to the unitized text, which is called *coding*.
4. The coded data is analysed to find the themes which occur most frequently.

One example of content analysis is *sentiment analysis*, which analyses a text to capture the opinion or attitude of the writer.

1.7.3 Hermeneutic Analysis

Hermeneutic analysis: A special type of content analysis, where the researcher tries to “interpret” the subjective meaning of a given text within its socio-historical context. The word *hermeneutic* referees to one particular strand or interpretation, so *hermeneutics* refers to them in the collective.

1.8 Methods of Comparison

Notes from the lecture titled ‘Methods of Comparison’ from Block 1.

QQ: What are the three ‘methods of comparison’ designs covered here?

1.8.1 Most Similar System Design

‘Most similar system design’ is a method of comparison defined by Prezorwski and Teune, and is used to explain differences in outcome between similar two cases. It looks for an independent variable that differs between the two cases.

For example, given the question “Although Sweeden and the US are both rich democracies, how come crime rates are lower in Sweeden?”, the most similar system design school might say that it’s because the population is much more homogeneous in Sweeden.

For example, France had a revolution and England did not have a revolution. They both had expensive foreign wars, serfs, and a repressive monarchy, but the only thing they really had different, was that France had a stagnant standard of living, while England did not. This suggests that the stagnant standard of living was a cause of the revolution in France.

1.8.2 Most Different System Design

‘Most different system design’ tries to explain similarities between very different systems. For example, France and China both had revolutions, though the only thing they really had in common is a rural population without property. This indicates that their common “nonpropertied agrarian proletariat” could have caused their revolutions.

1.8.3 Historical or Longitudinal Studies

These studies are a comparison of either one or multiple systems over time. Example questions could include “Why have there been so many regimes in France?” or “How has foreign security policy changed in country X over time, and why did it change?”.

1.8.4 What’s your ‘N’?

Your ‘N’ is the amount of *things* your studying. For instance, in the case of a single case study, your ‘N’ is 1, while if you study all the EU countries as of 2015, you would have an ‘N’ of 28.

1.8.5 Comparative Methods

Comparative methods include:

Archival Research: Which looks at both primary research (newspapers, film clips, speeches, emails, etc), and secondary sources (e.g. books and articles by others).

Historical Institutionalism: A focus on how existing institutional structures patterns of behavior, power relationships, and modes of communication among actors.

Content Analysis: The search for patterns or meanings of written/spoken materials, e.g. a comparison of *Der Tagespiegel und der Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*’s front page coverage of climate change.

Discourse Analysis: An effort to find meaning in different forms of discourse, such as how ‘evil’ is discussed by political leaders of different countries with different ideologies.

Interviews, surveys and database research: Different types of interviews (structured, semi-structured, open), oral or written surveys, and databases from a variety of sources such as think tanks.

QQ: What are the methods of comparative research listed?

2 Waves of Democratization

Notes from the lecture ‘Waves of Democratization’. Block 2.

Wave of Democracy: First popularized by Huntington, a wave of democracy refers to a surge of democracy in the world at a time in history.

There have been three waves to date, and their concomitant ‘reverse waves’ (just like an actual wave, democracy appears to retreat after it has arisen):

First wave (long) From 1828 1922, the first wave is characterized by at least 50% of people (males) with right to vote, a responsible executive, and periodic elections. At maximum 29 democracies.

First reverse wave From 1922 to 1942, the rise of fascism and the soviet expansion decreased the number of democracies to just 12.

Second wave (short) In the two decades after world war two (1945 to 1962), fascism was defeated and many states in Europe were democratized, as well as some in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

QQ: How many waves of democracy have there been?

Second reverse wave From 1958 to 1973, the tensions of the cold war and the failures of the newer democracies caused a rise in authoritarianism. The number of democracies drops to around 30.

Third wave The third wave began in about 1970, and the number of democracies has risen to around 100 now.

Something else? Is the Arab Spring a fourth wave of new democracies, or is the quality of some democracies actually decreasing with a rise of populism and a backlash against the 'liberal' part of a 'liberal democracy'?

QQ: What are the attributes of a democracy?

Democracy is also known as 'polyarchy', and is indicated by the following attributes:

- Free and fair elections
- Elected officials
- Inclusive suffrage
- The right to run for office
- Freedom of expression
- Alternative sources of information to those coming from the state
- Associational autonomy, defined as “ To achieve their various rights, including those listed above, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.” (Robert Dahl 1989)

Transitology: The study of “democratization” the process of becoming democracies.

Changes that paved the way for the third wave (the biggest wave) of democratization include:

QQ: What five factors led to the third wave of democratization?

1. A deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian governments unable to cope with military defeat and economic failure.
2. Burgeoning economies of many countries; raised living standards, levels of education, and urbanization. Yet at the same time, civic expectations were raised and their ability to be expressed.
3. Changes in religious institutions which have made them more prone to oppose governmental authoritarianism than defend the status quo.
4. A push to promote human rights and democracy by external actors such as non-governmental organizations and the European Community.
5. “Snowballing” or demonstration effects, enhanced by new international communications, of democratization in other countries.

The factors identified by Linz and Stephan that promote democratic consolidation are:

QQ: What five factors that encourage democratization?

1. The experience of a previous effort at democratization, even if it failed.
2. High level of economic development.
3. Favorable international political environment, with outside assistance.
4. Early timing of the transition to democracy, relative to a worldwide “wave”, indicating that the drive to democracy derived primarily from indigenous rather than outside influences.
5. Experience of a relatively peaceful rather than violent transition.

There are also four 'transitions' towards democracy:

QQ: What are the four transitions that can instantiate a democracy?

1. Transformations (as in Spain, India, Hungary, and Brazil) where the elites in power took the lead in bringing about democracy.

2. Replacements (as in East Germany, Portugal, Romania, and Argentina) where opposition groups took the lead in bringing about democracy.
3. Transplacements (as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bolivia, and Nicaragua) where democratization occurred from joint action by government and opposition groups.
4. Interventions (as in Grenada and Panama) where democratic institutions were imposed by an outside power.

3 Patterns of Democracy

Democracy: Government by the people.

Representative Democracy: Government by the representatives of the people.

Generally speaking though, democracy entails the following:

- A selection of government officials through free and fair elections
- Balance between majority rule and minority protection
- Limits on government action

There are two models of democracy in widespread usage today; the majoritarian model and the consensus model:

Majoritarian democracy: Indicates that the majority of people will do the governing, i.e. whichever group is largest. It is characterized by exclusive power and competitive politics. Majoritarian democracies are now very rare, only the UK, some former British colonies, and until recently, New Zealand (up to 1996) still have it.

Consensus democracy: Indicates that as many people as possible should be involved in the governing. Here, having a majority is the minimum requirement. It is characterized by inclusivity, bargaining and compromise.

Two important dimensions that a political system can exist within are the ‘executives-parties’ dimension and the ‘federal-unitary’ dimension.

The **executive-parties dimension** has five key differences:

- Concentration of executive power (e.g. a single cabinet) vs power sharing (e.g. a coalition).
- Executive-legislative relationship; is the executive dominant, or can the legislature balance its power?
- Two party, or multiparty?
- Majoritarian and disproportionate election systems, or a proportional representation system?
- Pluralist interest groups vs corporatist interest groups (see below).

The **federal-unitary dimension** also has five key differences:

- Unitary and centralized government vs a federal and decentralized government.
- Concentration in legislative power in one house (unicameralism) vs two equally strong but differently constituted houses (bicameralism).
- Flexible constitutions that can be changed by a majority, vs rigid constitutions that can only be changed by a large majority.
- Systems where legislators have the final say on the constitutionality of their legislation vs where the judiciary has a review.

Note that there are many definitions of democracy, but this one is simple and broad and appears in the text. Abraham Lincoln said that democracy should entail government by, but also *for* the people.

QQ: What are the five key differences along the executive-parties dimension?

QQ: What are the five key differences along the federal-unitary dimension?

- Is the central bank dependent on the executive, or independent?

Federalism: Guaranteed division of power between the central government and regional governments. Secondary characteristics are those listed above; bicameralism, a rigid constitution, and strong judicial review.

Turnover test: How many times has an incumbent government peacefully handed power to another party as a result of a democratic election? The 'two-turnover test' and 'three-turnover test' require multiple turnovers of power to be passed. Some very democratic countries fail these tests (mainly because subsequent in-power coalitions always had an element from the previous coalition).

Westminster Model: Equivalent to the majoritarian model; the party with the majority of seats forms a government, elected by a first past the post system. Power is concentrated into the hands of the cabinet. In effect, this is usually the party with the most votes.

Plurality: Winning the popular vote (e.g. Hilary Clinton in the US election, 2016).

Plurality method: Also known as "first past the post", the entity with the most votes wins.

In the Westminster Model, the cabinet is theoretically dependent on parliament, but in practice, the cabinet is backed by a majority in the House of Commons, and can confidently count on staying in office and having its legislation approved. As such, cabinets will lose their authority if either of two conditions are reached:

- They lose majority support in the house.
- The majority party loses cohesiveness (for example, through defection)

Manufactured Majorities: "Majorities that are artificially created by the electoral system out of a mere plurality of the vote" - Rae, 1967

Interest Group Corporatism: Regular meetings take place between representatives of the government, labour unions and employers organizations to seek agreement on socioeconomic policy. Often seen in 'party oriented' democracies over 'executive oriented' ones. The coordination process of this is called 'concertation'.

Tripartite Pacts: Are agreements reached through concertation between government, labour unions and employers organizations.

Pluralism: Decision making is mostly in the hands of government, but many non-governmental groups use their resources to exert influence (e.g. by lobbying).

Corporatism: All members of the economic sector join an 'interest group' which participates in policy making. The state has lots of control over these groups and the members in them.

Constitutionalism: Is a central concept in democracies; limit the power of government so that it must follow the law. The government upholding the constitution is part of what makes it legitimate.

Municipal: Relating to a town or district and its governing body.

There is a trade-off between the concentration and dispersal of power; institutions that concentrate power are often more effective, but are less democratic. Institutions that disperse power over many actors are more democratic, but can still be equally effective under some conditions.

New Institutionalism: Institutions which concentrate state and socioeconomic power are required for state capacity and autonomy, and for effective policy change.

Actor centered institutionalism: Institutions that disperse state power allow more points of access for veto groups to block these points. See the 'Veto Players' section below.

Note that while the UK is plurality system, there are proportional representation based elections in Northern Ireland (to help prevent violence), European Parliament elections, and regional assembly elections in Scotland and Wales.

QQ: What is the trade-off between the concentration and dispersal of power?

3.1 Majoritarian Political Systems

Notes from the lecture called 'Democratic Political Systems', and from Chapter 2 of Patterns of Democracy. Block 3.

Majoritarian political systems (also known as the Westminster Model) concentrate power in the hands of the majority. They foster a two-party system, the ruling party of which is accountable to the electorate. If the ruling party fails to perform, then voters can punish it at the next election.

QQ: List the typical characteristics of a majoritarian political system.

To synthesize the above elements of the 'executive' and 'unitary' models, they are characterized by:

- A concentration of executive power, with one party in power and majority cabinets.
- Two party systems.
- Majoritarian and disproportional election system.
- Interest group pluralism (giving states control).
- A unitary and centralized government.
- Concentration of legislative power in a unicameral system.
- Constitutional flexibility.
- No or little judicial review.
- A tightly controlled central bank.

The UK is, obviously, following the Westminster Model. As such, it is found on the 'executive' and 'unitary' end of the above dimensions.

It is basically unicameral (or at least its bicameral system is highly asymmetric); the House of Lords is not powerful, and can only delay legislation by up to one year, and could be abolished with a simple majority in the House of Commons.

The constitution is unwritten, or at least, there isn't one definitive document detailing it that explains the powers of governmental institutions and the rights of citizens. There are many basic laws (e.g. the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights) that serve the purpose instead. This makes for a flexible constitution that can be changed by parliament in the same way as normal laws are changed (i.e. a supermajority is not required, as it is in other systems).

3.2 Consensus Political Systems

Notes from Chapter 3 of Patterns of Democracy. Block 3.

QQ: What is the motivation behind the consensus model?

Sir Arthur Lewis said "All those who are affected by a decision should have the chance to participate in the making of that decision, either directly or through chosen representatives".

The motivation of consensus systems, is that if a majority party prevails against the will of the minority, then it would be undemocratic by the above quote, and hence the minority should always get a say.

Lewis does say that there are two conditions where majoritarian systems are still democratic:

1. The exclusion of the minority is mitigated by having majorities and minorities alternating in government (e.g. Tory/Labour alternating).
2. If a society is quite homogeneous, then the major parties could likely not be too far apart, and all voter preferences will be reasonably well served by the government.

What are the two conditions under which a majoritarian democracy is democratic according to Sir Arthur Lewis? Give an example of where they were violated, with negative effects.

If these conditions are violated inside a majoritarian model, then minorities could feel constantly discriminated against, and can lose their allegiance to the regime. This happened in Northern Ireland in 1980, when majority rule was a majority dictatorship and civil strife erupted.

In order to prevent such occurrences and ensure that the minority is satisfied, consensus democracies manifest ten characteristics:

QQ: What are the characteristics of the consensus model of democracy?

- Executive power sharing in broad coalition cabinets.
- An executive-legislative balance of power.
- Multiparty systems because:
 1. Societies are usually plural and are divided along many cleavages (race, class, religion, etc)
 2. Proportional representation doesn't inhibit a transition between cleavages (e.g. from a left-right cleavage to a economy-green cleavage).
- Proportional Representation
- Interest group corporatism (corporation oriented)
- Federal and decentralized government
- Strong bicameralism
 - This allows for different representation in different houses, e.g. special representation for smaller states in the upper house.
 - To be effective, the upper house must be elected on a different basis from the lower house, and must have some real power (ideally the same amount as the lower house).
- Constitutional rigidity
- Judicial review
- Independence of the central bank

Side effects of the consensus system include:

- Women are usually better represented
- There is better representation of the entire electorate
- There are higher election turnouts
- Citizen satisfaction on democratic performance is higher

As an example, the EU is structured as follows, and follows the points above:

- The European Council is made up of the heads of government from each member state
- The European Commission is the cabinet
- The European Parliament is the lower house
- The Council of the European Union is the upper house
- The European Court of Justice
- The European Central Bank

3.3 Normative Criteria of Evaluation for Party Systems

Notes from 'Choosing Electoral Systems; Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems' by Pippa Norris. Only the 'Normative Criteria of Evaluation for Party Systems' section is here, since the rest of the paper was mostly covered already. Block 3.

The heart of the debate around which electoral system to choose revolves around the central criteria by which they should be evaluated. The following sections will outline some of these criteria.

QQ: What are the four criteria for party system evaluation?

3.3.1 Government Effectiveness

Often strongest in majoritarian systems, a government is effective if it is able to implement its manifesto policies without the need to engage in post-election negotiations with its coalition partners.

Strong government often depends on an exaggerating bias in the electoral system in order to get a decisive result, and give the cabinet enough legislative power to pass whatever it feels necessary during its term of office.

3.3.2 Responsive and Accountable Government

A responsive government depends on the rate of potential seat turnover at election time, and often on a two-party system as well. Governments should have the power to take tough decisions and carry out unpopular policies during their term in office, but know that their power could be withdrawn at the next election.

3.3.3 Fairness to minor parties

The representation of minority groups and parties in a country's government is important to those advocating for a proportional representation system, though those who prefer majoritarian systems see the exclusion of small parties as a virtue since it prevents fringe groups on the extremes of the political spectrum from acquiring representative legitimacy.

Harshly penalizing small parties who come second, third or fourth in elections is hard to justify, and can lead to segments of the population being consistently stigmatized.

3.3.4 Social Representation

The social composition of parliament can be important, and the representation of women and minorities has usually lagged behind in countries using majoritarian systems. There are many ways to mitigate this, such as gender quotas, dual-member constituencies, or affirmative action programmes.

4 Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization

Notes from 'Party System Institutionalization and Party System Theory after the Third Wave of Democratization reading' by Mainwaring and Toccal. Block 3.

This paper outlines differences between long established democracies, and later democracies which are typically less institutionalized. First, let's write some definitions before getting into the bulk of the argumentation.

Party System: A set of parties that interact in patterned ways. There must be at least two parties, there must be some regularity to the distribution of voter support between parties over time, and there must be a continuity of parties making up the system over time.

Electoral volatility: The aggregate turnover from one party to another, from one election to the next. Computed by adding the net change in percentage of voters gained or lost by each party from one election to the next, then dividing by two.

Ideological voting: When voters choose a candidate or party on the basis of which best advances their programmatic interests; ideology is a shortcut for that decision.

Clientelism: The exchange of goods and services in return for political support, often involving explicit or implicit quid-pro-quo (e.g. in the extreme case, buying voters).

Personalistic voting: Votes are driven on the basis of the personal characteristics of candidates. Also known as ‘personalism’.

Bounded rationality: Decision making and rationality of individuals is limited by the information they possess, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite time they have to make a decision.

Okay with definitions out of the way, the main argument of the paper, is that less developed democracies are less institutionalized. This means that electoral volatility is higher, programmatic and ideological linkages between voters and parties are weaker, and linkage between voters and candidates is more personalistic, all of which have negative effects on the political system.

A key function of parties has historically to integrate new citizens (immigrants or young people) into the political system, and parties in institutionalized democracies generally do this well, but in younger democracies, parties never had the chance to take root and create strong identities before the advent of things like mass media. This means that voters have a low affiliation to parties, since parties are not powerful enough.

Weak institutionalism is bad because it means anti-party politicians are able to come to power, and electoral accountability is hampered. Parties are weaker and the system becomes ‘fluid’. Stronger electoral institutions have more stability (due to fewer floating voters since voters have strong attachment to parties), and parties that set their own agendas rather than being co-opted by ambitious leaders.

Voters don’t vote ideologically in less institutionalized democracies because:

- There are often material interests tied to voting which leads to clientelistic voting.
- They may vote based on the personality of the candidate, instead of the ideology of the party to which the candidate belongs (due to the weakness of party ideology).
- Voters may value the absolute performance of government over the ideological position of the current government; they just want *a working system*.

Personalism is so prevalent in less institutionalized democracies because:

- Parties are less strongly rooted, and their lack of establishment allows individual candidates to override their characteristics with their own personal characteristics. This is not possible if a party has a deeply ingrained culture and ideology.
- Poor regime performance leads to an erosion of trust and a discrediting of parties; the individual politicians are discredited and removed, but the parties are discredited and stay.
- Many parties are ideologically unreliable and programatically diffuse, which doesn’t help them foster a stronger image over time.
- Many newer democracies are presidential systems, which emphasize personality.

Personalism decreases voter comprehension of the actual policy positions of the candidates, and thus one test of personalism is when leadership evaluation is not well linked to ideology or programme. Political representation devoid of programmatic content is meaningless to voters, and this personalism can erode the foundation of democracy.

Note that ideological voting sounds bad, but it’s a lot better than personalistic voting. The ‘next tier’ above ideological voting in terms of voter competence might be a rational evaluation of individual politicians and policy programmes, but this is out of scope for the current discussion.

QQ: Why are voters less idealistic in less institutionalized democracies?

QQ: Why is personalism present in less institutionalized democracies?

QQ: What are the consequences of weak party systems?

To sum up, a lack of institutionalization has two important consequences:

1. It introduces uncertainty in electoral outcomes, increases party turnover rates, lowers barriers to entry for new parties, and encourages the election of personalistic politicians.
2. It limits electoral accountability. As parties change more often and are programatically vague, Voters find it harder to identify the main parties and what they stand for. This lets personality become the deciding factor in elections.

5 The 2012/2016 US Elections and Political Resilience

Notes from the lecture slides of the same name . Block 3.

QQ: What are four problems with the US political system. Give possible solutions for each.

This presentation goes over four issues with the US electoral system, and details alternatives.

5.1 The Electoral College

The electoral college is a body of electors from all the US states, that elects the president and the vice president through a majority vote. The number of electors per state is the sum of the number of representatives of the state in the House and the Senate.

The problem is, that ‘swing states’ are the key to winning, as opposed to ‘safe states’, and the winner of the popular vote sometimes loses (as in 2016).

An alternative would be to decide via the popular vote. This would abolish the electoral college, and means:

- Electors in the College cannot vote against the will of the people they represent.
- It increase the voice of minorities in red/blue states.
- Campaigns may concentrate on high population areas, which would be unfair to sparsely populated areas.

5.2 Primaries

Primaries are state level elections to select a party candidate for president. Not all states vote at the same time, meaning that early voting states have abnormal power.

An alternative would be to have rotating primaries. This would mean states have their primaries in an order determined by a lottery, and the power of individual early-voting states (such as Iowa) would be dispersed.

5.3 Congressional Representation

Filibustering means that only 40 of the House representatives (around 17%) need to be in agreement to prevent a vote. Partisan district maps lead to ‘gerrymandering’ and safe districts for candidates that have extreme views.

Alternatives include creating a non-partisan body could re-draw district boundaries to reduce the number of safe seats, or candidates for political office being entered into primaries, with the top two would be chosen regardless of political affiliation.

Both alternatives would reduce extreme positions in congress, and reduce political corruption. Though having a top-two system could lead to surprising candidates due to tactical voting.

5.4 Campaign Finance

Campaigns are increasingly expensive, and there are fears of undue influence from corporations, foreign entities and unions, who can all spend an unlimited amount of money on campaigns. Recently, rich people have been able to spend large amounts of their own money on campaigns too.

This reduces trust in the political system, skews the agenda towards what's important to high-spenders, and makes it difficult for poor, unconnected or young candidates to win office.

An alternative could be public financing. For example, each voter could have a fixed amount to spend on candidate donations. This would equalize funds between rich and poor candidates and reduce the influence of wealthy interests. However, it would also be expensive, and could have implications for free speech.

6 Power of the People

Notes from the lecture (also known as 'Interest groups, civil society'). Block 4. QQ: Define policy, polity and politics.

First, some informal definitions from my lecture notes:

Politics: Power relations, elections, setting the agenda, maneuvering.

Policy: Deciding on outcomes, rules and regulations.

Polity: The structure of the actors and institutions.

Governance: The process and management of all of the above three.

Civil Society: Often we talk about things that the government could be doing, but normal people are doing instead. Countries with large civil societies often do well.

The Silent Revolution: Was defined by Ronald Inglehart, and is characterized by a value shift from materialist to 'post-materialist' concerns as people become more wealthy. This includes things like woman's rights, the environment, longevity, life satisfaction, etc. Civil society groups emerged, where people weren't fighting for themselves, but rather for somebody else (or another group, possibly also including yourself).

6.1 Social Movements

Political parties emerged in societies from the middle to late 19th century, but a similar big transition happened in the 1960's, when the middle class emerged. Middle classes were largely post-materialist since they had a base of economic well being. This idea of a 'silent revolution' made people interested in all of the 'extra-governmental governance' that was happening.

Social Movements: Are collective, organized and sustained movements that exist outside of normal society, and are aimed at challenging cultural beliefs and practices, or a political or social practice.

Social movements often have the following characteristics:

- They challenge the traditional boundary between public and private realms.
- They politicize one private issues.
- They are often related to issues of identity and identity formation.
- They often address broad and non-material issues.
- They sometimes engage in strategies that are more radical than those of interest groups.
- They have a tenancy to be decentralized, and have democratic forms of self-organization.

QQ: What are the characteristics of social movements?

Their strategies can be grouped into three sections:

Direct action is frowned upon by governments, and includes protest, sabotage, violent demonstration, etc. It is almost always physical and aggressive.

Non-violent direct action includes peaceful protests such as strikes.

Public relations and information dissemination websites, mailing lists, events, social media, etc.

QQ: What three strategies do social movements use to try and enact change?

6.2 Interest Groups

Interest Groups: Also known as Advocacy Groups are any organizations that seek to influence government policy, but not to actually govern. They are not political parties, but they do try to influence political parties. They can take many forms, including small groups of two or three people, to citizen groups with thousands of supporters, industry associations or business lobby groups, etc.

Interest groups can be elitist, pluralist, or hyper-pluralist:

Elitist Power is concentrated in the hands of a few groups, and policy reflects the demands of these actors, not the public. Changes in public policy occur as a result of changes to the values of the elites.

QQ: What are the three main views on interest groups?

Pluralist Interest group activity brings representation to all, with the idea that with many groups, competition, bargaining and compromise will mean that the public interest will eventually be made public policy. Interest groups become a bridge between individuals and the government, and an equilibrium is reached between all the different interest groups.

Hyper-pluralism is the belief that there are too many interest groups, and they are so strong that the government is weakened. All these groups make it impossible to act, and politicians cannot please them all, so the result is a confused and muddled policy.

Interest groups deploy a range of tactics to achieve their goals, from the formal end of the spectrum which includes lobbying and having consultations with government, to the informal end, which includes holding rallies, organizing protests, etc.

Lobbying: A strategy by which organized interests seek to influence passage of legislation by exerting direct pressure on members of the legislature.

QQ: Describe two kinds of lobbying.

Direct lobbying: Is when groups meet with officeholders or bureaucrats and ask government to change in line with the lobby group's goals. They might help draft legislation, do research to help sway public opinion, or appear in hearings and give their expertise.

Grassroots lobbying: Is when interest group members directly lobby for their group by sending letters, making telephone calls, or participating in protests.

QQ: When might an interest group start litigation?

If an interest group fails in its aim to set policy, it could go to court in the hope of getting specific rulings, this is called litigation.

Public interest groups: Seek a collective good, which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership or activists of the organization.

Economic Interest Groups: Have the primary purpose of promoting the financial or business interests of its members.

6.3 Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): A legally organized entity created by private persons or organizations with no representation in government.

QQ: What's the difference between an NGO and a social movement?

In contrast to social movements (which are just collections of people), NGOs have a structure, formal charters and buildings. That said, NGOs can exist as part of a social movement, the concepts are not mutually exclusive.

Other types of NGO include:

International NGO (INGO)

Quasi NGO (QUANGO)

Governmental NGO (GONGO)

Partly Affiliated NGO (PANGO)

Donor Organized NGO (DONGO)

Business NGO (BINGO)

Polycentric Governance: Local governance being networked, creating change from the bottom up.

QQ: Why are NGOs important for polycentric governance?

NGOs are important for polycentric governance, lots of change originates from the bottom; small NGOs on the local level.

6.4 Civil society

Civil society: Is the space between the private market economy and the public realm of government. Democratic cultures are strengthened when civil society is rich in associations that conduct their internal affairs in a democratic and participatory fashion.

Civil society is sometimes referred to as the 'third sector', after the public sector (government) and the for-profit sector (business). In recent decades, government has increasingly looked to third sector groups to deliver public services. The third sector can depoliticize collective action since it is not part of government, and it cannot be lobbied in the same way by interest groups.

QQ: Why has civil society been called the third sector?

Civic Engagement: Active participation in the community (neighborhood associations, sports clubs, cooperatives). The denser these networks, the more likely that members of a community will cooperate for mutual benefit.

Social Capital: Was defined by Robert Putnam, and is characterized by high civic engagement and high stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve community problems.

Germany is a country that heavily invests in social capital, which was very important to the country after the end of the second world war. Speaking of which, wars erode social capital, and a country like Syria will unfortunately have very little.

Contentious Politics: Is the use of disruptive techniques to make a political point, or to change government policy. It occurs when ordinary people join forces in confrontations with elites, authorities and opponents. One example is that Parisians will build barricades, because barricades have been built by generations of Parisians.

Revolution: A sudden, fundamental change in power. The thorough replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed.

6.4.1 Theories of collective action

Pluralism: Many actors with the ability to give ideas into the system, and many interest groups; political power is dispersed among them all. People have various identities and interests in society is comprised of various cross-cutting cleavages, such that nobody is consistently a winner or a loser in the political arena, and stability is assured.

Marxism: Society is viewed as a composition of socioeconomic classes, based on people's relation to ownership and control of the means of production. The primary societal cleavage is viewed as the class cleavage between workers and owners.

Rational choice theory: The individual seeks to maximize personal utility, so how is collective action possible among individuals with a narrow self-interest? Collective action is assumed to be rare in this model, since individuals have little incentive to pursue a public good, and many people choose to free-ride. Selective incentives are used to give restricted benefits to the group.

QQ: List as many collective action theories as you can remember.

Resource mobilization theory: Emphasizes the importance of group resources, and focuses on things like money, leadership, allies, expertise, etc. It says that social movement activities are not spontaneous and disorganized, and social movement participants aren't irrational.

New social movement theory: Is a post-materialist idea that focuses on identity and culture in movement formation and activism. It looks at the collective identity formation, and says that collective action needs to be understood in terms of identity formation. The practices of collective action shape identities and the formation of identities shapes practices of collective action.

Political process model: What opportunities are available, and how do institutional rules moderate them? When political opportunities arise, contentious politics can be born as people try to realize them.

7 Veto Players

Notes from the lecture on veto players (Block 5), and the reading by George Tsebelis (Block 4).

Veto Players: In order to change legislature, a certain number of players must agree to make the proposed change. These are veto players. They can be institutional (e.g. a president, or parliament), or partisan (created by politics). Systems with many veto players will create fewer laws.

Winset: Every political system has a set of veto players, and the 'winset' is the set of outcomes that will (or can) replace the status quo.

The dependent variable could be the ease with which political change occurs, and the independent variable could be the number of veto players.

Political Stability: If the winset is small (e.g. veto players are ideologically far apart), then changing the status quo becomes difficult, and the system is stable.

An example, if the veto players and their respective number of 'votes' are given as follows:

$$P_1 = 9, P_2 = 7, P_3 = 5, P_4 = 3, P_5 = 1$$

If 19 votes are needed to pass a motion, then P_1 and P_2 are veto players, since they are required in order to pass the motion.

Agenda Setters: Are veto players that are able to craft "take it or leave it" proposals for other veto players. They have significant control over what policies can change the status quo.

QQ: If agenda setter power is the independent variable, what could be the dependent variable and what is the relationship?

Agenda setter power is inversely related to policy stability, since more policy stability means a smaller winset, fewer policies that change the status quo, and thus less choice for agenda setters.

QQ: If policy stability is the independent variable, what could be the dependent variable and what is the relationship?

Policy stability makes it hard to do anything, so if a government finds it hard to change the status quo due to policy stability, then it could resign. This means, that policy stability is inversely related to government stability. Similarly, if policy stability is high, then bureaucrats and judges could become more active, independent and creative to encourage change.

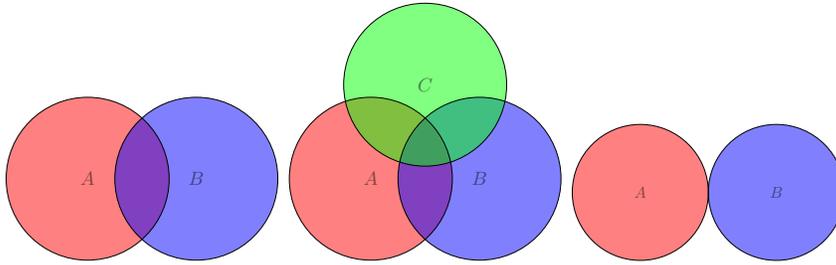


Figure 5: The overlap between the policies acceptable to veto player *A* and veto player *B* is shown in the leftmost diagram. In the middle, the addition of veto player *C* has caused the winset to become smaller. On the right, the actors *A* and *B* have moved ‘ideologically’ away from each other, so that there is no winset at all outside the status quo.

QQ: How much policy stability and government stability would there be, if *A*, *B* and *C* were veto players in each of these diagrams?

8 Federalism in the EU and the US

Notes from the lecture on the EU and US (Block 4), and the reading ‘Environmental Federalism in the EU & US’ by David Vogel (Block 4).

Federation: Authority is divided between the central state, and local governments.

Confederation: Authority is held by independent states and delegated to the central governments.

Unitary system: Authority is centrally held with state and local governments administering authority that has been delegated by the central government.

Dual federalism: National and state governments are split into their own spheres, and each is supreme in its respective sphere. Based off of the premise that separate but equal branches of government is the best option.

New federalism: Is an idea in the US to transfer certain powers ceded by states with Roosevelt’s New Deal to the federal government back to the states.

Cooperative federalism: Is a concept of federalism in which national, state and local governments interact cooperatively and collectively to solve common problems, rather than making policies separately.

8.1 US Federal and State Governments

The federal government has exclusive powers over war, money, treaties with foreign countries, regulation of commerce between states, and powers regarding taxation and welfare.

The state governments have powers to create their own local governments, conduct elections, regulate commerce within their state, promote public health, safety, morals, and all other powers that haven’t been delegated to the federal government (this is the 10th amendment).

Both levels can levy taxes, borrow and spend money, charter corporations and banks, create and enforce laws, etc.

8.2 Supranationalism and the EU

Supranationalism: Is the idea that autonomous governing bodies have the power and authority to make decisions above the level of member states, and in the interest of the supranational body (e.g. the EU) as a whole. As such, we talk about supranationalism when discussing the EU rather than federalism.

Intergovernmentalism: Is the negotiation process among leaders of national governments inside a supranational body that leads to key supranational decisions.

The EU has several levels of competence:

High/exclusive competence - Customs union, monetary policy and competition law.

Shared competence - Environmental policy, consumer protection and research.

Supporting competence - Civil protection (e.g. police), education, culture.

QQ: Name an area of governance that the EU has a high, shared and supporting competence in.

8.3 Environmental Federalism in the EU and the US

Environmental regulation in the US has evolved from being state level to being federal level, and now there is a reciprocity between the federal government and state governments, where states experiment and the federal government can learn and encourage conformity. Thus, state governments are an important source of policy innovation and diffusion.

Policy Innovation: The creation of new and novel policies.

Policy Diffusion: The idea that policies made at a given place and time are influenced by policy choices made elsewhere. Horizontal diffusion is between governments on the same organizational level, and vertical diffusion is (usually) from lower level governments up to higher level governments.

The EU has much closer and important interactions between the supranational level and the state level because:

1. States have direct representation in the EU through the Council of Ministers, while in the US, senators and representatives argue on behalf of the individual states, but are also have other allegiances too (e.g. party politics).
2. The EU insists on regulatory conformance, but the US does not and is happy to diverge. This is partly because the EU's single market is new and fragile, so the EU tries to protect it through conformity.
3. Politics moderates where the activities take place. It's not politically feasible for federal action on environmental issues to take place on the federal level in the US right now, so it happens almost exclusively on the state level instead. However, in the EU, environmentalism is widespread throughout society, so it happens on all levels of the governmental hierarchy.

QQ: Why is the EU more closely integrated on environmental issues (between the EU and individual nations) than the US is?

9 Communism and Authoritarianism

Notes from the lecture in Block 4.

There are several forms of authoritarianism, which can be overlapping:

Absolute monarchy: Rulers have absolute power and are defined by their hereditary.

Totalitarian state: Authority lies exclusively with the top leadership. North Korea is an example of a totalitarian state.

Fascist state: Far right ultranationalist and dictatorial governments that suppress opposition and strongly regiment society and the military.

Dictatorship: Absolute power for the leadership of government.

Military Juntas: The military takes over a country, often to 'protect democracy'.

Communist regimes: A state that tries to realize the communist ideology; to ensure the common ownership of the means of production and remove social classes and money. Communism has an ideological base, but dictatorships are based purely on power (and the two are not exclusive).

N.b. Democratic centralism is the idea that party members should vote on party matters, and the proletariat doesn't need to be political at all.

Marx and Engels wrote the communist manifesto, and didn't want it to be a political party. It was originally a class struggle between the controllers of production (bourgeoisie) and the labour force (the proletariat).

Lenin made communism political and created the communist party, saying that democratic centralism is important since the proletariat cannot be politically aware and the party must be political for them. Lenin's eventual goal was to create a dictatorship in order to 'cleanse' the proletariat of religion and nationalism.

Stalin then took communism to another level, he purged all the people in the communist party who might not have been fully committed to the regime (the Great Purge), and installed communist governments in Central and Eastern Europe (setting the stage for the cold war). He rapidly industrialized Russia, and enacted collective agriculture.

After the cold war, Gorbachev enacted two policies:

Perestroika: A shift away from communism towards a market economy.

Glasnost: A shift towards open debate.

9.1 The Cold War

The cold war made the world quite stable, because there was a bi-polar equilibrium, though tension across the world was heightened. Today, there is more instability but less tension.

Domino Theory: Is the idea that when a state becomes communist, other nearby states are at risk of becoming communist too.

Containment Theory: Aims to influence capitalist states bordering communist states to stop communism from spreading according to domino theory.

Though the cold war is often thought of being a western oriented conflict between the US and Russia, lots happened in East Asia too. China was pitted against Taiwan, and North Korea against South Korea.

9.2 China and Communism

Mao organized China into a one-party communist state. It had (and still has) a Politburo which is a group of around twenty high ranking officials that make the big decisions of government.

Mao said that the proletarian revolution that happened in Russia was a western creation, and focused his ideas on agricultural workers that were more relevant to China. He tried to break with China's aristocratic past and planned to make China great through the hard work of ordinary people. Through this logic, he thought that the more Chinese people there were, the stronger China would be.

Mao had three big ideological campaigns during his rule, all were disasters:

- The **Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom** campaign ('56-'57) asked people publicly post ideas for China's future, but then killed people who made progressive or good ideas.
- **The Great Leap Forward** ('58-'60) tried to collectivize steel production (which failed, producing very low quality steel as untrained peasants, who had to actually make the steel, had no idea what they were doing, and used any scrap metal to fill their quotas). It also tried to kill all the sparrows in China since they ate crops, but this just caused a plague of locusts which ate more of the crops.
- **Cultural Revolution** ('66-'69, but possibly longer) gave power to young people over more established and educated people (such as teachers and doctors). Lots of China's cultural heritage was destroyed.

Agricultural collectivization: Stalin oversaw the creation of huge farms, with the idea of automating them with machinery to make food plentiful. Peasants were conscripted to work on the farms, though they mostly resisted and had no experience of machinery. In the end, a lack of equipment, terribly designed farms, monocultures and low level peasant resistance meant that food production crashed and there was a massive famine in the 1930's.

QQ: What was the great purge?

QQ: Are Perestroika and Glasnost two ideas still embraced in Russia today?

QQ: What was Mao's strategy of communism in China?

QQ: What were the ideological campaigns that Mao ran in China during his rule?

China was reformed under Deng Xiaoping, who shifted away from ideological campaigns, shifted away from communism and shifted away from a socialist economy, to move China slowly towards a market economy.

QQ: What did Deng Xiaoping do with his reforms?

Under successive governments, China brought in five-year plans that focused on economic growth, tried to redistribute wealth from East to West, tried to fight corruption, and joined international institutions such as the World Bank.

QQ: What problems does China face now?

China is now a huge country, with over 1.3 billion people, with a population growing at 4.2% and a GDP growing at 9.3%. However, China is very multi-ethnic, and has lots of income inequality, an undercurrent of political unrest, severe pollution and resource depletion. It must face those challenges in the years to come.

10 Policy Diffusion - Seven Key Points

Notes from 'Policy Diffusion: Seven Lessons for Scholars and Practitioners' by Shipan and Volden (Block 5).

QQ: Give as many key points about policy diffusion as you can.

Policies do not exist in isolation; governments learn from each other, calibrate their policies against one another, and policy advocates target their efforts accordingly.

1. **Policy Diffusion is not limited by geographic constraints.** Governments look all over the world for successful policies to co-opt into their own programmes, and are rarely limited by geography; why should they be?
2. **Governments compete with each other** to attract or repel residents or business. For example, if middle-class families are flocking to an area with good schools, other areas might try to improve their schooling policies to attract them back, or they could try to improve policies in other areas for the same effect. Conversely, a race-to-the-bottom can also happen in order to repel people away from somewhere, for example, if welfare is very good in one city, then it could attract many people in need and put a large burden on the city.

Sometimes, governments don't need to compete (for example, on youth access to tobacco), or agree not to compete, or even to act together (for example, through trade agreements).

3. **Governments learn from each other.** Individual governments can experiment, and other governments can take the successful ideas. That said, policy makers could have a wide variety of objectives when learning from other governments, and they might not always be in the public good. For example, some policy makers could try to pick policies that get politicians reelected.

Low cost communication and travel means that it's easier than ever for policy makers to exchange information, and many networks of policy makers exist to facilitate this.

4. **Policy diffusion isn't always beneficial.** As previously noted, competition can produce a race to the bottom among states, but there are two other negative occurrences.

Policy Imitation: Is when one government copies another's successful policies without assessing whether the context in which the policies were successful applies to their own government's situation. This means the policies are often inappropriate.

Policy Coercion: Is when force (either hard or soft) is applied by one government to another to make it adopt a certain policy. The US does top-down policy coercion when it attaches conditional restrictions to development grants, and the IMF does it when it pushes austerity policies on struggling governments.

5. **Government capabilities are important.** Many governments adopting a policy could have a 'snowball' effect, causing it to be more likely to be adopted everywhere. However, if many subordinate (e.g. local) governments adopt a policy, then it could also act as a 'pressure valve' and take pressure off the higher-level (e.g. state) government to act.

Some governments have a low capacity, for example they may not pay legislators enough, or have very few staff. These governments are likely to exhibit the pressure valve effect since it's less work, or just not look elsewhere for suitable policies, or blindly adopt policies.

6. **Some policies spread more easily than others.** Complex policies spread more slowly than simple policies. Likewise, policies that have observable effects, confer a relative advantage on the legislating government, and are easily testable are more likely to be diffused.
7. **Decentralization is important for policy diffusion**, since experimentation is critical for the creation of new and novel policies that other governments can copy. If centralization occurs, then horizontal diffusion is stifled, and local governments cannot match policies to local preferences. Higher-level governments can mitigate this by mandating local policy experimentation, for example, local governments could be required to come up with an interpretation of a policy, thereby artificially creating policy experimentation.

QQ: Why is decentralized governance important for policy diffusion?

11 Multiple Streams and Policy Windows

Notes from the lecture, with a little input from the reading "Streams and Stages; reconciling Kingdon and Political Process Theory". Block 6.

Policy: A principle, plan, or course of action, as pursued by a government, organization, individual, etc.

Policy Making: The act or process of setting and directing the course of action to be pursued by a government, business, etc. It can occur on many levels.

There are multiple kinds of decision making:

Organizational decision making selects the best solution for an identified problem.

Incremental, routine decisions are decisions that happen repeatedly (this is the most common)

Incremental, non-routine decisions are the subject of this section.

11.1 Rational Decision Making

Rational decision making follows a pattern of problem identification, solution identification and evaluation and the deciding on a solution and implementing it. It assumes full information, decision makers powerful enough to carry out a decision, and agreement on the best course of action.

QQ: What is the pattern of rational decision making?

Key concepts include:

Satisficing: Limiting the range of information examined in identifying problems and solutions because information gathering is expensive. For example, one could assume that Coronavirus behaves in the same way as SARS did, because there's no opportunity to test it further.

Bounded rationality: Decision making and rationality of individuals is limited by the information they possess, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite time they have to make a decision.

Negotiated decisions: Compromise, bargaining, accommodation among parties/interests/coalitions in making a decision (decision making is affected by values and preferences of decision makers).

11.2 Incremental Decision Making

Decision makers often make choices similar to those made in the past. Charles Lindblom describes it as "the science of muddling through". An incremental decision making mindset doesn't consider

QQ: Who said what about incremental decision making?

the entire range of possible information about possible solutions, but instead considers only information relevant to extending the current policy.

11.3 The Garbage Can Decision Making Model

QQ: Who proposed the garbage can model?

Proposed by Cohen, Marsh and Olsen in 1972, the Garbage Can model imagines that there is a garbage can full of solutions to problems, and when a problem arises, policy makers randomly pick a solution from the can and try to apply it. The decision making process is chaotic, and bound by many constraints (lots of actors, limited time, etc).

11.4 Kingdon's Multiple Streams

QQ: Which stages of the policy making process does Kingdon focus on?

Agenda Setting: Is setting the process that determines which issues officials pay serious attention to at any given time. Kingdon asked why some problems come to occupy the attention of government officials more than others? Note that Kingdon is concerned with the agenda setting stage of the policy making process, not later stages such as the implementation or evaluation stages. That is to say that if the Policy Cycle is as follows, Kingdon is concerned with parts one, two and three:

QQ: List the five stages of the policy cycle.

1. Problem recognition
2. Agenda setting
3. Policy formation
4. Decision
5. Implementation
6. Evaluation (and possible back to the start if changes are required)

QQ: List Kingdon's three streams, what are they?

Kingdon proposed five interacting elements:

1. The Problem Stream (things like coronavirus, a housing bubble, road maintenance, etc). Policy makers must be persuaded to pay attention to a particular problem (called agenda setting). This involves the framing of events, and focusing attention on them.
2. The Policy Stream (solutions looking for problems). Policy proposals are generated, debated, revised and proposed here. Policies that are implementable, align with political values and are low-cost are often preferred.
3. The Politics Stream (parties fighting for attention). This includes all the political factors that influence the agenda (everything that could open a policy window), including changes in elected officials, the political mood, and what advocacy groups are focusing on.
4. Policy Windows (moments with decision making potential).
5. Policy Entrepreneurs (who focus attention on a problem in the middle of everything). These people are elected officials, career civil servants, lobbyists, academics, etc. They try to highlight indicators of the problem, push for a particular definition of the problem, present specific policies (from the policy stream) that are solutions to problems (from the problem stream) on the agenda (defined by the politics stream), and try to shape the debate. Policy entrepreneurs attempt to shape how see a problem in order to put forward the solutions they prefer.

QQ: Give examples of policy windows opening.

In Kingdon's model, the three streams are largely distinct from each other, but if they all align, then a policy window occurs. Typically, policy windows don't open for very long. They can open predictably (such when an election happens) not always (such as due to a financial crash). For example, in the financial crisis (a problem from the problem stream), austerity (a solution from the policy stream) was pushed by economically conservative figures (policy entrepreneurs).

12 Faces of Power

Notes from Stephen Luke's "Faces of Power". I only read the introduction, but it seems pretty good, so maybe I'll read more... Block 6.

Lukes describes two political scientists; *Mills* and *Hunter*, who in the 50's, described how power was concentrated in the hands of a small elite, at least inside American society. These were the people running big corporations, the military, etc, those who "occupy a strategic command post of the social structure". They act as power brokers, mediated through luncheon clubs and fraternities.

Dahl, writing at the end of the 50's disagreed with these theories on the grounds that they didn't have any empirical backing. In order to gain scientific rigor, the hypothesis would need to be tested and meet the following criteria:

1. The hypothetical ruling elite is a well defined group.
2. There is a fair sample of cases involving key political decisions, in which the preferences of the hypothetical ruling elite run counter to those of any other likely group that maybe suggested.
3. In such cases, the preferences of the elite regularly prevail.

In his studies, Dahl found that different actors and different interest groups prevailed in different issue-areas, with no overall 'ruling elite', meaning that power was distributed *plurally*.

The question then morphed, into one of how 'power' should be defined. Three 'faces' that are described are as follows:

QQ: What are the three faces of power?

The first face is the power of concrete decisions.

The second face is the power to limit decision making by influencing community values and political procedures.

Specifically, all organizations have 'bias' towards some conflicts and away from others. This bias can suppress some conflicts so that the status quo is more easily accepted.

According to Gramsci, this culture/ideology is facilitated by the consent or acceptance of normal people, which was voluntary and can vary in intensity. If the culture is hegemonic, then the conflicts/issues suppressed by the cultural bias are systemic.

There's lots more on this, "Faces of Power", it's interesting.

The third face is the power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things.

In other words, the third face enables power to work against people's interests and mislead them so that their judgment is distorted.