INTL 204. Introduction to Comparative Politics

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Learning Objectives

- Define key terms covered in the chapter, such as politics, power, the state, nation, science, hypothesis, and (dependent and independent) variables.
- Discuss the basic steps involved in the scientific research method, including the use of hypotheses and theories.
- Summarize the comparative method and the alternative approaches within it.
- Describe the basic difference between structures and choices.
- Summarize the defining features of the economic, cultural, identity, and political structures of the Topic in Countries (TIC) cases.
Key Concepts: Politics and Power

Politics: Some Definitions

• A pre-modern definition of politics & the state: Politics is the master science of the good. “...end of politics is the good for man. For even the good is the same for the individual and the state, the good of the state is the greater and more perfect thing to attain and to safeguard.” Aristotle

• Aristotle defined the state & politics by its end goal, purpose...
Would Aristotle’s definition work in a modern society? Discuss

Diversity of modern society. Hard to find a “common good”

State interests ≠ society’s interests (but of course they do not always conflict either)
Modern definition

- (Authoritative decisions about):

  “Who gets what, when, and how?”

What matters is the means, not the ends.
Question:

If politics is about who gets what, why all the talk about common good, morality and values, nationalism and religion?
• Benign view: politics is about reconciling self-interest (individual and group interest) with common good. Formulate self-interest in terms of public good. Discourse of self-interest in terms of public good.

• Cynical view: Hypocrisy. Discourse of self-interest in terms of public good.
Key Concepts: Politics and Power

Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How

Positive View of Politics: It is a set of activities that help organize individuals, resolve disputes, and maintain order in society. Positive-sum outcomes.

Negative View of Politics: a process that decides “who gets what” and thus produces winners and losers. Zero-sum outcomes and sometimes negative-sum outcomes.
Power: How People Get What They Want

- Power as Influence
  - Getting people to do what you want them to do
  - Overcoming resistance

- Power as Capabilities
  - What abilities allow someone to have influence?
  - Government office, money, control of military, etc.

- Coercive versus Noncoercive Power
Politics: Study of the state or of power?

• The two are interrelated: Ultimate power is that of the state in modern societies

• “Power is the ability of A to get B to do what A wants” (p.5)
Four Faces of Power

1. Coercive power: A makes B do what A wants, even though B doesn’t want to

2. Structural power: A structures B’s choices such that B has no other option but to do what A wants, even though B doesn’t want to

3. Soft power 1: A convinces B that to do what A wants is good for B, even though it isn’t

4. Soft power 2: A defines all the concepts and terms such that what A wants B to do is defined as the “good thing to do,” so B does it without thinking
Legitimacy & Authority

• Authority: Noncoercive power based on *legitimacy not based on punishments*

• Legitimacy is the belief that those giving the orders have a “right to rule”

• A ruler that has legitimacy has *authority*
Max Weber’s Three Types of Authority:

1) Charismatic authority: Leader’s ability (Prophets, national heroes, etc.)
2) Traditional authority: Monarchies
3) Legal/rational authority: Constitution, laws
Evolution of authority

- All authority is charismatic in origin
- Charismatic authority turns into traditional or legal/rational authority when the charismatic leader dies
- What are examples of charismatic, traditional, and legal/rational authority
If power is central to understanding politics, and politics is about “who gets what,” can the underprivileged in society ever get a fair deal from the government? Why?
Politics: Study of the State

• Politics is the study of the “state,” and everything related to the state
• State has power over every field of life (health, traffic, military, education, taxes, etc.)

• What is the definition of the “state”?
The State

- **State**: The basic unit of political organization in the world and the focal point of political power
  - Do not confuse with daily usage as “country”

- **Territory – source of disputes**

- **Population**: Citizenship or nationality

- **Institutions**

- **“Sovereignty”**

- **International Recognition**
Max Weber

• Early twentieth century sociologist

• Known for his ideas about power and politics
Max Weber
Definition of the State

• Unlike Aristotle (“ends/goals” based definition)
  • Weber defined the state on the basis of its “means” (instruments):
    • State is the organization with a “monopoly on the legitimate uses of violence”
Rise of the Modern State: Monopolization of Violence

- Pre-modern states: Local, feudal nobles could also apply violence, many armies
- France under Louis XIII, England under the Tudors, 16th-17th centuries, military was centralized, violence monopolized
- “Taxation” following mass conscription
What is a state? Exercises

• Russia in the 1990s
• Mafia
• Somalia
• Chechnya
• Northern Cyprus
• Iraq? Afghanistan?
Think and Discuss

- The issue of the environment causes problems for the concept of state sovereignty. What other issues create questions about whether states have the right to control their own affairs?
Regimes, Governments, and Leaders

- **Regime**
  - A set of rules that determine (1) **How are the ultimate decisions made?** (2) **who are the ultimate decision-makers?**
  - “How does the car function?”

- **Government**
  - The ruling institutions and the people who occupy positions of power in a state
  - A political system’s chief executive and cabinet officials
  - “Who gets to drive the car?”

- **Leaders**
The Nation

**National Identity**

- The group that shares a national identity (in the eyes of others and/or themselves) is a *nation*.

- But what is national identity?

- Confused with daily usage of (1) “country” or (2) ethnicity.
True or false?

Nation refers to a large group of people who recognize themselves as members of a group and are united by shared cultural features

1. A. Right
2. B. Wrong
3. C. Insufficient
• Distinguishing feature:

• Members of a nation believe that they have the right to exert political control over a certain territory.

• Nations emerge when a group of people come to believe that they have the right to self-rule: rule themselves in a given territory, to exert political control over a certain territory
Civic vs. Ethnic Nations

- A nation whose membership is based on a common ethnic identity is called an *ethnic nation*.
- A political nation (the national identity bond political as opposed to ethnic) is a *civic nation*.
Think and Discuss

To what extent are Turkish people a civic, as opposed to an ethnic, nation?
The Nation

- **Nationalism**: The process of pursuing a set of rights for a nation
- **Territorial autonomy**
- **Nation-State**
- **Overlapping Homelands**
Think and Discuss

• Nationalism is often portrayed in a negative light. Historically, it caused many wars and cost hundreds of millions of lives. Was nationalism to blame? Yes and no.

• But also, a core principle of national identity—control over one’s own political affairs—is a core principle of democracy. Are nationalism and democracy complementary or contrasting pursuits?
Political Science as a Science

**Scientific Research and Scientific Knowledge**
- Causality – answers *why* things happen. Causal relationship between two or more variables
- Theories as “causal stories”

**The Scientific Method**
- Develop a research question
- Generate falsifiable hypotheses
- Conceptualize and operationalize variables
- Collect data and analyze data about the variables
Think and Discuss

- Name a type of major political outcome that you think would make an interesting dependent variable.
Develop a research question

Interpret results and think about new research

Generate theoretically driven, falsifiable hypotheses

Conceptualize and operationalize variables

Analyze data

Collect data
Hypothesis

Economically developed countries are much more likely to be democracies

Independent variable

In this hypothesis, the dependent variable is whether the country is a democracy, while the independent variable is whether the country is economically developed. It captures the idea of the following causal relationship between the variables:

Democracy

Economic development
Is this a correlation or causal relationship?!!!
Methods of Comparing to Understand Politics

- Three Vital Questions When Designing a Research Project
  - What levels of analysis should be employed?
  - What form or forms of data should be collected and studied?
  - How many cases should be examined?

- Case Studies
- Quantitative Statistical Analysis
- The Comparative Method
Case Studies and the Comparative Method

- **Case Studies**
  - Strong on internal validity
  - Weaker on external validity (generalizability)

- **Comparative Method**
  - Most similar approach (Ex: South and Noth Korea)
  - Most different approach (Ex: United Kingdom and Turkey)
Causality

• Economic development causes (facilitates) democratization.

• What is the IV? What is the DV? How can we operationalize the IV and DV? Measure it? Test it?
Examples

• “Higher economic development measured in terms of GDP per capita causes democratic development in major East Asian countries such as South Korea and Taiwan”

• IV, DV, measurement, cases, level of analysis? Is it falsifiable? If it is not falsifiable, then it is either a tautology or a question that one cannot answer scientifically
Examples

- Example 1: More prosperous countries have more wealth to distribute.
- Example 2: Real Muslims (or Christians or Budhists) cannot be terrorists because true Islam (Christianity or Budhism) rejects terrorism.
- Example 3. God exists.
A Framework for Understanding Political Outcomes: Structure vs. Choice

Structures: The basic social, economic, or political-institutional settings surrounding a decision maker. Structures don’t change easily, they may only change in the long run.
Structures, Choices, and Levels of Analysis

- For the “choice” approach, level of analysis is typically the individual.
- For the “structure” approach, level of analysis is the state, political system, society (or a combination of these), or the international community.
Why citizens of country A mostly voted for Party B in the last elections?

According to Choice Approach: Rational individuals chose to vote for Party B to maximize their benefits.

According to Structural Approach: Due to the effects of political, economic or institutional setting in country A.

Contradictory or Complementary?
Ex: Why did Turkey begin to support the opposition in Syria, following the Arab Spring?

According to Choice Approach: The policy preferences of the government.

According to Structural Approach: Because the international structure changed after the Arab Spring.

Contradictory or Complementary?
Comparative politics must take structures into account because what first seem to be unique decisions or events often turn out to be (at least partly) products of general structures that exist also elsewhere.
Linking Concepts and Cases through Topic in Countries Sections

The Purpose of the Topic in Countries Sections

Show how the major concepts introduced in the chapters play out in nine of the world’s most important countries:

- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Mexico
- Brazil
- Russia
- China
- India
- Nigeria
- Iran