B30

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Comparative Politics

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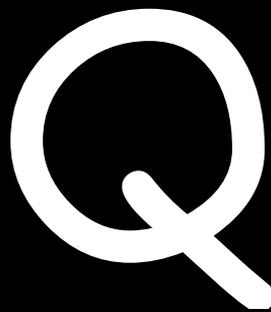
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Samenvatting: Comparative politics

1. What

Science op politics has three subfields:

- Normative politics: this is about values and what should be
- International politics: about interactions between the states
- Comparative politics: interaction within states and value-natural

These distinctions aren't always 100% clear:

- Normative statements can start with findings from CP (e.g. van Reybrouck, Marx, …)
- CP can investigate why specific interactions within a state can lead to specific ways they interact between each other (CP predicting IR behavior)
- Globalisation blurs the clear distinction of within and between (e.g. Brexit)

We can distinct three types of comparative politics (three traditions).

- Intially: study of a single country (in US, CP course sometimes still is about individual 'other' countries)
- Methodological Analytical: combines empiricism and method to explain similarities and differences => combination of substance + method
    - Describe: establish typologies, conceptualize
    - Explain: Why are some similar and some different
    - Predict

2. Substance

The comparative politics compares:

- Traditionally national political systems
- Subsystems
- Types of systems
- Specific elements of the political system

Evolutions

From institutions to functions

Firtst there were very formal descriptions of state institutions but there came a behavioural revolution, the golden age. This meant a shift from formal study of institutions to the behaviour in them. This was the result of new cases like communism, ecolonistation,… and the European countries that were not majoritarian but seemed stable.

This brought some consequences:

- Broader variety of systems were studied and other actors ('agencies')
- New methods: surveys, statistical analysis (see further)
- Systemic functionalism (e.g. Parsons, Easton). Describe the 'function' an element of the political system performs, rather then the specific institution

Back to institutions

There was an excessive level of abstraction. Systematic functionalism does not take into account historical elements of specific systems. This makes that you don't get a thick understanding of a specific case anymore. The counter reaction of this is

- A focus back on the institutions. This provides opportunity structure for behaviour
- In depth analysis of limited set of cases (mid-range theories): try to better understand a specific and smaller group of cases than very abtract encompassing theory.
- Methodology for small-N cases
- Rational choice theory: focus from sociological variables explaining behaviour to 'utility' (see Olson)

Now

- Now we see that the in the 1950's and 1960's are still at the core of CP (and the book). CP is cumulative.
- Systemic paradigm remains: most of the terminology brought in by Easton is still in use
- Continuous growth in topics being considered: now more focus to output and interdependence of states

3. Method

The method that is used depends on the number of cases, the dimension of comparison, the analysing unit,…

- In a first step CP analyzed singular or limited number of <u>cases</u> ('what are the characteristics of the specific country that we think is the benchmark?') => Small N (often: 1) research
- With behavioral revolution => focus on <u>variables</u> => but then they need to be comparable across many cases => large N research
  - o Increasing relience on statistical analysis.
  - o Focus on 'variables'
  - o Increasing abstraction of the underlying cases
- Now back to smaller number of cases
  - o Looking at constellations of factors rather than isolated variables. This means a focus back on 'thick' designs
  - o Now renewed criticism agains this but different 'schools' operate side-by-side

4. Data

Initially there was only data provided by states but because of the Democratization, industrialization and welfare state drastically increased the collection of data → mostly ont the aggregate level.

The Behavioral revolution led to political scientists increasingly collecting their own data because

- Distrust
  - e.g. GDP, in some countries just a few civil servants have to calculate the whole economic output of the country
  - E.g. In some countries (authoritarian) elections have almost impossible high turnout and incredibly high results for a single candidate
- Many variables of interest are not available in government data. This leads to the collection of own data with surveys
- Technological advances: Multilevel regression analysis requires so much calculating power, it was just not available to most researchers a few years back, now every student can do it on her/his laptop (and with free software…)
- Ecological fallacy
- A relationship at the aggregate level does not need to be present at the individual level

Move back to aggregate data

- Longitudinal analysis can be very (very) hard on individual level data.
- Surveys often deviate in some way in questions, sample-size, etc…making comparison difficult.
- Participation in surveys is decreasing => but for sophisticated analysis you need very high quality data.

5. Conclusion

Everything is comparable. That makes the subject of CP sometimes broad and diffuse, but it also stresses a specific attention to good theory, sound methods and analysis.

CP is cumulative and so on every sub-topic there is a massive amount of available research leading to better insights in these topics. Chapters will flesh this out

1. Introduction

The method used to answer the research question (RQ) depends on the question itself. We use comparative methods or the research design (RD) to get a research answer (RA). We can summarize this by **the triad**:

$$RQ \rightarrow RD \rightarrow RA$$

Developing a research design requires careful elaboration:

- The RD should enable the researcher to answer the question under examination
- The given answers need to meet the standards set in the social science so that the results are valid, reliable and generalizable
- Are the RD and the methods used indeed suitable for the research goals

2. The role of variables in linking theory to evidence

A **research question** should always be guided by a theory or constitute a potential answer to a existing theoretical argument.

A **variable** is a concept that can be systematically observed in various situations and it allows us to understand the similarities and differences between observed phenomena.

Typologies are often used as a first step in examining the theoretical association between two variables without explicitly arguing a causal relationship

First step is to make meaningful typologies for your variables. Classification is guided by your RQ. This should account for inclusiveness (you need one of each case) & exclusiveness

- E.g. If you want to study effects of democratic rule, when is a state classified as "democratic" (see next week). Is the mixed electoral system of Germany proportional or not or sui generis?

Because CP is not experimental, the conclusions are drawn by using comparison. Theoretical underpinning is crucial (causality)

- Use of hypothesis to explain relationship between Y and X. this makes an abstraction from the complexities of the real world.
- Because you can not capture full societal complexity, you only look at variables that are theoretically sensible (e.g. problem of 'over specification' and 'under specification' in regression analysis)

You establish causality by evidently and <u>systematically</u> demonstrating the link between both of them

- Is hotly debated when you can establish true causality ("correlation is not causation").
- In experiments you control the timing of variables (there is a before and after the treatment), which proves the direction of causality, in CP this is hardly ever possible

If you have an empirically sound relationship between your variables over sufficient observations => descriptive inference

- You can say something about similar cases that you did not observe

- Is "external validity" (is sometimes problem with experiments who on the other hand have very strong 'internal validity')
- This also means controlling for rival explanations (e.g. In quantitative analysis, not just look at correlation between two variables, but control for possible influence of other variables in a multivariate regression analysis)

3. Comparing cases and case selection

You need to decide from theory what you will compare (your cases) and how you will transform this information into variables.

A case is a unit of observation to be compared (Countries, regions, governments). This isn't a level of measurement because it could be that to say something about your cases (countries), you measure indivuals as voters. (within-case)

- E.g. Countries with proportional electoral systems have higher electoral volatility? => cases are electoral systems, but you need to measure individuals within the case in a survey to establish the volatility measure

'Cases' = type of system while 'observation' = value of variable for the cases

'Observations' = the values of a variable under investigation

There is an ongoing discussion about how to combine different types of data = **triangulations or methodological pluralism.** This overcomes the limitations of a single design and enable the researcher to both explain (cross- data) and interpret (within-case data). But a disadvantage is that it is difficult to puzzle the data together. Colier and Elman believe that you can distinguish three types op multi-method research:

- Combining conventional qualitative approaches
- Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches
- Combining conventional qualitative methods with either constructivist ir interpretivist methods

An innovative method that is used as a single method is **process tracing**. This method aims tot make a unit-level causal inference → it focuses on a causal mechanism by examining how X produces a series o conditions that come together to produce Y.

Comparative historical analysis aims at the explaination of substantively important outcomes by describing processes over time using systematic and centextualiserd comparisons → time as the major operationalization of a variable.

The selection of cases and variables depends on a deliberate choice in the relation to the research question and on consideration of the type of approach chosen in view of the explanatory goals set.

A difficult issue is about how many cases do you select? You van work:

- Intensive: few cases, many variables
- Extensive: many cases, few variables

There are five options for case selection. The choice depends on your hypotesis (and often available data)

- Single-case study: to check deviant case or when formulating hypothesis. External validity is low
- Time-series: one/few cases over many time-intervals. To inspect comparative changes or to investigate which factors are relevant over time
- Closed-universe : few cases over a few intervals (looking for critical junctures)
- Cross-section: many cases at one time-point. The circumstances of the cases under review are assumed to be constant and the included variables vary
- Pooled: many cases over many time-intervals

The choice of a analysis isn't completely free or completely determined. It depends on:

- The theoretical relationship (when you study a democracy, you can't include a non-dem)
- Type of empirical data
- The relationship between data cases and variables also determines what type of technique can be used
- Research question involves a specific phenomenon

4. The logic of comparison: relating cases to variables

CP is quasi-experimental, but can not control for all 'intervening factors' that might account for the relationship between IV and DV. Some problems that may occur are:

- Experimental variance: the observed differences or changes in the dependent variable Y of the research question
- Error variance: the effect of unmeasured variables
- Extraneous variance: when there is no control for other possible influences, the hypothetical relation X-Y may in part be produced by another unknown cause

You don't take just a haphazard number of cases to prove a theory. Solution is to use specific logic of comparison:

- Method of Difference (Most Similar Systems Design)
- Method of Agreement (Most Different Systems Design)

Method of Difference (Most Similar Systems Design)

Focus on systems that only differ on the dependent or independent, but are similar across all other variables. This allows to locate the variable that accounts for the difference in outcome. An example is the debate on the role of politics as regard the welfare state. We look at the political differences between systems that are similar in terms of their institutional design and examine the extent to which party differences X match the differences in welfare state provision.

Method of Agreement (Most Different Systems Design)

They try to detect those relationships between X and Y that remain similar notwithstanding the differences in other features of the cases compared. Hence the other variables may be different across the cases except for those relationships that are considered to be causal. The difference in all the other variables means that they are controlled for

An alternative approach is **the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)** which has been developed to cater for multiple causalities and it allows for the handling of many variables in combination with a relatively high number of cases simultaneously.

5. Constraints and limitations of the comparative method

Problem is that in social reality most IV's don't align that well => we can not invent a case (or country) if we miss one combination. The more controlling variables you have, the harder it becomes.

As long as IV's are yes/no (as in the table) the interpretation is mostly straightforward, but many IV's in CP are not binary (are degrees of)

- *Liberal VS authoritarian*
- *State much of less making decisions, influence (staat meer ingrijpen, ja /nee?)*

2. Party families & ideological space

Authors disagree whether we live in a two of three dimensional political space

Kriesi et al. (2006) position the various party families is an integration-based two-dimensional space *(cultural dimensional, economic dimensional)*

Horizontal dimension is socio-economic integration, vertical dimension is socio-cultural integration

Increasingly three-dimensional: socio-economic, socio-cultural and national-global

Party politics in populist times

The early 21st century has been defined by a series of 'crises'

- *9/11, in some countries bigger impact, bigger effect*
- *Economic crisis*
- *Social refugee crisis (2015-2016)*
- *Big moments that presented as a crisis*
- *Effects both in policies & party politics*

All have shook the public support of the political status quo

- *9/11 end of belief in some things*
- *The state, which had been diminished in power, after 9/11 different, more security*
- *Great depression end of status quo 'moving forward'*
- *End of the idea that European integration is going to make us rich*
- *What changed fundamentally: multiculturalism doesn't work, it didn't' live up to what*
- *we wanted to achieve, our policies where not good*
- *Now: immigrants & refugees where seen as dangerous & problematic*
- *Shared in softer terms*

The main winner of these 'crises' have been 'populist' parties & politicians

- *Pure people one end & corrupted people in the other end*
- *Left right center (all domains)*
- *Majority of the populists are RIGHT*
- *All of the large populist parties are right*

We are living in a populist zeitgeistdui. But how fundamental is the political crisis?

Are party systems in crisis?

I will assess the alleged 'crisis' on the basis of the famous trilogy of the German-Americal economist Alber Hirschmann. I focus primarily on Western Europe, ie. The period 194(-2015)/ Loyalty: support for pillar parties (=zuilen)

REST?

<u>**Loyalty: the implosion of pillar parties**</u>

After almost every national election one of the key stories is the alleged implosion of the pillar parties. At first sight the implosion seems indeed to be significant. But a closer look shows that the average decline is not that remarkable. Average decline is roughly 10% and fairly consistent over time

Decline is structural, is crisis: than drop & again stable

  Structural: slowly 'horizontal' line

<u>**Voice: the rise of anti-system parties**</u>

Similarly, after almost every national election one of the key stories is the alleged explosion of anti-system parties. At first sight the implosion seems indeed to be significant. But a closer look shows that the average decline is not that remarkable. Average decline is roughly 10% though sharp increase in recent elections

Exit: the declining electorate

A much less discussed story is the declining turnout in elections. A now familiar story emerges: at first sight a big decline. But a closer look shows that the average decline is not that remarkable. Average decline is roughly 10% and fairly consistent over time

3. Summary: party politics in western europe in the early 21st century

- Pillar parties still gain on average ca. 50% of the national vote
- Anti-system parties score an average ca 22% of the national vote
- Turnout is on average ca 70% in national elections
    - *Pretty high*
    - *Vast majority of people think voting/elections still useful*
- Trend is slow but steady change with recent increase
- Situation together in European elections, but ca 20% lower turnout

Plus ca change?

Change is overemphasized, and center still holds, but:

1) Growing group of transformed countries (GR, H, I)
   Vote for anti system parties

2) Party politics is multi dimensional and fragmented
   - *Structural thing, doesn't change, not related to crisis*
   - *Most of the changes is within the status quo*
   - *Most people change from center left to center right or reverse*
   - *Basis, connection between party & voter is no longer structural*
   - *Most people who vote are not at belief that they are a part of a subculture, it is because it is what they want*
   - *Area of big parties is over*

3) Pillar parties are confronted with new coalition pressure

4) Coalitions are getting bigger and process takes longer

While changes are not striking in absolute terms, they are fundamental in relative terms

Terms like pillar and niche lose meaning

   No 'niche' subjects anymore

   A lot of the same subjects

   Pillars? Do they still exist

5) Protest parties increasingly set political agenda and influence policies

6) Politics is getting more polarized and negative partisanship is replacing positive partisanship
Positive identity with a party

- *Negative partisanship: 'they hate the democratics'*
- *A and B system= easy, you hate A you vote for B.In multi system, this is not that easy*

Why relevant? Parties who comes to power, 'they hated the other one more' so you vote for this one, 'the less worst'

We voted 'against' another party, so we voted for this party

- *No 'real' supporters, so a lot of fluctuations. Voters change their votes fast 'if they hate another one'*
- *Real support is low for the party*
- *So not so much loyalty*

= consequence of negative partisanship

- *Lead to victory but with little support;*

7) Citizens are less and less satisfied with politicians

8) This is starting to affect attitudes towards whole system

A populist future?

- Power still rests with the pillar parties and allies
- They decide to cave or conquer!
- But to conquer exit and voice, they have to rejuvenate their ideology, organization and personnel
- They also have to accept and adapt to the fragmented and volatile new political reality

= structural change, all of these changes are going to continue

Exam in ENGLISH

Four questions, different types:

- one knowledge question (still part of the deal…)

- Applying a part of the course on an example

- Linking two parts of the course

- Not know specific examples, but be able to give me one

I will never ask just a name (so not 'What is the theory of Easton?')

Only the parts seen during the lectures. So chapters not seen are not to be known.