1. **Approach to the study of Comparative Politics**

Approaches to the study of the Comparative Politics are of two kinds: one, traditional; the other, Structural-Functional. The development of the latter is primarily of the 20th Century, although some tracings can go back to Aristotle. Montesquieu and de Tocqueville. A very distinctive feature of modern approach is its massive indebtedness to sociology in particular and to some extent to psychology. While pursuing this approach the new exponents heavily rely on empirical data making use of the various devices in psychology and sociology like interview, questionnaire and various kinds of statistical methods. In a way, these thinkers aim at qualification and exactitude. Such an attempt is known, by the name of scientism.

Talking of the reasons for abandoning the traditional approach, it is argued that comparative study has thus far been comparative in name,only.The traditional approach may be called the study of foreign governments in which the governmental structure have been treated in a descriptive,historical,or legalistic manner.

Taking up the historical nature of the traditional approach, it is contended that it has laid stress on written documents. The vast majority of writers dealt either with one country or parallel descriptions of the institutions of a number of countries. Historians interested in political phenomenon, or political scientists with institutional bent, had spent much time examining the origins and developments of constitutions. Those who used this historical approach, generally, paid less attention to political institutions than what they devoted to political matters of general chronologies of past events. Thus the historical angle tended to present political morphology or what might be called political anatomy. No effort was made to evolve an analytical scheme within which an antecedent factor was related in terms of other than chronological to a particular event of development.

The second deficiency of the traditional approach was the emphasis on institutions or structures. While its roots extended back in time to Aristotle’s description and classifications of the constitutions of Greek city-states, its philosophical approach and it is still either the predominant approach to the contemporary study of politics or of equal rank with the much newer behavioural approach.Institutionalist are not unaware that people must “inhabit” institutions of the institutions are to exist and function; but they emphasize the rules and the structures, not the people. Individuals are, in effect, treated as undifferentiated, as constant units, while different effects which the rules might have on different individuals are not examined on the ground that institution must be understood before its effect can be studies.

The third contention against the traditional approach is its legalistic content. The traditional approach is primarily expected to study the various forms of government and their relationships with reference to the existing constitutional and legal prescriptions. It does not seek the forces that shape legal forms. Nor does it attempt to establish casual relationships that account for variety in constitutional prescriptions from one system to another or from one period to another. To a great extent Ivor Jennings’s works on the British Cabinet and the British Parliament rely on the legalistic approach with particular emphasis on search for precedents that ‘explain’ powers of various governmental organs.

In all cases the traditional studies were a dissemination and distribution of powers in terms of their legal setting, leaving out of the pictures altogether the problems of change and the study of those factors-political or others-that account for change.

As opposed to this, the contemporary or the structural-functional approach champions argue in the following manner. Instead of the concept of “State”, limited as it is by legal and institutional meanings, we prefer “political system”; instead of “powers”; which again is a legal concept in connotation; we are beginning to prefer “roles’; instead of “institutions”, which again directs us to formal norms, “structures”; instead of “public opinion” and “citizenship training”, formal and rational meaning, we prefer “political culture” and “political socialization”.

By this, the structural-functionalists do not propose to set aside public law and philosophy as disciplines; but they only contend that these disciplines have stunted the growth of political science. Instead, the structural-functionalist propose to move forward a probabilistic theory of politics.

Abandoning the word “state”, the structural-functionalists use the term “political system”. Here they argue that a political system by its policies perform functions of maintaining integration of society, and adapting and changing elements of kinship, religious and economic systems. The political system is the legitimate, order-maintaining or transforming system in society. Legitimate force is the thread that runs through the inputs and outputs of political system, giving it its special quality and salience and its coherence as a system.

With the induction of input-output analysis, the structural-functionalists moved on to the analytical tool of system. By “system” they mean that there is a particular set of properties in interactions of system. Its three properties are comprehensiveness, interdependence and existence of boundaries.

By the word “comprehensiveness’ they mean that political system will include all interactions (input as well as outputs) which effect the use of threat or physical coercion. Such an approach logically means that the study of laws,parliaments,executives,courts, parties, interest groups, media of communication, but also structures in their political aspect just as kinship and lineage, status and caste groups, anomic phenomena like riots, street demonstrations, etc.

By the second property, that is “interdependence”, structural-functionalists mean that a change in one subset of interactions produces changes in all the other sub-sets, as for example, universal franchise in India cutting through caste, kinship, joint family systems, etc.In other words, system analysis is useful instead of the traditional approach, which is limited to bilateral relationships functioning within formal legal structures.

By the expression “existence of boundaries” in political system, structural-functionalists mean that there are points where other systems end and political systems begin. The murmurs and complaints in the bazaar in Baghdad are not in any political system until they precipitates, for example, in act of violence-an anomic act of interest-interaction.

What kind of structures man the boundaries of political system is of the utmost importance, in the functioning of political system. These structures process inputs, establish and maintain contact between polity and society.

Even in the absence of this compelling scientific justification for broadening the scope of comparative politics, practical policy-motives have forced the modern political scientists to concern himself with the whole range of political systems which exist in modern world-from African Kingdoms and tribal organizations to traditional oligarchies such as Saudi Arabia, and traditional, modernizing systems such as Burma and India. Thus, the structural-functionalists maintain that there are four characteristics common to all political systems, and it is in their terms that comparisons can be made. First, all political systems, including the simple, have political structures. Comparisons can be made with one another according to the degree and form of structural utilization.

Secondly, the same functions are performed in all political systems although the structures may be different. Comparisons may be made according to the frequency of the performance of functions, the kind of structures performing them with a style of their performance.

Thirdly, all political structures are multi-functional.

Finally, all political structures are mixed systems in cultural sense. There are no “all-modern” cultures and structures, in the sense of rationality, and no “all-primitive” ones, in the sense of traditionality. They differ in relative dominance of the one as against the other and in the pattern or mixture of the two components.

With this approach, an analysis of the policies of a non-western or primitive society may begin and end with a description of the properties and functions of a specific chieftainship or kingship, which, in the visible sense, may perform only the functions of legislation and administration. The articulative, aggressive, and communicative functions may be performed diffusely within society, or intermittently through kinship or lineage structure. An adequate analysis of political system must locate and characterize all of these functions, and not simply those performed by specialized political structures.

The above exposition clearly shows that the traditional approach was limited in scope and it did not bring into adequate focus the political aspect of society with other aspects of society. In the modern approach, the political aspect often merges with other aspects of society. In addition, the conceptual and analytical tools used by structural-functionalists are radically different from those of the traditionalists. In this attempt the structural-functionalists have heavily relied on the disciplines of sociology and psychology. Some of the exponents of this new approach like Easton are heavily indebted to Parsons’ structural-functional framework and his patter-variable concept. In brief, classical theorists repeatedly argued the question: who should rule and why? A contemporary scientists today would only change the wording to who does rule and how?