

Comparative Government and Politics PYQ 2020

Q1. What do you understand by comparative political analysis? Discuss its nature and scope.

Ans. Comparative political analysis is a method used in the field of political science to study and analyze political systems, institutions, processes, and behaviors across different countries or regions. It involves examining similarities and differences between political entities to gain insights into the functioning, successes, challenges, and variations within political systems. This approach helps researchers understand the factors that shape political outcomes and make meaningful comparisons to draw broader conclusions.

Nature of Comparative Political Analysis:

Cross-National Perspective: Comparative analysis involves studying political phenomena across national boundaries. It seeks to identify patterns and trends that transcend individual cases.

Empirical Study: Comparative analysis is based on empirical data, including qualitative and quantitative information. Researchers collect and analyze data to draw systematic comparisons.

Contextual Understanding: It emphasizes understanding political phenomena in their specific historical, cultural, economic, and social contexts. Contextual factors influence political dynamics and outcomes.

Generalization and Theory Building: Comparative analysis allows researchers to develop theories and concepts that explain political behavior and outcomes across various cases.

Multiple Approaches: Comparative political analysis uses various methodologies, including case studies, statistical analysis, qualitative interviews, surveys, and historical research.

Scope of Comparative Political Analysis:

Institutional Analysis: Comparative analysis helps understand the functioning of political institutions like governments, legislatures, judiciaries, and electoral systems. Researchers can assess their roles, structures, and impacts across countries.

Political Behavior: It examines citizen participation, voter behavior, political parties, and interest groups to identify patterns and variations in political engagement.

Public Policies: Comparative analysis assesses how countries develop, implement, and evaluate public policies. It sheds light on the effectiveness of policy solutions in different contexts.

Political Culture and Ideology: Researchers can compare political culture, ideologies, and values to understand how these factors influence political attitudes and decisions.

State-Society Relations: Comparative analysis helps analyze the dynamics between the state and society, including issues of governance, authority, and legitimacy.

Regime Types: The analysis can differentiate between different regime types such as democracies, authoritarian regimes, and hybrid systems. It explores how political systems impact governance and citizen rights.

Conflict and Cooperation: Researchers can study international relations, conflicts, alliances, and cooperation between states.

Development and Political Economy: Comparative analysis assesses the relationship between economic development, social welfare, and political stability in different countries.

Policy Transfer and Lessons: It identifies best practices and lessons from other countries that can be adapted to address domestic challenges.

In summary, comparative political analysis is a powerful tool that allows researchers to study political phenomena across different countries or regions. Its nature is empirical, contextual, and theory-building, and its scope covers a wide range of political aspects, from institutions and behavior to policies and international relations. By systematically comparing political systems, this approach enhances our understanding of political dynamics and helps formulate informed policy recommendations.

Q2. Is first past the post electoral system workable for democratic countries in the present times? Elucidate your answer with suitable examples.

Ans. The First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system, also known as the winner-takes-all system, is one of the most commonly used electoral systems in democratic countries around the world. While it has advantages such as simplicity and clear outcomes, it also faces criticisms and challenges that have led some to question its workability in present times. **Let's examine both perspectives with suitable examples:**

Advantages of FPTP:

Simplicity: FPTP is easy to understand and implement, making it accessible to voters and minimizing confusion.

Stable Governments: The system tends to produce stable governments with clear mandates, as the winning party often secures a majority of seats in the legislature.

Local Representation: FPTP ensures a direct link between constituents and their representatives, as each geographical area elects one representative.

Challenges and Criticisms:

Disproportional Representation: FPTP can lead to a disproportionate relationship between a party's share of the popular vote and its seat share in the legislature. This can result in a parliament that does not accurately reflect the diversity of voters' preferences.

Wasted Votes: In FPTP, votes cast for losing candidates do not contribute to the overall outcome. This can lead to a sense of wasted votes and voter disillusionment.

Duverger's Law: FPTP often results in a two-party system, as smaller parties struggle to win seats. This can limit voter choice and lead to policy polarization.

Regional Imbalances: In countries with diverse regions, FPTP can exacerbate regional disparities and incentivize parties to focus on winning in certain areas at the expense of others.

Tactical Voting: FPTP can encourage tactical voting, where voters cast their ballots not for their preferred candidate but against a candidate they want to prevent from winning.

Relevance in Present Times:

The workability of FPTP in present times depends on the specific context of each country. Some countries continue to use FPTP effectively, while others have opted for alternative systems to address its shortcomings:

Examples of Workability:

United Kingdom: The UK continues to use FPTP for general elections, and the system has produced stable governments for decades. However, criticisms of disproportionality and wasted votes persist.

United States: While the U.S. uses FPTP for its presidential elections, its legislative branches employ a modified version called "plurality-at-large" or "single-member-district plurality." The two-party dominance in the U.S. reflects the system's influence on the political landscape.

Examples of Change:

Canada: Canada uses FPTP but has had discussions about electoral reform due to concerns about proportionality and representation. However, attempts at reform have faced challenges.

New Zealand: In response to the limitations of FPTP, New Zealand shifted to a Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system in the 1990s, aiming for a more proportional representation.

In conclusion, the workability of the FPTP electoral system in democratic countries in present times is a nuanced issue. While it continues to produce stable governments in some cases, its challenges of disproportionality, wasted votes, and two-party dominance have led some countries to explore alternative systems. The suitability of FPTP depends on a country's political context and the degree to which its citizens find its advantages outweigh its shortcomings.

Q3. Is federal political system more appropriate for the democratic countries? Explain your answer with examples.

Ans. Whether a federal political system is more appropriate for democratic countries depends on various factors, including the country's historical, cultural, and geographical context. Federalism can offer advantages such as accommodating diverse populations and sharing power between central and regional governments. However, it also poses challenges like potential conflicts and administrative complexities. **Let's explore the pros and cons of federalism in democratic countries with examples:**

Advantages of Federal Political System:

Diversity Management: Federal systems are well-suited for countries with diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural populations. They allow regions to have some autonomy over local affairs, ensuring that diverse communities' interests are represented.

Local Autonomy: Federalism empowers regions or states to make decisions that suit their unique needs and preferences. This can lead to better governance tailored to local conditions.

Prevention of Concentration of Power: Federal systems distribute power between central and regional governments, reducing the risk of authoritarianism and promoting checks and balances.

Experimentation: Different regions can implement policies independently, allowing for experimentation in governance approaches. Successful policies can be adopted by other regions or the central government.

Examples of Federal Political Systems:

United States: The United States is one of the most prominent examples of a federal system. It accommodates diverse states with varying laws, regulations, and policies while maintaining a strong central government.

Germany: Germany's federal structure allows states (Länder) to manage education, policing, and cultural matters while the federal government handles foreign affairs and defense.

India: India's federal structure, often referred to as quasi-federal, grants significant autonomy to states in areas like education, public health, and law and order, while maintaining a strong central government for matters of national importance.

Challenges of Federal Political System:

Administrative Complexity: Federal systems can lead to administrative complexities, as regions may have different laws, policies, and regulations. Coordinating across different levels of government can be challenging.

Potential for Conflict: Disagreements between the central government and regional governments may arise over resource allocation, policies, and power-sharing, potentially leading to conflicts.

Inefficiency and Duplication: Duplication of efforts and resources across different regions can lead to inefficiencies in resource allocation and service delivery.

Inequality: Wealthier regions may have an advantage in terms of resources and governance capacity, leading to regional disparities and inequality.

Examples of Democratic Countries with Other Systems:

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom follows a unitary political system, with power concentrated in the central government. Devolution has granted some powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, but it's not a fully federal system.

France: France has a unitary system with strong central control. It has implemented regional decentralization to a certain extent, but it's not a federal structure.

In conclusion, whether a federal political system is more appropriate for democratic countries depends on their specific circumstances. While federalism can accommodate diversity, promote local autonomy, and prevent power concentration, it also presents challenges of administrative complexity and potential conflicts. Different countries may adopt federal, unitary, or hybrid systems based on their historical and contextual factors, and the success of a political system ultimately hinges on how effectively it balances central authority and regional autonomy.

Q4. Critically analyse the working of parliamentary system, with special reference to United Kingdom.

Ans. The parliamentary system, also known as the parliamentary democracy, is a form of government where the executive branch derives its legitimacy and authority from the legislature. The United Kingdom is a prominent example of a parliamentary system. **Let's critically analyze the working of the parliamentary system with reference to the UK:**

Advantages:

Clear Accountability: In the parliamentary system, the executive (Prime Minister and Cabinet) is accountable to the legislature (Parliament). This creates a direct link between the government's actions and policies and its responsibility to the people.

Efficient Decision-Making: The fusion of powers between the executive and legislative branches allows for quick decision-making and the passage of legislation. The government can act swiftly in response to crises or emerging issues.

Collective Responsibility: The Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, is collectively responsible for its decisions. This ensures consensus-building within the government and reduces the risk of arbitrary decision-making.

Regular Elections: The parliamentary system usually entails regular elections for the legislative body. This ensures that citizens have frequent opportunities to express their preferences and hold the government accountable.

Flexibility: The system is adaptable to changing circumstances. If the government loses majority support in Parliament, it can be replaced through a vote of no confidence, leading to the formation of a new government without the need for a complete overhaul of the system.

Challenges and Criticisms:

Dominance of the Executive: In a parliamentary system, the executive branch can sometimes become too powerful, leading to a concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Weak Separation of Powers: The fusion of executive and legislative powers can weaken the separation of powers, raising concerns about checks and balances and potential abuse of authority.

Lack of Direct Mandate: Unlike a presidential system, where the president is directly elected by the people, the Prime Minister in a parliamentary system is chosen by the majority party in Parliament. This can lead to concerns about the legitimacy of the leader's mandate.

Partisan Politics: The close relationship between the executive and the legislature can lead to partisan politics, where party loyalty may influence legislative decisions rather than individual MPs' assessments.

Limited Oversight: The government's control over the legislature can limit effective oversight, as the majority party may be hesitant to scrutinize its own leadership's actions.

UK's Experience:

The United Kingdom is often considered the birthplace of the parliamentary system. It has a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. The Prime Minister, who heads the

executive branch, is the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons. The UK Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Strengths in the UK's Case:

The UK's parliamentary system has a rich history of stability and adaptability. It has managed to weather significant challenges and changes in the socio-political landscape.

The "Question Time" tradition in the House of Commons allows MPs to question the Prime Minister and hold the government accountable, enhancing transparency.

Challenges in the UK's Case:

The dominance of the executive branch, particularly the Prime Minister's Office, has led to debates about the concentration of power and limited checks and balances.

The "first-past-the-post" electoral system has been criticized for not proportionally representing the popular vote, potentially leading to disparities between votes received and seats won by parties.

In conclusion, the parliamentary system, as seen in the United Kingdom, has advantages such as clear accountability and efficient decision-making. However, it also poses challenges like the dominance of the executive and the potential weakening of separation of powers. The effectiveness of the parliamentary system depends on how it balances the concentration of power with checks and balances, transparency, and representation.

Q5. Which party system is more suitable for the democratic systems - bi-party system or multi-party system? Analyse.

Ans. The suitability of a bi-party system or a multi-party system for democratic systems depends on various factors and can vary based on the context of each country. Both systems have their own advantages and challenges. **Let's analyze the characteristics of each system:**

Bi-Party System:

In a bi-party system, two major political parties dominate the political landscape, and these parties often alternate in holding power. Examples include the United States with the Democratic and Republican parties.

Advantages:

Simplicity: A bi-party system provides clear choices for voters, making it easier for them to understand the political options available.

Stable Governance: Since one of the two major parties usually forms the government, there is stability in governance, and policies are consistent over time.

Clear Accountability: Voters can more easily hold a single party accountable for policy decisions, making the connection between voters' choices and government actions clearer.

Avoidance of Fragmentation: Bi-party systems can prevent excessive fragmentation and reduce the risk of coalition governments that might struggle to form coherent policies.

Challenges:

Limited Choice: A bi-party system can limit political diversity and reduce the range of policy options available to voters.

Inadequate Representation: Smaller parties and diverse voices may find it challenging to gain representation, leading to the potential exclusion of important perspectives.

Polarization: The dominance of two parties can lead to polarization, where parties and voters become more ideologically extreme to differentiate themselves.

Multi-Party System:

In a multi-party system, several parties compete for political power, and coalition governments are common. Examples include India, Germany, and Italy.

Advantages:

Diverse Representation: Multi-party systems offer a broader spectrum of political representation, allowing a wider range of voices to be heard and represented.

Policy Flexibility: Coalition governments can bring together different parties with varied policy priorities, leading to more nuanced and balanced policies.

Power-Sharing: Minority groups and regional interests have a better chance of being represented in a multi-party system.

Avoiding Extremes: In a multi-party system, extreme ideologies may find it difficult to gain power, as coalition dynamics tend to moderate policy positions.

Challenges:

Instability: Frequent changes in coalition partners and governments can lead to instability, as governments may be short-lived.

Policy Gridlock: Coalition negotiations can result in policy gridlock if parties fail to find common ground, potentially leading to slow decision-making.

Accountability Challenges: Multiple parties in government can make it harder for voters to assign clear responsibility for policy outcomes.

Context Matters:

The suitability of a bi-party or multi-party system depends on the country's historical, cultural, and political context. A bi-party system may work well in countries with a stable political culture and moderate voter preferences. On the other hand, a multi-party system may be more suitable in diverse societies where a wide range of interests and opinions need representation.

In conclusion, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to whether a bi-party or multi-party system is more suitable for democratic systems. Both systems have their merits and drawbacks, and the effectiveness of each depends on how well they represent the interests of citizens, provide stable governance, and encourage political participation and accountability.

Q6. Critically evaluate the major features of unitary political system with special reference to China.

Ans. A unitary political system is characterized by a centralized government where the national or central government holds significant power and authority. While local governments or administrative divisions exist, their powers are usually delegated by the central government and can be changed or revoked. China provides an interesting example of a unitary political system. **Let's critically evaluate the major features of a unitary system with reference to China:**

Advantages:

Centralized Decision-Making: In a unitary system, decisions can be made swiftly and uniformly, which can be advantageous for implementing national policies and strategies.

Consistency: A unitary system promotes consistency in laws, regulations, and policies across the entire country, reducing disparities between regions.

Effective Control: The central government has strong control over various aspects such as defense, foreign policy, and national infrastructure development, which can lead to coordinated and strategic planning.

Unity and Stability: A unitary system can enhance national unity and stability by minimizing conflicts that might arise from regional disparities or secessionist movements.

Challenges:

Local Autonomy: The concentration of power at the center can lead to limited local autonomy. Local governments might not have the flexibility to address specific regional needs adequately.

Lack of Representation: In a unitary system, local populations might feel that decisions are imposed from the top without sufficient representation of their interests.

Inefficiency: Centralized decision-making can lead to inefficiencies due to the distance between the central government and local realities. Bureaucratic red tape can also slow down implementation.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: In countries with diverse cultures and languages, a unitary system might suppress local identities and languages in favor of a single national identity.

China's Unitary System:

China's political structure is based on a unitary system, where the central government in Beijing holds significant power. However, China's size, population, and internal diversity create unique dynamics:

Strengths in China's Case:

1. China's unitary system has facilitated rapid and coordinated economic development, as policies and investments can be directed towards national priorities.
2. The central government has maintained control over national security, foreign relations, and critical infrastructure projects.
3. China's unitary structure has been credited with enabling large-scale projects like the development of high-speed rail networks and the implementation of economic reforms.

Challenges in China's Case:

1. The unitary system has faced challenges in effectively managing regional disparities, particularly between urban and rural areas.
2. Ethnic and cultural diversity in regions like Tibet and Xinjiang has led to tensions over the suppression of local identities and cultural practices.
3. The central government's dominance in decision-making can sometimes lead to limited local participation and lack of responsiveness to grassroots concerns.

In conclusion, a unitary political system, as exemplified by China, has its advantages in terms of centralized decision-making, consistency, and control. However, it also faces challenges related to local autonomy, representation, and cultural diversity. The effectiveness of a unitary system depends on how it balances the needs of the central government with the interests of diverse regions and populations.

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