201 Comparative Government Revision (I)

Raluca L. Pahontu

Nuffield College

Trinity Term 2018

Exam Structure

- 12 questions, answer 3 in 3 hours
- Examples:
  - Is democratisation better explained by agentic or structural approaches?
  - Why are some constitutions more frequently amended than others?
- Past Exams can be found on Weblearn, under OXAM.

Aims of this Session

- A foundation of how to connect the different topics you have studied
- A discussion of how to assess theory limitations
- Go through exam questions, first paragraphs, essay plans

Comparative Government Developments

▶ What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?

Comparative Government Developments

- ▶ What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- ▶ Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
  - ▶ Influenced by sociology
  - ▶ Case studies, Small-N comparisons

Comparative Government Developments

- ▶ What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- ▶ Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
  - ▶ Influenced by sociology
  - ▶ Case studies, Small-N comparisons
  - ▶ Behaviorists:
    - ▶ Reaction against the prior scope-restriction on institutions; add informal procedures (e.g. interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, socialization)

Comparative Government Developments

- What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
    - Influenced by sociology
    - Case studies, Small-N comparisons
    - Behaviorists:
        - Reaction against the prior scope-restriction on institutions; add informal procedures (e.g. interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, socialization)
        - Question: What are institutions? Are political parties institutions?

Comparative Government Developments

- ▶ What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- ▶ Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
  - ▶ Influenced by sociology
  - ▶ Case studies, Small-N comparisons
  - ▶ Behaviorists:
    - ▶ Reaction against the prior scope-restriction on institutions; add informal procedures (e.g. interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, socialization)
    - ▶ Question: What are institutions? Are political parties institutions?
    - ▶ Centrality of theory – shortcomings?

Comparative Government Developments

- What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
  - Influenced by sociology
  - Case studies, Small-N comparisons
  - Behaviorists:
    - Reaction against the prior scope-restriction on institutions; add informal procedures (e.g. interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, socialization)
    - Question: What are institutions? Are political parties institutions?
    - Centrality of theory – shortcomings? A: reductionist accounts of politics; the state treated as a black box, ignored that actors' behaviours may be influenced by the state.

Comparative Government Developments

- What are the main theoretical developments in comparative politics?
- Behavioural Revolution (post-WWII - 1960s)
    - Influenced by sociology
    - Case studies, Small-N comparisons
    - Behaviorists:
        - Reaction against the prior scope-restriction on institutions; add informal procedures (e.g. interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, socialization)
        - Question: What are institutions? Are political parties institutions?
        - Centrality of theory – shortcomings? A: reductionist accounts of politics; the state treated as a black box, ignored that actors' behaviours may be influenced by the state. Politics as bottom-up or top-down?

Comparative Government Developments

- Post-Behavioural Period
    - Small-N comparisons, case studies; some Large-N on electoral behaviour, public opinion
    - Example: Lipset and Rokkan Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments
    - Contribution: politics can be explained in terms of more fundamental socio-economic factors.

Comparative Government Developments

- Scientific Revolution (ongoing since 1989)
  - Influenced by economics, rational choice theory
  - Large-N, Formal Theory
  - Growing number of issues: democratization, economic policy, government formation
  - Shortcomings?

Activity!

- ▶ Question 1: Why is the freezing hypothesis not corroborated empirically in some contexts?
- ▶ Question 2: What limitations can you identify in Lipset's (1959) result that economic development is a precondition for democracy?
- ▶ Question 3: Quantitative analysis should always be used, except when accurate measurement is too costly. (KKV) Discuss.

Things to consider...

- ▶ Question 1:
  - ▶ Top-down mobilization; everything else staying put. How about voters?
  - ▶ How do new cleavages emerge? Are parties or voters creating new cleavages? If voters, then top-down mobilization has limited explanatory power? If parties, then how did these *new* parties emerge to begin with, and whom are they representing?
  - ▶ Changes can also occur because of changing group identity, with new identities forming.
  - ▶ Methods? Endogeneity?

Things to consider...

- ▶ Question 1:
    - ▶ Top-down mobilization; everything else staying put. How about voters?
    - ▶ How do new cleavages emerge? Are parties or voters creating new cleavages? If voters, then top-down mobilization has limited explanatory power? If parties, then how did these *new* parties emerge to begin with, and whom are they representing?
    - ▶ Changes can also occur because of changing group identity, with new identities forming.
    - ▶ Methods? Endogeneity?
- ▶ Question 2:
    - ▶ Endogeneity?
    - ▶ Methods? How about Saudi Arabia? Outlier or a different explanation?
    - ▶ Theory1: consider alternative explanations – e.g. Przeworski (economic development *sustains* not *causes* democracy)
    - ▶ Theory 2: incomplete causal mechanism? Perhaps economic growth leads to democracy *through* socioeconomic changes (industrialization, urbanization, higher education)

Things to consider...Question 3

- ▶ Generalizable patterns, we are more 'scientific' (KKV)
    - ▶ But: With each observation we add, we lose historical knowledge
        - ▶ True, but historical knowledge, if not appropriately done, may be problematic (see Kreuzer on CIS and Boix historical analyses).

Things to consider...Question 3

- ▶ Generalizable patterns, we are more 'scientific' (KKV)
  - ▶ But: With each observation we add, we lose historical knowledge
    - ▶ True, but historical knowledge, if not appropriately done, may be problematic (see Kreuzer on CIS and Boix historical analyses). Historical knowledge/resources biased?

Things to consider...Question 3

▶ Generalizable patterns, we are more 'scientific' (KKV)
  ▶ But: With each observation we add, we lose historical knowledge
    ▶ True, but historical knowledge, if not appropriately done, may be problematic (see Kreuzer on CIS and Boix historical analyses). Historical knowledge/resources biased?
▶ Quantitative analysis mostly focused on *testing* theory. What if we want to clarify causal mechanisms or construct theories?
  ▶ But, what if we clarify a causal mechanism that only applies to one case within a particular period? We remain unsure what happens in all other contexts in all other periods.

Things to consider...Question 3

- ▶ Generalizable patterns, we are more 'scientific' (KKV)
  - ▶ But: With each observation we add, we lose historical knowledge
    - ▶ True, but historical knowledge, if not appropriately done, may be problematic (see Kreuzer on CIS and Boix historical analyses). Historical knowledge/resources biased?
- ▶ Quantitative analysis mostly focused on *testing* theory. What if we want to clarify causal mechanisms or construct theories?
  - ▶ But, what if we clarify a causal mechanism that only applies to one case within a particular period? We remain unsure what happens in all other contexts in all other periods.
- ▶ Quantitative methods much better at identifying causal inference. Inference in qualitative work possible, but with a lower degree of confidence (KKV).
  - ▶ But we can use Mill's method of agreement or difference, Eckstein's discussion of critical cases

Things to consider...Question 3

- ▶ Generalizable patterns, we are more 'scientific' (KKV)
  - ▶ But: With each observation we add, we lose historical knowledge
    - ▶ True, but historical knowledge, if not appropriately done, may be problematic (see Kreuzer on CIS and Boix historical analyses). Historical knowledge/resources biased?
- ▶ Quantitative analysis mostly focused on *testing* theory. What if we want to clarify causal mechanisms or construct theories?
  - ▶ But, what if we clarify a causal mechanism that only applies to one case within a particular period? We remain unsure what happens in all other contexts in all other periods.
- ▶ Quantitative methods much better at identifying causal inference. Inference in qualitative work possible, but with a lower degree of confidence (KKV).
  - ▶ But we can use Mill's method of agreement or difference, Eckstein's discussion of critical cases
- ▶ Perhaps quantitative analysis good for understanding *on average* what happens. But, we usually have outliers. We need case-studies to explain what happens there?

Good Theory?

- ▶ What are the most common problems that beset comparative theory?

Good Theory?

- ▶ What are the most common problems that beset comparative theory?
  - ▶ Lack of micro-foundations – many assumptions about actors and their motivations

Good Theory?

- What are the most common problems that beset comparative theory?
  - Lack of micro-foundations – many assumptions about actors and their motivations
  - Lack of clarify about causal mechanisms

Good Theory?

- What are the most common problems that beset comparative theory?
  - Lack of micro-foundations – many assumptions about actors and their motivations
  - Lack of clarify about causal mechanisms
  - Ambiguity concerning expected effects

Good Theory?

- ▶ What are the most common problems that beset comparative theory?
  - ▶ Lack of micro-foundations – many assumptions about actors and their motivations
  - ▶ Lack of clarify about causal mechanisms
  - ▶ Ambiguity concerning expected effects
  - ▶ Endogeneity

Activity!

- Are electoral systems dependent or independent variables?

Issues and Suggestions

> *"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves"* (Duverger, 1984)

▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?

Issues and Suggestions

> *"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves"* (Duverger, 1984)

- ▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?
    - ▶ Theory: Top-down vs bottom-up politics – i.e. is government spending shaped by institutions, actors (parties, voters) or both?
    - ▶ Endogeneity of electoral systems

Issues and Suggestions

> *"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves"* (Duverger, 1984)

▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?

  ▶ Theory: Top-down vs bottom-up politics – i.e. is government spending shaped by institutions, actors (parties, voters) or both?
  ▶ Endogeneity of electoral systems ... very problematic

Issues and Suggestions

"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves" (Duverger, 1984)

▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?

   ▶ Theory: Top-down vs bottom-up politics – i.e. is government spending shaped by institutions, actors (parties, voters) or both?

   ▶ Endogeneity of electoral systems ... very problematic

      ▶ We assume unit homogeneity

      ▶ We assume conditional mean independence

      ▶ Both can be solved with randomization. Yet we cannot assign institutions randomly to countries.

Issues and Suggestions

> *"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves"* (Duverger, 1984)

▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?

    ▶ Theory: Top-down vs bottom-up politics – i.e. is government spending shaped by institutions, actors (parties, voters) or both?

    ▶ Endogeneity of electoral systems ... very problematic

        ▶ We assume unit homogeneity

        ▶ We assume conditional mean independence

        ▶ Both can be solved with randomization. Yet we cannot assign institutions randomly to countries. Solution - natural experiments – yet, exclusion restrictions; we can only answer some types of questions, etc.

Issues and Suggestions

> *"Electoral systems are strange devices simultaneously cameras and projectors. They register images which have partly created themselves"* (Duverger, 1984)

▶ Suppose the exam question asks: "What is the effect of electoral systems on government spending?" What should you consider?

  ▶ Theory: Top-down vs bottom-up politics – i.e. is government spending shaped by institutions, actors (parties, voters) or both?

  ▶ Endogeneity of electoral systems ... very problematic

    ▶ We assume unit homogeneity
    ▶ We assume conditional mean independence
    ▶ Both can be solved with randomization. Yet we cannot assign institutions randomly to countries. Solution - natural experiments – yet, exclusion restrictions; we can only answer some types of questions, etc. Solution 2: Claim – Institutions are sticky. If so, we can analyse the effects of electoral systems (as independent variables). Discuss.

Issues and Suggestions

- Electoral systems as DV. Discarding theories: political versus economic origins.
    - Methodology - see Kruezer on Boix and CIS
    - Theory – why would right wing parties choose PR? [Boix: they chose PR when they were threatened. But, why not rule alone, though less often?] Puzzle: if center-left wing governments are more frequent under PR, why did center and right wing parties not attempt to make a change to majoritarian system?
    - Theory – untested resulting hypothesis in CIS: when there are two parties, risk averse middle-class voters are more fearful of the left than the right, even if the two parties offer the same platform [Rodden 2009]
    - Scope Conditions – Europe...?

Exam-Prep Hands-On

- ▶ Question 1: Does the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism matter for the character of politics in a country?
- ▶ Question 2: How should we explain the empirical relationship between electoral system type and the number of parties in the party systems?
- ▶ Question 3: Why are some party systems stable and others not?

Exam-Prep Hands-On

- ▶ Question 1: Does the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism matter for the character of politics in a country?

- ▶ Question 2: How should we explain the empirical relationship between electoral system type and the number of parties in the party systems?

- ▶ Question 3: Why are some party systems stable and others not?

- ▶ What is the exam question asking you to do with respect to the theory?

- ▶ What are the key theoretical developments that need to be considered?

Good or Bad Answers?

- ▶ Question: Why are some party systems stable and others not?
- ▶ Answer in brief: In this essay, I argue that Lipset and Rokkan's freezing theory hypothesis is correct. In my essay, I review the stability of the party systems in Europe between 1960-1970.

Good or Bad Answers?

- ▶ Question: How should we explain the empirical relationship between electoral system type and the number of parties in the party systems?
- ▶ Answer in brief: We should use Cox's theory on M+1 rule.

Good or Bad Answers?

- ▶ Question: How should we explain the empirical relationship between electoral system type and the number of parties in the party systems?

- ▶ Answer in brief: We should use Cox's theory on M+1 rule. How about endogeneity of the electoral system? How about other contributions?

Good or Bad Answers?

▶ Question: Does the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism matter for the character of politics in a country?

▶ Answer in brief: In this essay I define the character of politics as government spending. Defined as such, the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism is relevant because spending is 6% of GDP lower in presidentialism.

Good or Bad Answers?

- ▶ Question: Does the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism matter for the character of politics in a country?

- ▶ Answer in brief: In this essay I define the character of politics as government spending. Defined as such, the distinction between parliamentarism and presidentialism is relevant because spending is 6% of GDP lower in presidentialism. Good, but for a great answer: Person and Tabellini measurement good, but may be biased. For example, Blume et al 2009, enlarging their dataset and basing the measure on Golder dataset and definition find no difference between parliamentary and presidential system in spending.

What makes a BAD Answer

- ▶ No scope conditions
- ▶ Focus only on empirics or methods
- ▶ Focus only on theory

What makes a GOOD Answer

- ▶ Challenge the exam question
- ▶ Example: Why is the freezing hypothesis wrong?

What makes a GOOD Answer

- ▶ Challenge the exam question
- ▶ Example: Why is the freezing hypothesis wrong? A: The freezing hypothesis is not universally wrong. I discuss below conditions/countries/periods under which it is correct and under which it is not and why.
- ▶ Critically assess contributions, not just summarize
- ▶ Make an argument! Convince the reader that from a specific debate in a literature, one side is right.