

respond to the great contemporary challenges of building community, fostering economic development, and securing democracy that we discussed in Chapter 1.

On the right side of Figure 2.3 we see the consequences of the policy process. The outputs are the implementations of the political process. These are the substantive impacts on the society, the economy, and the culture. They include various forms of extraction of resources in the form of taxes and the like, regulation of behavior, and distribution of benefits and services to various groups in the population. The outcomes of all these political activities reflect the way the policies interact with the domestic and international environments. Sometimes these outcomes are the desired results of public policies. But sometimes the complexities of policy and society result in unintended consequences. Among these may be new demands for legislation or for administrative action, or increases or decreases in the amount of support given to the political system and incumbent officeholders. We shall return to the policy level, after providing an example of a structural-functional comparison.

The functional concepts shown in Figure 2.3 describe the activities carried on in any society regardless of how its political system is organized or what kinds of policies it produces. Using these functional categories, we can determine how institutions in different countries combine in making and implementing different kinds of public policy. Each country study in this book discusses the ways the different political functions are performed.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE COMPARISON: REGIME CHANGE IN RUSSIA

Figures 2.4 and 2.5³ offer a simplified graphic comparison of structures and functions in Russia before and after the breakdown of communist rule in the Soviet Union. They illustrate the use of the comparative method to assess the way a political regime changed significantly in a short period of time. The point here is to illustrate how we can use the tools of political analysis, rather than provide the details of the Russian case (which are discussed in depth in Chapter 12).

The figures depict the changes in the functioning of the major structures of the political system brought about by the collapse of communism. These include two revolutionary changes. One is the end of

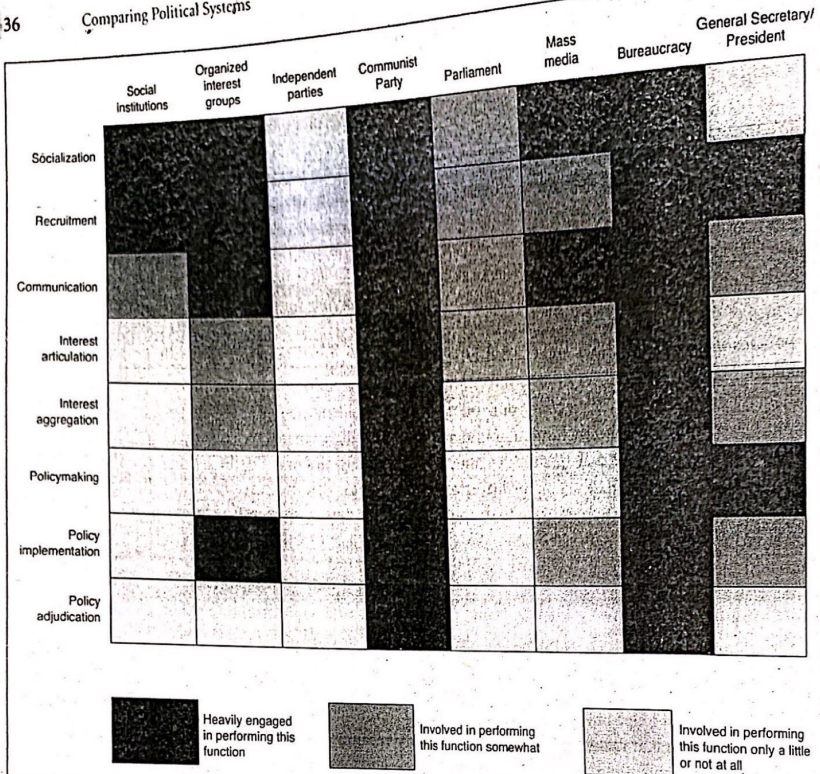
the single-party political system dominated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which held together the vast, multinational Soviet state. The other is the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself into its fifteen member republics. As a result of these two remarkable events, Russia, the republic that was the core republic of the old union, became an independent noncommunist state.

In June 1991, Boris Yeltsin, a bitter rival to the Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, was elected president of Russia. Six months later, the Soviet Union collapsed and Gorbachev gave up his office. In December 1993, Russian voters were called on to ratify a new constitution, which provided for a powerful executive presidency and at the same time elected a new parliament dominated by a diverse range of political parties.

In the new Russia, democratic tendencies competed with pressures for authoritarian rule. Overall, the new system was a mixture of pluralism with vestiges of the old, bureaucratically run, state socialist order. New political parties were represented in Parliament and tried to develop national political bases of support for the next elections. A reborn Communist Party—called the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—regularly denounced Yeltsin and called for the restoration of a strong state and more social protection. Parliament had become a meaningful site for policy debate and decisionmaking. The mass media were no longer tightly controlled by the Communist Party. New organized interest groups, such as business associations and labor unions, were actively involved in policymaking. The bureaucracy remained a powerful central player in the political process, however, with substantial continued control over the economy.

These and subsequent changes are reflected in the differences between the two figures. In 1985 (the year that the reform leader Mikhail Gorbachev came to power), the Soviet Union was a communist regime. Its Communist Party ruled the country. The top leader of the country was the general secretary of the Communist Party. Although the country had the formal trappings of democracy, power actually flowed downward from the decisionmakers at the top to government and society.

Figure 2.4 therefore shows how the basic functions of the political system were performed in 1985. The Communist Party was the dominant political institution of the country, overseeing schools and media, the arts and public organizations, the economy and



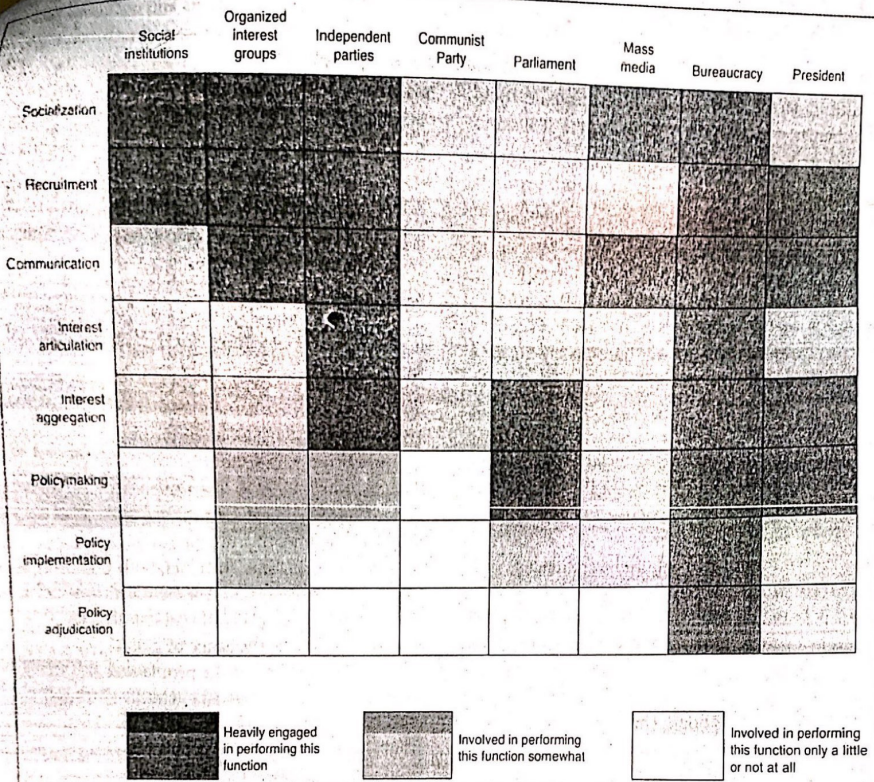
The Soviet Political System in 1985

FIGURE 2.4

the courts. For this reason, all the cells of the chart in the column marked "Communist Party" are shaded dark, as are the cells under the column marked "Bureaucracy." Although social institutions—such as the family, workplace, arts, and hobby groups—exercised some influence over such system-level functions as socialization, recruitment, and communication, it was the Communist Party and state bureaucracy that dominated process-level functions. Under their tutelage, the mass media in 1985 were a key agent of communist political socialization and communication. Parliament was a compliant instrument for ratifying decisions made by the party and bureaucracy. No other parties could exist beside the Communist Party. The only organized interest groups were those authorized by

the party. The party's general secretary was the most powerful official in the country, since there was no state presidency.

By 2000 the political system had undergone fundamental changes, as shown in Figure 2.5. Many more structures played a role in the political process, as is immediately evident by the larger number of cells that are heavily shaded. In particular Parliament, independent parties, and regional governments all acquired important new powers in policymaking. The freedom enjoyed by ordinary citizens to articulate their interests and to organize to advance them had expanded enormously. The Communist Party, no longer an official or monopolistic party, had declined substantially in power and



The Russian Political System in 2000

FIGURE 2.5

was playing by the rules of the parliamentary game. The lighter shading for the Communist Party in Figure 2.5 shows its diminished influence. The state bureaucracy remained an important element in the political system, although adapting itself to the new trend of movement toward a market economy by adopting quasi-commercial forms.

The presidency, now occupied by Vladimir Putin, has been a dominating policymaking institution in the new Russia, as shown in Figure 2.5. The Parliament, although fairly representative of the diversity of opinion in the country, was frustrated in its policymaking and oversight roles by the inertia of the vast state bureaucracy, by its inability to compel compliance with its laws, by its weak links with the electorate, and

by the president's power to make policy by decree. Nevertheless, it played a much greater role than before in aggregating interests and making policy, as shown when comparing Figures 2.4 and 2.5.

A further updating of Figure 2.5 would show the eclipse of independent parties and Parliament by President Putin after 2000. This movement in a more authoritarian direction, although not back to communism, would be shown by fewer dark shaded columns in the middle of the figure. These further developments are discussed in detail in Chapter 12.

The brief comparisons presented here illustrate the use of the structural-functional approach. This approach enables us to examine how the same functions are performed in different countries, or in the

same country at two different points in time. Similarly, we may examine changes in the functions performed by the same structures over time or across different political systems. In a country undergoing as rapid and dramatic a transition as Russia in the 1990s, this framework helps us to analyze changes in the distribution of power among the major institutions making up the political system.

Neither the analysis of structures nor that of functions is complete without the other. A structural analysis tells us the number of political parties, or the organization of the legislature. It describes how the executive branch, the courts, the bureaucracy, the mass media, interest groups, and other structures of a political system are set up and by what rules or standards they operate. A functional analysis tells us how these institutions and organizations interact to produce and implement policies. This kind of analysis is especially essential when we are comparing very different kinds of political systems.

The country chapters of this book do not present formal structural-functional sketches like Figures 2.4 and 2.5. But at the core of each chapter is a set of discussions of these functions and the structures that perform them. We can see these in the section headings of the country studies and in the analytic guide at the beginning of this book. These tools make it possible to compare the workings of the very different political systems in this book.

THE POLICY LEVEL: PERFORMANCE, OUTCOME, AND EVALUATION

The important question is what these differences in structure and function do for the interests, needs, and aspirations of people. We call this the policy level of the political system.

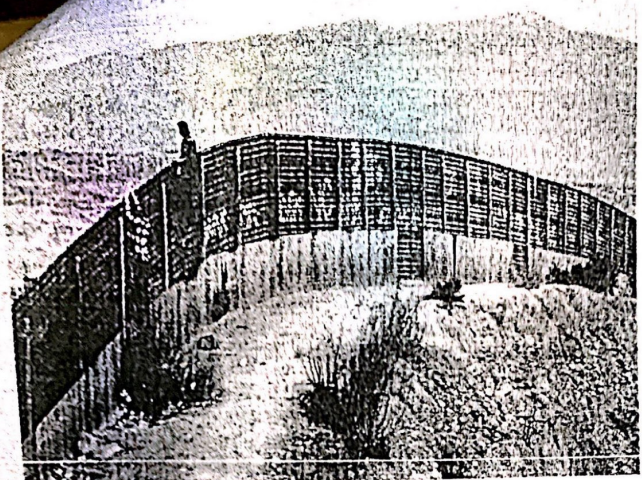
Looking again at Figure 2.3, we see reflections of the relationships between the international environment, the domestic society, and the political system. At the left of Figure 2.3 are arrows signifying inputs of demands and supports from the society and the international system. Inputs also come from the independent initiatives of political leaders and bureaucrats. The structures performing the political process functions convert these inputs into the policies of the government. These policies extract resources, distribute benefits, and regulate behavior. They are designed

to achieve broad goals, such as welfare, justice, and freedom—or control and domination—as well as special benefits for groups and individuals. At the right are arrows signifying outputs and outcomes, the end products of the political process, the things a government does for and to its people.

We call the outputs of a political system—its extractions, distributions, regulations, and symbolic acts—its policy performance. We have to distinguish among these efforts, the things a government does, and the actual outcome of these efforts. Governments may spend equal amounts on education and health, or defense, but with different consequences. Government efficiency or corruption plays a role in the effectiveness of politics. But so do the underlying cultural, economic, and technological levels.

Americans spend more per capita on education than any other people in the world. But their children perform less well in some subjects, such as mathematics, than do children in some other countries that spend substantially less. The United States spent enormous sums and many lives on the war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, as did the Soviet Union on its war in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Yet, both countries were held at bay by small countries resolved to resist at all costs. Because of these costly failures, they were weakened internally. The outcome of public policy is never wholly in the hands of the people and their leaders. Conditions in the internal environment, conditions and events in the larger external world, and simple chance may frustrate the most thoughtfully crafted programs and plans. Each country study in this book concludes with a discussion of the country's performance, describing both policies and their outcomes.

Finally, we must step even further back to consider the whole situation of political system, process, and policy, and the environment in order to evaluate what political systems are doing. Evaluation is complex because people value different things and put different emphasis on what they value. We will refer to the different things people may value as political "goods." In Chapter 7, we discuss goods associated with the system level, such as the stability or adaptability of political institutions. We also discuss goods associated with the process level, such as citizen participation in politics. Finally, we consider goods associated with the policy level, such as welfare, security, and liberty. To evaluate what a political system is doing, we assess performance and outcomes in each of



The wall dividing California from Mexico illustrates the input-output model of comparative politics. The two men are trying to escape from the poverty of the Mexican economy. The wall is part of the output of the American political system, intended to frustrate illegal immigrants. The two figures illustrate the point that outputs do not necessarily produce the intended outcomes.

Les Stone/Sygnma

these areas. We must also be aware of how outcomes affect individuals and subgroups in the society, of specific changes that may often be overlooked in presenting averages.

A particularly important problem of evaluation concerns building for the future as well as living today. The people of poor countries wish to survive and alleviate the suffering of today but also to improve their children's lot for tomorrow. The people of all countries, but especially rich ones, must deal with the costs to their children of polluted and depleted natural resources as the result of the thoughtless environmental policies of the past.

HOW WE EXPLAIN

Once we are able to describe politics with the help of the conceptual framework that we choose, the next task is to explain it. What we mean by explaining political phenomena is seeking to identify relationships among them. For example, we might be interested in the relationship between democracy and international peace (see Box 2.2). Are democratic states more peaceful than others? If so, are they peaceful because they are democratic, are they democratic because they are peaceful, or are they perhaps both peaceful and democratic because they are more prosperous than other states?

These questions show that we often want explanations to go beyond associating one thing with another. Ideally, we want to put many political relationships in causal terms, so that we can say that one political feature is the cause of another, and the latter is the effect of the former.

Theories are statements about causal relationships between general classes of events—for example, about what causes democracy, war, or welfare policies. Scientific theories are always tentative; they are always subject to modification or falsification as our knowledge improves. And theories need to be testable. A good theory is one that holds up after continued trials and experiments. Yet, it can be further confirmed or modified as we test the theory again and again. A well-tested theory allows us to explain confidently what happens in specific cases or groups of cases: these two countries have a peaceful relationship because they are democracies (see Box 2.2).

Researchers in political science distinguish between studies based on large numbers (large "n") and small numbers (small "n"). In large "n" studies, it is often possible and helpful to use statistical analysis. Such studies are usually referred to as *statistical studies*; small "n" studies are usually called *case studies*. Large "n" studies have a sufficient number and variety of cases to enable the researcher to examine the relation among the variables. Variables are the features on which our cases differ—for

A popular contemporary research program known as *democratic peace research* illustrates the pros and cons of statistical and case study research. It has been of primary interest to international relations scholars, who took the diplomatic history of the Cold War period and asked whether democratic countries are more peaceful in their foreign policy than authoritarian and nondemocratic ones. Many scholars in the democratic peace research group took the statistical route. They counted each year of interaction between two states as one case. With roughly half a century of diplomatic history involving a state system of 100 countries or more, they had a very large number of cases, even after eliminating the many irrelevant cases of countries that never, or rarely, had any relations with one another. Political scientists Andrew Bennett and Alexander George drew these conclusions after surveying the statistical research:

Statistical methods achieved important advances on the issue of whether a nonspurious interdemocratic

peace exists. A fairly strong though not unanimous consensus emerged that: (1) democracies are not less war-prone in general; (2) they have very rarely if ever fought one another; (3) this pattern of an interdemocratic peace applies to both war and conflicts short of war; (4) states in transition to democracy are more war prone than established democracies; and (5) these correlations were not spuriously brought about by the most obvious alternative explanations.

Yet, although much was learned from the statistical studies, they were not as successful at answering "why" questions. Case studies make clinical depth possible, revealing causal interconnections in individual cases. Careful repetition of these causal tracings from case to case strengthens confidence in these relationships. Thus Bennett and George concluded that the best research strategy uses statistical and case study methods together, with each method having its own strengths.

Source: Andrew Bennett and Alexander George, "An Alliance of Statistical and Case Study Methods: Research on the Interdemocratic Peace," *APSA-CP: Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section in Comparative Politics* 9 (1998) no. 1, 6.

example, "form of government: democracy or dictatorship." Statistical analysis enables us to consider possible alternative causes at the same time, accepting some and rejecting others. Small "n" studies permit investigators to go deeply into a case, identify the particularities of it, get the clinical details, and examine each link in the causal process. Most researchers recognize that these methods are complementary (see Box 2.2).

Large "n" statistical studies allow us to be more certain and precise in our explanations. On the other hand, we need the depth that case studies provide. They encourage us to formulate insightful hypotheses for statistical testing in the first place. They allow us to trace the nature of the cause-and-effect relations (sometimes called "causal mechanisms") better than large "n" studies. In this manner, political scientists may come to know not only whether democracies are more peaceful than dictatorships, but more precisely why democratic leaders behave in the way that they do.

We can also generate and test hypotheses about the causes and consequences of political change by comparing countries at different historical periods. Tocqueville's study of the French Revolution contributed to a general theory of revolution by comparing pre- and postrevolutionary France.⁴ Theda Skocpol based her theories of the causes of revolution on a comparison of the "old regimes" of France, Russia, and China with their revolutionary and postrevolutionary regimes.⁵

An example may suggest how you might go about theorizing in comparative politics, going beyond "just mastering the facts." It is well known that rich countries are more likely to be democracies than are poor countries; democracy and economic development are strongly associated. But there are many possible reasons for this association. Some have suggested that this relationship comes about because democracy encourages education and economic development. Others have argued that as countries develop economically their new middle classes or better organized working

Class are more likely to demand democratization. Yet others have seen that both democracy and economic development are commonly found in some regions of the world, such as Western Europe, while both tend to be scarce in the Middle East and Africa. This fact suggests that certain cultures may encourage or discourage both of them.

We want to understand the causal nature of this association, for reasons of both science and policy. Fostering economic development and securing democracy are two of the significant political challenges that we discussed in Chapter 1. It is vitally important that we understand how they relate to each other.

A work of Adam Przeworski and his associates examined the full experience of democracies, non-democracies, and transitions between them in all parts of the world between 1950 and 1990.⁶ Their statistical analysis led them to conclude that the explanation for the association did not lie in regional effects or superior economic growth in democracy. Moreover, countries at any level of development seemed able to introduce democracy, although economically developed countries are somewhat more likely to do so. They argue that key to the relationship lies rather in

the consistently greater fragility of democracies in societies at lower levels of economic development. Democracy can easily be introduced in poor societies with less educated populations. But in these social conditions it is often replaced by some kind of dictatorship. In rich countries, on the other hand, democracy tends to survive once it has been introduced. These democratic failures in poor countries produce a strong association between development and democracy. We still need to understand just why democracy is more precarious in less developed societies. But we are making progress in understanding the causal element in the relationship. We are better able to explain the relationship between development and democracy, as well as the failures of democratization in specific countries.

Comparative analysis is a powerful and versatile tool. It enhances our ability to describe and understand political processes and political change in any country by offering concepts and reference points from a broader perspective. The comparative approach also stimulates us to form general theories of political relationships. It encourages and enables us to test our political theories by confronting them with the experience of many institutions and settings.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- How do the main elements in the environment of a political system affect the way it performs?
- Why can't we compare political systems by just describing the different structures we find in them?
- What are the functions performed in all political systems as policies are made?
- What is the difference between outputs and outcomes of policy?
- How do we use theories to explain political events?

KEY TERMS

distribution
environment
extraction
functions
globalization
governments
inputs

interdependence
interest aggregation
interest articulation
outcomes
outputs
policy adjudication
policy implementation

policy level
policymaking
political culture
political communication
political recruitment
political socialization
political system.

process functions
regulation
structural-functional
approach
structures
system
system functions