

## Systematic Rooting of the Study of Political Systems; Comparative Study

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### Abstract

The study of political system comparisons stands as a major research interest for political science scholars because of its fundamental role in comparative political system analysis.

This research paper will explore the key elements which govern the comparative analysis of political systems by answering the main question: What factors determine the comparative study of different political systems? The analysis will draw upon various approaches and tools which are used in the worldwide comparative political system analysis.

The research will create scientific content to help readers and researchers and political science students specifically in order to understand properly the comparative studies of political systems.

The paper will examine both the political system concept and the comparative method alongside the main factors that influence political system analysis by following the comparative method stages. The analysis will focus on the political system environment and the key theoretical approaches that researchers and thinkers used during the behavioral development stage of comparative politics as well as the level and indicators of comparison.

This research aims to establish that the comparative method functions as an essential approach for political system development through system comparison to identify optimal political systems and it seeks to help students and researchers understand the alphabets of comparative political system analysis.

**Keywords:** Political Systems, Comparative Politics, Comparative Approach, Comparative Political Analysis

## Introduction

The analysis of various political systems through comparison represents a fundamental research method within comparative politics and political science as a whole because of its academic and methodological importance. From ancient Greek times until today political historians have utilized the comparative approach for examining political systems and developing their classifications. The father of comparative method belongs to Aristotle since he applied comparison techniques to study and classify political systems during ancient Greek civilization. Through his examination of 158 city-state constitutions Aristotle developed a system for classifying political systems according to their stability levels.

Over time, studies using the comparative method to examine political systems and phenomena evolved across civilizations and nations. Most early studies were concentrated in Europe before shifting to the United States during the behavioral phase, which is considered the peak of the development of comparative politics. During this phase, theoretical approaches were developed to facilitate the comparative analysis of political systems, and comparative research has continued to the present day.

Comparison functions as an experimental approach in the humanities and social sciences, serving as a critical method that contributes to the understanding and development of political systems and phenomena.

## Study problem

This paper explores the methodological foundations of studying comparative political systems by addressing the following question:

**What are the determining factors in the comparative political analysis of political systems?**

To address the study problem, we propose the following hypothesis: the comparative analysis of political systems is intrinsically linked to the context surrounding each political system.

## Literary Review

Numerous scholars have examined the comparative analysis of political systems from various perspectives, as reflected in the following studies:

- A study titled "Employing Approaches in the Analysis of Comparative Political Systems: The Systems Analysis Approach as a Model" by researcher Ramli Makhoulf was published in Academia for Political Studies, a journal issued by the Arab Policy Reform Laboratory under the Challenges of Globalization program at the University of Chlef, Volume 06, Issue 03, dated December 30, 2020. The study

examines the framework proposed by the systems analysis school in the development of comparative politics, highlighting how its ideas offered a viable alternative for studying and analyzing political systems globally. The researcher applies this framework specifically to Arab political systems.

- A study titled "Strategies of Comparative Analysis of Political Phenomena" by researcher Maghish Kenza was published in Al-Baheth for Academic Studies, the journal of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Batna, Volume 07, Issue 02, dated June 21, 2020. The study examines the comparative analysis of political phenomena in general, drawing on a wide range of theoretical approaches. The researcher also discusses key epistemological challenges in comparative analysis, the conditions required for valid comparison, the main strategies used, and the difficulties encountered in conducting such studies.
- A study titled "The Problematic of Studying African Political Systems: Reality and Prospects" by researchers Salama Saida and Ziani Saleh was published in the Algerian Journal of Security and Development, issued by the Security Research Laboratory in the Mediterranean Region at the University of Batna, Volume 07, Issue 02, dated July 1, 2018. The study focuses on the main theoretical approaches used to study and analyze African political systems, addressing the significant methodological and theoretical challenges they present.

The purpose of systematically grounding the study of political systems is to establish clear theoretical and methodological foundations for studying political phenomena. These foundations include: systematic control of research methods through tools and methods such as case studies, historical comparison, and qualitative and quantitative control; systematic control of research methods through tools and methods such as case studies, historical comparison, and qualitative and quantitative control; systematic linking theory to practice by making theoretical studies applicable to various political decision-making processes; balanced treatment of political issues by establishing underlying values and assumptions and ultimately evaluating their impact; standardizing comparative approaches and comparative analysis across time periods to reveal interpretive differences that help generalize applicable theories; deriving testable hypotheses and generating cumulative knowledge; and ultimately developing educational and research curricula to contribute to academic teaching.

Based on the aforementioned studies, the present research aims to establish a methodological and theoretical framework for studying political systems by focusing on the most significant theoretical approaches and perspectives, as well as the key factors influencing their comparative analysis. This includes examining the political system's environment and its implications, which, in one way or another, contribute to comparative analysis.

To verify the validity of the hypothesis from which we commenced, the study is divided into the following sections:

- Section One: A conceptual introduction to the notion of the political system
- Section Two: The concept of comparison, its levels, and methodological challenges
- Section Three: The factors governing the comparative analysis of political systems

## 1. Conceptual Introduction to the Notion of the Political System

The concept of “system” is inherently complex and has elicited diverse interpretations among scholars and researchers in political science, with no consensus on a single definition. This section presents the most prominent definitions of the political system, along with its characteristics, structures, and functions within society.

We will highlight the conceptual Introduction to the Notion of the Political System through the following sections:

- The Concept of the Political System
- Characteristics and Components of the Political System

### 1.1. The Concept of the Political System

The standard political system definition describes the governing institutions which operate within a specific state. The fundamental concept of political systems emerged during the initial development of political science when scholars used it to describe governance systems. During this period the constitutional school established that the political system consisted of three main institutions which included legislative bodies and executive powers and judicial authorities.

The political system according to Jean-Louis Quermonne consists of ideological elements and sociological institutions which form the government structure of a state throughout a particular time period (Nasouri, 2008, p. 384). The political system according to Georges Bidault represents the method through which authority operates inside the state while he links it to government as the official process for making and implementing decisions through legal procedures. Bidault defines the political system as a concept which covers every kind of state including both democratic and authoritarian regimes as well as developed and underdeveloped states.

Therefore, according to the traditional definition, the political system of a given country corresponds to its system of governance. This definition remains relevant, though some of its proponents have introduced developments to include other analytical components such as political parties, interest groups, and political ideologies (Tachema, 2011, p. 14).

The traditional definition gained wide acceptance during the classical phase of comparative politics, when the state was considered the primary unit of political analysis. The focus was mainly on the formal aspects of the state, especially its political institutions: legislative, executive, and judicial. Most scholars who defined the political system during this period were experts in constitutional law, particularly in Europe, before the study of political systems shifted to the United States during the behavioral phase of comparative politics, when the concept of the political system expanded, as will be discussed later.

The modern definition of the political system emerged primarily with the rise of the behavioral school after World War II, introduced by a group of thinkers and scholars who offered various definitions, which can be summarized as follows:

The political system is understood as a set of interactive processes and as a subsystem that interacts with other non-political systems, such as the economic, social, and cultural systems (El-Bishri & Others, 2023, p. 59).

Some define the political system as a social system whose function is to manage society's resources based on authority vested in it, aiming to achieve the common good through the formulation and implementation of policies (Odesho & Hatam, 2015, p. 21). This definition approaches the political system from a functional perspective, emphasizing the roles it plays within society. It is seen as a social subsystem complementing other systems, exercising authority granted by the society it governs through the development of policies, programs, and projects that serve societal interests and aspirations, as well as through the enactment and enforcement of laws.

David Easton, who introduced the concept of the system into political science, defines the political system as a set of interactions and roles related to the authoritative allocation of values, goods, and services (Al-Mashaqba, 2020, p. 42). According to Easton, the political system is a pattern of interactions and roles that performs a social function centered on distributing goods and services through the authority that distinguishes it from other systems in society. Easton's analysis focuses on inputs—demands presented by members of society—and outputs, which represent the system's responses to these demands, along with feedback mechanisms. This aspect will be examined in greater detail later in this paper.

Gabriel Almond defines the political system as a system of interactions that performs the functions of integration and adaptation in all independent societies. The political system exercises these functions through the use or threat of physical coercion, whether legitimate or authoritarian (Tachema, 2018, p. 97). Almond's definition links the political system to the functions it performs in society, drawing on structural-functional theory, of which he is a key pioneer. In his analysis, Almond focuses on the system's input and output functions.



Karl Deutsch, meanwhile, conceptualizes the political system as an information-processing system composed of specialized substructures and communication networks that perform communicative functions. For Deutsch, the political system is fundamentally a communication system capable of directing individual behavior, with the individual as the primary unit of political analysis. The political system depends on three key elements: information, the communication processes through which information is transformed, and the channels through which it flows—ultimately resulting in decisions and behaviors (Tachema, 2018, pp. 96-97).

Harold Lasswell defines the political system as the central political phenomenon through which the questions of “who gets what, when, and how” (Al-Mabhouh, 2012, p. 40) are determined. Lasswell interprets the political system in terms of power and those who wield it, grounding his concept in the notion of authority.

Professor Tharwat Badawi, in his book *Political Systems*, defines the political system as a coherent set of interconnected rules and institutions that clarify the system of governance, the means of exercising power, its objectives and nature, the individual's position within it, and the protections afforded to the individual (Al-Jassour, 2009, p. 365).

From these perspectives, it can be concluded that the political system is one of the most crucial phenomena in political science. It is understood as the organized structure through which state governance is conducted, consisting of a network of interacting institutions functioning in a systemic manner. This system manages societal resources, focusing on the authoritative distribution of values, goods, and services, and employing physical coercion or the threat of it—whether legitimate or authoritarian—in the exercise or non-exercise of power.

## 1.2. Characteristics and Components of the Political System

We will highlight the characteristics and components of the political system through the following sections:

- Characteristics of the Political System
- Components of Political Systems

### 1.2.1. Characteristics of the Political System

The political system maintains specific characteristics which separate it from all other social systems present in a state. The political system serves as the country's supreme authority which develops public policies while its three power branches execute political choices. The political system establishes fundamental state objectives while exercising the maximum power to influence other systems.

The system commands social members to follow its laws and decisions because it possesses legitimate authority which earns universal respect and legitimacy. This

legitimacy originates from its authority to control all laws and decisions and policies that govern its operations (Nuaimi, 2024, p. 28).

### 1.2.2. Components of Political Systems

Despite the diversity of political systems worldwide, they generally consist of several fundamental components, summarized as follows:

#### A. Political Institutions

These are ministries and official bodies that plan, develop programs, and implement political decisions within their legal and constitutional frameworks. These institutions include:

- **The Executive Authority:** Known in some political systems as the government or the council of ministers, depending on the state's laws. The executive is responsible for preparing and implementing public policy projects, laws, and government programs approved by the parliament or legislative authority.
- **The Legislative Authority:** Responsible for enacting laws and legislation within the state and overseeing the government and executive authority, which is accountable to it. The structure of the legislative authority varies between countries. Some adopt a unicameral legislature, with a single chamber representing the legislative body, while others have a bicameral system composed of two chambers to enhance the legislative process.
- **Judicial Authority:** This includes the collective judicial bodies, such as courts and judicial councils, responsible for reviewing the constitutionality of laws issued by the executive and legislative authorities. The judicial authority also enforces laws enacted by the legislative body by resolving disputes between natural persons (individuals and groups), legal persons (institutions and administrative bodies), or between individuals and administrative institutions.
- **Political Forces:** Referred to by some scholars as informal institutions, these are the influential informal political actors within the political system. They affect decision-making and the formulation of public policy. This category includes political parties, pressure groups, public opinion, civil society organizations, media outlets, research centers, think tanks, and other entities that influence decision-makers and political elites within the power structure (Nuaimi, 2024, p. 27).
- **Political Culture:** This refers to the collection of ideas, knowledge, attitudes, and prevailing political expressions within a given society. It is reflected in the organization of relationships among all active political forces in the system, shaped by the level of cultural awareness and the value-based influences on political interactions. These interactions include participation in decision-making,

understanding of rights and duties, legislative processes, policy formulation, and engagement with political authority and its orientations. It also includes the plans and objectives of political forces.

- **Political Interactions:** This refers to the dynamics arising from the interplay between formal political institutions and other active political forces within society. These interactions shape what is known as the political environment, which in turn affects all components of the political system (Nuaimi, 2024, p. 27).

## 2. The Concept and Levels of Comparison

We will highlight the concept and Levels of comparison through the following sections:

- The concept of comparison and the comparative Method
- The conditions and Levels of comparison

### 2.1. The Concept of Comparison and the Comparative Method

We will highlight the concept of Comparison and the Comparative Method through the following sections:

- The concept of Comparison
- The concept of the Comparative Method

#### 2.1.1. The Concept of Comparison

Definitions of comparison have varied, but most trace their origins to John Stuart Mill's definition, which describes it as the study of similar or analogous phenomena across different societies, or the systematic analysis of differences in one or more subjects across two or more societies. The purpose of comparison is to reach empirical generalizations by observing, monitoring, and identifying both similarities and differences, and by clarifying the factors that cause these variations (Qira, 2020, p. 03).

Comparison is a fundamental part of research in the social and human sciences, forming part of a broader effort to understand human behavior, which lies at the heart of these disciplines. Political phenomena are inseparable from social phenomena; therefore, scholars in political science adopt comparative analysis as a method for studying political systems and events. This analysis relies on selecting and measuring variables to explain the similarities and differences among political phenomena and states, making this approach the foundation of comparison (Boukleikha, 2024, p. 18).

In general, comparison involves measuring or juxtaposing two or more phenomena to determine their similarities and differences. It is a cognitive process that identifies commonalities and distinctions between social, economic, or individual occurrences or entities (Lectures in the Module of Research Methods and Techniques, 2022, p. 09).



Accordingly, the broader concept of comparison refers to an intellectual activity aimed at highlighting similarities and differences among phenomena. It serves as an alternative to experimental methods used in the natural sciences and is a fundamental requirement in the scientific analysis of any phenomenon. Comparison is central to verifying hypotheses and achieving the scientific goal of studying variation and similarity among real-world phenomena, as well as identifying the conditions and circumstances underlying these patterns of agreement and divergence (Boukleikha, 2024, p. 18).

### 2.1.2. Concept of the Comparative Method

Researchers employ the comparative method as a scientific technique to analyze social institutions and processes through methodical comparison of observed phenomena. The comparative method studies how similar and different aspects of social institutions and phenomena exist between different societies and geographical areas and within a single society throughout different time frames. The comparative method represents a research approach which involves studying multiple systems through the identification of their shared and distinct characteristics among selected variables (Salatnia & Djilani, 2012, p. 101).

The method relies on identifying commonalities between the studied phenomena as its fundamental assumption. Researchers establish conditions that make the method applicable for social and political studies by defining core elements which serve as the basis for selecting study components (Saati, 2014, p. 118).

Furthermore, the comparative method is described as the series of steps a researcher follows when comparing the phenomena under investigation. The aim is to identify the factors that account for similarities and differences between these phenomena, ultimately reaching a specific conclusion about the phenomenon's status within society. Such judgments rely on identifying parallels and divergences among the elements of the phenomenon, thereby establishing the foundations of variation and the factors of similarity (Majdoub, 2021, p. 47).

From this, it follows that the comparative method is a scientific research approach involving a set of procedures and techniques used to study social and political phenomena. It focuses on highlighting similarities and differences to produce more accurate results and is often considered the equivalent of the experimental method in the humanities and social sciences.

## 2.2. Conditions and Levels of Comparison

We will highlight the concept and Levels of comparison through the following sections:

- The conditions for Comparison
- The levels of Comparison

### 2.2.1. Conditions for Comparison

Comparative research in political studies depends on a set of conditions that must be met by the phenomena being examined. These conditions can be summarized as follows: Comparative research on political phenomena requires studying the phenomenon in all its dimensions, including its variables and surrounding circumstances.

This comprehensive analysis is only possible if the researcher has sufficient and accurate information about the phenomenon from all relevant perspectives, consistent with the nature and scope of the comparison. Reliable and precise information enables the researcher to conduct the comparison with confidence. In contrast, phenomena marked by scarce or incomplete data result in limited and ineffective comparisons.

Moreover, the researcher must select phenomena that show both similarity and difference; comparison should not be made between phenomena that are either entirely identical or completely unrelated. Superficial comparisons should also be avoided. Instead, researchers should focus on the most substantive aspects to uncover the true nature of the reality under study. Serious and in-depth comparisons ensure that the comparative method produces the intended results and achieves its objectives. Doing so often requires the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the phenomenon thoroughly and understand its dimensions, causes, and consequences (Majdoub, 2021, p. 48).

Comparisons must be constrained by the factors of time and place, meaning that the social or political phenomenon under study occurs within a temporal and spatial context that allows its comparison with a similar event in a different time and place (Qashi, 2021, p. 158). Researchers in political science should rely on standardized indicators to conduct comparisons, ensuring fairness and more accurate results. For example, when comparing two political systems or phenomena, both must be evaluated using the same indicators—whether economic, social, cultural, environmental, legal, or others.

It is illogical to compare two phenomena or systems using entirely different indicators, as this would bias the researcher toward one system over the other. The researcher must also clearly define and accurately use concepts and terminology to serve the study's objectives and outcomes. The cases selected for comparison should be appropriate and capable of yielding accurate and meaningful results; differences between them in temporal, spatial, or contextual frameworks should not be excessively wide. It is also essential to identify points of divergence in order to describe both the shared and unique characteristics of each case, thus establishing a basis for identifying study variables, constructing classificatory models, and uncovering causal variables (Abdelkader, 2008, p. 09).

### 2.2.2. Levels of Comparison

Comparative analysis operates at several levels, which can be summarized as follows:

- **Horizontal Level:** This involves comparing two political systems or institutions at the same level, often referred to as spatial comparison. At this level, the political system or phenomenon in one location is compared with its counterpart in another location at the same hierarchical level. For example, the central government of one country should not be compared with the local government of another, as central and local institutions do not occupy the same level. This approach helps identify similarities and differences, such as a comparative study of democratic transition in the Arab world between Algeria and Egypt (Daal, 2021, p. 63).
- **Vertical Level:** This level involves comparison along temporal or historical lines, examining a social or political phenomenon across successive time periods to identify changes over time. For example, comparing the Algerian economy under socialism with its transition to a market economy, or the Egyptian political system during the presidencies of Mohamed Morsi and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (Daal, 2021, p. 63).
- **Spatiotemporal Level:** A political system or phenomenon in a particular location and period is evaluated by comparing it to its equivalent system in a different location and period. The Egyptian political system under President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Algerian political system under President Houari Boumediene faced comparison along with their counterparts under the current leaders Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Two aspects of comparison exist in this method because it evaluates political systems laterally across locations and vertically through historical periods. Evaluating distance education prospects requires analysis of Algerian and French legislation before and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Majdoub, 2021, p. 51).

### 3. Factors Governing the Comparative Analysis of Political Systems

In the preceding sections, we addressed the definition of political systems and noted significant variations in how the concept is understood. Political systems worldwide also differ markedly based on their classifications and the criteria used for classification. This diversity naturally complicates and broadens the scope of comparison. Therefore, this section aims to examine the main factors that govern the comparative analysis of political systems, which researchers must consider when conducting such studies. These factors relate both to the comparative method—its stages and procedures—and to the nature of the political system itself, along with its surrounding environmental factors.

We will highlight the Factors Governing the Comparative Analysis of Political Systems through the following sections:

- Defining the Subject of Study, Phenomenon, or Political System Under Comparison

- Selecting the Level of Comparison
- Selecting Comparison Indicators
- The Political System's Environment

### 3.1. Defining the Subject of Study, Phenomenon, or Political System Under Comparison

This involves selecting the political system or systems the researcher intends to compare. Choosing the subject of study is a critical initial step in any comparative research, particularly in collecting data and identifying the relevant factors influencing the phenomenon under investigation, as well as defining the geographical scope of the political systems being compared. Selecting the units of comparison is one of the challenges facing researchers in comparative political analysis, due to the complex and multifaceted nature of political systems and their interaction with their surrounding environments.

Comparative studies of political systems typically follow one of three approaches:

- The first approach involves selecting a large number of political systems or countries, covering many states across different historical periods. This requires a high level of conceptual abstraction due to the breadth and diversity of the sample.
- The second approach limits the study to a smaller number of countries or political systems, often focusing on two to three cases and up to ten. It is characterized by purposive and selective case selection, such as comparing the most similar systems or contrasting highly dissimilar ones.
- The third approach focuses on a single country or case study. It is considered comparative when generalizable concepts are applied, allowing for broader applicability and extension to other cases—for example, comparisons across different time periods within the same system (Abdelkader, 2023, pp. 60-61).

### 3.2. Selecting the Level of Comparison

After selecting the subject of study—primarily the political systems to be compared—the next and arguably most critical step is determining the level at which the comparison will be conducted. This decision guides the researcher's comparative analysis and is closely tied to the initial choice of subject. If the researcher selects a single political unit, this implies a vertical level of comparison, meaning the system will be examined across specific historical periods. Conversely, if two political systems are chosen, the comparison is horizontal or spatial, involving a side-by-side analysis from all relevant perspectives. Researchers may also combine horizontal and vertical levels to conduct spatiotemporal comparisons.

### 3.3. Selecting Comparison Indicators

The selection of comparison indicators refers to the domains and dimensions through which the comparison is conducted, such as political, economic, social, cultural, legal, domestic, and international indicators, or others deemed relevant by the researcher for comparing the political systems or states under study. Defining specific, standardized indicators across the systems being compared enhances the validity and fairness of the analysis.

If indicators differ from one system to another, this may introduce bias or imbalance into the comparison. For example, if the focus is on economic factors, the researcher examines economic capacities and the impact of economic variables on the formation and sustainability of political systems. By identifying similarities and differences, the role of economic factors within each system can be understood, allowing an assessment of which economy has a greater influence on political system development.

Similarly, if the comparison centers on social factors, the focus is on social structure, composition, and relevant variables, comparing the social dynamics of system "A" with those of system "B." This reveals the extent to which each system is shaped by its social structure and how this contributes to its formation, continuity, and stability.

Therefore, the researcher must standardize the indicators used in the comparative process to ensure more precise and reliable results.

### 3.4. The Political System's Environment

The environment of the political system refers to the full range of geographical, economic, social, and historical factors on which the political system is built and through which it develops, while also influencing and being influenced by these factors. In comparative studies of political systems, researchers focus on a set of foundational elements that make up both the internal and external environment of the political system, including:

- Geographical Capacities
- Economic Factors
- Social Factors
- Historical and Cultural Factors

#### 3.4.1. Geographical Capacities

These include geographic location and its strategic significance, as well as the diversity of terrain, climate, maritime access, straits, and other geographical features that distinguish political systems and affect their stability. A state with a favorable geographic location, or one whose borders are artificially drawn in ways that do not align with its social and economic realities, is more likely to become a focal point of regional or international



conflict. Furthermore, a system's capacities may be constrained by factors such as large territorial size, rugged terrain, and heightened tensions with neighboring states, which can increase the likelihood of foreign intervention in its internal affairs (Boumzir, 2025).

### 3.4.2. Economic Factors

These include the state's economic capacities, covering its agricultural, industrial, and service sectors in all their forms, as well as its natural resource endowments—whether energy-related or mineral—and all aspects related to the economy, such as exports, imports, and factors that support its policies and economic sovereignty (Ibrahim, 2012, p. 444). The economic dimension plays a crucial role in shaping the political system, contributing to its stability, development, and growth—or, conversely, to its decline. For instance, economic policies adopted by political systems can have significant negative repercussions on the system and its stability. Although many African and Arab states possess substantial natural, energy, and mineral resources that could position them among the world's strongest economies across various sectors, the reality often contradicts this potential.

Thus, comparative analysis in this domain involves examining the economic dimensions of these systems by analyzing their policies across sectors, identifying areas of convergence and divergence, and determining which systems implement more effective economic strategies. This process helps identify strengths and weaknesses in the economic sphere relative to other systems and supports the reassessment of their economic policies.

### 3.4.3. Social Factors

These include the social components that make up the structure of the political system from various angles, such as religious, ethnic, sectarian, and tribal elements. The social structure directly affects the formation of the political system and the development of its institutions, as seen in the Lebanese case, where sectarian affiliation forms the basis of state institutions within a consociational democracy. Political elites in any system usually come from specific social, religious, or ethnic backgrounds. More generally, political phenomena are inherently part of social phenomena, since the political processes carried out by the political system originate from society (demands) and return to it (outputs such as public policy programs and decisions), all of which address society in its full diversity and complexity (Sajid, 2021, pp. 48-50).

Therefore, comparisons between political systems based on this criterion involve analyzing and contrasting the social compositions of the systems under study. This includes identifying areas of similarity and difference through social analysis of all societal groups, using quantitative data such as the percentages and proportions of different social segments, and interpreting the significance of these figures for the structure of the political system. One example is comparing consociational democracy in political systems characterized by sectarian pluralism.

### 3.4.4. Historical and Cultural Factors

The historical factor is one of the most influential elements in shaping political systems. It is not possible to analyze a nation's present or predict its future without examining its past. Political systems that experienced colonial rule, for example, are significantly influenced by that history in their legal, institutional, economic, and social structures—particularly in terms of the continued dependency of post-colonial systems on their former colonizers. Moreover, studying the emergence and development of political systems over time contributes to their progress by identifying past mistakes and seeking to correct them (Boumzir, 2025).

Historical factors, along with cultural elements such as religion, language, and identity, are among the most important considerations in the comparative analysis of political systems. Researchers must give priority to these factors when conducting such studies. For instance, comparing two political systems that were under different colonial powers can yield more accurate results, showing how colonial legacies shaped each system. Likewise, comparing a political system across two major historical phases can provide valuable insights.

### 3.5. Theoretical Approaches to Analyzing Political Systems

The field of comparative politics has seen the emergence of various theoretical approaches used by scholars and researchers to analyze political systems in their different forms. The following section outlines the most prominent approaches used in the analysis of political systems:

- Systems Analysis
- The Structural-Functional Approach
- The Communication Approach
- Institutional Approach
- Legal Approach

#### 3.5.1. Systems Analysis

Systems analysis is one of the most important approaches adopted in comparative political studies since the 1950s and 1960s, coinciding with the behavioral phase, which used the system as the unit of political analysis during that stage of the field's development. David Easton is credited with introducing the concept of the system to political science, following its earlier use by Parsons in sociology.

This approach is based on the idea that the system is the unit of analysis, where political life is studied as a system of interactions within a society that forms a behavioral structure. The existence of a political system depends on a continuous pattern of human interactions and relationships. According to David Easton, the political system includes all interactions within society through which resources and values are authoritatively distributed.

Based on this definition, Easton developed a dynamic and integrated framework for analyzing the political system, conceptualized as a cycle that begins with inputs and ends with outputs, connected through a feedback loop linking the two (Ramli, 2020, p. 51).

According to this approach, the political system operates within a social environment, and political events cannot be analyzed separately from other social phenomena. Influences from society shape the political process. Easton conceptualized the political system as a set of reciprocal interactions aiming to maintain equilibrium and stability through continuous adaptation. He described the system as a “black box” situated within an internal and external environment, distinguishing what lies inside from what lies outside the boundaries of the political system. This system is open and interacts with its environment through inputs and demands (Mujib, 2021, pp. 144-147).

Inputs are divided into two categories: demands, which represent pressures the system must respond to, and supports, which are resources the political system relies on. Outputs refer to decisions and the distribution of values, including both material and symbolic rewards. After outputs are produced, responses from the internal or external environment occur, known as feedback, which generates new inputs in the form of demands or supports.

This approach is widely used by researchers studying and analyzing political systems, focusing on the interaction between the political system and its surrounding environment, whether internal or external. By nature, the political system is an open system that interacts with and is influenced by the environment in which it operates. As a result, public policy programs, projects, demands, and needs raised by members of society all originate from the environment and enter the political system as inputs. The political system then processes these inputs, transforming them into laws and projects that are returned to society as outputs. Projects or demands that do not yet meet societal expectations re-enter the system as feedback.

These concepts together form the general framework of systems analysis, often referred to by some scholars as the systemic approach, since the relationship between the political system and its environment takes place within a system that interacts with its surroundings. Comparative political analysis of political systems, therefore, examines the extent of the system’s interaction with its environment through input and output processes, assessing how internal and external environments influence the functioning of the political system.

### 3.5.2. The Structural-Functional Approach

This approach is one of the most important methods used by researchers in the study of political systems. The concept of structural-functionalism originates from sociologist Talcott Parsons, who viewed society as an internally connected social system in which each component performs a specific function, and any disruption or change in one part leads to changes in other parts of the system.

Structural-functionalism is fundamentally influenced by the biological sciences, which emphasize the functions of an organism's organs. Its early proponents, including Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, likened society to a living organism in terms of growth, development, complexity, and decline (Kouri, 2023, p. 21).

Gabriel Almond is considered a pioneer of structural-functionalism in political science, particularly through his 1956 article titled *Comparative Political Systems*. Almond based his analysis on the core elements of structural-functional theory, defining the political system as a process consisting of specific activities and essential functions necessary for policymaking.

These functions include the expression of interests, where individuals and groups articulate their needs and demands; interest aggregation, which involves combining various demands related to proposed policies and linking them to available political resources; policymaking, which entails selecting the most appropriate option among proposed policies; and finally, policy implementation and adjudication, which involve carrying out policies and resolving legal disputes through the judiciary (Mostafa, 2023, p. 105).

Despite the diversity of political systems, Almond identified common characteristics that make comparison possible (Kouri, 2023, p. 22):

- All political systems consist of a set of structures that perform various functions.
- Each political system includes structures that carry out different roles and functions. The analytical focus, therefore, is on how political structures perform their roles, with emphasis on function rather than structure.
- Almond distinguished between two main functional categories: inputs and outputs. Inputs include interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication; outputs include lawmaking, implementation, and adjudication.
- Degree of functional specialization: Almond argued that no political structure performs only a single function. Rather, each structure performs multiple functions. For example, political recruitment is not limited to political parties but is also carried out by interest groups and media organizations.

All political systems are culturally hybrid, combining both traditional and modern cultural elements. The structural-functional approach, as previously discussed, emphasizes the functional aspects of the political system, in contrast to systems analysis, which focuses more on the interactive relationship between the political system and its environment. The structural-functional approach compares political systems based on the functions they perform, regardless of their forms or classifications, by examining the roles of both formal and informal structures and institutions.

Each structure performs one or more functions, which may vary or overlap depending on the nature of the structures that make up the political system (Zeid, 2023, p. 12). In the early stages of comparative politics, the focus was mainly on the formal institutions of the state or political system, with limited attention to the functions they carried out. However, the structural-functional approach shifted this focus toward functions, a criterion that researchers using this approach in comparative political analysis must follow.

### 3.5.3. The Communication Approach

Proposed by Karl Deutsch, this approach uses the same systems model developed by David Easton but explores the internal dynamics of the “black box.” Deutsch focuses on the input-output processes, emphasizing a single behavioral dimension he considers essential: communication. He argues that the flow of information into and out of the political system is fundamental to its survival and continuity. The efficiency and effectiveness of the political system therefore depend on the efficiency and effectiveness of its communication processes. Additionally, Deutsch’s communication model introduces the concept of the political system’s memory as an active element rather than a neutral tool (Al-Qurayya, 2023, p. 58).

According to Karl Deutsch, the political system is essentially an information management system made up of specialized subsystems and structures that carry out communicative functions. These subsystems include (Al-Qurayya, 2023, p. 59):

- **Reception Subsystem:** Responsible for receiving information from both the internal and external environments of the political system.
- **Memory Subsystem:** Functions as an archive and reservoir of information about the internal and external conditions of the political system.
- **Evaluation Subsystem:** Processes alternatives and makes choices, allowing decision-makers to select one course of action over another when addressing a problem or situation.
- **Implementation Subsystem:** Responsible for issuing and carrying out decisions.

In addition to these four subsystems, the political system’s ability to receive and process information and messages from its environment accurately and efficiently is essential, as are the communication channels within the political system itself. Ultimately, decisions represent the outputs of the communicative process that takes place within the political system (Leqraa, 2025, p. 37).

The behavioral process through which the political system handles information from its environment involves the following stages:



- **Filtering:** This initial stage involves receiving a large volume and intensity of information through specialized communication channels. The political system's ability to handle this flow of information is inherently limited.
- **Recall:** The second stage involves processing the information by classifying it through the retrieval of past experiences stored in memory, allowing for a more effective and quicker response.
- **Transformation:** This stage consists of converting information into responses by formulating alternatives and options. The time between receiving the information and issuing a response plays a critical role in the system's adaptation and capability development.
- **Feedback and Reinforcement:** This stage reflects the positive results communicated through feedback, indicating relative satisfaction, which enables the system to move forward and pursue new objectives (Leqraa, 2025, p. 38).

Beyond the aforementioned approaches, scholars employ a range of theoretical frameworks in the study and analysis of political systems, including:

#### 3.5.4. Institutional Approach

This approach characterizes the traditional phase in the development of comparative politics. It focuses primarily on the formal aspects of political systems and compares the institutions that make up the political system, both formal and informal. This phase was marked by an emphasis on the formal structure of the state and political system. Comparative analysis within this approach centers on examining political systems through their constituent institutions, treating them either as autonomous objects of study or as fixed variables used to explain other political phenomena. From this perspective, institutions define the political domain and clarify its boundaries in relation to other areas of society (Tamamghart, 2024, pp. 66-67).

For instance, one might compare the legislative institution in the Algerian political system with its counterpart in the Egyptian political system, examining their structures, roles within each system, mechanisms of access, degree of influence (or lack thereof) within the political system, and other indicators relevant to the researcher's comparative framework.

#### 3.5.5. Legal Approach

The legal approach is considered one of the key methodologies in the study and analysis of political systems. It emerged primarily during the traditional phase of comparative politics. This approach examines political systems by assessing the legitimacy and legal relationships among governmental institutions. It focuses on the extent to which both formal and informal government activities conform to legal norms—that is, the legality

and legitimacy of governmental actions—and evaluates whether these actions comply with or violate the laws regulating political life.

Central to this approach is the analysis of treaties, agreements, and contracts, including their parties, preparation, signing, and ratification. As a result, the legal approach is largely descriptive, assuming the existence of criteria, standards, and rules that determine the legitimacy of political actions. It is applied in political studies by focusing on the description of political institutions, outlining citizens' rights and duties, and assessing the extent to which leaders and elites adhere to legal frameworks (Azroual, 2024, pp. 59-60).

The legal approach views the political system as a structured set of abstract legal rules and values, protected and enforced by various official institutions and bodies. Comparative analysis under this approach is conducted within a legal framework, involving the comparison of the laws and constitutions governing political processes in different systems, and highlighting their similarities and differences.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study of political systems through comparative analysis remains a fundamental methodological tool which political scientists utilize to study political systems worldwide. Political systems function as the fundamental core of all political processes because they execute state management of political life through their control of political programs and projects alongside political phenomena. The comparative method serves as the essential foundation for analysis because it helps researchers identify both common features and differences between political systems in comparative political system studies.

Researchers need specific factors to identify similarities and differences which drive their comparative analysis of political systems. Researchers need to carefully select political units and systems for comparison in order to collect relevant data and information. The selection between horizontal and vertical comparison methods remains essential since horizontal analysis focuses on spatial dimensions through same-level political system comparisons while vertical analysis studies political system changes across specific time periods using identical indicators. The research framework allows the integration of horizontal and vertical methods through the evaluation of two political systems over several time periods.

Comparative analysis also depends on the environment surrounding the political systems under study, emphasizing geographic, demographic, economic, historical, and cultural factors that form the broader context of the political system. Furthermore, the theoretical approaches and frameworks adopted by the researcher play a guiding role in ensuring the study is properly directed.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the comparative analysis of political systems is not based solely on the immediate environment or its influence, but rather on a comprehensive set of factors that shape the comparative process, as outlined throughout this paper.

### Disclosure statement

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