
A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE FIELD OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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The aim of this paper is to sketch an overview of Comparative Politics and discuss the major analytical and conceptual systems under which comparativists conduct their research. It presents some of the basic problems one has to face in attempting to understand evolution of key overarching generalized dichotomies established by problem-solving and critical Comparative Politics (developed-developing and North-South).

Key words: Comparative Politics, development, South-North divide, poststructuralist turn in Comparative Politics.

The aim of this paper is to sketch an overview of Comparative Politics and discuss the major analytical and conceptual systems under which comparativists conduct their research. Inasmuch as development of Comparative Politics is largely driven by research conducted by scholars associated with the US academia, the significant part of the paper is devoted to critical analysis of mainstream US-led scholarship. The paper starts with a brief history of Comparative Politics as an independent subfield of political science. Further, I describe and assess the predominant analytical perspectives of mainstream US-led Comparative Politics: systemic functional approach, rational choice approach, and the four new institutionalisms. Drawing on Robert Cox's ideas, I suggest that mainstream US-led Comparative Politics can be characterized in terms of problem-solving theorizing and discuss the comparative method and its implications for problem-solving theorizing. Focusing on the concept of development and categories related to it, I outline essential challenges of problem-solving Comparative Politics and what it will take for scholars to address these challenges.

In the second part of the paper the discussion points to the poststructuralist turn in Comparative Politics. I argue that diverse poststructuralist scholarship has much to offer Comparative Politics in terms of overcoming the major setbacks of the problem-solving theorizing by questioning the way certain problems are framed and how these framings may entrench existing power structures. Inevitably, poststructuralist scholarship problematizes the role of comparison and generalizations: Do major analytical and conceptual systems of Comparative Politics travel well across diverse nations and cultures, across time, or across different individuals and social categories?

Mainstream US-led Comparative Politics

Over much of the 20th century, political science was “in many ways a peculiarly American discipline” [53. P. 987] and played a minor role in European academia and none in the rest of the world. In 1950, the American Political Science Association had amongst its ranks more than 5,000 political scientists, whereas there were only 50 poli-

tical scientists in the UK, 37 in Belgium, 30 in Canada, 10 in Netherlands, and 2 in Switzerland [136. P. 182]. In the countries of socialist orientation, political scientists did not exist until the late 1980s because political science was not recognized as an independent area of social science inquiry [123; 70]. Development of global political science as an autonomous field of study with relatively definite analytical boundaries started in the mid 1940s. Over the next decades, intellectual traditions of US political science diffused to other countries. Consequently, globalization of political science has in fact meant its Americanization. In particular, global political science inherited from US academia its idiosyncratic cleavages: inter-disciplinary separations between International Relations and Comparative Politics.

Mainstream International Relations scholars emphasize how international factors affect states and other political actors constraining or driving their actions and choices. The international realm is perceived as “a catchall category for all actors and influences emanating from beyond a country’s borders” [81. P. 5]. In contrast, the majority of Comparative Politics scholars focus on the study of institutional and structural differences of domestic politics. Scholars of Comparative Politics recognize that external influences infringe on domestic politics, yet their attention is more on differences in national responses to these influences rather than on these influences per se. A fair amount of research overlaps International Relations and Comparative Politics, and many scholars claim that the inter-disciplinary separation is artificial and misleading [113; 122; 81]. However, over the last decades the attempts to overcome the divide between domestic and international within the discipline go no farther than to launch an appeal to “reintegrate” the two major subfields of political science [111] and enhance the dialogue between them in the context of particular research questions (1), while the separation between domestic and international remains an essential part of the identity of the discipline and its subfields.

Comparative Politics became the major locus of theory building about domestic dimensions of politics in the US from the 1960s to 1980s. Richard Snyder argues that the most fruitful studies in the realm of political science of the 20th century were inspired, motivated, and guided by comparison [123]. Discussing the human dimension of comparative research, Snyder demonstrates that leading political scientists, such as Gabriel A. Almond, Barrington Moore, Robert A. Dahl, Juan J. Linz, Samuel P. Huntington, Adam Przeworski, David D. Latin, and Theda Skocpol, were asking questions encouraged by comparison and were looking for the answers through comparison. Tracing the history of Comparative Politics, Gerardo L. Munck indicates that although by the end of the 20th century Comparative Politics became “a truly international enterprise,” the dominance of “scholarship produced in the US, by US- and foreign-born scholars, and by US-trained scholars around the world,” still persists [99. P. 32]. The US academic community quantitatively dominates the literature in the field of Comparative Politics [100], which allows it to set standards of research.

Thinking Theoretically

Munck tells a linear story of Comparative Politics, distinguishing four stages in its evolution: the constitution of political science as a discipline (1880—1920), the beha-

vioral revolution (1921—1966), the post-behavioral period (1967—1988), and the second scientific revolution (1989 — present) [99]. Such an approach is very problematic, insofar as it is based on the notion of paradigms. Even though the major analytical perspectives of Comparative Politics are products of paradigms, they themselves are not paradigms by Kuhn's definition (2). This implies that even though a number of important elements in the major analytical perspectives of Comparative Politics cannot be synthesized, they are not mutually exclusive and incommensurable. They clearly are competing and can be compared by establishing testable differences.

As Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink rightly note, comparativists do not feel obligated to preserve “a consistent theoretical identity” or to strengthen an “ism” “in the paradigm trench wars,” and thus their research is often aimed at solving a particular problem rather than at testing a particular theoretical model [43. P. 404]. In other words, the choice of logic of inquiry is contextual and depends on the object under study: seeking to deepen their knowledge about a particular case, comparativists appeal to “a *mélange* of theoretical traditions” [74. P. 4]. In this sense, the vast majority of comparativists are pragmatic “opportunists” who use whatever tools that work best for framing and explaining a particular case [74. P. 46]. Therefore, most often scholars classify intellectual divisions within Comparative Politics in terms of long-standing research traditions through the agency-structure lens (3) or using the threefold classification offered by Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman that is based on rationality, structure, and culture [83].

While these two approaches to classifying theorizing in the field of Comparative Politics are useful for understanding intellectual divisions within it, I want to avoid generalizations and focus on the three particular analytical perspectives that, in my opinion, have the most significant impact on the general logic of comparison: systemic functional approach, rational choice approach, and the four institutionalisms.

Systemic functionalist approach. The behavioralist movement that arose in Comparative Politics during the late 1950s and the 1960s was intended to professionalize and universalize the discipline by grounding it in a scientific method. Supporters of behavioralist movement, in the words of Robert Dahl, were united by “a strong sense of dissatisfaction with the achievements of conventional political science” and “a belief that additional methods and approaches either existed or could be developed that would help to provide political science with empirical propositions and theories” [23. P. 76]. In Comparative Politics, behavioralist movement brought about a rapid shift from the study of formal political institutions and their interrelations to almost exclusive emphasis on observable individual behavior. It represented a turn from “naïve empiricism” to “naïve scientism” [58. P. 115] and is better understood not as a revolution but as “a recommitment to the visions of both the scientific study of politics and liberal democracy” [61. P. 1283].

The systems approach developed by sociologist Talcott Parsons on the basis of works of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim became an important source of inspiration for comparativists who were searching for more general and universal categories of analysis [88]. The central starting point for Parsons is to ask the question: What makes a society stable? He suggests a framework that is based on such concepts as

equilibrium, evolutionary universals, and identification of properties. A stable society, according to Parsons, exhibits the same characteristics as a stable biological system, and thus survives by fulfilling four “functional imperatives”: adaptation, goal-attainment, integration, and latent pattern-maintenance. As Nils Gilman indicates, contributors to behavioralist movement in Comparative Politics perceived themselves “as creating intermediate special theories useful for systematic empirical research,” but the vast majority of them were significantly drawing on Parsons’ systematic theoretical orientations [58. P. 117].

In a groundbreaking work employing Parsons’ approach, *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*, David Easton suggests that for analytical purposes political processes should be isolated from the social context and examined as if they are “a self-contained entity surrounded by, but clearly distinguishable from, the environment or setting in which it operates” [31. P. 384]. He focuses on tasks and functions that a political system need to fulfill in order to survive, and examines relations between the system and its environment. Following this logic, in his later writings Easton defines political system as “a set of interactions, abstracted from the totality of social behavior, through which values are authoritatively allocated for a society” [32. P. 57]. According to Easton, inputs (demand and support) stream into the system and are transformed into outputs (decisions and actions) that constitute the authoritative allocation of values.

Gabriel A. Almond describes reading Easton’s article of 1957 as “one of those moments of intellectual liberation, when a concept comes along that gives one’s thoughts an ordered structure” [5. P. 225]. Following Parsons and Easton, he rejects the concept of state and explores systemic functionalist perspective. Almond’s definition of political system replicates the one suggested by Easton: political system is a “system of interactions to be found in all independent societies which performs the functions of integration and adaptation by means of the employment or threat of employment, of more or less legitimate force” [6. P. 7]. However, while Easton concentrates on how political system reacts to challenges and maintains itself, Almond is more interested in examining functions that are performed by different structures within the system. The inner working mechanisms of the system for Easton are located in a “black box” and, as a result, remain largely invisible and undefined. In contrast, Almond pays close attention to activities that he distinguish as essential for a policy to be enforceable in a political system [8. P. 28]. In the study of political culture, Almond moves further away from concentrating on total systems and turns to empirically orientated research, exploring individual behavior patterns.

In *The Civic Culture*, Almond together with Sidney Verba survey five different countries to examine perceptions of political system and “the role of the self” in it in order to understand how these perceptions influence the type of political system and, particularly, association with democracy [7. P. 12]. On the basis of an extensive survey research, Almond and Verba distinguish three basic orientations toward political system — parochial, subject, and participant — that originate corresponding “pure forms of political culture” [7. P. 18]. They write: “A participant is assumed to be aware of and informed about the political system in both its governmental and political aspects.

A subject tends to be cognitively oriented primarily to the output side of government: the executive, bureaucracy, and judiciary. The parochial tends to be unaware, or only dimly aware, of the political system in all its aspects” [7. P. 79].

The most favorable to development of democracy type of political culture is a “civic culture” within which even those individuals who are active in politics still perform the roles of subject and parochial [7. P. 339]. Although Almond and Verba do not explicitly suggest that civic culture and democracy are causally related, their conclusions reveal that evolution of civic culture parallels development of democratic political systems. In other words, behavior associated with civic culture is linked to the capacities of political system to survive and effectively fulfill its basic functions, inasmuch as this behavior supports formation of democratic institutions.

Rational choice approach. Munck describes emergence of rational choice approach as “the second scientific revolution” in political science [99. P. 52]. Rational choice approach started its triumphant march in the field in the early 1980s and by the end of the decade became for some political scientists “the beginning of political theory” and “its culmination” for others [104. P. 291].

While supporters of behaviorist movement drew heavily on sociology, advocates of rational choice approach drew inspiration from the works of economists such as Anthony Downs [30] and William Riker [108] who demonstrated that individual pursuit of self-interest can explain significant elements of political life. The basic distinguished symbol of rational choice approach is the assumption that “individuals make decisions that maximize the utility they expect to derive from making choices” [99. P. 166]. Being driven by the logic of methodological individualism, rational choice approach reduces explanation of political phenomena to properties or interactions of independent individuals [142; 41]. In other words, it connects micro-level interactions to macro-level processes and events. Rational choice approach significantly changes the logic of inquiry but, unlike supporters of behaviorist movement, advocates of rational choice do not seek to redefine the subject matter of political science. As Munck indicates, “while behaviorists proposed a general theory of politics, which had direct implications for what should be studied by [political scientists], rational choice theorists advanced what was, at its core, a general theory of action” [99. P. 53].

James M. Buchanan argues that the rapidly accumulating developments in rational choice approach have transformed how we think about government and political processes [16]. Along the same lines, Sonja M. Amadae in her historical account, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: the Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism*, argues that the key to understanding the success of rational choice approach in political science is acknowledgment of the complex relations between “rational choice as a decision tool for government policy initiatives and as an explanatory device for predicting the outcomes of human action” [9. P. 28]. She discusses rational choice approach as a “regime of knowledge production” designed to provide quantifiably objective analytical categories and explanation frameworks for the US domestic and foreign policies during the Cold War.

Howard J. Wiarda argues that the majority of comparativists are unconvinced in the strength of rational choice approach. Although rational choice “explains *some* aspects

of *American* political behavior, the world is too diverse for *all* the world's political systems to be explained in this way" [143. P. 143]. Most advocates of rational choice approach within the field of Comparative Politics turned towards the institutional framework. They try to capture the diversity within politics by examining the ways by which institutions influence sequences of interactions, choices available to specific actors, structures of information and beliefs, and costs and benefits of individuals and organizations.

The new institutionalisms. Rational choice institutionalism should be distinguished from the direct application of economic rationalization to political sphere, inasmuch as it seeks to understand how different contextual and institutional factors influence behaviors and choices of individual actors [82. P. 125]. Using deductive logic to define and categorize actors and to specify their goals or preferences, rational choice institutionalism examines individuals and organizations as intentional and purposive unitary actors that can choose between options in order to maximize benefits [57].

For proponents of rational choice, institutions play a role of contextual factors that pinpoint the options available to actors and identify the costs and benefits associated with these options. Basically, institutions, according to the logic of rational choice, help actors to stabilize relations and maintain commonality, and thus are subsumed together with other structural characteristics that determine strategic choices of political actors and shape their "second-order preferences" [57. P. 177].

Barbara Geddes stresses that while none of these features is idiosyncratic in its own right, the combination of these features defines rational choice and distinguishes it from the other new institutionalisms, bringing both novel and fruitful theoretical results [57. P. 192]. For Geddes, rational choice approach premises on the assumption that preferences are stable only during the time it takes an actor to make its strategic choice, and thus the claim that rational choice approach presupposes static preferences is "a misunderstanding born of a failure to distinguish everyday language from technical language" [57. P. 182]. In addition, Geddes argues that insofar as rational choice approach does not set any specific constraints to what actors' goals may be, it can be applied to explain a behavior that is conventionally perceived as irrational under the assumption that "actors were rationally pursuing their own (peculiar) goals" [57. P. 181]. Along the similar lines, Margaret Levi claims that rational choice goes beyond rigorous utility-maximization assumptions and does not imply that individual actors are self-interested [82. P. 128].

In contrast to rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism examines how particular social systems transform, adapt, and adjust to the new equilibriums. Analytical tools of historical institutionalism are useful in determining the trajectory of evolution punctuated by institutional transformation. Importantly, historical institutionalism allows scholars to explain how particular institutions came to existence, what factors promote their stability and continuity, and what initiates their transformation through time.

Sven Steinmo believes that Comparative Politics can benefit from knowledge and insights about evolutionary processes coming from such disciplines, as anthropology,

linguistics, psychology, economics, and biology. In *The Evolution of Modern States*, he encourages scholars who subscribe to historical institutionalism to be more explicit about how they understand evolution of human social institutions [130. P. 9]. Steinmo's major theoretical arguments are grounded on the assumption that "similar variables can have very different effects in different contexts" [130. P. 11], and thus "random variation within complex systems can set development along totally new and unpredictable paths" [P. 13]. Consequently, Steinmo places change in the center of analysis. In his own words, rather than approaching history "as lurching between different equilibriums," scholars should think about it "as a continuous adaptive process," where adaptation is "an interactive, interdependent, and ongoing process between the individual, the population, and the broader environment or ecology" [130. P. 15].

Many proponents of historical intuitionism employ Peter Hall's definition of institutions: "the formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating practices that structure the relations between individuals in various units of the polity and the economy" [64. P. 19]. Hall examines institutional change in the context of "social learning" which he defines as "a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in the light of consequences of past policy and new information so as to better obtain the ultimate objects of governance" [65. P. 278]. Following Hall's logic, institutions are "historically specific and ontologically prior to the agents who occupy them" [14. P. 197]. Hence, institutions are conceptualized in the same fashion as in the framework of rational choice institutionalism: one of many "intervening variables (or structural variables) through which battles over interest, ideas, and power occur" [128. P. 7556]. However, this does not mean that institutions play the same role in the analysis of historical path as they do in the analysis of incentives and constrains for strategic behavior of actors from the perspective of rational choice.

In the words of Steinmo, institutions are "the points of critical juncture" because "political battles are fought inside institutions and over the design of institutions" [128. P. 7556]. In a similar vein, Ira Katznelson claims that institutions do more "than confer categories and organizations," insofar as they "embody asymmetries that assert a new structure for distribution of money, information, access, and other key assets of power in tandem with the naturalization of categories" [72. P. 297]. Consequently, although historical institutionalism does not challenge the assumption of rational choice that actors are rational and motivated by self-interest, it leaves a room for constructivist analysis (4) and questions about norms and identities. This bridges historical institutionalism with sociological institutionalism [135; 129].

The basic concept of sociological institutionalism is logic of appropriateness that is understood as acceptance of norms and practices by agents [93; 94; 95]. Proponents of sociological institutionalism define institutions as relatively stable collections of norms and practices that are rooted in "structures of *resources* that make action possible" and "structures of *meaning* that explain and justify behavior" [94. P. 691]. This definition implies that institutions are socially constructed and represent collective outcomes rather than a product of individual preferences [135. P. 386]. James G. March and Johan P. Olsen suggest that institutions join together diverse social constructions in a way

that “clear prescriptions” can be distinguished [94. P. 693]. Simply put, agents make choices according to the logic of appropriateness that correspond best with their identities.

In the attempt to give a new insight into the role of social constructions in the context of institutional change, Vivien Schmidt [117; 118; 119; 120] proposes to add to the three established variants of institutionalism a fourth one: discursive institutionalism. Much like proponents of sociological institutionalism, Schmidt sees institutions as a structure of shared knowledge that influence the way actors formulate their goals and by what means they choose to achieve those goals. However, she argues that institutional continuity and change are endogenously driven and focuses on the “explanatory power of ideas and discourses” in a dynamic perspective, raising the questions of how, when, and why ideas and discourses matter [118].

Schmidt findings lend support to the claim that institutions are not “the external rule-following structures” that set limits for actors as it is argued by the proponents of the three other institutionalisms [119. P. 4]. She criticizes rational choice and historical institutionalism for perceiving power as “a function of position” [119. P. 18]. She demonstrates that because of “the deliberative nature of discourse” agents can approach institutions as “object at a distance,” and thus can transform institutions by interacting with them [118. P. 316]. On these grounds, she propounds basic assumptions of rational choice and historical institutionalism arguing that even actors with a low power position are able to obtain power from their ideas [119. P. 18].

Schmidt’s approach also advances understanding of agency and structure offered by sociological institutionalism. As Schmidt explains it, while scholars working within the framework of sociological institutionalism focus on “how interests develop from state identities to structure national perceptions of defense and security issues,” scholars who subscribe to discursive institutionalism draw on a more dynamic conception of ideas that allows them to examine “norms, frames, and narratives that not only establish how actors conceptualize the world but also enable them to reconceptualize the world, serving as a resource to promote change” [119. P. 13]. In sum, discursive institutionalism embraces a more broad view of institutions and navigates a wider political environment than each of the three other institutionalisms taken separately. According Schmidt, actors seek to define their goals in a way that links generalized ideas and agenda shared by a particular slice of the population. In practice this means that in the process of policy making governments and political parties have to be able to bridge broad public discourses with narrow policy solutions.

The four new institutionalisms — rational choice, historical, sociological, and discursive — are fairly independent from each other. Each approach has its own context specific limits and internal biases. As Schmidt notes, all four approaches may be overly deterministic with regard to their central category [120]. Enthusiastic proponents of rational choice approach tend to see instrumental rationality everywhere, whereas their counterparts from the sociological institutionalism camp limit explanations to only socially constructed rationality. Historical institutionalists sometimes simplify explanations down to the path dependency. Finally, devoted discursive institutionalists might

fall into shortcoming because they see the influence of ideas everywhere. At the same time, as Guy Peters accurately points out, all variations of institutionalism are tightly bound together, inasmuch as they all “consider institutions the central component of political life” [103. P. 164]. In other words, rational choice, historical, sociological, and discursive institutionalisms are not conflated but neither are they to be mutually exclusive. There is a number of important borrowings and ongoing cross-fertilization between the four approaches. For instance, historical institutionalism creates links between deductive logic of calculation and culturally contingent and socially constructed logic of appropriateness, while discursive institutionalism allows scholars to bring agency into the three other institutionalisms. To quote Peters again, “[a] discussion of one of the approaches naturally [leads] to a discussion of some aspects of another” [103. P. 164].

Problem-solving Nature of Mainstream Comparative Politics Theorizing

The three analytical perspectives of Comparative Politics discussed above are best understood as approaches to the study of politics or competing logics of inquiry rather than as theories or methods, and thus should be treated as tools or means, rather than ends of analysis. The overarching intellectual agenda behind these analytical perspectives is to study the world we currently live in. To portray the issue in Robert Cox’s terms, these approaches accept the existing power structures as given and concentrate on examining the problems that exist within these structures [22]. As tools and means of analysis these, approaches are not designated to produce scholarship that will be “standing apart from the prevailing order of the world” [22. P. 88]. In other words, these approaches are not supposed to capture internal challenges of existing power structures, and thus cannot help a scholar to contemplate possibilities of transformation and propose admissible alternatives. Even sociological and discursive institutionalisms that embrace constructivist ontology do not have a critical potential to provide “a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order” [22. P. 90]. Consequently, mainstream US-led Comparative Politics can be characterized in terms of problem-solving theorizing. In the next section, I explore the use of comparison as a method and implications of comparison in the framework of problem-solving theorizing, focusing on analytical and conceptual systems under which mainstream comparativists conduct their research.

Problem-solving Comparison

As Giovanni Satori rightly points out, Comparative Politics as a study of politics in foreign countries does not make any sense [116]. Following Satori’s logic, it is not the subject (what politics do we study?) but the method (how do we study politics?) that defines Comparative Politics. The field is characterized and constituted by comparison as the major analytical orientation and explorative tool. Through comparison, scholars obtain evidence necessary for making generalizations that reinforce understanding of political phenomena. Consequently, comparison allows scholars to contextualize and classify political phenomena, build general theories by means of hypothesis-testing, and make predictions about the possible outcomes [78. P. 4].

Nevertheless, US Comparative Politics was initially developed in opposition to studying one's own country. This means that comparative analysis of politics was originally motivated by the pursuit of the US academic community to explain "the other" from the standpoint of enlightened self-interest and expand the understanding of "the self" through comparison with "the other." For example, Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell state that comparison "deepens our understanding of *our own* institutions", insofar as it permits uncovering "a wider range of political alternatives" and "the virtues and shortcomings in *our own* political life" [8. P. 21, emphasis added]. Elsewhere, Almond formulates this even more clearly, claiming that comparative analysis of non-Western systems has led to "an extraordinary enrichment of the discipline" because distinctive features of the West "stand out more clearly in primitive and non-Western contexts" [6. P. 165].

Arguably, Comparative Politics has a habitual preoccupation with alterity, tremendously impacting on the trajectory of its development. First, mainstream US-led Comparative Politics reduces the "non-Western" into an object of study and a source of comparable data sets. The field of Comparative Politics is delineated by comparisons to Western norms that are institutionalized, homogenized, and universalized by the US academic community. It is defined by variables, conceptualizations, and pervasive shifts in the approaches to the study of politics that have been developed by the US academic community and applied in a testing manner to non-Western politics. Second, mainstream US-led Comparative Politics reproduces as abnormal the voices of those who perceive their evolutionary trajectory and modernity differently, inasmuch as it assumes that the discourse of rational and measurable (quantifiable) neoliberal development is the only one meaningful in an attempt to achieve a certain level of equality and prosperity within the borders of a national state. As a result, the mainstream discourses of Comparative Politics become submerged in hegemonic and supposedly universal categories. One of the most illustrative examples of this is the idea of development.

Development and modernization theory. Early mainstream development thinking was dominated by the idea of modernization with emphasis on economic growth and democratic transition. Seymour Martin Lipset's extremely influential article *Some Social Requisites of Democracy* [87] is among basic modernization theory texts. This article is one of the ten most cited articles published in the *American Political Science Review* [24. P. 675]. Importantly, as Larry Diamond points out, "if we include citations to it as it was reproduced in *Political Man* (published the following year), we would surely find it to be one of the most influential political science essays of the past half-century" [24. P. 675]. Starting with a rather simple thesis — "the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances it will sustain democracy" [87. P. 75] — Lipset claims that modernization manifests itself through social changes that foster "the historic institutionalization of the values of legitimacy and tolerance" [P. 98], whereas economic development plays the role of a mediating variable and is part of a larger set of conditions favorable to democratization.

Another quasi-canonical text of modernization theory is Walt W. Rostow's book *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* that examines factors

needed for a country to reach the path to modernization and “take-off.” According to Rostow, take-off is “an industrial revolution, tied directly to radical change in methods of production, having their decisive consequences over relatively short periods of time” [112. P. 57]. He emphasizes that take-off is preceded not only by “the build-up of social overhead capital and a surge of technological development in industry and agriculture” but also by “the emergence to political power of a group prepared to regard the modernization of the economy as serious, high-order political business” [112. P. 8]. Consequently, for Rostow economic modernization and democratic transition are linear and inevitable and stand in a one-to-one relationship to each other.

The majority of Lipset’s and Rostow’s followers use the terms “development” and “modernization” synonymously, considering the difference between the two concepts too marginal to make distinctions. Such conceptual blending is extremely problematic, inasmuch as it leads to “a distinct notion of linear ‘progress’ as measured in terms of the industrialized nations’ standards” [137. P. 9]. While development aims at infrastructure, modernization is about “social organization and is thus more heavily interventionist and reliant on social engineering and planning” [137. P. 9]. Consequently, discarding “the world as it has been” and putting forward “the resolution to change” [11. P. 23], modernization theory absorbs the concept of development and sees it as a transitory period from a pre-modern or traditional to a modern society. Indeed, designations of the “modern” that shape modernization theory were created to match the standards of Western experience and Western evaluations of modernity, and thereby fail to describe the actual development of diverse non-Western societies and cultures. In such a framework, modernity became a discourse that forces non-Western societies to copy the aspirations and cultural manifestations of Western development. As Margaret R. Somers puts it, [modernization theory] deceptively concealed the truth of Western capitalist inequalities and racism (among other failures) and instead invented and help up for the rest of the world to emulate a fictitious model of freedom and equality for all, unified not by hegemonic political ideologies but by a democratic ‘political culture’ — itself defined as a set of psychological values committed not to any one set of political visions of the good but to political moderation and the procedural rule of law [126. P. 458].

Following initial widespread acceptance of modernization theory, sharp criticism began to emerge in the late 1960s. (5). In the 1980s, modernization theory was replaced by neoliberal conception of development. Neoliberal vision of development constitutes a set of diverse ideas that emphasize market forces as having strong catalytic influence on development process and restrict the role of the state to creating framework conditions for development. The quintessence of neoliberal thinking in terms of development policies is the ten points of the Washington Consensus which represent the agreement among the community of developed countries regarding reforms that should be carried out in developing countries. The Washington Consensus can be simplified to the belief that intensified globalization is itself development, and thus state intervention in economics should be limited because the global free market is both the means and the end of development. There is no decisive ontological and theoretical discontinuity between modernization theory and neoliberal thinking. As Uma Kothari and Martin Mignogue convincingly demonstrate, “neoliberalism is simply a reformulation of moder-

nization theory”, even though the two approaches “propound different roles of the state and the market and view the relationship between them differently” [75. P. 7].

A neoliberal view of development is built upon the same universalistic ideas of a singular Western-centric path to modernity as modernization theory. Francis Fukuyama argues in his essay *The End of History?* [55] and later in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* [56] that the neoliberal model is the only available paradigm of development. For Fukuyama, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the more general systemic demise of state socialism resulted in “the end of history as such: that is the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” [55. P. 271]. As Mojtaba Mahdavi and W. Andy Knight rightly note, Fukuyama’s logic of “the end of history” presupposes that “the West is the best and the Rest, lacking its own models of development, should and will follow the West” [91. P. 4].

The West versus the Rest. From the 1950s to 1970s, “the West” was subsumed under the category of the “First World,” while “the Rest” was divided on the “Second World” and the “Third World” (6). The concept of the Third World is related to the momentous anti-colonial responses to the remaking of the global politico-economic and social order after World War II. By the 1950s, Third Worldism was widely conceived as a source of political identification in the context of nationalist resistance to colonialism and the struggle for decolonization. As Peter Worsley notes, in the 1970s the Third World “was the non-aligned world” and “a world of poor countries,” where poverty, however, was “the outcome of a more fundamental identity: that they had all been colonized” [146. P. 102]. Worsley further argues that “the economic sense” of the concept of Third World was emphasized later as a direct response to the failure of the vast majority of the nation-states of the Third World to achieve the development goals set out between the 1940s and the 1970s [146. P. 103]. As a result, the Third World acquired a definition by reference not to what it was but by reference to what it was not. By the early 1980s, the concept of the Third World was used as a designation of diverse societies that faced difficulties in achieving the economic and political goals of either capitalist modernity of the First World or socialist modernity of the Second World [28. P. 13]. As Aijaz Ahmad notes, the First and Second Worlds are defined in terms of their production systems (capitalism and socialism, respectively) whereas the third category — the Third World — is defined purely in terms of experience of externally inserted phenomena. That which is constitutive of human history itself is present in the first two cases, absent in the third case. [1. P. 100].

During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Second World disappeared leaving behind “one hegemonic power, and one hegemonic ideology: neoliberalism” [28. P. 13]. The concept of the three worlds was replaced by the idea of one globalized world that is increasingly coordinated and homogenized yet divided into developed and developing countries.

The term “developing countries” is used in a broad generic sense to represent all countries other than highly industrialized societies that are referred to as “developed countries.” In addition, it presupposes a linear and uniform model of development. As

Marcin Wojciech Solarz shows, the adjective “developing” suggests “the existence of a scale, the extremes of which are defined by the adjectives ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘developed’,” and thus implies that all countries move along the same path [125. P. 108]. Although many scholars emphasize that “developing countries” does not refer to a homogeneous set (7), Solarz demonstrates that the term implicitly constructs “a favorable image of [‘developing’] segment of the international community as a whole” and insinuates a political message that the neoliberal path of free markets will eventually lead to peace and prosperity of all [125. P. 107]. Importantly, in terms of comparison the designation of “developing countries” replaces more controversial terms such as “less developed countries” that provokes the question: Less developed compared to whom or what? Inasmuch as the term “developing countries” has less negative connotations and allows scholars to rank countries along a continuum, comparison with the developed Western countries becomes less implicit.

The categories of the “developed” and “developing” are strictly divergent and provide contrasting formulation, and thus the diversity and heterogeneity within them is habitually disregarded or underestimated. The term “developed countries” becomes a substitute for the First World (countries that adopted entire neoliberal model of development), while the term “developing countries” is used as an equivalent to the Third World (countries that are neither fully liberal nor fully capitalist).

As Mark Irving Lichbach points out, Comparative Politics, in general, is “better at ‘knowing that’ than in ‘knowing how’” [84. P. 22]. For two-thirds of the people on earth, a positive meaning of the term “development” and the diversity of categories related to it has become only “a reminder of *what they are not*” [38. P. 6]. To portray the issue in Sara Ahmed’s terms [2; 3], the mainstream discourse of Comparative Politics designates non-Western entities as willful disobedient subjects who *will* wrongly (8). As willful subjects, non-Western societies are doomed always to be “developing” in comparison to the West. In order to become “developed,” non-Western societies have to subordinate their will to the Western rationality and emulate the Western model of development.

In sum, since the idea of development is confined by uniform frameworks, answers are ready before questions are formulated. Instead of exploring how a particular country evolves, mainstream comparativists tend to examine how this country fits into the dominant neoliberal path of development and end up categorizing this country as exceptional or backward if it does not fit. Then, they focus on how this country might be fixed according to a standard of neoliberal development and why it has not yet been fixed. As a result, mainstream US-led Comparative Politics becomes integrated into the project of universalization of Western norms and developmental experiences and contributes to exertion of hegemonic intellectual domination over non-Western societies. According to Syed Farid Alatas, the “political and economic structure of imperialism generates a parallel structure in the way of thinking of the subjugated people” [4. P. 24]. As Kang Jung In demonstrates using the example of South Korea, even non-Western political scientists end up trying “to fit the square peg of [non-Western] political experience into the round hole of Western theory” [71. P. 123]. Nevertheless, in mastering

and assimilating the mainstream US-led Comparative Politics not all non-Western scholars remain uncritical of it. Likewise, it does not presuppose that all Western scholars accept conventional boundaries of the field.

Critical Comparative Politics: Poststructural turn and the idea of South

Under the influence of the economic and intellectual revival of formerly colonized societies, new areas of academic inquiry that focus on examining the contestation and interconnection between Western and non-Western started to develop within the field of Comparative Politics. This challenges Eurocentrism, Western-centrism, and other modes of parochialism of mainstream US-led Comparative Politics and encourages scholars to question traditional canons of research and the routinely accepted or sometimes enforced boundaries of the field.

While mainstream comparativists seek to offer a better way to study politics within existing epistemological frameworks, poststructural scholars strive for transforming the way the field of Comparative Politics is constituted by calling into question the underlying analytical and conceptual systems that frame comparison. Poststructural turn in Comparative Politics gave rise to critical race [21; 54; 76; 107; 144] and identity studies [102], “third wave feminism” [17; 40; 98; 131], postcolonial [13; 18; 19; 20; 91; 96; 115; 125] and postdevelopment approaches [12; 35; 36; 37; 86; 92; 114] (9).

This extremely diverse and heterogeneous scholarship embraces constructivist ontological perspective and emphasizes the constitutive power and intrinsic forces of ideas and pays close attention to intersubjective meanings and knowledge structures that delineate and imbue political environment. Importantly, poststructural approaches share critical epistemology inspired chiefly by writings of the Frankfurt school, specifically its leading representative Jürgen Habermas, and French poststructuralist philosophers.

In *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* [62], Habermas argues that actors in society seek to communicate with each other in order to reach common understanding. He believes that actors seek to coordinate their actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals. In his later writings, Habermas develops theory of communicative action further by applying its central concepts to the analysis of politics [63]. Habermas’ major goal is to problematize mainstream meta-narratives and expose the tension between the efforts to rationalize institutional structures and the assumption that individual decisions might be open to free rational choice. Related intentions inform works of French poststructuralist philosophers. However, French poststructuralist philosophers are partly in agreement and partly in dispute with Habermas: Habermas focuses on forms of communication, whereas French poststructuralist philosophers emphasize the power discourses [10; 105].

For example, for Michel Foucault political processes, institutions, and actors are constructed through dominant discourses that are broadly understood not only in terms of language and ideas but also in terms of practices representing by language and ideas [46]. In his own works, Foucault explores the interplay of discourses and practices,

examining how particular social phenomena — mental illnesses and medicine [49; 50], human science [47], penal system [48], and sexuality [45] — are colonized and regulated by hierarchical structures. Foucault's "archaeological method" [44] encourages a philosophical-historical analysis that breaks through the structures of power. Similarly, Jacques Derrida's methodology of socio-linguistic deconstruction and Jean-François Lyotard's "skepticism of metanarratives" [90] inspire many scholars of Comparative Politics to reject formal and rationalist approaches to politics.

Drawing on constructivist ontology and critical epistemology, poststructural scholarship not only enhances the number of analytical tools available for scholars but also contests conceptual frameworks that are taken for granted by mainstream comparativists and used as foundation for their theories, including the idea of one universal modernity and development. Such conceptual categories as subaltern [60; 127] or Orientalism [115] are not intended to travel across different disciplines, nations, diverse cultures, time, or different individuals and social categories, inasmuch as their authors seek to produce not new meta-narratives but anti-foundations and contextualize their knowledge linking it to a specific location. Nevertheless, these concepts were mobilized for initiating useful discussions in the realm of Comparative Politics. The majority of comparativists inspired by poststructuralist ideas approach comparison with the objective of determining explanatory variables for a phenomenon under study, taking a "position of mild positivism" [59. P. 13], and use poststructuralist conceptual categories to create as new generalizing references. One of the examples is the concept of North-South fracture introduced to Comparative Politics by post-colonial and post-development scholars.

The concept of North-South fracture connotes the conventional ideas of development, inasmuch as it initially emerged as a replacement of an older ideological dichotomy between West (capitalist First World) and East (socialist Second World) and was first used to describe drastic differences in the international economic development in the so-called *Brandt Report* (10). However, poststructural understanding of North-South divide does not imply scaling regions and their inhabitants between levels of economic development as strictly as the concept of developing countries.

The center of the concept is South, whereas North is defined against it. The notion of South implies acknowledgment of the failure of neoliberal ideas as a global master narrative and "the mutual recognition among the world's subaltern of their shared condition at the margins of the brave new neoliberal world of globalization" [89. P. 1]. As a synonym of subalterity, South transcends geographical frontiers. Arif Dirlik points out that the geography of South is "much more complicated than the term suggests, and is subject to change over time" [28. P. 13]. For him, as a "metaphoric reference" South designates "the marginalized populations of the world, regardless of their actual location" [25. P. 31]. Similarly, Walter Dignolo argues that the South should be understood as "an ideological concept" that captures "the economic, political, and epistemic dependency and unequal relations in the global world order, from a subaltern perspective" [97. P. 166]. Thereby, the concept of South travels well across different contexts. Importantly, South overlaps with North. As Dignolo explains it, South can in-

clude “portions” of countries that are located in North, whereas North can be represented in South through political alliances [97. P. 184].

Within the poststructuralist epistemological framework, the concept of South allows comparativists to reveal interpenetrations between actors and existing power structures on local, regional, transregional, and international levels. In this sense, the notion of South is used to create a space for a context specific scholarship that examines experiences of the world’s subaltern without labeling them as abnormal. This scholarship moves away from homogenized dichotomist variations of “the West versus the Rest” that reproduce designations of generalized otherness. At the same time, it goes beyond the idea of infinitely “multiplied modernities” (11).

Insofar as the diversity within the category of South is treated in the context of social structures that are understood as power structures, it renders possible the overcoming the conventional history of development and the perception of linear evolution of a universal modernity without falling into the particularism of a set of endlessly pluralized modernities. Therefore, the subject matter of the scholarship inspired by the idea of South can be described as an entangled heterogeneous modernity or, as Dirlik [26; 27] puts it, “global modernity”. To this effect, South is meant to represent intertwined complex categories that point to ruptures and asymmetries in the construction of modernity, simultaneously including the experience of subalterns into the shared history of modernity.

Conclusion

Regardless of the perspective one takes on the development of Comparative Politics as an independent subfield of political science, there is a general consensus that Comparative Politics emerged largely as the result of a parochial focus on Western versions of modernity. The early development of Comparative Politics owed much to the efforts of US academia and was profoundly influenced by the ethnocentric biases and political values of US scholars. As Charles Taylor rightly notes, “the unsurprising result” of US domination in Comparative Politics was “a theory of political development which places the Atlantic-type polity at the summit of human political achievement” [133. P. 34; 134]. Mainstream US-led Comparative Politics is focused on problem solving theorizing, and thus is not capable of overcoming its own ethnocentrism and moving far beyond the study of foreign countries. Nevertheless, comparison as an analytical perspective is a comprehensive and powerful tool of analysis and is always open to new approaches. This represents the key strength of Comparative Politics as a field of inquiry.

Comparative Politics has undergone important theoretical and normative transformations in recent decades, and its scope has been widening through the introduction of new approaches. I contend that the most promising path forward for Comparative Politics is the dialogue between problem-solving and critical theorizing. Critical post-structuralist scholarship revamps and rejuvenates Comparative Politics, insofar as it allows comparativists to reevaluate overarching analytical frameworks and generalizations of problem solving theorizing by capturing the great diversity and complexity of relations of power, influence, and authority existing in the modern world.

NOTES

- (1) Rapidly growing literature on the role of international factors in the process of democratizations is a case in point [68; 73; 81; 109; 122; 145]. Another interesting example of inter-disciplinary dialogue and rivalry is studies that examine how the international and domestic realms intersect and interact in very peculiar social, cultural, economic, and political settings of the European Union [66; 67; 106; 110; 111].
- (2) According to Thomas Kuhn, a paradigm is an essential, grand theory that guides intellectual inquiry and the accumulation of knowledge. In other words, paradigms constitute fundamental assumptions on which a solution to a problem is attempted, as well as the tacit means of communicating existing knowledge to new members of the community. Kuhn argues that every paradigm establishes “incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practicing science in it” [77. P. 4]. Accordingly, knowledge developed under one paradigm would be “incommensurable” with knowledge that belongs to another paradigm, and thus no common criterions could be established for assessing and comparing theories [77. P. 5].
- (3) Agency is understood as the capacity of actors to function independently from externally imposed constraints. In other words, “agency is the power of human beings to make choices and to impose those choices on the world, rather than the way around” [85. P. 76]. As Daniel M. Green points out, agency contains “discursively produced social spaces, continually being renegotiated through a myriad of complex transactions” [59. P. 257]. In his opinion, “if agency is ignored, agents can be simply reduced to structure in explanation, leaving out the obvious possibilities for interplay between the two” [59. P. 44]. Consequently, structure refers to a central framework or context within which agents make choices and take actions. In this sense, structure might designate features of political system and institutions that facilitate or constrain choices and actions of an actor.
- (4) In the framework of International Relations, constructivism constitutes an independent body of theory [15; 42; 101; 132; 140; 141; 142]. In contrast, in Comparative Politics constructivism is represented by “eclectic scholars who at times make compelling arguments about discourses, language, ideas, culture, or knowledge relevant to specific thematic areas, “yet do not “use the term constructivism to refer to their own work” [43. P. 404—405].
- (5) The critique of modernization theory is too massive to be covered in this paper. Among the most significant and influential discussions of the late 1960s and the early 1970s are those that might be subsumed under the umbrella of dependency theory [52; 29; 138; 139] and those that were inspired by Samuel Huntington’s book *Political Order in Changing Societies* [69].
- (6) The actual idea of the three worlds as designations of specific geographical and socio-political locations is often associated with an article written by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952. In his article, Sauvy uses the French concept of *tiers monde* to describe the social, economic, and political condition of those nation-states not formally aligned with the capitalist bloc (“First World” centered on the US) or the socialist bloc (“Second World” centered on the USSR) during the Cold War.
- (7) Considering GNI per capita, the World Bank uses the term “developing countries” for low-income countries, lower-middle income countries, and upper-middle income countries.
- (8) Sara Ahmed [2; 3] explores the ways in which will and willfulness are socially reconciled, situated, negotiated, and constructed. Ahmed describes willful subject as a figure who wills wrongly or wills too much, and thus its will is perceived a sign of deviance. Willfulness becomes charge made by some against others. Ahmed writes: “Some forms of political volition are understood as willful because they pulse with desire, a desire that is not directed in the right way; a willful will would have failed to acquire the right form, failed to have coordinated and unified disparate impulses into a coherent intent” [2. P. 75]. Consequently, according to Ahmed, willfulness can be a product of both intentional and unintentional desire.

- (9) As it was already mentioned, many scholars of Comparative Politics do not “maintain a consistent theoretical identity” [43. P. 404] and there is communication and active cross-fertilization of ideas, viewpoints, and issues between different areas of research within the subfield. The categories I use are not mutually exclusive, oppositional, disjoint, or competing. Thus, I place diverse poststructuralist scholars into the categories that they might not use themselves.
- (10) The *Brandt Report* is a report released in 1980 by the Independent Commission on International Development Issues of the World Bank chaired by Willy Brandt. The authors of the report point out that wealthy countries are located mainly in North hemisphere, while poor countries are located in South.
- (11) The concept of the pluralization of modernity (“multiple modernities”) is developed by the sociologist Shmuel N. Eisenstadt [33; 34]. According to him, there are other unique modernities (for example, Asian modernity/modernities) that differ fundamentally from the Western modernity. Eisenstadt’s ideas are criticized from a number of different perspectives by European sociologists [51; 79; 80; 121].

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КРИТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ПОЛЯ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТОЛОГИИ

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Представленная статья содержит обзорное исследование классической сравнительной политологии и анализирует основные методологические и концептуальные системы, на основе которых политологи осуществляют свои исследования. Автор поднимает основные проблемы, необходимые для понимания эволюции ключевых дихотомий сравнительной политологии (по линиям развитые — развивающиеся страны и Север — Юг).

Ключевые слова: сравнительная политология, политическое развитие, раскол между Севером и Югом, постструктуралистский поворот в сравнительной политологии.