

Theories and Methods of Comparative Studies on Western Bureaucracies

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Supported by National Social Science Fund of China (No.07BZZ019).

Received 15 September 2013; accepted 1 February 2014

Abstract

When conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies, the first and foremost task for researchers to undertake is to seek a suitable researching paradigm, laying out the perspective as well as the starting point. Then, with researching approaches of institutionalism and structural functionalism, researchers should figure out the organizational structures and power relations of bureaucratic systems in those countries under study. Next, an exploration into the historical contexts in which these bureaucratic systems evolve is also of great significance, since this investigation will offer us valuable insights into the political cultures of these countries and the impacts brought by political cultures on the development of western bureaucracies. With such a researching frameworks, researchers are able to formulate a new theoretical model when conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies.

Key words: Researching paradigm; Institutionalism; Structural functionalism; Historical cultures; Typology

TAN Rong, MA Zhengyi (2014). Theories and Methods of Comparative Studies on Western Bureaucracies. *Canadian Social Science*, 10(1), 1-9. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720141001.3977>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720141001.3977>

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the writer's experiences and reflections in conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies, and the primary purpose of the paper is to make an inquiry into the theories, methods, perspectives, researching areas and researching framework that are concerned in the study process. Though the writer has been engaging in comparative political studies for many years, most of the researching work, admittedly, is done without a sound theoretical framework, which is far from enough for undertaking a further and deeper study, particularly when the issues involved are fairly complicated and inherently ambiguous.

The paper aims to investigate the paradigms employed by researchers when conducting comparative studies, and examine into several popular researching approaches like institutionalism, structural functionalism, historical analysis, political culture as well as typology. These theories and methods are also what the writer hopes to adopt and apply when conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies.

1. THE PARADIGM

As one of the important researching fields in comparative politics, the comparative study on western bureaucracies is also at the core of comparative public administration. Therefore, researchers should be fully aware of the fundamentality in seeking proper theories and methods when undertaking comparative studies on western bureaucracies.

As for researching design, the renowned American sociologist Babbie¹ suggests that two aspects should

¹ Earl Babbie, the renowned American sociologist, has taught in Harvard, University of Hawaii, UC Berkeley and Chapman University. Hailed as the one of the classics in social researching methods around the world, the book *The Practice of social Research*

be taken into serious considerations: “First, you must specify as clearly as possible what it is you want to find out; second, you must determine the best way to do it. A properly framed question contains the answer” (2004, p.87). In the eyes of the German scholar Klaus von Beyme, “empirical studies can not be carried out without theories. And social facts will always remain boundless and chaotic without thought-provoking theories” (1990, p.244). Serving as the foundations for conducting researching, theories and methods are considered by Babbie as “paradigms”, the theoretical framework and perspective for researching, namely the “points from which to view” (2004, p.43). Babbie argues that paradigms can provide the ways of looking, and can “shape what we see”; moreover, paradigms can “cause us to see social behavior in one way”; therefore, they “underline social theories and inquiries”, serving as “the fundamental models or frames of references we use to organize our observation and reasoning” (2004, pp.33-34). Theories are created, with which researchers wish to explain what they see. Theories are also “systemic” and “interrelated” statements on social life, which “provide ways of looking at life, and are grounded in sets of assumptions about the nature of reality”, helping us “make sense of observed patterns”. In general, deduction and induction are major tools utilized for formulating theories, which can help “flesh out and specify paradigms”. In contrast, concepts are “basic building blocks of theory” (Babbie, 2004, pp.33-34). Babbie contends that “conceptualization” refers to “the process of coming to an agreement”. Moreover, “concepts”, devices created merely for the purpose of filling and communication, are the “mutual agreement from mental images” of researchers (2004, p.122). Being an integral part of researching, clarifications on concepts are closely related to the nature and scope of study. Thus, no study can proceed without finishing this job. Undoubtedly, scholars and researchers from different countries put a lot effort in doing so.

Comparative studies on western bureaucracies that the writer engages in can be categorized as a combination of case study, comparative study and qualitative analysis. Starting from the definition on concepts, the study will first specify the researching perspective, entry point and research category. Furthermore, a preliminary theoretical framework, which determines the direction of the study, will be laid out. Based on the established theoretical framework, the study will then make an investigation into the desirable researching methods, with which the writer is able to analyze and assess the literature available, offering her generalizations, explanations and conclusions on what she has found, finally formulating the researching model and new theoretical framework.

was widely used as a textbook in universities across United States and was translated into several foreign languages.

2 . M E T H O D O L O G Y O F I N S T I T U T I O N A L I S M A N D S T R U C T U R A L F U N C T I O N A L I S M

Erik Allardt, the Finnish sociologist, advocates that “political science takes institutional studies as a major part” (as cited in Von Beyme, 1990, p.71). In the early days, political studies in western countries focus on formal institutions and structures. Political scientists tend to make descriptions on constitutions, laws and governmental organizations, laying much stress on rules, procedures and formal governmental institutions. Structuralism, legalism and functionalism are dominant researching approaches adopted by scholars for political studies. However, the 1950s and 1960s saw the thriving of behaviorism, which drew much attention from political scientists, and gradually took the place of traditional institutionalism as the fashionable and prevalent researching method.

Interestingly, as a response to “under-socialized propensity” (Marsh & Stoker, 2006, p.88) in academic research, the late years of 1980s witnessed the rebirth of “institutionalism”, which, equipped with a new and widened visual field, attached much importance to the values, power relations of institutions and “the organization of political life” (March & Olsen, 1984, p.747). Compared with traditional institutionalism, new institutionalism is highly theorized, with its researching focus laid not only on formal institutions and organizational structures, but also on informal rules in political life. Some scientists greet the revival of institutionalism with proclamations like “return to the state”, since new institutionalism “not only provokes semantic adaptations on the part of many scholars, but also “draws attention to institutional and particularly administrative history” (Almond, 1988, p.872). Meanwhile, new institutionalism rejuvenates the studies on normative questions, which are not confined into formal regulations and laws as what political scientists commonly did in the past, but are closely linked with conceptions of “the public interest” and “civil science” (Heady, 2001 p.11; Landu, 1968, p.74).

Based on the contents, theories and methods employed in their studies, political scientists in western countries classify new institutionalism into several types as the following: normative institutionalism, historical institutionalism, empirical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, international institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and network institutionalism. In her comparative studies on western bureaucracies, the writer is inclined to take the first three types, namely normative institutionalism, historical institutionalism, empirical institutionalism, as the favorable researching approaches. The writer hopes to explain the values and power relations embodied by institutions while investigating their structures; interpreting the developments and operations of institutions in practice while exploring into their historical origins.

Under the theoretical framework of new institutionalism, institution and structure are indispensable elements to political studies. Talcott Parsons, the well-known American sociologist, believes that institution is “the quest for structuralization” and “a set of equipments for social actors”. Compared with roles, structures are much more stable and complicated. “The quest for structuralization gets its universally acknowledged legitimacy in investigating social system as a whole”. (Von Beyme, 1990, pp.71-72). Therefore, instead of adopting expressions like “institution”, many western political scientists often use terms which have similar meanings. Expressions like structures, functions and roles are frequently used. With the theoretical framework of structural functionalism, their studies are often carried out with a combination of institutional, historical and ideological analysis. Understandably, in the theoretical contexts of structural functionalism, the meanings of structures and functions are almost the same as that of institutions and activities. In other words, activities are conducted through institutions, and functions are carried out through structures.

In general, normative analysis is what structural functionalists favor. They lay more stress on “institutionalized” behaviors, tending to discover norms and values by analyzing institutions and roles so that “a mode for order” (Von Beyme, 1990, p.93) can be found out.

As early as 1940s and 1950s, some scholars of comparative politics expressed their dissatisfactions on traditional institutionalism, complaining that, in political studies, “scientific methods” are not fully employed. Not surprisingly, these scholars prefer to researching tools like structural functionalism and political system analysis; and concepts like consensus, actors, rationality, and socialization are taken into serious considerations (Brown, et al., 1968, p.1). In the 1960s and 1970s, Gabriel A. Almond, the well-known scholar in comparative political studies, expressed similar viewpoints systemically and thoroughly in his book *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*. Almond incorporates various political roles and the interactions among them into a certain political system, believing that political system is “given types of cultural and structural arrangements from its past” (Almond & Bingham Powell, 1978, p.75). He also claims that “stability in the political culture over time will be influenced by continuity in the socialization process across agents and by those agents over time” (Almond & Bingham Powell, 1978, p.81).

In undertaking comparative studies on western bureaucracies, the writer will observe the ideas and principles of structural functionalism. Political system of a country is considered as a whole, from which the administrative branch will be picked up and studied as a significant and relatively larger system. The political system of a country is also understood as the foundation for the survival and operation of the administrative

system, which, obviously, interacts with the whole political system. However, the environment under which the administrative system survives and operates comprises of another system, which is even larger than political system, namely, the social system of a country. Thus, besides the political system, the social system of a country is also the precondition for administrative institutions to function normally. Needlessly, administrative system and social system also interacts with each other, and relations between them are rather complex. In accordance with the theoretical framework and researching methods of institutionalism and structural functionalism, what the writer aims to achieve in her studies is to clarify the intricate relations between administrative institutions, and the political, social system of a country, putting forward the new theoretical model eventually.

3. HISTORY AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Political Culture Study

In the book *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*, Almond defines political culture as “a set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time. This political culture has been shaped by the nation’s history and by the ongoing processes of social, economic, and political activity”, and he believes that “political culture shapes the actions of individuals performing political roles throughout the political system” (Almond & Bingham Powell, 1978, p.25). Moreover, political culture can also be understood as “the political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings and evaluations of its population” (Almond & Verba, 1989, p.13). Lawrence C. Mayer, another American scholar in comparative politics, regards political culture as “dispositional attributes”, “the internal state of individuals that predisposes them to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli”, and “these attributes become part of the political culture when they refer to political objects and when they are so widely held among a population that they might be called typical”. Political culture is embodied concretely as “attitudes toward authority; beliefs or conceptions of what are true; an ideological or pragmatic approach to decision making; feelings of attachment, rejection, trust, or distrust; knowledge and information; and basic values” (Mayer & Burnett, 1996, p.14). Lucian W. Pye, the American specialist on eastern Asian studies, maintains that political culture refers to a set of subjective political factors systemically established in the political system of a country, and it conveys the tradition of the society as well as the morality of public organizations. Political culture is the reflection of the likes and dislikes of the citizens; the political emotions of the masses; principles and ways of political leaders in doing things. Therefore, political culture ensures that political behaviors of individuals are conducted in certain

ways, and that political systems are value-oriented, functioning with a certain degree of continuity (Pye & Verba, 1965, p.513). For American political scientist Ronald F. Inglehart, political culture can be defined as the peculiar historical experiences of a nation, and the knowledge of people acquired by consistent learning in the early days. Moreover, political culture is a durable cultural factor, which provides its people a distinctive and stable cultural mode. Undoubtedly, the peculiarity of this cultural mode will be influential in affecting behavioral modes (Wang, 2000, p.171). In other words, the unique cultural mode will determine the preferences and attitudes of people towards politics and political system. And most importantly, it will affect the perceptions of people on the roles they can play in such a political system.

As a challenge to the dominance of behaviorism, since 1950s, culture was introduced into political studies, evoking widespread discussions among scholars. The increasing importance of social anthropology in social science serves as the wake-up call for political scientists to realize that cultural experiences of each country should be taken into account, and the impact political culture exerts on national political attitudes should be stressed. Thus, political scientists link culture with other concepts, and consider culture as a system of values and guiding ideologies (Von Beyme, 1990, p.160). Eventually, in the studies on "institutions", culture was introduced and regarded as the environmental factor for institutions to survive. For instance, in comparative political studies, Almond integrates the theoretical framework of structural functionalism with political culture, political socialization and political development, believing that social structure and political culture are constraining force for political development. By investigating social structure and political culture, different political systems can be explored and explained, and a new theoretical mode can be put forward. Not long after David Easton puts forward the system theory, Almond reiterates the term of "political system" in his book *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*. Almond argues that "political system" is "an ecological concept", that the birth of the concept of political system enhances the awareness of researchers in emphasizing the influences brought by environmental factors on politics, public policies, and the range of political activities in a society. Thus, researchers begin to lay much stress on the interdependence and interaction between "political system" and environment (Almond & Powell, 1978, pp.4-9).

Political systems of different countries demonstrate that each type of political culture is closely related to a certain kind of political structure. "The compatibility between political culture and political structure is the prerequisite to maintain the stability of political institutions; otherwise, political institutions will be in danger or does not work regularly". Researching approaches of rationality, culture and structure are

employed simultaneously in the study from Max Weber, who analyzes religious ethics and normative order with a cultural perspective, aiming to reveal the "irrationality that drove the rationality that turned irrational". In the meanwhile, Max Weber investigates the hierarchical model and ruling system with a structural perspective, hoping to figure out the institutional factors that affect the rationality and irrationality of individuals (Lichbach, 1997, p.271). Weber argues that statal and societal rules are just like cages in which individuals are caught up between rationality and irrationality. It is culture that serves as the most decisive factor in bringing such a dilemma.

Samuel H. Barnes, the prominent American political scientist, believes that "for much of the world, culture--conceived of as shared assumptions about what is correct and proper in most situations--is not something individuals may accept or reject. Rather, it is something they must live with and work around. They need not believe it, in the sense that they have internalized it". "Culture can constrain behavior much as institution can. It rewards some behaviors and sanctions others. Like institutions, it conditions behavior, it conditions choice" (Barnes, 1997, p.119). When cultural analysis is employed in comparative studies, what we are endeavoring to find out is the impact that culture brings. We are not simply arguing that individuals behave in their special ways merely because they are Americans, British or Germans. What we are supposed to do is to reveal the underlying factors that motivate them to behave in such particular ways. In doing so, we actually are exploring into culture and its origins, which are ingrained in the early social relations of these countries, and have been internalized as the shared feelings among individuals in the long course of history. Therefore, "culture is not the property of single individuals, for it is rooted in social practice and shared understandings" (Ross, 1997, p.63). Culture is also a kind of outlook, which is derived from the people's understandings and attitudes toward life, their cognition, beliefs towards reality in a certain community (Duverger, 2007, p.59; Geertz, 1973, p.89).

In brief, cultural analysis is very important in the studies of comparative politics. Culture interacts intimately with institutions which, apparently, is not merely a set of rules and structures, and is not completely free from the impact from culture either. Therefore, institutions operate in specific cultures and connote a set of cultural values, which, in turn, bring far-reaching influences on the formation and development of institutions, determining the shared assumptions and attitudes. Some scholars raise the question "whether it is cultural norms that lead to the proper functioning of democratic institutions or whether their proper functioning is itself the origin of the norms of democracy" (Barnes, 1997, p.120). Relations between culture and institution, institutional culture and the broader societal culture are what these researchers intend to reveal.

It is indisputable that social culture is where institutional culture takes roots, but institutional culture is also influenced by organizational structures, administrative orders as well as the internal regular behavioral modes and supervisory authorities of institutions. Therefore, it is understandable that institutional structures and behavioral modes can be, not surprisingly, diversified under the same societal culture. With an eye to discovering the universality and specificity in the political development of different countries, the popular trend in the study of comparative politics today is to combine culturalism with institutionalism, though the latter has long been taken by scholars as the dominant researching method. Though cultural analysis is one of the most traditional methods in political studies, it frequently begets criticism due to the fact that culture, as a unit of analysis, is hard to be defined and interpreted. Nevertheless, a great majority of scholars, instead of abandoning cultural analysis, are more tolerant and open-minded when faced with harsh criticism directed at cultural analysis.

Comparative studies on bureaucracies from the writer concern particularly about the impacts brought by political culture on bureaucratic system and power relations in each country. Political cultures with Anglo-Saxon traditions can help bureaucratic system become more representative and inclusive. For instance, with political pluralism, America's bureaucratic system is more diversified and permeable, and a close contact between government and civil society is maintained. As a typical model of parliamentary democracy, party politics culture of U.K ensures that the country's bureaucratic system can be untied as a whole. With a long-cherished tradition of parliamentary system, the representative function of the bureaucratic system can be fulfilled with parliamentary politics. Contrastingly, Germany and France have a long history of authoritarian culture, laying much stress on the autonomy of states, which leads to the exclusiveness of their bureaucratic systems. Consequently, the bureaucratic systems in these two countries are relatively isolated from civil society. Compared with Germany, France is more protrusive in this aspect. Due to its elitist political culture, the bureaucratic systems of France have a sophisticated system in recruiting and training state elites, who, under the help of the system, interact actively with professional elites. With a different historical origin, political culture in Germany is more heterogeneous, and the country's bureaucratic systems demonstrate more hybridity. The truth is, in any country, the political system should be compatible with its political culture, and interacts with civil society harmoniously. Britain and America are successful examples. However, in Germany and France, historically, a huge gap exists between political system and social system, causing much discontinuity and instability in their political development. These are all the critical issues that the writer deals with in her studies.

3.2 Historical Tradition Study

When comparativists probe into cultures of different countries, they are fully aware of the importance of historical contexts in which these cultures evolve. Researchers find that the powerful impacts of culture can be perceived from the historical evolution of a country, and this can be proved by the fact that some events, influenced by deep-rooted cultural elements, may frequently repeat themselves, and the fact that cultural element can even become decisive forces for social development.

As early as the first half of the 19th century, French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville made an investigation on American society, recognizing that Americans are highly autonomous, organized and are desirous for political participation. Fortunately, this tradition can still be found in American society today. Contrastingly, in the political culture of France, national authority is enshrined in the minds of people. Therefore, when authority is desired but cannot be felt in French political institutions, the political order of the country will suffer much instability, which is clearly not conducive for national political development. This is sufficed to show the vitality of political culture in the historical evolution of a country.

Not surprisingly, history and culture become two notable and meaningful perspectives for comparative studies in social science. Ignorance of a country's history will make it impossible to understand the cultural elements contained therein. Without rudimentary knowledge about the history and the culture of a country, it is out of the question to comprehend what the country has experienced in the past, how it moves forward today, and where it will go in the future.

For a long time, historical methods are widely accepted in political studies, and the truth is, these two branches of social science are always inextricably linked with each other. Institutions and institutional studies are major aspects of political studies. Thus, while analyzing and explaining a relatively stable political order, the origins and evolutions of it should also be illustrated. Such an idea will connect history and politics closely together.

American scholar John G. Gunnell regards the retrospective study on history tradition as "a reflective analytical structure" and "a pattern that historians of political theory summarized from the study on classic works" (Gunnell, 1988, p.2). The purpose of explaining the current situation with a detained discussion on the past is "not to revive the corpse of past erudition", but to investigate history based on the connections between the past and today. John G. Gunnell considers the past as object with intrinsic values, the past can "make more vivid the life of today", and "help us to envisage its problems with a more accurate perspective" (Figgis, 1907, p.3). William A. Dunning, the American historian, thinks highly of the positivistic sociology from Comte.

Dunning commends that “the philosophy of history that is embodied in his work ranks with the greatest achievements of the human mind in generalizing from the past the elements of progress in civilization” (Dunning, 1920, p.393). Currently, a majority of scholars in political studies have an increased awareness of the importance of historical analysis; some even consider history as the foundation of civic education.

Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman argue that “culturalists produce interpretive understandings, and structuralists study the historical dynamics of real social types”. Moreover, “culturalists study the rules that constitute individual and group identities, and structuralists explore relations among actors in an institutional context” (Lichbach & Zuckman, 1997, p.7). Structuralism scholars maintain strong curiosities for institutional studies, and focus their studies on formal organizations. However, they do not investigate institutions statically. Instead, they try to figure out what is behind the institution, paying much attention to the historical tradition and the interaction between state and society.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the rising of historical institutionalism, which inherited the legacy of macro-analysis and restated the importance of “state and social structures”. Historical institutionalism reaches conclusions through comparative studies on institutions and histories, laying much stress on singular historical events. Therefore, it becomes “the thick version of new institutionalism”. Historical institutionalism equates actors in historical process with agents that act under institutional environment, modeling researching elements and variables by investigating the related background and context. Such a macro-analysis with historical and structural perspectives is accepted as an effective analytical tool, because it stresses the significance of historical and environmental elements, and also the more complicated relations and procedures. Moreover, this study emphasizes the relation between history and other branches of social science, tending to make comparisons among cases with certain analytical tools, therefore; “a deeply inductive approach” takes shape (Katznelson, 1997, p.86; p.96).

Currently, in comparative studies on political systems of different countries, historical institutionalism cares more about the links between state or part of state with society; but rational institutionalism emphasizes more on the unique developmental paths swayed by choices made in the past. Max Weber approaches the modernity of modern states and organizations from the angle of world history and comparative analysis. Historical analysis can at least impose restrictions on some decisions, excluding certain choices, though it cannot be omnipotent in explaining anything. Therefore, political system in any country is influenced by its past, inheriting some traditional cultural elements and organizational patterns (Almond & Powell, 1978, p.2).

These aspects are all what the writer concerns in her studies on western bureaucracies. With the researching approaches of structural functionalism, the writer keeps a watchful eye on the historical evolution and cultural origins of bureaucratic systems in developed countries. Hopefully, this can provide the way of viewing, and the foundation to construct a new theoretical model for the studies on western bureaucracies.

4. COMPARATIVE STUDY AND MODEL METHOD

4.1 Comparative Study

Mentioning comparative studies, the first question has to be answered is the necessity of doing so. In social science, comparisons are the precondition to construct a theory that is universally acknowledged, and this is especially true to political studies. Faced with the question touched above, Robert Alan Dahl, the famous American scholar in political and public administration studies, argues that “as long as the study of public administration is not comparative, claims for ‘a science of public administration’ sound rather hollow”, and it is also impossible to set up a scientific theory “in the sense of a body of generalized principles” or based on each country’s “peculiar national setting” (Dahl, 1947, p.8).

Almond offers his understandings on the values and feasibilities of comparative politics from the angles of “description” and “theory building”. He believes that comparative analysis can help researchers acquaint with background information and complex relations, preventing people from taking all kinds of possibilities for granted, which is especially important for constructing scientific theories. Furthermore, Almond argues that, in the process of studies, firstly, all the political terms and concepts should be defined clearly and then comparisons on different political systems should be made so as to construct a theory. Secondly, based on the functions and internal relations of political structures, researchers should make classifications and comparisons. Almond also reminds that, in practice, misunderstandings often arise when the method mentioned above is applied to comparative studies, since researchers often find that “structures that look the same may indeed work very differently”. Therefore, it is urgent for researchers to go further and discover “how the structures function in the political system”, so as to make adequate comparisons and discriminations. What is more, “comparative analysis is also invaluable in testing the credibility of political theories” (Almond & Powell, 1978, p.2).

Unlike some of the institutionalism scholars who always lay much emphasis on comparative studies, behaviorists are reluctant to devote themselves to macro-analysis; instead, their studies are confined within micro-studies, which highlight the roles of individuals rather than that of groups, merely taking comparative analysis for granted.

In general, both “functionalists” and political cultural analysts “have strong desires to employ the method of comparison” (Von Beyme, 1990, p.103). However, the truth is, “recognizing the need for comparison is much easier than coping with some of the problems posed by efforts to compare on a systematic basis” (Heady, 1990, 2001, p.7). Klaus von Beyme argues that “comparisons can only be conducted among things that display partial similarities and partial disparities”. He believes that comparisons can “reduce the negative impacts brought by the impossibility in carrying out experiments in social science” (1990, p.103).

When conducting comparative studies, firstly, researchers are required to construct the framework of comparison with certain tools; secondly, in light with assessments on the materials gathered, they are supposed to come up with theoretical assumptions and work out the proper researching approaches; thirdly, they are also expected to testify the theoretical assumptions with empirical comparative studies.

In the comparative studies on western bureaucracies, the following aspects should be taken into considerations (Guy, 1988, pp.4-21). First, make comparisons across different countries. As an integral part of comparative politics and comparative public administration, comparative studies on western bureaucracies should be completely based on the specific bureaucratic system in each country. The primary purpose is to unveil the typical features, which may include organizational structures and operating characteristics, of bureaucratic system in the country under investigation. What is more, the study should also probe into the underlying factors that turn bureaucratic system into what it is now. Then, the researchers are able to engage themselves into comparative studies, and construct the theoretical model for the study on western bureaucracies. Secondly, diachronic comparisons, which tend to make comparisons between administrative systems within a country at different historical periods, should be done, with an eye to reviewing the developments of political system and bureaucracy in the early days of the country. By exploring the dynamics of bureaucracy historically, researchers can gain a better and deeper understanding about the intrinsic features of the bureaucratic system. Thirdly, the comparative studies that focus on different levels of bureaucratic systems within a country. Comparisons between American federal government and its eighty-three thousands state and local governments are good examples in point.

Broad academic vision and sound structure of knowledge are the prerequisites in conducting comparative studies, since they can integrate universality and particularity together, offering sound illustrations on the nature of the issue. And for exactly that reason, systemic comparative studies are significant. Mark Howard Ross, the American culturist, combines cultural studies with

comparative political studies, and he argues that cultural analysis is remarkably important since it can offer valuable background information. Thus, Mark Howard Ross conducts comparative studies by interpreting the politics and culture of each country, and by “examining both systems of meaning and the structure and intensity of political identity” (1997, p.44). Views from Mark Howard Ross are particularly enlightening and instructive for comparative studies on western bureaucracies.

4.2 Modeling: The Use of Typology

Closely connected with cultural and comparative studies, typology is commonly used for constructing theoretical models. Since the birth of the book *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, edited by Gabriel Abraham Almond and Sidney Verba in the 1960s, apart from empirical comparison of typology, another type of typology, which stresses the assessment on particular kind of culture, flourished in America.

The construction of a theoretical model is based on the abstractive induction gained from observing and comparing different political systems. The goal is to figure out and clarify the shared elements that make sense in political systems of different countries. What is more, the historical origins and developments of these shared elements should also be checked. With all these efforts, researchers are able to offer systemic and logic explanations on what they have found, which is exactly what they hope to see—the new theoretical model. Obviously, the new theoretical model is highly explanatory.

American scholars who engage in comparative politics and public administration take theories and methods seriously. In their studies, they will first set up an analytical framework and then construct a theoretical model with certain principles. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, diverse theoretical models are put forward. For instance, Robert V. Presthus differentiates the theoretical model that is broad, cross-cultural and all-encompassing with the theoretical framework that is called intermediate theory and has a limited explanatory power. Alfred Diamant distinguishes between “general system” models and “political culture” models (Heady, 1962, p.4). Ferrel Heady puts forward “bureaucratic model”; Fred W. Riggs constructs a system of deductive models, namely “ecological model”, which includes refracted model, fused model and prismatic model. During this period, scholars who devote themselves to comparative public administration modify and refine the ideal-type theoretical model constructed by Max Weber. With middle-range theory, a new bureaucratic model is constructed. Dwight Waldo finds that this model is “useful, stimulating and provocative” (Heady, 2001, p.17) and this model is advantageous and appealing because it “is set in a large framework that spans history and cultures and relates bureaucracy to important social variables, yet it

focuses attention upon the chief structural and functional characteristics of bureaucracy” (Waldo, 1964, p.24).

Von Beyme believes that “normative elements are always hidden in comparative studies” (1990, p.120). However, effective researching methods are required if such a normative theory is to be formulated. First and foremost, concepts should be defined as clearly as possible, which is fundamental for clarifying researching categories. Then, interpretations with certain theoretical tools on perplex political phenomenon should be done. Next, classifications on political phenomenon should be made with empirical, comparative and logical studies so as to construct a theoretical model that contains normative conclusions. The writer’s studies on western bureaucracies pay special attention to the conceptual boundaries between “bureaucrat” and “bureaucracy”, with the purpose to avoiding misunderstandings and establishing a common ground for theoretical construction in the studies on bureaucratic systems.

Riggs argues that a model is, to some degree, merely a delicate simile or paradigm, referring to any “structure of symbols and operating rules” (Riggs, 2006, p.19). Whether we are willing or not, “we are using models, whenever we are trying to think systematically about anything at all” (Deutsch, 1952, p.356).

Serving as the fundamental instruments in regional studies and constructing a theoretical framework, the process of modeling can offer people the references in understanding correlations among various factors; in making classifications according to the peculiarities of different countries and in observing the values contained in different models. Researching can be improved with modeling because studies can be carried smoothly without the difficulties encountered when classifying massive amount of data. Consequently, this helps to reach substantive conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Based on what has been discussed above, some tentative conclusions can be reached as the following. When conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies, the first and foremost task for researchers to undertake is to seek a suitable researching paradigm, laying out the perspective as well as the starting point. Then, with the researching approaches of institutionalism and structural functionalism, researchers should figure out the organizational structures and power relations of bureaucratic systems in those countries under study. Next, an exploration into the historical contexts in which these bureaucratic systems evolve is also of great significance, since this investigation will offer us valuable insights into the political cultures and the impacts political cultures generate on the development of western bureaucracies. With such a researching framework, researchers are able to formulate a new theoretical model when conducting comparative studies on western bureaucracies.

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