

## **APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

### **Legal Method**

Since we are exploring the traditional approaches, we will also refer to methods like legal and juridical. As evident, this means that we shall analyse political systems along with the institutions and legal processes that comprise it. For political scientists using this method, law and justice are not limited to being the matters of jurisprudence but the state itself is treated as in charge of an equitable and effective system of law and order. Therefore, for political scientists, organizational matters, as well as those related to jurisdiction and independence of judicial institutions, are matters of concern. State has been analysed as a corporation or a juridical person by analytical jurists from Cicero in ancient times to Dicey in the modern period. Politics thus became a science of legal norms, independent of the science of the state as a social organism. This approach, therefore, treats state as the prime entity to craft and implement laws. Applied to the study of national and international politics, the legal method presumes that any action which is to be taken in case of an emergency is prescribed in law. It forbids action taking in some other situations, thus fixing the limit of action permitted. Moreover, it emphasizes that where rule of law prevails, its very knowledge among the citizens can help in determining their political behaviour. However, by its very nature, the legal method is very narrow.

### **Philosophical Method**

Principles of political theory were laid with the help of history, law, ethics and philosophy.

This approach significantly contributed to literature on normative political theory. Thinkers like Plato and Burke successfully laid down the principles of political theory and developed concepts like liberty and equality, rights, law and justice. On the one hand, with traditional approach, Plato, Kant and Hegel idealized the state; on the other hand, Aristotle, Hobbes and Machiavelli became more practical and developed theories of the state which could be practiced for real. Relationship between politics and law was adopted by Grotius, Bentham, Austin and Dicey. This approach continued to remain in operation for a very long time and examined every political institution with the help of available evidences.

### **Comparative Approach**

The comparative method, its nature and scope, has its own supporters and critics. Theorists like A. N. Eisenstadt argue that the approach has no specific method but involves focuses on cross-societal institutional or other macro aspects of societies for social analysis. On the other hand, theorists like Arend Lijphart, contend that comparative approach is a method and not just a vague term that symbolizes or indicates towards the focus of one's research. Lijphart defines this method as a basic method compared to others that are more experimental, statistics-based or rely on case studies to make generalizations.

Another theorist, Harold Lasswell, argues that the comparative nature within the scientific approach cannot be avoided and thus to anyone who uses such an approach to a political phenomena, a completely independent comparative method, seems redundant. Comparative approach has also been equated to the scientific method by Gabriel Almond. Yet, there is a general agreement between different scholars that the comparative method is not a method of measurement but aimed at discovering empirical relationships between variables. The first step is to measure variables before a relationship is explored among them. It is the latter step which is referred to as the comparative method. Theorists argue that a distinction must be made between the technique and the method and identify comparative method as a broad, general method and not a narrow, specialized technique. Keeping these arguments in mind, theorists refer to it as the comparative approach method or a method of comparison because it lacks the nature and principles of a method. Therefore, the comparative approach can also be thought of as a more basic research strategy than a strategic tool of research. When compared with the experimental, statistical or case study methods, the comparative approach can be better understood. For instance, the experimental method is a process to understand the relationship between two variables in a controlled environment. Such experiments are rare and difficult in political science, therefore, an

alternative is used by the way of statistical method. Within statistical method, the empirical data is conceptually manipulated to discover controlled relationships among variables. Control is ensured through division of the sample into many different groups, also referred to as parting correlations or cross tabulations, like differentiating on the basis of age, income, gender, education. This is followed by finding the correlation between two selected variables in each case. This is the standard procedure followed in this method and applied to most empirical research. The two methods— experimental and statistical— use the same logic and are often referred to as the approximation of each other.