APPROACHS TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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BASIC CONCEPTS

Comparative Politics – comparative politics is the study and comparison of both the formal and informal , constitutional and extra constitutional organization of various state to know –

➢ How others live and act.

➢ To discover similarities and dissimilarities between oneself and others.

➢ To accept what is perceived to be the best in order or for a reformist motivation.

Approach – approach is a way of looking at phenomena , explaining a particular phenomena , criteria for selecting problems and relevant data for intensive analysis.

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

➢ It is a traditional approach.

➢ It emphasis on the study of institutions.

➢ Focus on the study of the formal structure of a political organization like legislature , executive and judiciary , rules by which political parties are run.

➢ Focuses only on institutions which have been legally established by the society .

➢ Major exponents – *Aristotle , Polybius , Bryce , Finer , Duverger, Sartori*.

➢ **Features** –

i.   Normative approach.

ii.   speculative and prescriptive.

iii.   Eurocentrism.

iv.   Limited scope and too narrow.

v.   Ignores the role of individuals who constitute and operate the formal as well as informal of a political system.

vi.   Evolved as comparative government.

vii.   Ignored international politics.

viii.   Does not take any notice who run those institutions.

➢ **Conclusions** – although there have some limitations it an important approach to study comparative politics. It includes some informal organization such as political parties , election etc.

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

➢ It is a traditional as well as an oldest approach.
➢ Major exponents were **Aristotle, Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Marx** etc.
➢ The thinkers fly in the heights of imaginations to find out truth and knowledge.
➢ Topics of interests are justice, liberty, equality and idea of good.
➢ It is normative (what ought to be rather than what is) in character and believes in building norms or ideal in prescribing a certain standards.
➢ Philosophical approach are ethical, value loaded, prescriptive, speculative, deductive.
➢ Example – Plato's ideal state, philosopher king, communism of property and family, Hobbes of absolute monarchy, Locke on constitutionalism, Marx of communism.

HISTORICAL APPROACH

➢ This approach emerged in the end of 19ᵗʰ century.
➢ It studies phenomena through the historical background.
➢ Focus on the comparison of two or more historical trajectories of major political phenomena.
➢ Major exponents – **Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Machiavelli, Oakeshott** etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL APPROACH

- ➢ Emphasis on the study of formal institutions and neglect of political process.
- ➢ Focused on the western European political systems and neglect the non European political system (it is culture bound).
- ➢ Emphasis on description of existing institutions.
- ➢ Lack of concern for the development of theories through collection and analysis of data in order to test specific hypothesis.
- ➢ Showed insensitiveness to non political determinants of political behaviors.
- ➢ Comparative politics is normative in nature.
- ➢ It is subjective.

SYSTEM APPROACH (INPUT-OUTPUT MODEL)

INTRODUCTION –
- David Easton for the first time developed a systematic framework for the study of politics on the basis of system analysis approach.
- He developed this approach in his work **"A System Analysis of Political Life",** published in 1965.

WHAT IS POLITICAL SYSTEM –
- There are various system in society ,but political system is different from other because it is about authoritative allocation of values.
- According to David Easton , political system as 'a set of interaction' and politics as 'making authoritative allocation of values'.
- Political system is a set of interactions operating inside the entire social system through which values are allocated for a society.

a) Values – resources (primary goods, rights and freedom, opportunity etc.)

b) Allocation – distribution

c) Authoritative – decision backed by authority and force.

CONTINUED

➢ Every political system wants to survive and for this it must be able to perform two functions –
1. Allocate values to society through taking decisions and issuing command.
2. To get all members of society accept those values - get decisions implemented and command obeyed.

ANALYSIS –
➢ His system analysis is also known as input-output analysis or conversion process.
➢ The conversion of input into outputs by the system.
➢ The conversion or transaction take place between a political system and its environment.
➢ Environment divided into two parts –
1) Intra Social – intra social environment are not being engaged in authoritative allocation of values , such as economy, culture, social structures, personalities etc.
2) Extra Social – extra social environment includes which lie outside a given society, such as international political system, international economic system etc.
➢ He argues, every political system is constantly being influenced by environment.
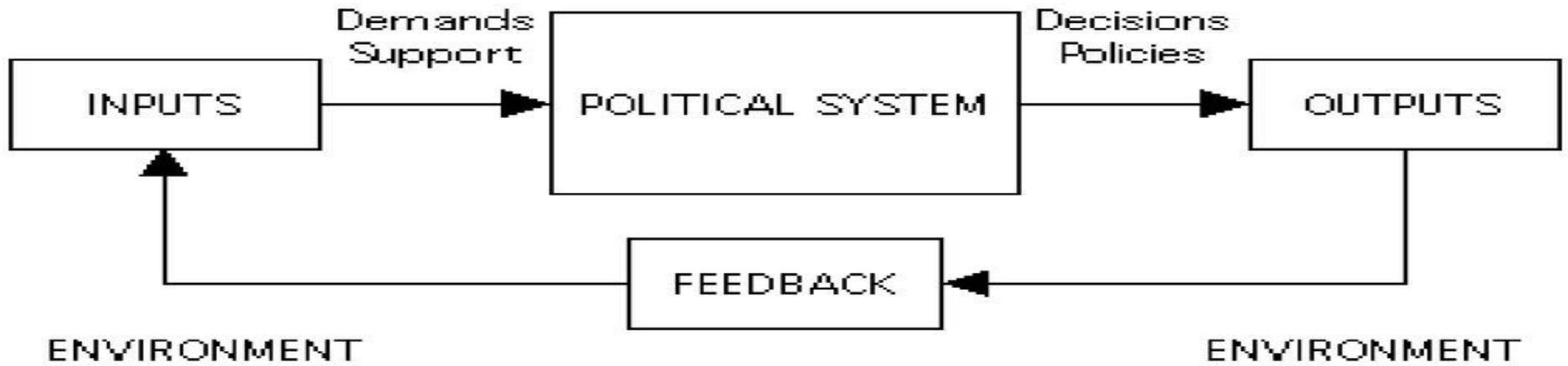
1. Inputs are demands and supports
2. Outputs are decisions and actions(policies)
3. Decisions and policies are reflected by feedback mechanism.
4. Output influence the input.

5. Again arise some demands.

6. This input-output analysis is called equilibrium. If one collapse than the system will collapse.

7. Every system seeks to survive and long standing.

CONTINUED

CRITICISM –

➢ This approach is too abstract and too far from empirical reality.

➢ Designed for macro level studies not for micro level studies.

➢ Not applicable in many third world countries.

➢ Inapplicable and unsuited to such a fast changing unstable societies.

➢ Very little interest in the individual.

STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

INTRODUCTION-

➢ This approach largely attributed to Gabriel Almond.

➢ He developed this approach in his book *"Comparative Political Analysis",* published in *1956.*

➢ This approach was first applied in 1960 by Almond and James S Coleman to study of non western politics.

POLITICAL SYSTEM-

➢ According to Gabriel Almond all political system have a structure . Structure is the legitimate patterns of human interactions by which order is maintained.

➢ All political structures perform many functions , though in different degrees in different systems, the same functions are performed in all political systems, all political systems are both modern and primitive cultures.

ANALYSIS

➢ Almond was very influenced by David Easton's input-output model, but he found limitations and focus on the issues of institutions, i.e. every political system has certain kind of institution. Every institution performs several functions. Every institution is known by the function it performs.

➢ For him there are two kinds of institutions-

1) **Hard** – hard institutions are legal and have certain kind of framework. For example- parliament which is based on rules and regulations.

2) **Soft** – soft institutions are not very much legal, not rule bound, but people unknowingly follow it. For example- caste system, culture etc.

➢ According to Almond , structure or institution plays a primary role. For him there are *four input (political) and three output (governmental)* functions-

INPUT FUNCTIONS

➤ Input functions are performed by the non-governmental sub systems including the general environment.

➤ Input functions are more important in the political systems of the developing countries.

1. **Political socialization and recruitment** –

❖ According to Almond, political socialization is the process of induction into the political culture and leads to the development of a set of attitudes and beliefs among the members of the system towards their political system.

❖ Transmitting of political values and norms of the society.

❖ It is a psychological concept.

❖ Political recruitment is the method through and by which citizens are recruited for specialized role of the political system.

2. **Interest articulation** –

❖ Interest articulation means the voicing of political demands to the decision makers.

❖ It is concerned with the formulation and expression of interest, claims and demands for political action.

INPUT FUNCTIONS

3. **Interest aggregation** –
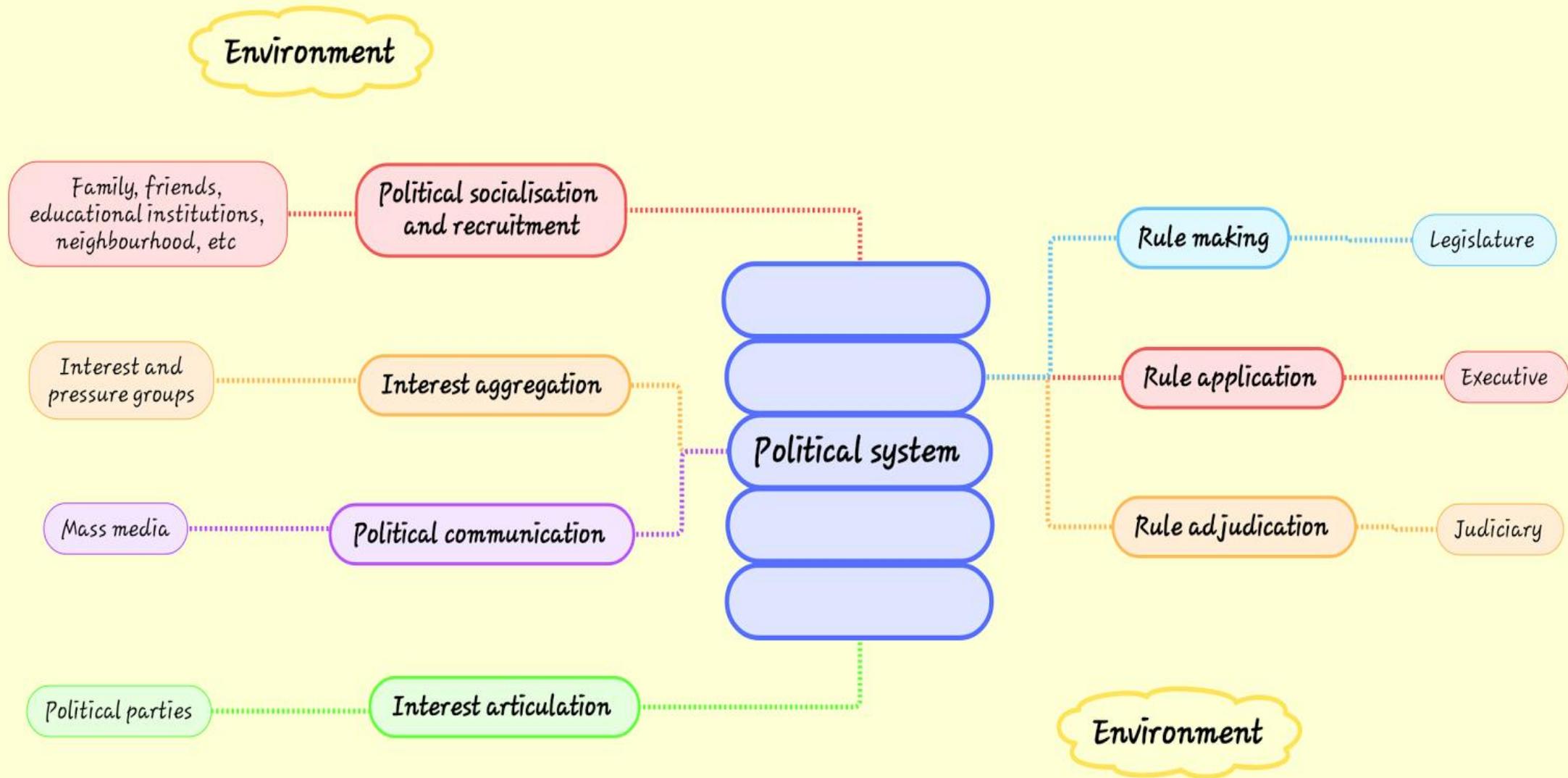
❖ Interest aggregation means the managing of political demands by bodies such as parties and interest groups.

❖ It is a way of aggregating the interests, claims and demands which have been articulated by the interest groups of the polity.

4. **Political communication** –

❖ Political communication means the sending of messages within the political system and between the system and the outside.

❖ All functions of political system are performed by means of communication.

OUTPUT FUNCTIONS

1) **Rule making** – formulation of rules.

2) **Rule application** – enforcement of rules.

3) **Rule adjudication** – to ensure that rules once enacted are not violated.

➢ Each input and output has inter relationship with the system as a whole.

Family, friends, educational institutions, neighbourhood, etc — Political socialisation and recruitment

Rule making — Legislature

Interest and pressure groups — Interest aggregation

Political system

Rule application — Executive

Mass media — Political communication

Rule adjudication — Judiciary

Political parties — Interest articulation

Environment

Structural functional analysis

CRITICISM

➤ Almond does not care to define what a system actually means or what the full connotation of an interaction is.

➤ His definition of political system is not very sound.

➤ It belong to the western political system, mainly to the American political system. So his analysis is not applicable to non western societies.

➤ It is difficult to draw a boundary between the political and non political.

➤ Almond has not attached enough importance to the output functions and has failed to emphasis the importance of feedback process in aggravating or minimising the challenges to the existence or even the survival of political system.