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scoresvideos Dr. Kanwalpreet Introduction We, human beings, live in a society which is a loose social organization that includes the economic, political, religious, cultural, sub-divisions. Every society has its own structures that serve special purpose, for example, the educational organisations, the law-making structures etc. Each structure has its own organization. When we talk about the political structures, we keep in mind all those structures that regulate the activities of the whole community. 'Political' means something that is not in the 'private' domain and is 'public' meaning, applies to all citizens. The political structures are common to the whole community and not limited to a few. The political structures bring about some kind of order in a society. The word, 'polis' comes from the ancient 'Greek City-states'. These states were relatively small communications where rules knit people together. Man needs to live under some organization, otherwise the inherent qualities of man to hoard or to think about only oneself would dissolve any society into total chaos. The political structures are those organizations that run the society efficiently. These structures are prevalent in all societies, though their nature might differ. Prior to the Second World War, the political scientists studied the formal organizations and the governmental structures. Their emphasis was to study the composition of these structures. 'The approach to Comparative Politics prior to the Second World War is generally known as Traditional Approach. Indeed, what is today called as Comparative Politics was studied under 'Foreign Government' till the second World War'.1 In the traditional approaches political analysts depended upon normative, historical and descriptive studies. The normative aspects of the study made it first determine values and then prescribe the same. The forms of study was, 'what ought to be' than what 'is'. The traditional approaches, be it legal, philosophical, historical or structural tended to express their preferences for something. They gave priority to some order and then supported it because of a higher sense of ideal or because of some universal commitment. The 'sense-experience' which is crucial in contemporary approaches does not find any place in the traditional approaches. A normative statement can not be verified or repeated. The statement could be supported by strong arguments but none could be verified. 'Values' became very important and facts were not studied or entertained. It serves an intrinsic value which is an end-in-itself and an end, different to different people. Thus, the traditional approaches are very subjective- what may be justice for one might not be justice for the other. It can define and defend but cannot prove. The traditional approaches are prescriptive for they deal with those conditions that are prevalent and have been accepted by the society. The laws, conditions, habits are described and argued that how right or wrong are they morally and then an alternative is prescribed . The alternative might be achievable or might not be achievable but the best is prescribed. Nothing can be proved scientifically but the focus is on values and in achieving what is morally considered right. Among the traditional approaches we include the Philosophical, Legal, Historical, Structural and Institutional approaches. The Philosophical approach attempts to clarify the various concepts used in various disciplines. It is considered to be the oldest approach. It describes the subject matter and the nature of the subject. The endeavor is to clear the confusion that results because of language and terms. It also tires to set the parameters for what is just, good, right or wrong. Everything is based on moral, reasoning and cannot be put under the microscope for dissection. Political philosophy is an attempt to know the nature ofpolitical happenings. Once a result is attained, it can further be questioned. The debate continues. The attempt is to attain true knowledge but the search never ends. The aim is to set up a good political order. In the Legal approach, the endeavor is to understand politics, political occurrences, in terms of law. All the organs of the government are assigned some specific functions. The emphasis is to analyse the legal and constitutional framework. The focus is to inquire into their legal position and see how their actions are valid. The Historical approach analyses the historical events while attempting to understand politics by studying an account of the past. The ideas and the lives of the past ages is analysed so that the present day problems can be solved. Political thought, political theory and politics ,as such, have a rich past. The knowledge of the past is necessary to formulate new theories. 'It is necessary to recapitulate the circumstances under which a political theory was produced, for understanding its relevance to the present situation. Moreover, any political theory is not only a product of history, it also served as an instrument of moulding history by its ideological force. However, all great political theories are valid for all times.'2 The traditional approach only described the various structures without comparing them. The emphasis was on studying the formal political structures and presenting a political anatomy of the countries. The governments and the structures were chosen arbitrarily. Traditional approaches are considered narrow. They only studied the structures of the advanced industrialized countries. The study of western countries which were sparsely populated made the study very ethnocentric. No doubt, these governments were democratic but the study of the Third World countries would have made it more comprehensive. Situations keep on changing, but the traditional approaches do not study the forces that assist in these changes and subsequently their effect. Ignoring the informal organisations makes the traditional approaches lack in drive. They did not believe with the non-political actors of political behavior. Centered in the European countries, the sample was very small, for the majority of the population lived in the developing countries and the latter were ignored. All this led to the political scientists to developing a new branch called 'comparative politics'. The structural approach is a part of the traditional approaches and studies the formal structures and their organization. Structural Approach The society is a complex structure. There are many structures in a society like family (being the smallest unit) various educational institutions, religious institutions etc. Each performs a particular function and each has an organization. In each structure there is a hierarchy which the power of each office, each official is pre-determined. Of course, the activities of the structures and its office-holders can increase or decrease with time. Politics for a long time has been a study of the State and Government. The questions worked upon were, What is a state? What are its essential elements etc.? The government was the other focus of this approach, along with its organs like the Legislative, Executive, Judiciary etc. The focus of the structural approach is to delve into the organization of the government and its myriad organs. It also studies all those established organizations that affects the politics of a state. It explains the various branches of the government, their composition and their powers. It also endeavours to identify the various levels of government like the local, state, federal etc. It studies the 2 O. Gauba, An Introduction to Political Theory, 2003, Macmillan, India, p. 85. interrelationships between the various levels of government as well as within the various branches of the government (i.e., the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary). The facts are elaborately described for there is more emphasis on description. We can say that there the approaches step into the domain of empirical study. But it remains limited to this for it tends to describe but not explain. It comes quite close to the legalistic approach though it came as a reaction in the 19th century against the historical and legalistic approach. Structural approach, thus, is concerned with all those principles and ideas which run in any political organization. The general understanding among the political scientists was that the study of politics goes beyond reading legal constitutions and the laws, codes of various countries etc. It believes that the three branches of the government, the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary need to be studied in detail because they are the ones which deliberate, discuss and frame laws. So, the agencies, the structures that make these laws need to be studied in detail. Instead of analyzing their history and their legal aspects, the day-to-day functioning of these structures need to be studied. Mac Iver believes that structures are those forms of procedure that are established. Structures are those units through which human beings organize themselves for the attainment of certain goals. Organising themselves into structures helps the human society to plan and execute many activities which would not be possible by individuals alone. These structures satisfy the various needs of the human society. Structures form an important ingredient of the subject-matter of politics. The emphasis is on the formal aspects of government. The structure of the society is composed of structures which are important for its individuals. This approach believes that the rules of the structures are very important to understand and analyse any political phenomena. The individual is pushed back to the extent that the effect of the rules whether positive or negative on the individual is not even studied. It also concentrates on the rules of the political system. The study also endeavours to study the powers of the various structures. This approach undermines the role of the individual and emphasis more on structures. It studies the relationship between the various groups in a society like the political parties, the religious institutions, the various classes etc. Each group has its own agenda, its own targets and works earnestly to achieve them. These groups get intertwined in relationships that might challenge the government, the parties and the various formal structures. History is sourced and the structuralists study the past to understand the relationships in the present. 'In politics, a structural approach emphasis the objective relationships between social groups, including social classes and the state. The varying interests and positions of these leading groups shape the overall configuration of power and provide the dynamic of political change.3 Criticism Structural approach is criticized on the ground that it concentrates more on the structures that are political, neglecting the political processes. In all this, the individuals who run these structures are totally neglected. It ignores the people who are responsible for running the political structures. The study is too preoccupied with the structures , thus the individual is relegated to the background. Moreover, the approach stresses on building an ideal society, based on values. Values cannot be measured. There is non- application of any scientific method. The study also neglects the political processes and all the informal groups, which otherwise play a very important role in a political system. It also neglects and bypasses the study of international politics. The latter's study is very important as the policies of one country directly or indirectly effect the rest of the world, especially in the present tech- savvy world. The approach is also criticized for being normative, descriptive and idealistic. The neglect of the individual who forms the backbone of the structures makes this study biased and narrow. It is not analytical. It answers the question, 'what' (is happening?) but does not answer 'why (it is happening)'. The study is limited to structures. Much happens within and outside the four walls of the structures by actors who are nowhere in the picture in this approach. It is also criticized on the grounds that its conclusions are prior deductions. The structuralist thinkers only believe in the social structure and not in the effects of cultures, values etc. 'At the core of structuralism is the concern with objective relationships between groups and societies. Structuralism holds that configurations of social relations shape, constrain and empower actors in predictable ways. Structuralism generally downplays or rejects cultural and value-based explanations of social phenomena. Likewise, structuralism opposes approaches that explain social outcomes solely or primarily in terms of psychological states, individual decision-making processes or other individual-level characteristics.4 The emphasis was on historical comparison which made it a normative study. 'The diachronic comparisons treated various systems like contemporary societies. But they did not help to develop a critical methodology of comparison.5 The traditionalists, the structuralists treated each event as 'unique' and studied it as an example that would be repeated elsewhere and they would have solutions ready. But it was not sure that the event would be repeated. Conclusion But despite the criticism, the structural approach and the other traditional approaches cannot be counted obsolete and redundant. Many thinkers gave their conclusion, after observing the facts closely. Machiavelli wrote his book , ' The Prince' after acutely observing the conditions in Italy. Aristotle compared 158 constitutions and then gave his conclusion. Many of our present day norms have their roots in the structures of the past. They need to be studied to know they have evolved and their effect on the present day structures and their further growth. The formal structures give a certain form to a political system, they organize the activities, thus, need to be studied. Every society is in a state of flux. Politics is a struggle for power and more power. For this, there is constant tussle between the various groups. The process becomes all the more complex because the preferences of people change the effect of domestic and international politics and the change in the markets all lead to new combinations and permutations. Change is constant so various interests have to be accommodated. 'A structure is defined by the relationships between its parts. The elements, themselves, their internal organization and especially the individuals, within them, are of little interest. For instance, what matters to the structuralists is the relationship between labour and capital in a society, not the internal organizations of trade unions and business organizations.6 The people who run their organizations are not important for the structuralists, yet giving importance to their non-economic groups is significant like the bureaucracy, military etc. This approach answers questions taking cues from history. It gives generalizations which have to be verified. This Op. cit., no. 3, pp.83-84. Klaus Von Beyme, 'The evolution of comparative politics' in Daniel Caramani, Comparative Politics,, An Introduction, 2011, OUP, p. 24. Op cit. no. 3, p. 82.approach makes broad assumptions by stressing on the relationships of the groups. Thus , this approach has contributed in its own way in the development of the subject. The study of groups and classes, their evolution and development make an interesting and an analytical study. It is true that the structural approach like the other traditional approaches is speculative and ethnocentric, yet it helps to understand the structures which are very important. 'Polities, rather than politics and policies were described. The main goal of these analyses was to establish classifications and typologies. Very often, these classifications concerned evolutionary models (derived from Darwinism) as in the case of Spencer and Marx'.7. Suggested Readings you can view video on Structural Approach Maheshwari, S. R., Comparative Government and Politics, 2004. Lakshmi Narain Aggarwal, Agra. Gauba, O. P., An Introduction to Political Theory, 2003, Macmillan India, Delhi. Hague, Rod, Harrop, Martin, Comparative Government and Politics, An Introduction, 2015, Palgrave Replika, New Delhi, India. Jayal, Nirija Gopal and Mehta, Pratap Bhanu, The Oxford Companion to Politics in India, 2015, Oxford University Press. Caramani, Daniele, Comparative Politics, 2011, Oxford University Press Fact Checked Content Last Updated: 17.08.2023 16 min reading time Content creation process designed by Content cross-checked by Content quality checked by Save Article Save Article The Structural Approach is a significant tool when analysing political systems. It frames the social, economic, legal, and political connections that shape a society. By delving into these relationships, you gain a deeper understanding of the functions and consequences of different political structures. Let's dive into the definition of the Structural Functional Approach to understand it better.The Structural Functional Approach is a method in political science that examines socio-political systems by analysing their structures (the institutions that form them) and functions (the roles that these institutions play).To illustrate this concept, let's look at a concrete example from a democratic system.Take for instance a democratic system. Here, the parliament, as a structure, functions in law-making. This function affects other parts of the political system such as the judiciary and the executive. The judiciary interprets laws while the executive enforces them. These interactions consequently bring about outcomes that affect the lives of the citizens.Now, let's examine the major elements in the Structural Functional Approach.Two critical elements constitute the foundation of the Structural Functional Approach: Structures and Functions. Structures refer to institutions or parts of a socio-political system, while Functions point to the role or job that these institutions play.Structures: Consider institutions like the judiciary, parliament, and administrative bodies. They form the 'skeleton' of a political system.Functions:These are the roles that the above structures perform. For instance, the judiciary's function is to provide justice, while the parliament's role is to make laws.Let's take a deep dive into how these elements interact in a system.The Structural Functional Approach isn't just about identifying structures and their functions. It's about analysing the dynamic nature of their interaction. Through this lens, you can perceive a political system as a complex, interconnected web where any change in one node can potentially disrupt or reinforce other nodes.So, how does the structural functional approach translate into concrete variables?Remember, important variableslike social norms, cultural values, geographical location and demographic makeup can also influence a system's functioning.Structural Functional ApproachRoleStructuresForms the basis of political systemFunctionsRole or job that institutions play in the systemThis understanding can place you a step ahead in comprehending the political scripts of the past, interpreting the political manoeuvres of the present and predicting the political outcomes of the future.The Structural Functional Approach is a theoretical framework commonly used in sociology, anthropology, political science, and organizational structures. This approach views society or an organization as a complex system of interdependent parts that work together to promote unity and stability. It emphasizes the importance of understanding both the structures (the visible, tangible components of a system) and functions (the roles those components play). It is particularly useful in evaluating how different parts of a system contribute to the overall functionality.Having delved into the basic concepts of the Structural Functional Approach, it's time to examine real-life examples and applications of this theoretical system in understanding political dynamics and organizational structures.Consider a government system. Here, several structural components including the legislative bodies, executive branches, judiciary, public services, and citizens play different roles to ensure functionality. The legislature makes the laws, judiciary interprets the laws, executives implement these laws, and citizens adhere to these laws and expect certain services in return. Just like in an organism where all parts must work in harmony for survival, all these institutions (structures) functioning together (performing their roles) ensure the smooth running of a government (system).A celebrated example of the Structural Functional Approach in political science is the framework developed by Gabriel Almond. His approach provides a way of 'mapping' political systems by examining their structures and functions.Almond identified seven functions that every political system must perform to survive. These functions are grouped into two main categories:Input Functions: Includes political socialisation and recruitment (the process by which citizens learn political norms and gain roles within the political system), interest articulation (expressing what citizens want) and interest aggregation (combining and conveying these wants to the government).Output Functions: Encompasses rule-making (establishing laws), rule application (putting these laws into practice), and rule adjudication (resolving disputes over these laws).This can be visualized in the following table:FunctionInput/OutputDescriptionPolitical Socialisation and RecruitmentInputLearning political norms and gaining rolesInterest ArticulationInputExpressing citizen wantsInterest AggregationInputCombining and conveying these wants to governmentRule-makingOutputEstablishing lawsRule ApplicationOutputPutting laws into practiceRule AdjudicationOutputResolving disputes over these lawsAlmond's approach to political systems revolutionized the way political science was examined. By assigning specific functions to the parts of the system, Almond created a grid for political analysis which enabled a thorough examination of any political system, irrespective of its geographic location or level of development. However, it was also criticized for being overly simplistic and incapable of appreciating the complexities of interaction among the different components of a political system. Despite this, Almond's Structural Functional theory remains a relevant tool in contemporary political science.The role of the Structural Functional Approach isn't limited to political science; it's also valuable in understanding organisational structures. This approach looks at organisations as complex systems with interdependent parts.For instance, consider a corporation. Departments such as Human Resources, Operations, Finance, and Marketing can be seen as the structural parts of the corporation. Each of these departments has a distinct function in the organisation. Human Resources manages personnel, Operations ensures the delivery of services or production of goods, Finance looks after the fiscal health of the corporation, and Marketing promotes the corporation's products/services and manages customer relationships. The successful functioning of the corporation depends on all these departments performing their respective roles effectively and in harmony with each other.It's crucial to point out that organisation's structural and functional components aren't stagnant. They can evolve or change over time, reflecting shifts in organisation's objectives, cultural dynamics, or external economic conditions.Change can be triggered by various factors like changes in top-level management, strategy shift, acquisition or merger, or influences from the external environment like new regulations, change in market conditions, etc. For example, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, many traditional brick-and-mortar businesses had to enhance their digital capabilities and ramp up their online sales functions to continue serving their clients efficiently during lock-downs. These changes, when managed efficiently, can lead to sustained growth, adaptation and survival of the organisation in an ever-changing business environment.Remember, maintaining a balanced interplay between structures and their corresponding functions is crucial for smooth operations within any organisational setup. It optimises resource allocation and provides a firm foundation for informed decision-making processes.The Structural Functional Approach, commonly used in political and sociological studies, analyses political structures based on their functions within a system. The approach assumes that each element within a system contributes to its continuity and stability.However, while the Structural Functional Approach serves as an instrumental tool in studying political structures, it has also been subject to various criticisms, primarily because it may not accurately capture the complexities of political systems.Though this approach offers valuable insights into understanding political systems, its framework may not sufficiently cover all aspects. Here are a few limitations associated with this approach:Overemphasis on Stability: This approach tends to overexaggerate stability and order while downplaying conflicts and division within a political system. It presumes that every component of a system contributes to its continuity, though, in reality, certain elements may lead to system imbalance or disruption.Failure to Account for Change: Critics argue that the Structural Functional Approach struggles to account for social and political change effectively. It is argued that this approach is static and doesn't accommodate changes within a system over time effectively.Overgeneralisation: Critics suggest that the approach may lead to oversimplification and overgeneralisation as it attempts to categorise all political structures and their functions into a universal formula.Difficulties in Measuring Variables: Another disadvantage lies in the measurement of variables related to structures or their functions. Sociopolitical measurements can be subjective and challenging, unlike other disciplines, such as Physics or Chemistry, where units of measurement are standardised.These limitations highlight the challenges critics identified within the Structural Functional Approach and underline the need for a more comprehensive analysis of political systems.A pertinent example of these limitations can be seen when we compare the judiciary structure and its function in the United Kingdom and China. These two countries, governed by different political systems, have notably different judiciary functionalities, which significantly influence their overall political dynamics. The Structural Functional Approach finds it challenging to account for these differences, thereby highlighting its limitations.LimitationDescriptionOveremphasis on StabilityFocuses excessively on stability, downplaying conflictsFailure to Account for ChangeStruggles to accommodate changes over timeOvergeneralisationMay oversimplify complex systemsDifficulties in Measuring VariablesChallenges in measuring structures and functionsThere are several contrasting views on the Structural Functional Approach, each presenting alternative viewpoints or lenses to study political systems. A couple of which include Conflict Theory and Symbolic Interactionism.Conflict theory emphasises the role of coercion and power, a stark contrast to the emphasis on stability and equilibrium in structural functionalism. It proposes that social and political systems are inherently unstable, marked more by conflict than consensus.Contrarily, symbolic interactionism shifts focus from societal structures to individual interactions. Focussed on studying the micro-aspects of a system, it aims to understand how they shape society's broader political and social dynamics.TheoryFocusConflict TheoryPlaces emphasis on coercion and powerSymbolic InteractionismFocuses on individual interactionsThese alternative theories provide varied perspectives and deepen our understanding of political systems. After all, every approach in studying political systems reveals different essential aspects, offering a multi-layered and comprehensive understanding of the subject.In the domain of political science, the Structural Approach serves as a lens allowing us to examine different political systems. Its primary focus is to unravel the relationship between different structural features of political systems and their subsequent impact on their function. By doing so, you can gain a profound understanding of how these institutions are shaped or influenced by their structures.The Structural Functional Approach mainly focuses on structures in political or social systems. The term "structure" here refers to the entities and relations organising a political system. Structures could be institutions like a parliament, a court system, or administrative bodies.The approach also pays attention to the "functions" of these structures, i.e., the roles they play within the system. For example, a parliament's significant function is to create legislation; a judiciary's main role is interpreting and applying these laws. The approach draws inkling from a functionalist standpoint in sociology, predominantly influenced by the ideas of prominent sociologist Emilie Durkheim. Durkheim emphasised the importance of interdependent parts in a society, each performing a specific function contributing to the entire social system's stability.The Structural Functional Approach's focus also includes understanding their interaction. For example, a policy change could lead to changes in structures, which would affect their functions.Consider a change in policy that results in a shift in the administrative structure. This change would subsequently affect its overall function. This interaction between structures and functions is a central component of the Structural Functional Approach.The Structural Functional Approach finds profound use in the field of Comparative Politics. Comparative Politics involves comparing political systems, understanding patterns of government, and analysing how different cultures impact political situations.Utilising the Structural Functional Approach enables the comparison of different political systems in a systematic and coherent manner. It provides a roadmap to categorise components of different political systems and their functions, thereby facilitating meaningful comparison. Let's illustrate this with a table:Political SystemStructuresFunctionsDemocratic SystemParliament, Judiciary, ExecutiveLaw-making, justice provision, policy implementationCommunist SystemSingle-party State, Central Planning CommitteeCentralised control, planned economy operationThe Structural Functional Approach also guides the understanding of how inputs (like public opinion, societal norms) get converted into outputs (like laws, policies) in political systems.The Structural Functional Approach plays a critical role in Comparative Politics. Not only does it facilitate comparison, but it also enhances understanding of the functionality of various political systems.The Structural Approach is significantly impactful in the realm of education and learning. Often used as a pedagogical tool, it aids in designing more effective learning strategies and processes. It involves an in-depth understanding of the 'structures' and 'functions' at play within a learning environment, and how these elements interrelate to enhance or impede learning processes.In a classroom context, 'structures' could be seen as different educational components - like the curriculum, teaching methods, classroom rules, and the physical learning environment. 'Functions', on the other hand, identify and analyse the roles these structures play in promoting a conducive learning atmosphere.In essence, the Structural Functional Approach seeks to optimise these structures and their intended functions to maximise learning efficiency.To use this approach effectively, you must focus on creating the structures and ensuring consistent performance of their functions.Creating the Structures: This involves designing a robust curriculum, developing learner-centric teaching methods, setting positive classroom norms, and creating a supportive physical learning environment.Ensuring Consistent Performance of Functions: This entails delivering the curriculum, employing the teaching methods, maintaining order through classroom norms, and utilising the learning environment to facilitate education.This approach encourages teachers to understand each student's unique learning style, needs, and pace and then tailor their teaching methods to meet these needs. A simple mathematical expression can be represented in LaTeX to illustrate this: \[Classroom Strategy = Creation\ of\ Structures + Consistent\ Performance\ of\ Functions \] And represent it in a simple language as: "The classroom strategy is a sum of creating the structures and ensuring their consistent performance."The benefits of using the Structural Functional Approach in education are noteworthy. However, it's important to also understand the potential challenges of its implementation.Here are the main benefits and challenges associated with this approach:Benefits:Enhances Learning: This approach helps teachers to structure lessons or curriculum to improve a student's understanding and retention.Aids Individual Learning: It focuses on understanding every student's unique learning style, allowing teachers to adapt their teaching strategies and methods accordingly.Structured Environment: It promotes an organised learning environment fostering discipline and facilitating productive progress in essential skills.However, there are also some challenges that need to be considered:Challenges:Rigidity: This approach's strong focus on structure can potentially make learning too rigid, stifling creativity and innovation.Overemphasis on Uniformity: It might encourage a 'one-size-fits-all' perception which may not cater to individual learning needs or abilities.Teacher Dependence: The approach might inadvertently foster dependence on teachers, limiting students' development of independent or critical thinking skills.The benefits and challenges of the Structural Functional Approach can be presented in a table for easy comparison:AspectBenefitsChallengesLearning EnhancementEnhances understanding and retentionRigidity might stifle creativityIndividual LearningSupports unique learning stylesMay encourage 'one-size-fits-all' perceptionStructured EnvironmentPromotes discipline and skill progressPotentially fosters teacher dependenceIn plain language this means: "The effectiveness of the Structural Functional Approach is determined by the difference between its benefits and challenges."Remember, a keen understanding of these aspects can help educators better navigate and utilise the Structural Functional Approach in education and learning processes. Through this, they can extract its maximum benefits while efficiently handling any arising challenges.Structural Functional Approach is a method in political science that examines socio-political systems by analysing their structures (the institutions that form them) and functions (the roles that these institutions play).Structural Functional Approach is commonly used in sociology, anthropology, political science, and organizational structures. It views society or an organization as a complex system of interdependent parts that work together to promote unity and stability.Critical elements that constitute the Structural Functional Approach: Structures, which are the institutions or parts of a socio-political system, and Functions, the role or job these institutions play.The Structural Functional Approach finds profound use in the field of Comparative Politics which involves comparing political systems, understanding patterns of government and analysing how different cultures impact political situations.The Structural Approach in classroom settings involve understanding the 'structures' and 'functions' at play within a learning environment, subject to the benefits such as enhanced learning and facilitating discipline and challenges such as potential rigidity and stifling creativity. Who is the father of functionalism? The "father" of functional functionalism is often considered to be French sociologist Émile Durkheim, who deeply influenced the formation of structural functionalism through his emphasis on the interdependent nature of social systems. What is the importance of structural functionalism? Structural functionalism is important as it provides a framework to understand how various parts of a political system interact and contribute to its overall functionality and stability. It highlights the balance between unity and diversity within a political system. What are the four basic concepts of Structural Functionalism? The four basic concepts of Structural Functionalism are: social structure, social function, social stability, and functional prerequisites. These concepts analyse how societal structures maintain order and cohesiveness within a society. What is an example of the structural-functional approach? An example of a structural functional approach in politics is the system of governance in the UK. The institutions (like Parliament, Judiciary, and Monarchy) form the structure and the functions are the norms, traditions, and rules, which keep society stable and cohesive. What is the structural functional approach? The structural functional approach is a concept in political science that analyses the structures (like institutions or processes) of a society and their functions, to understand the workings of the political system. It sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote unity and stability. Save Article Access over 700 million learning materials Study more efficiently with flashcards Get better grades with AI Sign up for free Already have an account? Log in Good job! Keep learning, you are doing great. Don't give up! Next Open in our app At StudySmarter, we have created a learning platform that serves millions of students. Meet the people who work hard to deliver fact based content as well as making sure it is verified. Lily Hulatt is a Digital Content Specialist with over three years of experience in content strategy and curriculum design. She gained her PhD in English Literature from Durham University in 2022, taught in Durham University's English Studies Department, and has contributed to a number of publications. Lily specialises in English Literature, English Language, History, and Philosophy. Get to know Lily Gabriel Freitas is an AI Engineer with a solid experience in software development, machine learning algorithms, and generative AI, including large language models' (LLMs) applications. Graduated in Electrical Engineering at the University of São Paulo, he is currently pursuing an MSc in Computer Engineering at the University of Campinas, specializing in machine learning topics. Gabriel has a strong background in software engineering and has worked on projects involving computer vision, embedded AI, and LLM applications. Get to know Gabriel StudySmarter is a globally recognized educational technology company, offering a holistic learning platform designed for students of all ages and educational levels. Our platform provides learning support for a wide range of subjects, including STEM, Social Sciences, and Languages and also helps students to successfully master various tests and exams worldwide, such as GCSE, A Level, SAT, ACT, Abitur, and more. We offer an extensive library of learning materials, including interactive flashcards, comprehensive textbook solutions, and detailed explanations. The cutting-edge technology and tools we provide help students create their own learning materials. StudySmarter's content is not only expert-verified but also regularly updated to ensure accuracy and relevance. Learn more A LevelPolitical StudiesEdexcel17.1.1Rational, cultural and structural approaches are three different ways to compare the politics of different countries. The rational approach compares individuals in different political systems. The rational approach views individuals as rational people who will act in their own self-interest to ensure they achieve their political goals. The rational approach is useful for comparing members of the executive, legislative, political parties, pressure groups and voters. The cultural approach focuses on the shared ideas and belief of groups within different political systems. The cultural approach believes that the ideas and values of groups will influence the behaviour of people within the group. The cultural approach explains why societies behave differently to one another. The structural approach compares the institutions in each political system and the processes within each institution. The structural approach believes that different political structures, such as two political systems having a different type of constitution, will lead to different political outcomes. The structural approach is useful for comparing constitutions, legislatures, judiciaries, executives and both parties and pressure groups. Jump to other topicsUnlimited access to 10,000+ open-ended exam questionsMini-mock exams based on your study historyUnlock 800+ premium courses & e-booksGet started with Seneca Premium Imagine trying to understand the vast and complex world of politics without any guiding framework. It would be like trying to navigate a labyrinth without a map! This is where political scientists like Gabriel Almond come in, offering us structured ways to analyze and comprehend political systems. Today, we dive into Almond's Structural-Functional Approach, a pivotal framework in comparative politics. Table of Contents Gabriel Almond, a renowned political scientist, introduced the Structural-Functional Approach to provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing political systems. His approach revolves around understanding the essential functions that political systems must perform to sustain themselves. The Core Functions of Political Systems Almond identified four core functions that every political system needs to perform: Political Socialization: This is the process by which individuals in a society are educated and indoctrinated into the political culture. It involves the transmission of political norms, values, and beliefs from one generation to another. Schools, families, media, and religious institutions play a significant role in political socialization. Interest Articulation: This function involves the expression of needs, demands, and desires by individuals and groups within a society. Interest groups, political parties, and other organizations facilitate this process, ensuring that the voices of the people are heard in the political arena. Interest Aggregation: Once interests are articulated, they need to be aggregated or combined into policy proposals. Political parties are primarily responsible for this function, as they take various individual and group interests and merge them into broader policy agendas. Political Communication: Effective communication is crucial for any political system. This function involves the dissemination and exchange of information between the government and the public. Media, public speeches, and official statements are some of the key channels for political communication. The Multifunctional Nature of Political Structures Almond emphasized that political structures are multifunctional, meaning that they often perform more than one function. For instance, a political party not only aggregates interests but also socializes members and communicates policies to the public. This multifunctionality makes political systems complex but also more adaptable and resilient. The Concept of Political Culture One of Almond's significant contributions is the introduction of the concept of political culture. Political culture refers to the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that shape the political behavior of individuals and groups. It helps explain why different societies have different political systems and practices. For example, in India, the political culture is deeply influenced by historical, religious, and social factors, which differ significantly from the political culture in the United States. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for a comprehensive analysis of political systems. Classifying Political Systems: Primitive, Traditional, Transitional, and Modern Almond's framework also includes a classification of political systems based on their developmental stages: Primitive Political Systems: These are the earliest forms of political organization, often found in small, tribal societies. They have simple structures with limited differentiation of roles and functions. Traditional Political Systems: These systems are more complex than primitive ones and are typically found in agricultural or feudal societies. They have established institutions and a higher degree of role differentiation. Transitional Political Systems: These systems are in the process of moving from traditional to modern structures. They are characterized by significant social, economic, and political changes, often leading to instability and conflict. Modern Political Systems: These are highly complex and differentiated systems found in industrialized and post-industrial societies. They have advanced institutions, high levels of role specialization, and greater political participation. Criticisms of Almond's Structural-Functional Approach Despite its influence, Almond's approach has faced several criticisms: Conservative Bias: Critics argue that the framework has a conservative bias, as it tends to emphasize stability and order, often overlooking issues of power, inequality, and conflict. Conceptual Ambiguity: Some scholars have pointed out that the concepts used in the framework, such as political culture and functions, can be vague and difficult to operationalize. Operational Limitations: The approach has been criticized for its limitations in empirical research. Measuring and comparing political functions across different systems can be challenging due to the lack of clear, quantifiable indicators. Conclusion Gabriel Almond's Structural-Functional Approach has undoubtedly provided a valuable framework for understanding political systems. By identifying core functions, emphasizing the multifunctional nature of political structures, and introducing the concept of political culture, Almond has enriched the field of comparative politics. However, like any theoretical framework, it is essential to be aware of its limitations and criticisms. What do you think? How relevant do you find Almond's approach in analyzing contemporary political systems? Can you think of examples where this framework might fall short in explaining political phenomena?