

Chapter 2:

Comparing Political Systems



Why We Compare

• "Without comparisons to make the mind does not know how to proceed."

Alexis de Tocqueville



Alexis de Tocqueville

• Comparison is fundamental to human thought

• Comparisons act as tests because controlled experiments are impossible



How We Compare

- 3 ways: describe, explain, predict
- Without description, everything else is impossible
- Explain: determines relationships for government types
- Predict: from theories from relationships
- Large "n" studies- statistical studies
- Small "n" studies- case studies
- Large: variety of cases sufficient number
- Small: go deeper into cases



Systems: Structure and Functions

- Three general concepts that are used
 - 1. System
 - 2. Structure
 - 3. Function
- System: an object having moving parts interacting with setting or an environment
- Political system: is a set of institutions and agencies concerned with formulating and implementing the collective goal of a society or group within it



Systems: Structure and Functions

- Government or statues: are the policy making parts of political systems
- Structures: specialized agencies
- Parliaments, bureaucracies, administrative agencies and courts



Systems: Structure and Functions Continued

- Functions: enable the government to formulate, implement, and enforce its policies
- The policies reflect the goals: the agencies provide the means.

Key terms:

- 1.) Political Regime
- 2.) Structural
- 3.) Dense and Sparse trade relations
- 4.) interdependence of nations
- 5.) Fluctuations

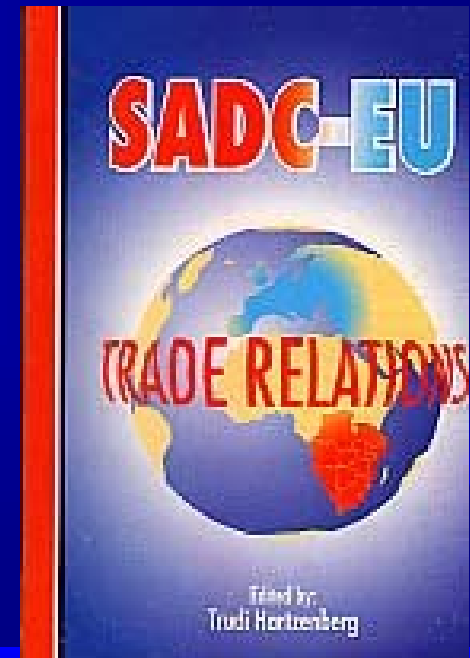
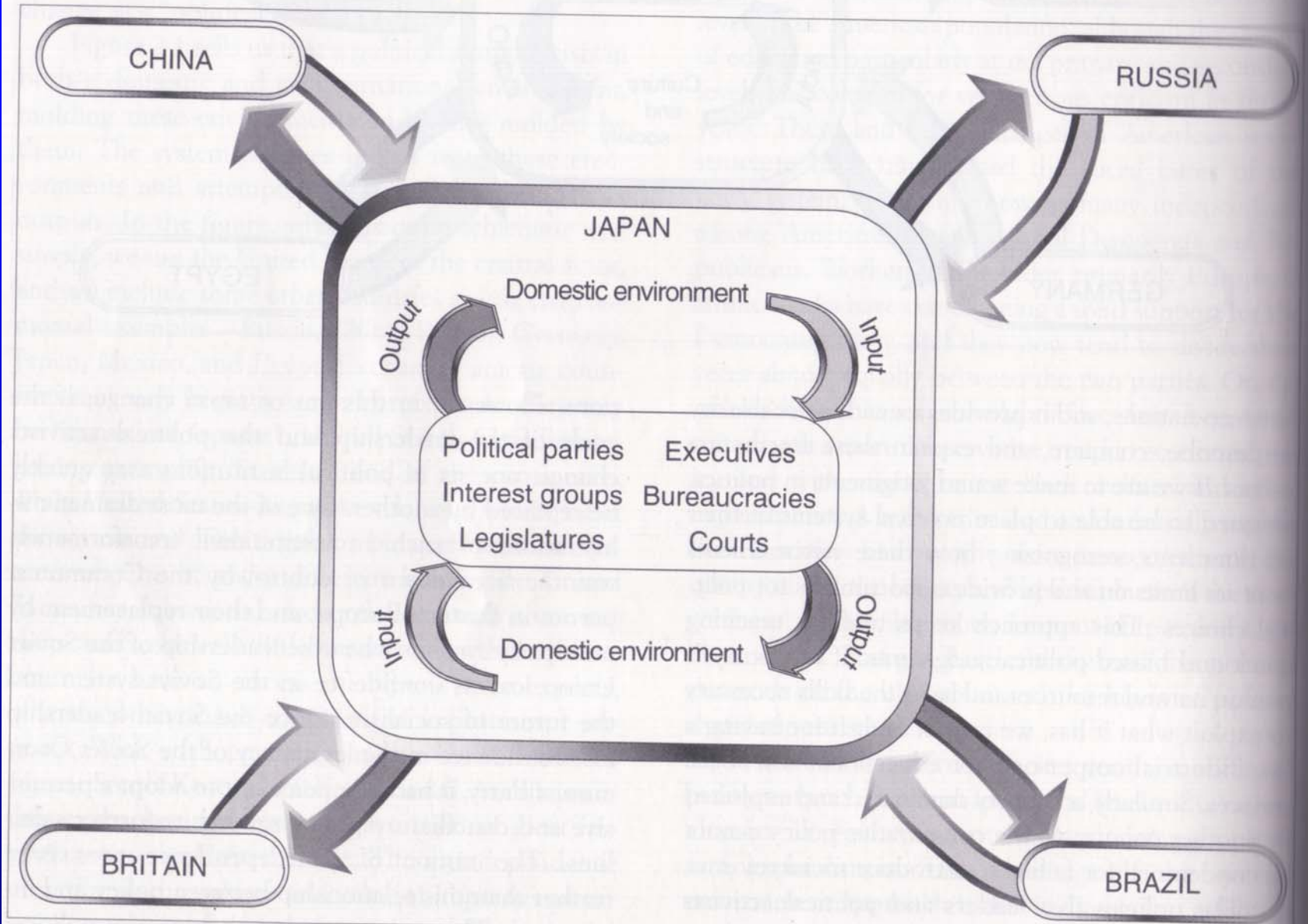
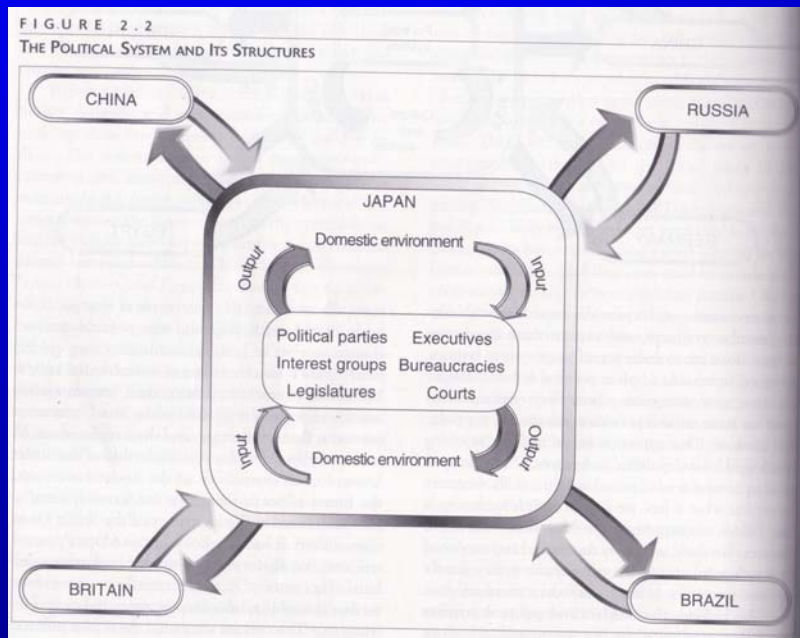


FIGURE 2.2

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS STRUCTURES



Section 4: Structures and Functions



- ◆ Locates within the political system six types of political structures: political parties, interest groups, legislatures, executives, bureaucracies, and courts
- ◆ will not carry far when comparing different political systems b/c such structures are found in almost all modern political systems
- ◆ Britain & China have all 6 political structures (at least in name)



Britain

- ◆ Monarchy
- ◆ Political Executive: Prime Minister, ministers assigned to the Cabinet & larger industry (all heads of departments/agencies)
- ◆ Political executive is usually selected by Parliament & have substantial policymaking power
- ◆ Has a legislative body (House of Commons)

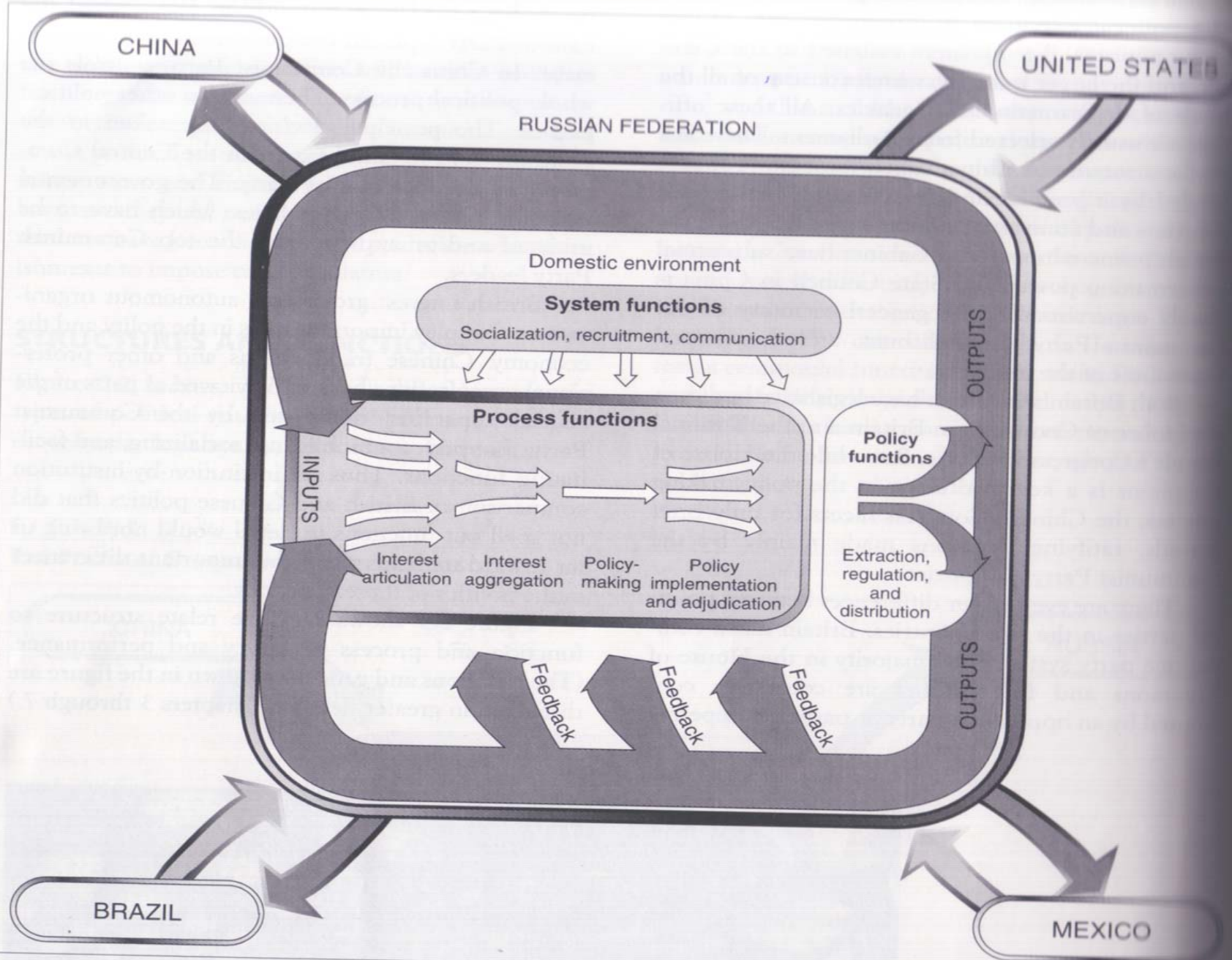


China

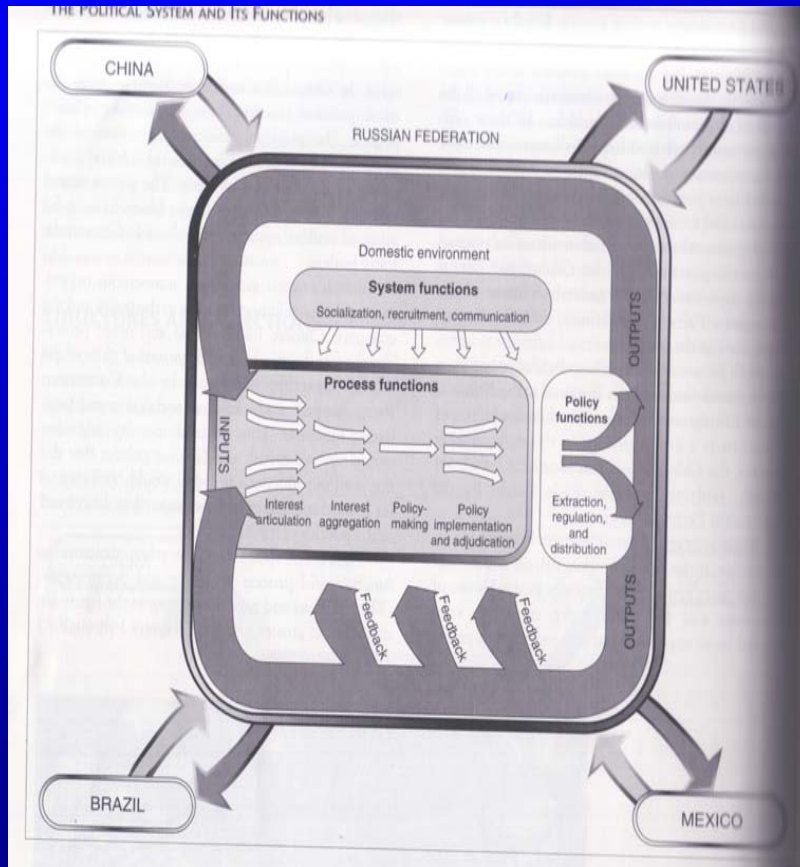
- ◆ No specialized ceremonial executive
- ◆ Has a president elected by the National People's Congress who performs ceremonial and political functions
- ◆ Political Executive: similar structure to Britain but is called the State Council and is headed by the Premier
- ◆ Political Executive is closely supervised by the general secretary of the Communist Party, Politburo, and the Central Committee of the party
- ◆ legislative body (National People's Congress) which meets for brief periods, ratifying decisions mainly made by the Communist Party authorities
- ◆ Communist Party controls the whole political process



THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ITS FUNCTIONS



The Political System & Its Functions



- ◆ shows how we relate structure → function & process → performance
- ◆ Under “process functions”: distinctive activities necessary for policy to be made/implemented
- ◆ The political process begins as interests are expressed/articulated, but must be combined/aggregated into policy alternatives to be effective; alternative policies are THEN considered



System functions (socialization, recruitment, communication)

- ◆ Not directly involved in making/implementing public policy
- ◆ Determine whether or not the system will be maintained/changed
- ◆ Political socialization - involves families, schools, communications media, churches, and various political structures that develop, reinforce, and transform attitudes of political significance
- ◆ Political recruitment - refers to the selection of people for political activity & government offices
- ◆ Political communication - refers to the flow of information through the society and through the various structures that make up the political system



Outputs - implementations of the political process

- ✦ Policy functions - substantive impacts on society, economy, and culture (Using these functional categories, we can determine how institutions in different countries combine in the making/implementation of different kinds of public policy)
 - Regulation of behavior
 - Extractions of resources in the form of taxes, etc.
 - Distribution of benefits and services to various groups in the population
- ✦ Outcomes - result in new inputs, demands for legislation or administrative action, and increases/decreases in amount of support given to the political system and incumbent officeholders



Little Tidbits

- ✦ interest groups are autonomous organizations <play important roles in the polity and economy>
- ✦ Trade unions/professional organizations have to be viewed as parts of the official apparatus, dominated by the Comm. Party



An Illustrative Comparison

Brief Example:

Russia in 1985	Russia in 1998
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Gorbachev-USSR-Communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Yeltsin-15 Member Republics-Parliament-independent political parties. Etc.

-Comparisons look at changes, contrasts, and functions of Institutions over time



An Illustrative Comparison Continued

Structural Analysis:

- Looks at the number of political parties, organization of legislature, executive branch, bureaucracy, mass media, etc.
- Tries to determine how all of the above function together.



The Policy Level: Performance, Outcome and Evaluation

- "structural-functional" differences determine relationship between politics and society on things such as welfare, justice, freedom, equality, peace and prosperity.
- Government's efficiency is not determined by spending. Other factors come into play, such as technology, culture, etc.
- Public Policy is never wholly determined by the people or their leaders. There are other factors that influence them.
- The output of a political system is its performance.



The Policy Level: Performance, Outcome and Evaluation continued

-Evaluation of political systems is determined by things such as security, welfare and liberty.

-Another part of evaluation is considering how the govt. policies affect individuals and subgroups

