

the theory by applying them to policy praxis.¹⁹

13. Albeit handicapped, the traditional approach is not entirely useless. Used for a particular country, it will provide the policy planner with a configurative description, i.e., in the words of Charles Ragin, a combination of characteristics. It is the juxtaposition of this particular configuration to another one which constitute a comparison in the qualitative tradition.²⁰ Ragin, rather than distinguishing the boundaries of comparative social science by its data like most of his contemporaries, argues that the distinctive goals of comparative social science should define its boundaries; those goals being "both to explain and to interpret macrosocial variation."²¹ This has some appeal to the "real world" of policy planners. The objects of study of policy planners are various, but primarily they consist of states, each being in itself a macrosocial unit whose intentions and variations of, for example, need to be known. Moreover, as Ragin suggests, the macrosocial units are considered real and identified by name, something which is clearly consistent with diplomatic practice. The policy planners, like the comparativists will identify the similarities and differences among macrosocial units, but unlike them, in order to formulate policies in light of clearly or less clearly

¹⁹ I thank Professor von Riekhoff for his suggestions on this matter.

²⁰ See Charles Ragin's brief comments at page 3 of his book The Comparative Method. Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987).

²¹ Ragin, The Comparative Method [...], page 5.