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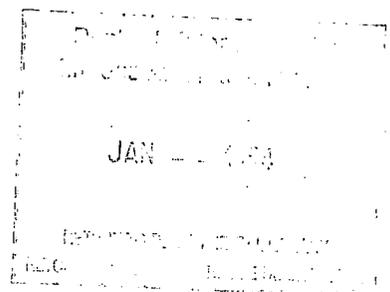
**YUGOSLAVIA AND THE POLICY PLANNING PROCESS:
COMPARATIVE POLITICS' METHODOLOGIES TO THE RESCUE**

(SECOND DRAFT)

By

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YUGOSLAVIA AND THE POLICY PLANNING PROCESS:

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INTRODUCTION

1. This paper is based on a fundamental assumption: the time and efforts spent to enhance our cumulative knowledge of political phenomena are wasted except when this cumulative knowledge is politically purposeful. This bias in favor of applied knowledge by political practitioners¹ will certainly displease many political scientists who have devoted their whole career to the development of abstract models and theories.² This bias results from the author's underlying belief that there is a large gap between the cumulative knowledge produced by political scientists and the applicability of this knowledge in the "real world" as defined by political practitioners.

2. While political scientists try to grasp a complex political reality and provide it with meaning through the conscious building of models, schemes or theories, political practitioners are struggling with a never ending agenda of topics upon which positions or courses of action - or, ironically, inaction - have to

¹ The term applies here to elected politicians, their political advisors and the bureaucracy beneath them. Though in principle apolitical, the bureaucracy which interests us here operates on the world scene and as such its acts constitutes the essence of foreign policy study, a sub-subfield of political science. Its accountability to elected political masters does not denude the nature of state's acts - which is the essence of its work - of its political contents on the international scene. The reader is reminded that the context of our discussion is Canadian.

² Of course, the fact that, at times, pure abstract theory can provide understanding benefitting political practitioners cannot be denied.

be developed. The constraints faced by those political practitioners (time, scarcity or overload of information, lack of resources, and organizational limitations imposed by the parameters permitted by the political system) may be comparable to those faced, at times, by political scientists. However, contextual differentiations separate them into different categories of politically interested subjects. That is, their respective realm of activity and intellectual representation of it - despite the fact that their subject of study may perfectly coincide - are in fact and to varying degrees dissociated from one to another. Of course, the rigidity of this dichotomy weakens when interpenetration occurs between the two milieux.

3. From a practical stand this interpenetration, albeit welcomed, appears too often suspicious to the non-interactive colleagues. On the one hand, political scientists are accused of misunderstanding the nature of practical political problems because of their apparent dissociation from the "real world" and of misinterpreting the practitioners' decisions on the matter for the same reason. On the other hand, practitioners, while knowing the gritty-nitty details of everything, are accused of misunderstanding too often the real conditions, causes, and nature of political phenomena for which, when their polity is affected, they are accountable to decide on acting or not. The point here is not to designate which side of the debate is right but rather how one can complement the work of the other. More precisely, our argument is to the effect that practitioners and their particular milieu cannot easily

embarrass themselves of complicated theoretical and abstract constructions of reality, however well tested they may be, in order to be responsive to the constraints they are operating under and/or to their polity. However, they can, with caution, benefit from the various methodologies developed by political scientists.³ In turn, the results of such methodological applications in the world of politics from the reality of ideas can also assist the scholar in his theory-building process.⁴

4. Our argumentation will be presented from a very particular point of view, our goal being to offer practical tools of analysis to international affairs governmental practitioners.⁵ Thus, our first step will be to identify the External Affairs Department's particular practitioners who can benefit the most from those tools, why, and how they can do so. Secondly, a particular set of

³ Moreover, they can benefit from the data and different interpretations emerging from the theoretical discourse, as well as from criteria of critique which may be absent or underdeveloped in the practitioners' context. I thank Professor von Riekhoff for having brought my attention on these points.

⁴ This argument is based on the premise that the political practitioners we are focusing on in this paper need intrapolitics knowledge to operate effectively in their field, which is by nature international. This is a slightly modified view of the one expressed by Chadwick F. Alger years ago to the effect that comparative politics theories can serve explanatory functions in the international relations field. See his "Comparison of Intranational and International Politics", American Political Science Review, Vol. 57, No. 2 (June 1963). Our focus here is different since we are concerned primarily with comparative politics methodologies and their use by actors whose primary area of activities is dissociated from theory-building.

⁵ We assume that diplomats will not consciously engage in theory building. Instead the comparative politics' methodologies will assist their formulation of general or even specific generalizations in relation to their dossier upon which either policy-making will be based or policy planning done. In other words, we do not assume that those generalizations will necessarily be systematically related in order to form a theory's nucleus subject to observation and empirical testing.

methodologies, from the comparative politics subfield of political science, will be identified and briefly commented upon.⁶ Finally, we will offer some examples of methodological applications, which could, we believe, easily be taken over by political practitioners.

I - THE POLICY PLANNING STAFF AND THE POLICY PLANNING PROCESS

5. External Affairs and International Trade Canada is engaged in a multitude of activities everyday. Those activities are varied, ranging from diplomatic contacts to coordination meetings or current assessments of foreign activities. A large bureaucracy, its personnel is compartmentalized into various branches and divisions. Two organizational streams can be recognized. The first one is concerned with the support of foreign service personnel and their activities (the core branches). The second one is concerned by policy formulation and program planning and coordination (the functional and geographic matrix), which presupposes ministerial direction and the availability of adequate data and information on the subjects requiring foreign policy decisions or state's acts.⁷

⁶ International relations and comparative foreign policies methodologies are extensively discussed in the literature addressing foreign policy issues. It is the neglect of discussions recognizing the possible usefulness of comparative politics methodologies in the foreign policy area that prompted us to undertake that paper.

⁷ This structural representation of the Department is conceptual and used only to help the reader contextualize the general environment in which the policy planners work. A line representation of the Department can be found in its Annual Report 1990/91 (1991), at page 79. Supplementary information is provided in Government of Canada, 1992-93 Estimates. Part III: Expenditure Plan External Affairs and International Trade Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1992), at pages 2-13 - 2-15.

The first organizational stream is the one which concerns us.⁸

6. Policy coordination, corporate management and personnel is the essence of the first stream. Of particular interests are the Policy Planning and Coordination Staff and the Foreign Assessments Bureau. The Foreign Assessments (formerly Intelligence) Bureau's mission is to "provide intelligence to decision makers within the Department", that is, to collect, analyze and disseminate classified information "relating to Canada's international role and the intention of foreign states" to senior managers and policy developers.⁹ The Policy Planning Staff is thus fed (but not exclusively) by the Foreign Assessments Bureau.¹⁰

⁸ The other stream is mainly concerned by current activities and its work is mainly reactive in nature, which largely prevents it from engaging in any kind of theory-building process. Rather, its needs are for treated information - when available - upon which policy formulation can proceed. Otherwise, untreated and factual information is widely used for short-term purposes. Of course, methodological considerations are of lesser concern, its personnel being responsive to subjective factors, such as Canadian foreign policy goals and objectives, normative by themselves, or ministerial requests for action. A closer look at that stream is surely warranted but outside the scope of the present paper.

⁹ External Affairs and International Trade Canada, Annual Report 1990-91 (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group - Publishing, 1991), page 73.

¹⁰ Comparative politics methodologies may somehow enter the intelligence cycle, the cycle by which raw information are assessed and given meaning. But like the functional/geographical matrix, the focus is on current intelligence (factual analysis). Although it would be interesting to study long-term intelligence assessments as well as the intelligence assessment methodologies used by intelligence officers in comparison with those used by political science comparativists, it is unfortunately a difficult task considering the secrecy surrounding intelligence work. At this stage a look at the Policy Planning Staff will suffice. On the intelligence assessment process, see Bruce D. Berkowitz and Allan E. Goodman, Strategic Intelligence for American National Security (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), Chapter 2-4; and Walter Laqueur, A World of Secrets. The Uses and Limits of Intelligence (New York: Basic Books, 1985), Chapter 1.

7. The Policy Planning Staff is divided into two divisions: Policy Planning and Economic Planning.¹¹ It is "responsible for advising senior management on the general orientation of Canada's foreign policy and for the larger issues requiring coordination between various branches".¹² Policy planning is meant here to describe a process by which plans are conceived and delineated, and evaluated (in this case, the implementation is the responsibility of the foreign service personnel serving in Canada's representations). Policy conception is generally task-oriented from top-down, that is, based on goals assigned by the organization. What differs from others' roles in the organization is the policy planners' research for a balance of priorities against the realities of limited resources, imperfect intelligence, and of specific political and economic environments.¹³ This task is particularly difficult in a period of economic recession where foreign economic opportunities clash with, for example, good governance principles.

8. The determinants of good planning are (1) the quality of the available information, raw or analyzed; (2) the good judgment and

¹¹ Policy Planning is the particular division which interests us here.

¹² EAITC, Annual Report 1990-91, page 70.

¹³ Our understanding of policy planning has been largely influenced by the tactical planning literature. Many of the terms we used are from Stephen J. Andriole, "TACPLAN - An Intelligent Aid for Army Tactical Planning", in Stephen J. Andriole [Ed.], Artificial Intelligence and National Defense: Applications to C3I and Beyond (Fairfax, Va: AFCEA International Press, 1987), pages 143-155. On influencing external factors in policy formulation, see Government of Canada, 1992-93 Estimates [...], pages 2-16 - 2-17.

pertinent experience of policy planners, that is, their capacity to identify and maintain by their policy formulations a balance of priorities; (3) managerial direction consistency and quality; and (4) intraorganizational cooperation and successful extraorganizational coordination. The crucial determinant appears to be number (2). Any good judgment requires a sound understanding of reality, which one's experience may help attain, but not necessarily: contexts and actors rarely remain static, they evolve and change. Considering the nature of policy planning, which is less oriented on the immediacy of departmental concerns, we argue that its analytical skills and output can be considerably enhanced by the use of comparative politics methodologies in its day to day work. We shall repeat here that in many of its dossiers intrapolitics¹⁴ knowledge is a prerequisite of informed policy formulation and policy advise to senior managers. The exclusion of international relations methodologies or comparative foreign policy methodologies will not be precipitated by the use of comparative politics methodologies, which concern themselves with purely intrapolitics matters. Rather, it is the ability of the policy planners to handpick the analytic tools in both political science fields that should be enhanced.

9. With the bureaucratic and organizational constraints faced by policy planners, no one can expect them to build theories. However,

¹⁴ To be more specific, we understand intrapolitics as encompassing both bureaucratic politics and domestic politics at large.

every policy planner has his/her own model explaining the issue he is dealing with, this model being either implicit and vague or explicit and clearly defined. Each tend to produce an "environmentally conscious", i.e. culture oriented, explanatory discourse on his subject matter and from that predictions on the subject's future unfold. Left to his own intuition and experience (including his education and his organizational acculturation), which are never fully exposed, his model may rally many or rather open itself to challenge and organi-zational in-fighting. A more structured way to organize the intrapolitics information on a single or many subject matters, in relation to the political phenomenon (or political phenomena) which is (are) the object of policy formulation attempts, is to rely on formal comparative methodologies. What is needed from policy planners is sufficient theoretical deduction in order to arrive at a set of politically or organizationally acceptable propositions upon which courses of action or plans can be conceived and then assessed through a cost/benefit analysis. The explanatory and predictive power of their propositions on particular subject matters will be as good as the methodologies they use to organize the intrapolitics information they had access to. The goal in using comparative politics methodologies is thus to organize the intrapolitics information in such a way as to render it purposeful to policy planners. The step from theory-building may seem short, however, it is left to political scientists; the policy planners cannot devote more of their limited time to such a task. Their propositions are

consequently up to grab to be finessed or to be empirically tested. From a policy perspective, the propositions reached through the use of comparative politics' methodologies are useful as long as they lend themselves to policy formulation.¹⁵

II - COMPARATIVE POLITICS' METHODOLOGIES

10. Diplomatic work has traditionally been predominantly bilateral. However, grassroots and in many cases governmental demands, formulated out of necessity, for multilateral and even global diplomacy have challenged the old approach. Simply put, it is because factors of interdependence - as well, paradoxically, as factors of fragmentation - are more important now than ever before. One has only to think about environmental and nuclear issues to realize the necessity of concerted international efforts. This had not been missed by External Affairs policy planners. In their "Foreign Policy 1991-92 Update", they wrote that "a changing power constellation, a growing international commitment to common values, an increasingly global economy, and a world beyond borders will shape the new global agenda. All of these related forces will pose significant challenges to traditional notions of sovereignty; managing interdependence will increasingly characterize foreign

¹⁵ The expanding literature on comparative politics and on its methodologies would be useless unless some application of it can be envisaged in the "real world". This paper only offers one possibility.

policy in the 1990s."¹⁶

11. To follow the preceding logic, traditional comparative politics has to be suspected of lesser utility than the newly offered methodologies. The comparative politics' traditional approach is usually characterized by its configurative descriptive, formal-legalist, parochial, conservative, nontheoretical and methodological insensitive focus.¹⁷ The traditional approach is theoretically reductionist, but at the same time clearly suitable to acquire intrapolitics knowledge (even if this knowledge may be irrelevant or ethnocentrically biased) of individual countries in a normatively based policy environment. However, if the policy planner has to attain a balance of priorities in a determined context characterized by the interdependence of individual countries, the traditional approach will fail him in many respects. First, the insufficient knowledge of political processes will misconstrue an already probable complex reality. Secondly, the assumption "that all political systems [are] inexorably and inevitably evolving in the direction of liberal democracy"¹⁸ will distort the cost/benefit analysis necessary to establish a credible balance of priorities. Thirdly, the difficulty to act on interde-

¹⁶ External Affairs and International Trade Canada, Policy Planning Staff, Foreign Policy Themes and Priorities 1991-92 Update (Ottawa: EAITC, December 1991), page 2.

¹⁷ For a detailed exposé and critique of the traditional approach, see James A. Bill and Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr, Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1973), pages 1-12.

¹⁸ Bill and Hardgrave, Comparative Politics [...], page 6.

pendent or fragmentation factors will be apparent because of a lack of comparative knowledge of convergent or divergent political processes in many countries, thus largely preventing the formulation of multilateral or global policies. Finally, the limited power of research procedures of the traditional approach's methodologies means that findings verification at the same level of analysis or at other levels is virtually impossible. Thus the chances that a phenomenon under examination may remain relatively unexplained by the use of traditional comparative politics' methodologies are higher than under an inquiry encompassing different kinds of methodologies.

12. To recapitulate, the traditional approach limits itself to study the "what" of intrapolitics. We contend that the inquiry should go a little further in policy planning, simply because the "how" and the "why" are important to understand and formulate sound policy options. Although no theory-building will necessarily emerge from the policy planners' use of elaborate comparative politics methodology which systematically address the "how" and the "why", their work may be of many uses to the interested and theory-building comparativists. At least three important contributions to theory which policy planners can make can be envisaged: (1) help developing the formulation of the initial theory by providing academics with inside information; (2) interpret theory in light of their practical experience; and (3) test propositions derived from

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.

circumscribed normative goals. We agree with Ragin that "this knowledge provides the key to understanding, explaining, and interpreting diverse theoretical outcomes and processes and their significance for current institutional arrangements",²² but with the exception that policy planners are not to be understood as true comparativists: their methodologies may be as objective in their application as the comparativists but their interior motives are inherently subjective, thus generally dissociated from theory-building considerations.

14. The danger for the policy planner is to confuse observational from explanatory units. To avoid such a confusion, he has to be clear as to what pattern of results he is investigating and assure himself of the presence - or absence thereof - of such a pattern in the macrosocial units under comparison. Anyhow, his explanatory propositions concerning, for instance, interdependence or fragmentation phenomena will likely be limited due to empirical constraints (scarcity of information or time restriction for example). It is at such a junction that the political scientist will take over.

15. Focusing more specifically on methods, Ragin distinguishes three: the case-oriented comparative method, the variable-oriented approach, and the synthetic comparative strategy. The case-oriented comparative method is similar in scope to the traditional

²² Ragin, The Comparative Method [...], page 6.

approach's methods. We argue that the case-oriented method is suited for a lesser number of phenomena of interest to the policy planners for they only uncover patterns of invariance when the latter is interested primarily in the direction of changes of both interdependency or fragmentation phenomena. That is not to suggest that case-oriented studies are a waste of tax-payers' money, for they are still widely used for non-theoretical purposes in diplomatic organizations, but that their applicability is less relevant than ever. The variable-oriented approach seems perfectly suited to the busy policy planners, who can comfort themselves in the certainty of numbers provided by scientific statistical analysis. The beauty of the variable-oriented approach is that it can assess "the correspondence between relationships discernible across many societies or countries, on the one hand, and broad theoretically based images of macrosocial phenomena, on the other."²³ As Ragin notes, the findings of this approach are of unknown value. Moreover, in many instances the policy relevance can hardly be demonstrated, the emphasis on technique being the main preoccupation rather than substance;²⁴ that is, the generalist, who focuses on structural process, is substituted for the area specialist, who focuses on human agencies.

16. The two preceding comparative approaches can be combined, that is, both are applied to the same problem under investigation, or,

²³ Ragin, The Comparative Method [...], page 53.

²⁴ Bill and Hardgrave, Comparative Politics [...], page 17.

as Ragin favors, synthesized, which means that several features of each are integrated. The major advantages of a synthetic comparative approach are that (1) a large number of cases may be addressed; (2) parsimonious explanations (useful in a policy setting) can be formulated; (3) there is an analytic aspect; and (4) alternative explanations are considered.²⁵ Over all, the case-oriented strategy is discredited to the profit of more encompassing methodologies. However, their value should not be forgotten.²⁶

17. From a practical point of view, the case-oriented approach can be the object of appropriate use, outside theory-building. Harry Eckstein's work seeks to demonstrate the validity of case studies to theory-building. Yet, his typologies of case studies are an indication of the various ways by which case studies can be purposeful, especially for the policy planners of our discussion. However, his configurative-idiographic case study, which deals with complex collective individuals such as polities, parties, etc., can be accused of suffering from the same criticisms addressed to the traditional approach. Eckstein's own criticisms are rather similar in contents. A second type of case study identified is the heuristic case, by which the study is one of gradual unfolding and not of simultaneous inspections as in a comparative study. The main

²⁵ See Ragin, The Comparative Method [...], page 82-84.

²⁶ See the demonstration of Harry Eckstein to the effect that the contribution of case studies to theory-building should not be dismissed. Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science", in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby [Eds.], Handbook of Political Science. Vol. 7: Strategies of Inquiry (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975), pages 79-137.

problem with this type of case study is that it is difficult to find those especially precious cases to theory-building. But, as previously mentioned, the policy planners generally have no theory-building goals. Instead they have policy goals, for which they have to possess, for policy formulation to occur, analyzed intrapolitics information susceptible of generalizations. Thus, the heuristic method, allied to the continuity of diplomatic experience and a continuous input into policy planning can be purposeful. The political scientist can always pick what would be of interest. The other types of case study (plausibility probes and crucial-case) proposed by Eckstein are of theory-building relevance primarily. The time necessary to their conclusion would probably deter the most determined policy planner.²⁷

18. Our discussion has been concerned exclusively by the applicability of the comparative politics' grand methodologies: the traditional and the case study approaches, very similar in scope, and the behavioral approach in the world of the policy planners. We have argued that the traditional and case study approaches have some relevancy in relation to the goals pursued by the policy planners and that the behavioral approach can be dangerous. We also considered a synthetic combination of both and argued that this would give a better perspective to the policy planner. Albeit imperfect, all of these comparative politics' grand methodologies

²⁷ Space constraints do not allow us to demonstrate in greater length our argument on these last two type of case studies.

are not mutually exclusive. They provide the policy planner with methodological directions to organize intrapolitics information that will ultimately be used to understand particular political phenomena or institutions. However, to be used effectively and with purpose, the limitations and strenghts of each grand methodologies should be understood by the political planners. These three different, but somehow compatible comparative politics' grand methodologies do not exhaust the number of available sub-methodologies applicable to comparative politics, and usable by policy planners.

19. For instance, in her seminal study of Yugoslav nationalism, Sabrina Ramet takes on the converse proposition of Chadwick Alger mentioned above and demonstrates empirically that international relations theories, namely the balance-of-power theory, can be used in a comparative politics setting, i.e. in an intrapolitics case study.²⁸

20. While these grand methodologies and sub-methodologies look at macrosocial units, the rationality school constitutes one of the main exception, being one of methodological individualism. Essentially, this school seeks to explain individual decisionmaking processes, particularly in a situation of nested games and where,

²⁸ Sabrina P. Ramet, Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991, Second Edition (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).

apparently, an actor select a sub-optimal option.²⁹ In the realm of policy planning, and taking the Yugoslav conflict as a case of application, such an approach could provide insights into the Serbian President's, the Federal President's and Prime Minister's actions and predict their likely future behavior in each of their nested games. The problem, however, is that very few policy planners in the Department are well versed in game theoretical analysis.³⁰ Yet, a simple analytical use of Tsebelis's concepts may offer some useful insights.

CONCLUSION

21. The use of comparative politics' methodologies in the work of policy planners seems a priori justified. However, nobody would be convinced in the absence of any practical demonstration. Such an enterprise is well beyond the confine of this short paper. It would encompass the study of policy planning papers, the study of the policy planners bureaucratic and organizational environment, the interviewing of policy papers' authors in order to understand the rationale on which their analyses are based, the application of various methodologies in order to compare their conclusions on particular subject matters with those achieved by the policy planners, and so on.

²⁹ See George Tsebelis, Nested Games. Rational Choice in Comparative Politics (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990).

³⁰ This can, however, easily be taught.

22. One primary concern at External Affairs is surely the ongoing Yugoslav crisis. An interesting testing of our argumentation would be, for example, to use Tsebelis's and Ramet's frameworks of analysis and draw the appropriate conclusions and then confront them with the conclusion arrived at by policy planners, taking into account the rationale of their policy formulations. Considering the goals and principles by which the Department operates, the usefulness of some formalized methodologies could thereafter be deduced. No matter what the result of an empirical verification of our argument, a formal structure of thoughts in formulating policy options is fundamental to achieve optimal policy outcomes, that is, we consider that it is essential to somehow let aside the "what" and to give priority to the "how" and "why" of primarily intrapolitics phenomena in order to maximize the output of the policy planning function in the department. It is our opinion that policy planners can make better use of available comparative politics methodologies. We have discussed some of those big approaches in a very selective way. However, we hope to have generated a sufficient interest to further develop our thoughts on the matter. On the other hand, we believe to have somehow linked the world of comparative politics and academia, however imperfectly and with bias, to the real world of political practitioners.

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