Synthesis

Inquiry Problems and Future Research

CHARLES F. HERMANN

This essay reviews the two immediately preceding chapters and attempts to use them as a point of departure for some more general observations about key inquiry questions in cross-national research.[1] The Nesvold and Rosenau presentations lend themselves well to the task. In some respects they are complementary and in other ways their contrasts highlight alternative approaches. In both ways they dramatize some of the current issues in cross-national endeavors. To evaluate these two contributions, the reader will be invited to judge these articles as if they were the respective author's definitive statement on the subjects addressed—an assumption that is unlikely, but nevertheless appropriate until each researcher provides us with further analysis on the topics. In the discussion that follows, I will deal first, generally, with problems of logic and levels of analysis in cross-national research, and then deal subsequently with the subproblems of missing elements of aggregation and sequence.

Theory Development and Empirical Investigation

In examining these two contributions side by side, one is struck by the number of ways in which they are complementary. The Rosenau chapter is conceptual and speculative. It develops in broad brush strokes the outline of a theoretical interpretation of how international phenomena may contribute to a change in domestic attitudes and behaviors. The civic commit-

ment of the citizen to the national government is postulated as being fragmented and redirected toward other entities. Interdependence of nations combined with technological advances and resource depletion is viewed as a major contributing force. Rosenau interprets the reconciliation of multiple loyalties and their effects to be dependent upon psychological processes and individual constructs for ordering the world that researchers need to identify and understand.

The large number of concepts and relationships discussed or alluded to by Rosenau stands in sharp contrast to Nesvold's primary concentration on the single relationship between the state's use of coercion and public manifestations of political conflict. What is the relationship between these two variables and what produces extremes in their occurrence? These questions are at the heart of Nesvold's inquiry. Unlike Rosenau's chapter, hers is an empirical analysis of variations in a single relationship.

Both studies need to be extended by the kind of research design represented by the other. Upon examining Rosenau, the reader may ask: Is this really true? With what evidence do you substantiate your assertion? Where are the data? After encountering Nesvold's study and discovering the global correlation of .72 between political conflict and coercion across 117 nations for each of ten years, the reader may join with the author in asking: Why is this so? What theory could account for this relationship? Is it part of a larger pattern of relationships or an artifact with limited real significance? In sum, the chapters illustrate the two essential components of cross-national research—theory development and empirical investigation.

It is apparent throughout the field of cross-national research and social inquiry generally that theoretical development and empirical investigation must complement one another (Boynton would call this coherence). Because such an observation seems obvious, it is surprising that in cross-national studies as a whole, we have had difficulty keeping the two elements intertwined. Early comparative studies were highly speculative with only scant attention paid to evidence or the canons governing its collection or use. After all, when the support for an interpretation of multiple societies depends on the direct or indirect observations of a single observer, the task of gathering empirical support for cross-national generalizations is overwhelming. By the 1960s, however, the enthusiasm among many Western scholars for data collection—national accounting data, other aggregate data, event data, perceptual data, voting data, survey data—and the means of manipulating large data files efficiently, overwhelmed most efforts at theory building.

Are we now collectively in a position to do better—to combine careful cross-national empirical analysis with thoughtful theoretical development? Perhaps, but the integration is not likely without considerable skill and a conscious commitment to conduct work in one domain that facilitates efforts in the other. Surely it is of critical importance to train graduate students and others committed to cross-national inquiry to work in both modes. Although many graduate programs offer instruction in various data collection and analysis methods, training in theory and concept development often goes no further than an introductory seminar in the philosophy of science and perhaps a course that reviews recent substantive theoretical developments in comparative or international politics. Courses in logic or mathematics, seminars on theoretical work in other social sciences, or exercises designed to encourage the student to move from observable phenomena and actual or imaginable experiences to broad generalizations are not routinely advanced. Even if a person is given the opportunity to develop capabilities in both modes, personal talent and predisposition may lead to concentration in one area or the other rather than both.

When a scholar does not perform both functions and hopes that one or more others will build upon his or her work and conduct complementary inquiries, it is imperative that the initial investigator thinks and communicates in ways that facilitate consideration of his or her contribution. If individual scholarly efforts are consciously viewed as building blocks in a cycle of theory and empirical inquiry, various requirements could be advanced to promote the process. Among such requirements, concept formation and specification of conditions certainly should be prominent. These topics bring us back to the Nesvold and Rosenau studies.

Concept Development and Condition Specification

Though the two studies illustrate complementary sides of the theory development/empirical verification concern, they are similar in their interest in multiple units at several levels. Interpretation of phenomena at one level is advanced in terms of phenomena at a different level. The national government is a unit of concern to both Nesvold and Rosenau. The former examines it as emitting coercive behaviors; the latter finds it involved in a web of interdependent relationships that reduce its ability to engage in behaviors that might resolve domestic problems. Both authors introduce subnational units, but with a surprising lack of specification. Rosenau

concentrates on the citizen and "unknown others." The latter may be deceptively easy to operationalize as a "remainder" category—all the people in the world with whom a person does not interact directly. Operationalization, however, is not the same as concept development. In fact, it is not clear that Rosenau is concerned with all unknown others, but only with those to whom an individual assigns some "loyalties or sentiments." Those key descriptors of the unit remain undefined terms. Nesvold considers the behavior of subnational units that challenge the regime or its policies. The behaviors are operationalized—riots, demonstrations, terrorist actions, revolts, and so on—but the units that engage in such behaviors receive no explicit attention. In a similar fashion, Rosenau specifies interdependence as a behavior pattern outside the national government, but is rather unclear about the units generating that relationship. One is left to wonder whether interdependence as used is only between governments, between entire societies, or between various components of a society. (The latter option raises the prospect of some parts of a society being more interdependent than others).

It can be argued that an attempt to explain behavior patterns, whether they be interdependence or political conflict, will be hampered without specification of the behaving unit. When an infant with a relatively undifferentiated means of communication cries, it may not have the same implications as a crying adult. A crying adult in one culture may have a far different meaning than the same adult behavior in another society. Concept development, not just operationalization, is a critical task in any research enterprise and it becomes even more acute in cross-national inquiries. Cross-national equivalencies in units and behaviors must be established rather than assumed.[2]

Both studies struggle with another critical task—the specification of the conditions and parameters under which the postulated relationship might exist. Rosenau stipulates some conditions; Nesvold searches for them empirically. Rosenau speculates that the hypothesized relationship between the citizen and the state applies in industrialized democracies. He suggests that the relationship increases as interdependence increases. In that author's present formulation, the effect of interdependence on citizen behavior is indefinitely linear. Each and every incremental increase in interdependence is assumed to produce an effect on citizen behavior comparable to that of every other equivalent increase. Variability is introduced not as the amount of interdependence changes, but rather as the individual responds in either an accommodative or resistant mode. The

alternate responses are briefly mentioned as being influenced by international crises, technological breakthroughs, inflationary cycles, political leadership, and political socialization. Only the latter intervening variable is discussed to suggest how it affects the direction of individual response. The task of specification is begun, but unfinished.

Nesvold first examines the global relationship between political conflict and state coercion and then checks to see if the relationship is affected by geographical region, structural coerciveness, industrial development, and finally, individual nations. As with Rosenau, the discussion as to why these conditions might be expected to alter the relationship is almost nonexistent.

In terms of specifying underlying conditions and limiting parameters, these chapters may reflect a continuing evolution in cross-national research. The authors are more sensitive to the need than might have been the case a decade ago in cross-national research, but a more explicit and thorough treatment is required. Zinnes (1975) describes the large volume of comparative and international work that engages in what she calls "ad hoc hypothesis testing," the simplest form of which is the exploration of a bivariate relationship—A covaries with B. Typically, the researcher offers some anecdotal suggestions as to why such a relationship is plausible before engaging in an empirical test. Missing in the vast majority of studies, however, is any recognition of the need to probe more deeply at the expected underlying logic for the association and the conditions under which it might be expected to occur, change in intensity, reverse, or disappear entirely.

In cross-national research, certainly part of this specification must concern the class of nations to which the relationship might apply and why. It is a fuller treatment of the "why" in designating conditions that we must stress in the future. The Rosenau interpretation of the individual and the state is noted as a problem of industrial democracies. Is it because they are more prone to interdependence? Is it their pluralism in the organization of interests that facilitates alternative objects of loyalty and commitment? Is it the individual's greater access to communication, information, or personal wealth?

In advancing the idea of the policy sciences, Lasswell (1971) urged his colleagues to establish the contextuality of their research. His concern with context, that of Zinnes (1975) with the inadequacy of ad hoc hypothesis testing, and the references here to conditions and parameters, share a common concern. Until the developers of theoretical works com-

mit themselves to explication of the underlying logic, specification of conditions and parameters will remain a significant impediment to cross-national research.

Problems of Aggregation and Sequence: Multiple Levels and Complex Interactions

In examining the two studies as a set, it is possible to construct linkages between the phenomena addressed in each. In Rosenau's chapter among the effects of increasing international interdependence examined are the emergence of more issues in the public arena and the reduced effectiveness of national governments in resolving domestic public problems. How does the individual member of the polity respond to such circumstances? Rosenau suggests a person reacts in their civic role with either accommodation or resistence. Each of these broad response domains consists of many kinds of behavior and the resistence pattern certainly could include political conflict–demonstrations, riots, strikes, and so on. Moreover, national governments could respond to a reduction in their effectiveness by attempting to reduce interdependence (if that were the perceived source) by initiating new modes of problem solving, engaging in propaganda to lower citizen expectations, or increasing police powers to ensure their continuance in office in the face of domestic dissatisfaction. The last course would likely lead to more governmental coercion. Thus, Rosenau's concern with the effects of interdependence could be a source of the state coercion/political conflict relationship examined by Nesvold. Specifically, the effects Rosenau attributes to increased interdependence could intensify the state coercion/political conflict relationships.

It might also be argued that as dissident groups–who oppose a current regime for whatever reasons–seek to mobilize broad support for their cause by political conflict, the individual citizen's loyalty to the regime could be seriously affected. Some citizen's may react by a renewal of their commitment to the state, whereas others may experience exactly the kind of loss of civic attachment that Rosenau describes. Certainly if state coercion increases or if what has become the accepted or "normal" pattern of state treatment of opposition increases (Nesvold's coercion/conflict ratio), then notions of the civic self are likely to be affected. Following this line of argument, one would expect to observe some of Rosenau's competing loyalty phenomena in countries experiencing peaks in the Nesvold ratio of coercion/conflict.[3]

Though the linkages between the two sets of concerns may appear plausible, the material from each would seem to be only a partial explanation for the phenomena of concern to the other. Facing the assumed consequences of interdependence, Rosenau's citizen has multiple options of which political conflict is only one. From the perspective of Nesvold's research, interdependence may be a factor contributing to coercion or conflict but certainly it is only one source applicable to a subset of the countries examined. If, in the contemporary world, interdependence is steadily increasing, it cannot account for the fluctuations in the coercion/conflict ratio in an industrial democracy such as France.

The attempt to identify possible points of intersection between the two studies facilitates several observations. Both studies involve not only a cross-national research design but one across levels of analysis. Not only do they involve variables at different levels, but also parallel searches for sources of explanation at nonnational levels. Nesvold and Rosenau both tend to favor psychological types of explanation. Nesvold suggests learning theory. Rosenau implies some form of cognitive structure approach with his proposals for differentiated systems orientations to determine the nature of the civic self. There is no necessary reason to suspect that all cross-national studies will tend in the future toward psychological forms of explanation, but it does seem reasonable to suggest that as national variables (e.g., state performance as problem solver, state coercion) are linked to supranational (e.g., interdependence) or subnational (e.g., civic self, political conflict) variables, then the search for explanation will require theories at these other levels and conceptualizations that can bridge across them.

The juxtaposition of the two studies also suggests that the authors explicitly stipulate relationships that comprise only one set of responses in circumstances not well defined. Fragmented loyalties might arise from interdependence, but they may also result from either state coercion or political conflict. State coercion might trigger political conflict or vice versa, but both may result from third factors such as interdependence. There may be a tendency to construct explanations that are too linear to permit a reasonable interpretation of the actual political world. By linear is meant explanations of the form: A produces one type of change in B, which in turn has one outcome that results in C, and so on. If our purpose is to understand C, it may be necessary to consider the effects of A on variables other than B and the multiple factors that can influence the value of B, if it is the trigger for C. The criterion of parismony often has been

introduced to avoid consideration of more complex, nonlinear interactions. We face a danger, however, of letting our thinking become simple-minded as well. By assuming we can comprehend only simple, linear relationships we may fail to understand essential social patterns. Even if actual research designs are simplified, there is no reason why one's thinking about the phenomena must be so constrained. In fact, it may even be preferable to design a more complex interpretation than to settle for one so simple that the prospects of success and acceptance are minimal.

How far considerations of complex interactions must be taken cannot be fully determined without a clear specification of the underlying logic expected for the basic relationships and a stipulation of the conditions under which they are expected to hold. This returns us to the earlier discussion.

Patterns, Puzzles, and Precision— The Future of Cross-National Research

It would be inappropriate to conclude this essay without reference to one aspect of the discussion that surrounded the original conference presentation of the preceding chapters. The question was raised as to whether cross-national research in political science has a future. Was the surge of studies in the 1960s and 1970s that examined a large sample of nations in either a cross-sectional or longitudinal design a transitory interest? As Professor Maurice East observed in his remarks at the conference, others have suggested that cross-national research is too gross to reveal actual political dynamics, too simplistic to capture complex relationships, too insensitive to distinctive historical experiences of different polities and cultures, too dependent upon inaccurate, noncomparable data, and too focused on the aggregate national level to provide realistic explanatory theories. Though the conference reached no collective position on these issues, the author of this essay has reached a strong positive position on the question. One would hope that we have learned a good deal about cross-national political research since the early days of large data-based studies that began two decades ago. Because of this experience, we should not expect—indeed we would not wish—that the future would be an unaltered continuation of past research. If one conceives of cross-national political research more broadly as the development and examination of empirically investigatable theories about sets of nations or political phenomena located in different countries, continuation in years ahead seems certain.

Exactly how future cross-national research will take shape in the years ahead depends upon a number of factors. Some of these, such as the nature, level, and source of funding for political science research, are beyond the scope of this essay. It does seem possible, however, to identify some needed, and probable, characteristics using the Nesvold and Rosenau studies as a point of departure.

(1) Cross-national explanations will employ variables from multiple levels of analysis—supranational, national, and subnational. Perhaps in no way are the two preceding chapters more illustrative of the future of cross-national studies than with respect to their use of variables drawn from multiple levels. These more complex interpretations have implications not only for theory development, but also for research designs and data collections.

(2) Greater specification will be made of the context and the underlying logic expected to govern basic relationships specified in theories and supporting empirical research. It is unlikely that all researchers will become formal modelers or confine themselves to rigorous deduction from a set of initially given conditions and terms. That step is not necessary to achieve at a verbal level greater specification of the reasons and conditions for any hypothesized relationships. That commitment involves more than the introduction of control or mediating variables, although their use might well follow from greater efforts at identifying necessary conditions and parameters.

(3) Cross-national research will involve a greater variety of research techniques and methods. Gillespie (1971) reminded us of the distinction between the cross-national and the configurative approaches to comparative analysis. The cross-national approach formulates empirical generalizations about the entire political system using each system in a specified set as one data point and comparing them all simultaneously. The configurative approach examines one system at a time and comparisons are made sequentially. In effect, the configurative approach is a set of case studies. Both Gillespie (1971) and Russett (1970) remind us that each approach has assets and liabilities. They can and should be used as complementary strategies for theory building. Their more frequent use in tandem in the years ahead will not only strengthen each, but will facilitate bonds between comparativists specializing in aggregate data manipulations and those specializing in the study of a single country or region. Cross-national theory can be viewed as a common enterprise pursued by different but complementary strategies of inquiry.

(4) More effort will be given to concept formation and the association between acting units and their behaviors. The studies under review concentrated on the analysis of behaviors (e.g., interdependence, political conflict, system orientations, state coercion) with minimal attention to the nature of the units responsible for those behaviors. In many studies, the

focus is reversed—attributes of units are examined with minimal reference to the expected behaviors. Most cross-national studies require attention to both for a number of reasons, including designing the research so that one is able to determine whether behaviors in different countries can be treated as equivalent.

(5) Cross-national studies will offer a closer interaction between theory development and empirical investigation. It still may be unrealistic for many contributing scholars to be at one and the same time extraordinary creators of theory and talented data analysts, but there is reason to be optimistic that the contributions of each will be more accessible and usable to the other. Certainly, advancement on the previously noted four points would have that effect; so, too, would attention to both concerns in graduate education. The Rosenau and Nesvold studies provide reason to be encouraged. Certainly Rosenau discusses the issue of operationalization in his theory development chapter. To a very considerable degree, Nesvold discusses both past and prospective theoretical levels that pertain to the relationship she explores. Both scholars demonstrate a concern upon which others can expand.

These five developments are the author's proposed requirements for the future of cross-national research. Though others might disagree in whole or in part with the list, it seems reasonable to project that evolution and innovation will occur and that cross-national research will continue for the simple reason that it can fulfill a valuable set of purposes in comparative analysis. Cross-national research can reveal basic patterns that characterize sets of nations with a clarity that seems unavailable in any other way. It can, as Nesvold nicely demonstrates, offer the inquiring mind puzzles that motivate new insights and research. Furthermore, it is a powerful vehicle for increasing the precision of our knowledge both with respect to its boundaries and scope and with respect to the manner (i e., the concepts and theories) in which we express it. The continuation of cross-national research is not in doubt.

NOTES

1. The author has had the advantage of developing this essay after having heard a critique of the chapters in question by Maurice A. East (University of Kentucky), Lyndelle Fairlie (San Diego State University), and William Lineham (State University of New York at Stony Brook), as well as the general discussion by participants attending the conference on "New Dimensions in Political Science." It is impossible to acknowledge all the individual insights gained by through these interactions, but it is undoubtedly the case that these comments have benefited by the process although I alone am responsible for this presentation.

2. MacIntyre (1973) makes the noncomparability of social concepts across cultures one of his main reasons for challenging the possibility of a science of comparative politics. As they now stand, the concepts introduced in the two proceeding cross-national studies would offer considerable ammunition for MacIntyre's arguments. For a discussion of developing empirical equivalence for concepts on a cross-national basis, see Przeworski and Teune (1970).

3. This essay will make no effort to critique the empirical analysis procedures used in the Nesvold study as that would turn the comments in the direction of a separate, noncomparable examination of her study. The intention is rather to treat the Nesvold and Rosenau research as a set from which observations about cross-national research might be developed. It might be noted, however, that Professor William Lineham, in his discussion of the Nesvold study, raised interesting questions about the design of the state coercion/political conflict ratio for cross-national research. Using as it does the raw frequency of events in both categories, the ratio does not take into consideration the effects of population. The same number of incidents of either kind in India and Iceland, for example, would suggest very different things.

REFERENCES

GILLESPIE, J. V. (1971) "An introduction to macro-cross-national research," pp. 13-30 in John V. Gillespie and Betty A. Nesvold (eds.) Macro-Quantitative Analysis. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

LASSWELL, H. D. (1971) A Pre-View of the Policy Sciences. New York: Elsevier-North Holland.

MACINTYRE, A. (1973) "Is a science of comparative politics possible?" pp. 171-188 in Alan Ryan (ed.) The Philosophy of Social Explanation. London: Oxford University Press.

PREZEWORSKI, A. and H. TEUNE (1970) The Logic of Comparative Inquiry. New York: John Wiley.

RUSSETT, B. M. (1970) "International behavior research," pp. 425-443 in Michael Haas and Henry S. Kariel (eds.) Approaches to the Study of Political Science. Scranton, PA: Chandler.

ZINNES, D. A. (1975) "Research frontiers in the study of international politics," pp. 87-198 in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.) International Politics, Vol. 8, Handbook of Political Science. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.