FIFTH EDITION

INTRODUCING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

CONCEPTS AND CASES IN CONTEXT

STEPHEN ORVIS

CAROL ANN DROGUS

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Lake Winnipeg

Great Lakes

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Mississippi R.

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Haiti

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St. Vincent &

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Ecuador

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Europe

East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific

South and Southwest Asia

Sub-Saharan Africa

Australia and New Zealand

Antarctica

ARCTIC OCEAN

PACIFIC OCEAN

INDIAN OCEAN

ATLANTIC OCEAN

INTRODUCING COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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REGIONAL AND COUNTRY COVERAGE

*** This case study is new to this edition.

PREFACE

The question of "country" or "concept" has long divided and, to some extent, confounded the teaching of introductory comparative politics: should we teach the course as a series of country studies highlighting the key similarities and differences among political institutions around the world, or should we focus on the important concepts in the discipline? Throughout thirty years of teaching introduction to comparative politics, this "either/or" proposition and the textbooks that reflect it have frustrated us. The country approach is far too descriptive, and it is not easy to tease major concepts out of country case studies in any sustained way. This makes it difficult for students to get to the intellectual "meat" of our discipline. A purely conceptual approach, on the other hand, leaves students with little concrete knowledge, even when they're given examples here and there. We want our students to know the difference between a president and a prime minister. We've found that it is impossible for them to assess theories in an empirical vacuum. Students need the context that studying actual country cases provides.

This textbook tries to resolve the country-or-concept dilemma using what we call a hybrid approach. While the book is organized conceptually, each chapter introduces concepts and then examines these concepts with relevant case studies. For instance, chapter 10, on the political economy of wealthy countries, lays out the key concepts in political economy and major economic theories and inserts case studies where they best fit: of the U.S. laissez-faire model, the German social market economy, and the Japanese developmental state.

We use eleven countries throughout the book as touchstones, returning to these countries to illustrate the themes we address. The eleven countries—Brazil, China, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—span the globe, illustrate a wide array of current and past regimes, and avoid the Eurocentrism still too common in the field of comparative politics. These countries cannot illustrate every aspect of comparative politics, though, so we reference dozens of others as examples or features throughout the text. A boxed feature in chapter 6, for example, examines France's evolution (and recent demise) as a two-party system.

Thus we introduce students not only to a wide array of important concepts and theoretical debates but also to each of the eleven countries. We do not and cannot systematically examine all elements of all eleven as a standard country-by-country book would. Instead, after a brief contextual overview of each country in chapter 2, we identify the most conceptually interesting elements of each country. For instance, regarding Japan, we cover the developmental state, the role of that state's bureaucracy and level of corruption, its electoral system, and the country's recent efforts to deal with globalization and resuscitate economic growth. Regarding Germany, we cover the rise and structure of the Nazi regime, Germany's cultural

nationalism and citizenship debates, its electoral system, and its efforts to reform the social market economy and welfare state in the face of globalization and European Union integration. The case studies are organized and written in a way that allows students to understand the context of the debates and concepts without having to read an entire "country chapter" on each. And we keep the cases concise, which leaves faculty members the option of lecturing to fill in any additional detail that they may feel important or to provide comparisons with cases not covered in a chapter.

In chapter 1, we introduce students to the broad debates in comparative politics to show how comparativists have used various theories and methodologies to understand political phenomena. We do not generally offer definitive conclusions about which approach is best for understanding a particular issue, preferring instead to show students the strengths and weaknesses of each. Occasionally, we make clear that one approach has become the "conventional wisdom" in the field or that we believe one is the most accurate way to analyze a particular phenomenon, but we do this in the context of a broader debate. Our primary focus on eleven countries gives the book an implicit bias toward comparative case studies over large-*N* quantitative methodology, but we introduce students to the core ideas and benefits of the latter and refer to numerous large-*N* studies throughout. We believe our approach will allow instructors to generate lively and useful debates among students over key approaches and methodologies and to focus on these key conceptual debates in real-world contexts. The result is a book that moves students beyond the memorization of basic information and toward an ability to assess and debate the real issues in our discipline.

We also move firmly away from the traditional Cold War division of the world into first-, second-, and third-world countries. While many textbooks claim to do this, we have found that they typically suffer from a "Cold War hangover," with the old division lurking just beneath the surface. We consciously set out to show that many theoretical concepts in the discipline are useful in a wide array of settings, that political phenomena are not fundamentally different in one part of the world than they are in another. For instance, we illustrate the parliamentary system not only with Britain but also with India, we use both the United States and Brazil to analyze the presidential system, and look at social policy in Germany and Brazil. Throughout, we try to show how long-standing concepts and debates in the discipline illuminate current "hot topics."

Organization of the Book

This book is divided into three main parts. It first examines the theories and concepts that inform and drive research as a way to frame our investigation, then moves to a survey of political institutions and institutional change, and, finally, to an examination of political economy and policy debates. **Part I** introduces the major theoretical approaches to the discipline and focuses on the modern state and its relationship to citizens and civil society, regimes, and identity groups. It provides an introduction to the discipline and its key concepts in the modern world, applying them to case studies throughout. **Chapter 1** provides a broad overview of key conceptual debates and divides the field into three broad questions to help students organize these debates: What explains political behavior? Who rules? and Where and why? These orient students by grouping the many debates in the field into broad categories tied to clear and compelling questions. "What Explains

Political Behavior?" gets at the heart of the discipline's major disputes, which we divide among interests (rational choice and its critics), beliefs (political culture and ideology), and structures (Marxism and institutionalism). "Who Rules?" addresses the dispersion of political power, focusing mainly on the debate between pluralist and elite theorists. While that debate is typically subsumed under the study of American politics, we think it helps illuminate important areas of comparative politics as well. "Where and Why?" introduces students to the importance of and approaches to comparison.

The rest of Part I focuses on the modern state and its relationship to other key areas of modern politics. **Chapter 2** defines and provides an overview of the modern state and the concept of state strength/weakness, and it uses a brief history of the modern state in our eleven case studies to give students an overview of each. **Chapter 3** examines modern states in relation to citizens, civil society, and political regimes, arguing that the latter are based first and foremost on political ideologies that define the relationship between state and citizen. **Chapter 4** looks at the debate over political identity and the state's relationship to identities based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, race, class, and gender and sexual orientation. Each of these chapters uses case studies to illustrate and assess the concepts and debates it introduces.

Part II examines political institutions and participation in both democratic and authoritarian regimes as well as regime transitions. It is the "nuts-and-bolts" section of the book, providing what traditionally has been a core feature of the course. Chapters 5 and 6 examine political institutions in democratic regimes. **Chapter 5** focuses on governing institutions: executive/legislative systems, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and federalism. The theme throughout is the question of accountability in democracies. **Chapter 6** looks at institutions of participation and representation: electoral systems, parties and party systems, and interest groups. It focuses primarily on how to achieve different kinds of representation and the potential trade-off between active participation and effective governance. **Chapter 7** examines contentious politics, taking up social movements as a follow-on to the prior chapter and then moving on to political violence (civil war and terrorism) and revolution (as contentious political episodes). **Chapter 8** looks at institutions and participation in authoritarian regimes, drawing on the previous two chapters to show how similar institutions function quite differently in nondemocratic regimes, as well as presenting the active debate over authoritarianism over the past decade. **Chapter 9**, on regime transition, focuses not only on democratic transitions but also on transitions to authoritarian rule: authoritarianization, military coups, and revolutions (as regime change).

Part III examines political economy and some key current policy issues that have been foreshadowed earlier in the book. The conceptual and empirical knowledge that the students have gained in Parts I and II are used to address important current issues. **Chapter 10** examines the theoretical and historical relationship between the state and the market economy, including key concepts in political economy, economic theories, and globalization, applying those to wealthy countries, including the debate over convergence versus the varieties of capitalism approach. The chapter includes a discussion of the global financial crisis and its implications. **Chapter 11** looks at the political economy of development, using many of the concepts developed in the prior chapter. The theme of **chapter 12** is market failure, examining social policy, health policy, and environmental policy in turn. It draws on chapters 10 and 11, as well as material from Part II, to look at different approaches to current hot topics such as universal health care and climate change.

Key Features

A number of pedagogical features reappear throughout the chapters. Each of them is designed to help students marry the conceptual and country-specific material in the most effective way possible. We think students can manage the concepts without losing sight of the important facts they've learned about the countries if they're given the right tools. Each chapter begins with a set of **key questions** and **learning objectives** that help students focus on the key issues as they read the chapter, study the cases, and then debate in class. At the start of each **case study**, students will find a "case synopsis" that provides a brief overview. Each case study concludes with "case questions" to help students connect the specifics of the case to the larger thematic points of the chapter.

"Country and Concept" tables that begin each chapter highlight data for our eleven case study countries. The text refers to the tables at various points, but students and instructors can use these for much more, comparing the countries across the variables and asking questions about what might explain the observable variations.

Most chapters include one or more **"In Context"** features that present basic data. These allow students to set a case study or idea into a comparative context. Students can use these to assess how representative some of our case studies are or to see the distribution of an institution, type of event, or set of factors around the world or within a region—for example, the "In Context" in chapter 11 places Nigerian oil production in the context of OPEC oil production, showing the differences between Nigeria and, for instance, the Gulf States.

In most chapters, we include a **"Critical Inquiry"** box, in which we ask students to think actively about a particular question. Many of these provide students a limited set of data and ask them, simply by visually examining the data, to develop their own hypotheses about key relationships or evaluate competing hypotheses they've studied in the book. Chapter 6, for instance, includes a "Critical Inquiry" box on the question of what explains women's share of legislative seats around the world. It provides data on the number of women in lower houses broken down by region, electoral system, and length of regime, and it asks students to use these data to informally "test" alternative hypotheses about why women gain better representation. A few "Critical Inquiry" boxes direct students toward more normative questions, using the concepts in the chapter to address them.

In addition to these themed features, readers will find many original tables, figures, and maps throughout the book that illustrate key relationships or variables around the world. Students will find end-of-chapter lists of **key concepts** with page references to help their study and review, as well as a list of **works cited** and a list of important print and electronic **references for further research**. We hope the design of the book strikes a balance as well: colorful and well illustrated to help engage student attention but without adding significantly to cost.

New to This Edition

We're grateful to the many users who have graciously and enthusiastically provided us with feedback over the course of the last four editions. We've done our best to address their suggestions and comments. The most significant changes are thorough reorganizations of chapters 8 (authoritarian rule) and 9 (regime transition). The recent debates in the field on authoritarianism and the demise of democracy informed these changes. Chapter 4 includes

a new section, social class, as an identity category, with a case study of the United Kingdom. In chapter 6, we reorganized the section on political parties to emphasize different ways in which parties mobilize support, including an extended section on the global rise of populism. A new case study in chapter 7 looks at the "resistance movement" that emerged in the aftermath of President Donald Trump's election as a social movement. Chapter 9 includes extended examples from Turkey and Hungary to illustrate authoritarianization, and in chapter 7 we focus on the civil war in Syria that has led to the global refugee crisis and the debates it has raised in many countries. Throughout the book, case studies have been updated to include the most recent political developments.

A new pedagogical feature for this fifth edition are chapter-opening learning objectives that will help guide students' reading of the chapters and help them focus on the important points.

Digital Resources

Because we know from experience that making the leap into a new textbook is no small chore, CQ Press offers a full suite of high-quality instructor and student ancillary materials.

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- **video and multimedia content** that facilitate student use of Internet resources, further exploration of topics, and visual depictions of key concepts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Last, but far from least, we have to extend thanks to our children, Nick and Will. They didn't contribute ideas or critique the book, but from a young age they showed real enthusiasm for understanding things, like who the prime minister of Britain is and why there is a Monster Raving Loony Party, and they endured and even participated in occasional dinner table debates on things like the relative merits of parliamentary systems and different concepts of citizenship. Most of all, they gave of themselves in the form of great patience. This project became more of an obsession, at least at key points, than our work usually is. The first two editions took us away from them more than we like and made our family life rather hectic. They bore it well, going on with their lives in their typically independent way. Now they're older and off on their own and have become active citizens of whom we are very proud. We preserve our dedication of the book to them and their generation, who give us great hope.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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PART I

A Framework for Understanding Comparative Politics

1

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, civil war in one country can have impacts around the world. Here, migrants arrive on the island of Lesbos in Greece. In 2015, the Syrian civil war produced a massive refugee crisis that flooded Europe with requests for asylum. The political and economic effects of this movement of people were huge, burdening the weak Greek economy, leading to greater support for anti-immigrant parties in many European countries and influencing the successful British vote to leave the European Union.
AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris

Key Questions

- What is comparative politics and how do we study it?
- Do self-interest, beliefs, or underlying structural forces best explain how people act in the political realm?
- What kinds of evidence can help us explain political behavior?
- What can be learned from comparing political behavior and outcomes across countries?

Learning Objectives

After reading chapter 1, you should be able to do the following:

1.1 Explain the theories and methods of comparative politics

1.2 Articulate in detail the three key questions in comparative politics

Understanding political developments and disputes around the world has never seemed more important than it does today. Many people now see the world as more complicated and less comprehensible than it was during the late twentieth century. During the Cold War (1944–1989), the divide between communist and democratic countries seemed stark, and the main question facing newly minted countries in the "Third World" was how they would be governed internally and navigate the Cold War divide externally. The post–Cold War era (1989–2001) seemed to spread democracy, economic growth, and prosperity.

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, however, political questions that seemed settled and ideas and problems that seemed passé have re-emerged as relevant and vital. In 2008 and 2009, the economic crisis that emerged in the United States and then hit Europe harder revived debates about economic policies and what kinds of political institutions could best enact them. Greece, the hardest hit European country, took an unexpected turn to the left and threatened to leave the European Union (EU). In the Middle East, an unprecedented wave of protests known as the Arab Spring in 2011 overturned several authoritarian regimes, producing one new democracy in Tunisia, new authoritarian regimes elsewhere, and a civil war in Syria. As a result, over a million people fled Syria for the relative safety of Europe. Their arrival has raised questions about Europeans' identity and immigration policies. In response to both immigration and economic crises, populist and nationalist movements that question long-held political and policy assumptions have arisen throughout the Western world, most dramatically in the British vote to leave the EU in 2016 and the electoral victory of Donald Trump as U.S. president a few months later. On the other hand, since the end of the Cold War many countries have established democratic governments, particularly in Eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. East Asia, led by China, has achieved unprecedented economic growth that has lifted more people out of poverty more quickly than ever before in history. The UN admitted 31 new members in the 1990s and six more so far this century, as new nations proclaimed their place in the world. And while still struggling, much of the world has recovered from the Great Recession of a decade ago, in part due to various governments' economic policies.

These current "hot-button" political issues around the world are just the latest manifestations of a set of enduring issues that students of comparative politics have been studying for the last half century: Why do governments form?

Why does a group of people come to see itself as a nation? Why do nations sometimes fall apart? How can a government convince people that it has the right to rule? Do some forms of government last longer than others? Do some forms of government serve their people's interests better than others? How do democracies form, and how do they fall apart? Can democracy work anywhere or only in particular countries and at particular times? Are certain political institutions more democratic than others? Can government policy reduce poverty and improve economic well-being? This book introduces you to the many and often conflicting answers to these questions by examining them comparatively. It will also help you start to assess which answers are the most convincing and why.

Comparative Politics: What Is It? Why Study It? How to Study It?

Politics can be defined as the process by which human communities make collective decisions. These communities can be of any size, from small villages or neighborhoods to nations and international organizations. **Comparative politics** is one of the major subfields of **political science**, the systematic study of politics. Politics always involves elements of power, the first concept we need to examine closely.

Individuals or groups can have power over others in a variety of ways. If someone holds a gun to your head and demands your wallet, you comply because he has great power over you at that moment. If your boss tells you to do something, you do it because she is paying you and could fire you. But if someone has control over a resource you need—say, admission into a college—she also may have power over you. Political theorist Steven Lukes (1974) usefully categorized power into three dimensions. The **first dimension of power** is the ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do something it otherwise would not do, as in the first example preceding. The focus here is on behavior and active decisions: making someone do something. A **second dimension of power**, first articulated by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz (1962), sees power as the ability not only to make people do something but to keep them from doing something. Bachrach and Baratz argued that a key element of political power is the ability to keep certain groups and issues out of the political arena by controlling the political agenda and institutions to allow certain groups to participate and voice their concerns while preventing or at least discouraging others from doing so: if it takes large amounts of money to run for office, poor people are likely not to try. A **third dimension of power**, which Lukes contributed, is the ability to shape or determine individual or group political demands by causing people to think about political issues in ways that may be contrary to their own interests. The ability to influence how people think produces the power to prevent certain political demands from ever being articulated: if workers making the minimum wage believe that raising it will result in fewer jobs, they won't demand a higher wage in the first place. We examine the role of all three of these dimensions of power in this chapter and in the rest of the book.

What Is Comparative Politics?

Comparative politics focuses primarily on power and decision making within national boundaries, from local groups and communities to entire countries. Politics among national governments and beyond national boundaries is generally

politics: The process by which human communities make collective decisions

comparative politics: One of the major subfields of political science, in which the primary focus is on comparing power and decision making across countries

political science: The systematic study of politics and power

first dimension of power: The ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do something it otherwise would not do

second dimension of power: The ability not only to make people do something but to keep them from doing something

third dimension of power: The ability to shape or determine individual or group political demands by causing people to think about political issues in ways that are contrary to their own interests

the purview of the field of international relations, and although comparativists certainly take into account the domestic effects of international events, we do not try to explain the international events themselves. Perhaps it is self-evident, but comparativists also compare; we systematically examine political phenomena in more than one place and during more than one period, and we try to develop a generalized understanding of and explanations for political activity that seem to apply to many different situations.

Why Study Comparative Politics?

Studying comparative politics has multiple benefits. First, comparativists are interested in understanding political events and developments in various countries. Why did peaceful regime change happen in Tunisia in 2011 but civil war break out in Syria? Why did the Socialist Party win back the presidency in France in 2012 after seventeen years of conservative presidents? Also, as the Middle East example shows, understanding political events in other countries can be very important to foreign policy. If the U.S. government had better understood the internal dynamics of Syrian politics, it might have been able to respond more effectively to the outbreak of civil war there.

Second, systematic comparison of different political systems and events around the world can generate important lessons from one place that can apply in another. Americans have long seen their system of government, with a directly elected president, as a very successful and stable model of democracy. Much evidence suggests, though, that in a situation of intense political conflict, such as an ethnically divided country after a civil war, a system with a single and powerful elected president might not be the best option. Only one candidate from one side can win this coveted post, and the sides that lose the election might choose to restart the war rather than live with the results. A democratic system that gives all major groups some share of political power at the national level might work better in this situation. That conclusion is not obvious when examining the United States alone. A systematic comparison of a number of different countries, however, reveals this possibility.

Third, examining politics comparatively helps us develop broad theories about how politics works. A **theory** is an abstract argument that provides a systematic explanation of some phenomenon. The theory of evolution, for instance, explains how species change in response to their environments. The social sciences, including political science, use two different kinds of theories. An **empirical theory** is an argument that explains what actually occurs. Empirical theorists first describe a pattern and then attempt to explain what causes it. The theory of evolution is an empirical theory in that evolutionary biologists do not argue whether evolution is inherently good or bad; they simply describe evolutionary patterns and explain their causes. A good empirical theory should also allow theorists to predict what will happen as well. For example, a comparison of democratic systems in post–civil war situations would lead us to predict that presidential systems are more likely to lead to renewed conflict.

On the other hand, a **normative theory** is an argument that explains what ought to occur. For instance, socialists support a normative theory that the government and economy ought to be structured in a way that produces a relatively equal distribution of wealth. Although comparativists certainly hold various normative theories, most of the discipline of comparative politics focuses on empirical theory. We attempt to explain the political world around us, and we do this by looking across multiple cases to come up with generalizations about politics.

theory: An abstract argument that provides a systematic explanation of some phenomenon

empirical theory: An argument explaining what actually occurs; empirical theorists first notice and describe a pattern and then attempt to explain what causes it

normative theory: An argument explaining what ought to occur rather than what does occur; contrast with empirical theory

How Do Comparativists Study Politics?

Clearly, political scientists do not have perfect scientific conditions in which to do research. We do not have a controlled laboratory because we certainly cannot control the real world of politics. Physicists can use a laboratory to control all elements of an experiment, and they can repeat that same experiment to achieve identical results because molecules do not notice what the scientists are doing, think about the situation, and change their behavior. In political science, however, political actors think about the changes going on around them and modify their behavior accordingly.

Despite these limitations, comparativists use the scientific method (as explained in the "Scientific Method in Comparative Politics" box) to try to gain as systematic evidence as possible. We use several research methods to try to overcome the difficulties our complex field of study presents. **Research methods** are systematic processes used to ensure that the study of some phenomena is as objective and unbiased as possible.

One common research method we use is the **single-case study**, which examines a particular political phenomenon in just one country or community. A case study can generate ideas for new theories, or it can test existing theories developed from different cases. A single case can never be definitive proof of anything beyond that case itself, but it can be suggestive of further research and can be of interest to people researching that particular country. Deviant case studies that do not fit a widely held pattern can be particularly helpful in highlighting the limits of even widely supported theories. Case studies also deepen our knowledge about particular countries, useful in and of itself. Scholars engaging in case study research search for common patterns within the case or use a method known as process tracing, which involves careful examination of the historical linkages between potential causes and effects, to demonstrate what caused what in the particular case. Case studies serve as important sources of information and ideas for researchers using more comparative methods.

Scholars use the **comparative method** to examine the same phenomenon in several cases, and they try to mimic laboratory conditions by selecting cases carefully. Two approaches are common. The most similar systems design selects cases that are alike in a number of ways but differ on the key question under examination. For instance, Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle (1997) looked at transitions to democracy in Africa, arguing that all African countries share certain similarities in patterns of political behavior that are distinct from patterns in Latin America, where the main theories of democratization were developed. On the other hand, the most different-systems design looks at countries that differ in many ways but are similar in terms of the particular political process or outcome in which the research is interested. For instance, scholars of revolution look at the major cases of revolution around the world—a list of seemingly very different countries like France, Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Iran—and ask what common elements can be found that explain why these countries had revolutions. Both comparative methods have their strengths and weaknesses, but their common goal is to use careful case selection and systematic examination of key variables to mimic laboratory methods as closely as possible.

With about two hundred countries in the world, however, no one can systematically examine every case in depth. For large-scale studies, political scientists rely on a third method: **quantitative statistical techniques**. When evidence can be reduced to sets of numbers, statistical methods can be used to systematically compare a huge number of cases. Recent quantitative research on the causes of civil

research methods: Systematic processes used to ensure that the study of some phenomena is as objective and unbiased as possible

single-case study: Research method that examines a particular political phenomenon in just one country or community and can generate ideas for theories or test theories developed from different cases

comparative method: The means by which scholars try to mimic laboratory conditions by careful selection of cases

quantitative statistical techniques: Research method used for large-scale studies that reduces evidence to sets of numbers so that statistical analysis can systematically compare a huge number of cases

war, for instance, looked at all identifiable civil wars over several decades, literally hundreds of cases. The results indicated that ethnic divisions, which often seem to be the cause of civil war, are not as important as had been assumed. Although they may play a role, civil war is much more likely when groups are fighting over control of a valuable resource such as diamonds. Where no such resource exists, ethnic divisions are far less likely to result in war (Collier and Hoeffler 2001).

Each of these methods has its advantages and disadvantages. A single-case study allows a political scientist to look at a phenomenon in great depth and come to a more thorough understanding of a particular case (usually a country). The comparative method retains some but not all of this depth and gains the advantage of

Scientific Method in Comparative Politics

Political science can never be a pure science because of imperfect laboratory conditions: in the real world, we have very little control over social and political phenomena. Political scientists, like other social scientists, nonetheless think in scientific terms. Most use key scientific concepts, including the following:

- Theory: An abstract argument explaining a phenomenon

- Hypothesis: A claim that certain things cause other things to happen or change

- Variable: A measurable phenomenon that changes across time or space

- Dependent variable: The phenomenon a scientist is trying to explain

- Independent variable: The thing that explains the dependent variable

- Control: Holding variables constant so that the effects of one independent variable at a time can be examined

In using the scientific method in political science, the first challenge we face is to define clearly the variables we need to include and measure them accurately. For instance, one recent study of civil wars by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2001) included, among other variables, measurements of when a civil war was taking place, poverty, ethnic fragmentation, and dependence on natural resources. They had to ask themselves, What constitutes a "civil war"? How much violence must occur and for how long before a particular country is considered to be having a civil war?

What many saw as a civil war erupted in Ukraine in 2014, though accompanied by a Russian military invasion supporting one side. Fighting and cease-fires have been off and on ever since, with the situation by 2017 still a stalemate. So should the Ukraine be classified as having a civil war or not and exactly when?

A second challenge we face is figuring out how to control for all the potentially relevant variables in our research. Unlike scientists in a laboratory, political scientists cannot hold variables constant to examine the effects of one independent variable at a time. A common alternative is to measure the simultaneous effects of all the independent variables through quantitative studies, such as Collier and Hoeffler's study of civil wars. Single-case studies and the comparative method attempt to control variables via careful selection of cases. For instance, a comparative case study examining the same questions Collier and Hoeffler studied might select as cases only poor countries, hypothesizing that the presence of natural resources only causes civil wars in poor countries. The question becomes, In the context of poverty, is ethnic fragmentation or the presence of natural resources more important in causing civil war? If, on the other hand, we think poverty itself affects the likelihood of civil war, we might select several cases from poor countries and several others from rich countries to see if the presence of natural resources has a different effect in the different contexts. None of this provides the perfect control that a laboratory can achieve; rather, it attempts to mimic those conditions as closely as possible to arrive at scientifically defensible conclusions. ●

systematic comparison from which more generalizable conclusions can be drawn. Quantitative techniques can show broad patterns but only for questions involving evidence that can be presented numerically, and they provide little depth on any particular case. Case studies are best at generating new ideas and insights that can lead to new theories. Quantitative techniques are best at showing the tendency of two or more phenomena to vary together, such as civil war and the presence of valuable resources. Understanding how phenomena are connected and what causes what often requires case studies that can provide greater depth to see the direct connections involved. Much of the best scholarship in recent years combines methods, using quantitative techniques to uncover broad patterns and comparative case studies to examine causal connections more closely.

No matter how much political scientists attempt to mimic laboratory sciences, the subject matter will not allow the kinds of scientific conclusions that exist in chemistry or biology. As the world changes, ideas and theories have to adapt. That does not mean that old theories are not useful; they often are. It does mean, however, that no theory will ever become a universal and unchanging law, like the law of gravity. The political world simply isn't that certain.

Comparative politics will also never become a true science because political scientists have their own human passions and positions regarding the various debates they study. A biologist might become determined to gain fame or fortune by proving a particular theory, even if laboratory tests don't support it (for instance, scientist Woo Suk Hwang of South Korea went so far as to fabricate stem cell research results). Biologists, however, neither become normatively committed to finding particular research results nor ask particular questions because of their normative beliefs. Political scientists, however, do act on their normative concerns, and that is entirely justifiable. Normative theories affect political science because our field is the study of people. Our normative positions often influence the very

Young men look for diamonds in Sierra Leone. Recent statistical research has supported the theory that conflicts such as the civil war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s are not caused primarily by ethnic differences, as is often assumed, but by competition over control of mineral resources.
AP Photo/Adam Butler

questions we ask. Those who ask questions about the level of "cheating" in the welfare system, for instance, are typically critics of the system who tend to think the government is wasting money on welfare. Those who ask questions about the effects of budget cuts on the poor, on the other hand, probably believe the government should be involved in alleviating poverty. These normative positions do not mean that the evidence can or should be ignored. For example, empirical research suggested that the 1996 welfare reform in the United States neither reduced the income of the poor as much as critics initially feared nor helped the poor get jobs and rise out of poverty as much as its proponents predicted (Jacobson 2001). Good political scientists can approach a subject like this with a set of moral concerns but recognize the results of careful empirical research nonetheless and change their arguments and conclusions in light of the new evidence.

Normative questions can be important and legitimate purposes for research projects. This book includes extensive discussions of different kinds of democratic political institutions. One of the potential trade-offs, we argue, is between greater levels of representation and participation on the one hand and efficient policymaking on the other. But this analysis is only interesting if we care about this trade-off. We have to hold a normative position on which of the two—representation and participation or efficient policymaking—is more important and why. Only then can we use the lessons learned from our empirical examination to make recommendations about which institutions a country ought to adopt.

Where does this leave the field of comparative politics? The best comparativists are aware of their own biases but still use various methods to generate the most systematic evidence possible to come to logical conclusions. We approach the subject with our normative concerns, our own ideas about what a "good society" should be, and what role government should have in it. We try to do research on interesting questions as scientifically and systematically as possible to develop the best evidence we can to provide a solid basis for government policy. Because we care passionately about the issues, we ought to study them as rigorously as possible, and we should be ready to change our normative positions and empirical conclusions based on the evidence we find.

Three Key Questions in Comparative Politics

Comparative politics is a huge field. The questions we can ask are virtually limitless. Spanning this huge range, however, are three major questions. The first two are fundamental to the field of political science, of which comparative politics is a part. The third is comparativists' particular contribution to the broader field of political science.

Probably the most common question political scientists ask is, What explains political behavior? The heart of political science is trying to understand why people do what they do in the world of politics. We can ask, Why do voters vote the way they do? Why do interest groups champion particular causes so passionately? Why does the U.S. Supreme Court make the decisions it does? Why has Ghana been able to create an apparently stable democracy, whereas neighboring Mali had its democracy overthrown by the military? By asking these questions, we seek to discover why individuals, groups, institutions, or countries take particular political actions. Political scientists have developed many theories to explain various kinds of political actions. We discuss them in terms of three broad approaches that focus on interests, beliefs, and structures.

An Orientation to Comparative Politics

You are only starting your study of comparative politics, but it is never too early to start developing the ability to understand and ultimately conduct systematic research in the field. Throughout this book, you'll see boxes labeled "Critical Inquiry." Most of these will present you with some key evidence, such as data on several variables for a select number of countries. We will ask you to use these data to test or challenge other findings or to develop hypotheses of your own that attempt to answer some of the key questions we address in that particular chapter. We may invite you to use online and other resources for additional research as well, so you can start to formulate conclusions about whether the hypotheses are true. In some chapters, we also present normative questions for consideration, for these are also essential to the study of comparative politics. Although you won't be able to come to definitive conclusions, these exercises will give you a taste of how comparative politics is done. They will also allow you to think about the limits of the research you've done or encountered, the role of normative questions in the field, and what could be done to answer the questions more definitively. ●

The second large question animating political science is, Who rules? Who has power in a particular country, political institution, or political situation and why? Formal power is often clear in modern states; particular officials have pre-scribed functions and roles that give them certain powers. For example, the U.S. Congress passes legislation, which the president has the power to sign or veto and the Supreme Court can rule as constitutional or not. But does the legislation Congress passes reflect the will of the citizens? Are citizens really ruling through their elected representatives (as the U.S. Constitution implies), or are powerful lob-byists calling the shots, or can members of Congress do whatever they want once in office? The Constitution and laws can't fully answer these broader questions of who really has a voice, is able to participate, and therefore has power.

Virtually all questions in political science derive from these two fundamen-tal questions, and virtually all empirical theories are involved in the debate these two questions raise. Comparativists add a third particular focus by asking, Where and why do particular types of political behavior occur? If we can explain why Americans on the left side of the political spectrum vote for Democrats, can we use the same explanation for the voting patterns of left-leaning Germans and Brazilians? If special interests have the real power over economic policy in the U.S. presidential system, is this the case in Britain's parliamentary democracy as well? Why have military coups d'état happened rather frequently in Latin America and Africa but very rarely in Europe and North America? Comparativists start with the same basic theories used by other political scientists to try to explain political behavior and understand who really has power; we then add a comparative dimen-sion to develop explanations that work in different times and places. In addition to helping develop more scientific theories, comparing different cases and contexts can help us determine which lessons from one situation are applicable to another.

What Explains Political Behavior?

The core activity in all political science is explaining political behavior: Why do people, groups, and governments act as they do in the political arena? It's easy

enough to observe and describe behavior, but what explains it? In daily discussions, we tend to attribute the best of motives to those with whom we agree—they are "acting in the best interests" of the community or nation. We tend to see those with whom we disagree, on the other hand, as acting selfishly or even with evil intent. You can see this tendency in the way Americans use the phrase *special interest*. We perceive groups whose causes or ideological leanings we agree with as benevolent and general; those we disagree with are "special interests." Logically, however, any **political actor**, meaning any person or group engaged in political behavior, can be motivated by a variety of factors. Political scientists have developed three broad answers to the question of what explains political behavior: interests, beliefs, and structures. Each answer includes within it several theoretical approaches.

Interests

We commonly assume that most people involved in politics are in it for their own good. Even when political actors claim to be working for the greater good or for some specific principle, many people suspect they are just hiding their own self-interested motives. The assumption of self-interest (broadly defined) is also a major element in political science theories about political behavior.

Rational choice theory assumes that individuals are rational and that they bring a set of self-defined preferences into the political arena. This does not mean that all people are greedy or selfish but rather that they rationally pursue their preferences, whatever those may be. The theory borrows heavily from the field of economics, which makes the same assumptions in analyzing behavior in the market. Political scientists use this theory to explain political behavior and its results by making assumptions about political actors' preferences, modeling the political context in which they pursue those preferences, and demonstrating how political outcomes can be explained as the result of the interactions of those actors in that context. For instance, the allocation of money for building new roads is the result of an agreement among members of a congressional committee. All of the members of the committee have certain interests or preferences, based mainly on their desire for reelection and their constituents' demands. The committee members pursue those interests rationally, and the final bill is a negotiated settlement reflecting the relative power of the various committee members as well as their interests within the context of the committee and Congress more broadly.

Rational choice theorists start their analyses at the level of the individual, but they often seek to explain group behavior. They model group behavior from their assumptions about the preferences of individual members of groups. Group behavior is considered a result of the collective actions of rational individual actors in the group in a particular context. Racial or ethnic minority groups, women's groups, or environmental and religious groups can all be analyzed in this way. Rational choice theorists would argue, for instance, that environmentalists are just as rational and self-interested as oil companies but simply have different preferences. Environmentalists gain benefits from breathing clean air and walking through unpolluted forests; they pursue those preferences in the same way that the oil industry pursues its opposition to environmental regulations. Although self-defined preferences may be easier to see when analyzing battles over material goods and money, they exist throughout the political arena. Rational choice theorists thus are not interested in the second or third dimensions of power we mentioned earlier; they examine behavior, not institutions that prevent behavior, and they do not ask how and why people have certain preferences. They instead

political actor: Any person or group engaged in political behavior

rational choice theory: An explanation for political behavior that assumes that individuals are rational beings who bring to the political arena a set of self-defined preferences and adequate knowledge and ability to pursue those preferences

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack (under President Barack Obama) and Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-NH, address reporters at a press conference in 2014 announcing $25 million for the nation's farmers to turn agricultural commodities into value-added products. Agricultural subsidies such as this represent the type of political issue based on material interests that lends itself to rational choice theoretical explanations.
Bill Clark/CQ Roll Call

accept people's preferences and actions as given and then ask how they can be explained via rationality.

This raises one of the major criticisms of rational choice theories: they can't explain preferences in advance so can't predict political behavior in advance. Group theorists, such as Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels (2016), argue that rational choice theorists have it exactly backward: individual preferences don't define group behavior; rather, group membership creates individual preferences. When a new political issue arises, political groups have to figure out their preferences and how they will pursue them; individual group members almost always follow leaders of groups with whom they strongly identify.

In economics, it's a pretty safe assumption that people engage in economic activity to make money: businesses seek to maximize profits, and workers look for the highest wage. Knowing preferences in advance is much more difficult in political science. For instance, how can a rational choice theorist explain the electoral choice of a voter who is both a devout Catholic and a union member if the two available candidates are (a) a Democrat who favors raising the minimum wage and other workers' benefits but also favors legalized abortion, and (b) a Republican with the opposite views? Will that person vote as a Catholic or as a union member? Achens and Bartels (2016) argue that we have to understand the strength of group membership to answer this question; the simple assumption of individual rationality can't answer how a person faced with such a conflict will vote.

Many comparativists also ask whether rational choice theories can explain the different political behaviors seen around the world. For most of the twentieth century, for example, the most important French labor unions were closely affiliated with the Communist Party and pursued many objectives tied to party beliefs, beyond the basic "shop floor" issues of wages and working conditions. In the United States, by contrast, no major unions were tied to communist or socialist parties, and unions focused much more on improving wages and working conditions, with less concern for broader social changes. In Britain, labor unions were not communists, but they created their own party—the Labour Party—to represent their interests in government. Rational choice theorists might be able to explain

political outcomes involving these unions after correctly understanding the preferences of each, but they have a hard time explaining why unions in different countries developed strikingly different sets of preferences. Did something about the working conditions of these three countries produce different definitions of *self-interest*, or do different workers define their interests differently based on factors other than rational calculation?

Psychological theories also focus on individual interests but question the assumption of rational action and are particularly interested in how political preferences are formed. They explain political behavior on the basis of individuals' psychological experiences or dispositions. Psychological theories look for non-rational explanations for political behavior. Comparativists who study individual leaders have long used this approach, trying to explain leaders' choices and actions by understanding personal backgrounds and psychological states. More recently, political scientists have examined the role of emotions in explaining political behavior. Roger Petersen (2002) and Andrew Ross (2013) look at emotions like fear to explain violent ethnic and religious conflict, whereas Marc Hetherington and Jonathan Weiler (2018) show how white Americans' answers to four simple questions about child rearing define personality types and worldviews that explain everything from who they vote for to what cars they drive. In sharp contrast to rational choice theory, psychological theories are often interested in the third dimension of power: influences on the formation of individual political demands. Critics of the psychological approach argue that the inherent focus on the individual that is fundamental to psychological theories makes them irrelevant to explaining group behavior. If so, their utility in political science is limited. Explanations beyond the level of individual motivation, however, might help explain these situations.

Beliefs

Beliefs are probably second only to self-interest in popular ideas about political behavior. If people think a political actor is not simply self-interested, they usually assume she is motivated by a value or belief. Environmentalists care about the environment; regardless of their own personal interests, they think everyone ought to have clean air to breathe and forests to explore. People who are against abortion believe that life begins at conception and therefore abortion is murder; self-interest has nothing to do with it. Political scientists have developed various formal theories that relate to this commonsense notion that values and beliefs matter. The main approaches focus on either political culture or political ideology.

A **political culture** is a set of widely held attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbols about politics. It provides people with ways to understand the political arena, justifications for a particular set of political institutions and practices, and definitions of appropriate political behaviors. Political cultures emerge from various historical processes and can change over time, although they usually change rather slowly because they are often deeply embedded in a society. They tend to endure, in part, because of **political socialization**, the process through which people, especially young people, learn about politics and are taught a society's common political values and beliefs. Theories of political culture argue that the attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbols that constitute a given country's political culture are crucial explanations for political behavior in that country. Widely accepted cultural values, they argue, can influence all three dimensions of power: getting people to do something, excluding them from the political arena, and influencing their political demands.

psychological theories: Explanations for political behavior based on psychological analysis of political actors' motives

political culture: A set of widely held attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbols about politics

political socialization: The process through which people, especially young people, learn about politics and are taught a society's common political values and beliefs

Two broad schools of thought within political culture theory exist: modernist and postmodernist. **Modernists** believe that clear attitudes, values, and beliefs can be identified within any particular political culture. The best-known example of this is Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's 1963 book *The Civic Culture*. Based on a broad survey of citizens of five countries in North America and Europe, the authors developed a typology—a list of different types—of political cultures. They saw each country as dominated primarily by one particular type of political culture and argued that more stable and democratic countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, had a **civic culture**. This meant that their citizens held democratic values and beliefs that supported their democracies; these attitudes led citizens to participate actively in politics but also to defer enough to the leadership to let it govern effectively. On the other hand, the authors described Mexico as an authoritarian culture in which citizens viewed themselves primarily as subjects with no right to control their government, suggesting that these attitudes helped to produce the electoral authoritarian regime that ruled the country until 2000.

Critics of the modernist approach question the assumption that any country has a clearly defined political culture that is relatively fixed and unchanging, and they contest the argument that cultural values cause political outcomes rather than the other way around. They note that **subcultures**—distinct political cultures of particular groups—exist in all societies. Racial or religious minorities, for instance, may not fully share the political attitudes and values of the majority. The assumption that we can identify a single, unified political culture that is key to understanding a particular country can mask some of the most important political conflicts within the country. Furthermore, political attitudes themselves may be symptoms rather than causes of political activity or a governmental system. For example, Mexican citizens in the 1960s may not have viewed themselves as active participants in government for a very rational reason: they had lived for forty years under one party that had effectively suppressed all meaningful opposition and participation. They really did not have any effective voice in government or any chance for effective participation. According to this view, the political institutions in Mexico created the political attitudes of Mexicans rather than vice versa.

Some political scientists also accuse modernists of ethnocentrism, in that many modernist approaches argue that Anglo-American values are superior to others for establishing stable democracies. Still other critics suggest that political culture is more malleable than *The Civic Culture* assumed. The attitudes that surveys identified in the 1960s were just that—attitudes of the 1960s. Over time, as societies change and new political ideas arise, attitudes and values change accordingly, sometimes with breath-taking speed (Almond and Verba 1989). Many cultural theorists, for instance, have argued that both Arab and Islamic cultures tend to have nondemocratic values that support authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. The revolts of the Arab Spring in 2011 suggest that those theorists either misunderstood the cultures or the cultures changed rapidly, and the differential outcomes of those revolts—democracy in Tunisia but a return to electoral authoritarian rule in Egypt—suggest that "Islamic" or "Arab" culture is far from monolithic.

Some modernist approaches examine change in political culture. Ronald Inglehart (1971) coined the term **postmaterialist** in the 1970s to describe what he saw as a new predominant element in political culture in wealthy democracies. He argued that as a result of the post–World War II economic expansion, by the 1960s and 1970s, most citizens in wealthy societies were less concerned about economic (materialist) issues and more concerned about "quality of life" issues. They had become "postmaterialist." Economic growth had allowed most citizens to attain a level of material comfort that led to a change in attitudes and values. Individuals

modernists: Theorists of political culture who believe that clear sets of attitudes, values, and beliefs can be identified in each country that change very rarely and explain much about politics there

civic culture: A political culture in which citizens hold values and beliefs that support democracy, including active participation in politics but also enough deference to the leadership to let it govern effectively

subcultures: Groups that hold partially different beliefs and values from the main political culture of a country

postmaterialist: A set of values in a society in which most citizens are economically secure enough to move beyond immediate economic (materialist) concerns to "quality of life" issues like human rights, civil rights, women's rights, environmentalism, and moral values

Police confront protesters in Mexico City in 1968. Political culture theory argues that countries like Mexico were not democratic because they did not have a democratic political culture. Critics contend that culture can change quickly, so it isn't a very good explanation of regime type. Mexico transitioned to an electoral democracy in 2000.
Bettmann/Getty Images

had become more concerned with ideas like human rights, civil rights, women's rights, environmentalism, and moral values.

This postmaterialist shift in political culture led to a sea change in the issues that politicians came to care about and the outcomes of elections. It explained, for instance, why many self-identified Catholic voters in the United States shifted from voting Democratic in the middle of the twentieth century to voting Republican by the end of the century. In the 1950s, they voted their mostly working-class economic interests, supporting the party that created what they saw as "pro-worker" policies. Later, as they achieved greater economic security as part of an expanding middle class, they came to care more about postmaterialist moral values, such as their religious opposition to abortion, and they shifted their party allegiance accordingly. As the bulk of American voters went through this shift in political culture, political battles focused less on economic issues and more on debates over moral and cultural values. More recently, Russell Dalton, Christian Welzel, and their colleagues have argued that postmaterialist and more participatory values have come to characterize not only Western societies but many societies around the world and that those more participatory values result in stronger democracy and ability to govern, in contrast to *The Civic Culture*'s thesis that too much participation threatens democracy (Dalton and Welzel 2014).

The postmaterialist thesis shows how political culture can change over time as a result of other changes in society. Nonetheless, these theorists continued to argue that it was useful to think about societies as having identifiable political cultures that explain much political behavior. The **postmodernist** approach, on the other hand, pushes the criticism of modernism further, questioning the assumption that one clear set of values can be identified that has a clear meaning to all members of a society. Postmodernists, influenced primarily by French philosophers such as Michel Foucault, see cultures not as sets of fixed and clearly defined values but rather as sets of symbols subject to interpretation. When examining political culture, postmodernists focus primarily on **political discourse**, meaning the ways in

postmodernist: An approach that sees cultures not as sets of fixed and clearly defined values but rather as sets of symbols subject to interpretation

political discourse: The ways in which people speak and write about politics; postmodern theorists argue that political discourse influences political attitudes, identity, and actions

which a society speaks and writes about politics. They argue that a culture has a set of symbols that, through a particular historical process, has come to be highly valued but is always subject to varying interpretations. These symbols do not have fixed values upon which all members of a society agree; instead, political actors interpret them through political discourse. Influencing discourse can be a means to gain power in its third dimension: influencing how people think about politics.

One example of a symbol that American political actors use in political discourse is "family values." No American politician would dare oppose family values. In the 1980s, Republicans under President Ronald Reagan used this concept in their campaign discourse very effectively to paint themselves as supporters of the core concerns of middle-class families. As a result, Democrats and their policies came to be seen at times as threatening to the ideal of the nuclear family. In the 1990s under President Bill Clinton, Democrats were able to gain back some political advantage by reinterpreting family values to mean what they argued was support for "real" American families: single mothers trying to raise kids on their own or two-income families in which the parents worried about the quality of after-school programs and the cost of a college education. Democrats created a new discourse about family values that allowed them to connect that powerful symbol to the kinds of government programs they supported. Family values, the postmodernists would argue, are not a fixed set of values on which all agree but rather a symbol through which political leaders build support by developing a particular discourse at a particular time. Such symbols are always subject to reinterpretation.

Critics of the postmodern approach argue that it really cannot explain anything. If everything is subject to interpretation, then how can one explain or predict anything other than "things will change as new interpretations arise"? Postmodernists respond that the discourses themselves matter by setting symbolic boundaries within which political actors must engage to mobilize political support. The ability of political leaders to interpret these symbols to develop support for themselves and their policies is a central element to understanding political activity in any country.

Advocates of political culture, whether modernist or postmodernist, argue that explaining political behavior requires understanding the effects of political culture at the broadest level. A related but distinct way to examine the effect of beliefs is the study of **political ideology**, a systematic set of beliefs about how a political system ought to be structured. Political ideologies typically are quite powerful, overarching worldviews that incorporate both normative and empirical theories that explicitly state an understanding of how the political world does operate and how it ought to operate. Political ideology is distinct from political culture in that it is much more consciously elaborated. In chapter 3, we examine the predominant political ideologies of the last century: liberalism, communism, fascism, modernizing authoritarianism, and theocracy.

Advocates of a particular political ideology attempt to mobilize support for their position by proclaiming their vision of a just and good society. The most articulate proponents of an ideology can expound on its points, define its key terms, and argue for why it is right. Communists, for instance, envision a society in which all people are equal and virtually all serious conflicts disappear, meaning government itself can disappear. They appeal to people's sense of injustice by pointing out the inequality that is inherent in a capitalist society, and they encourage people to work with them through various means to achieve a better society in the future.

A political ideology may be related to a particular political culture, but political ideologies are conscious and well-developed sets of beliefs rather than vague sets of values or attitudes. Some scholars take political ideology at face value, at least

political ideology: A systematic set of beliefs about how a political system ought to be structured

implicitly accepting the idea that political leaders and perhaps their followers as well should be taken at their word. These scholars believe that political actors have thought about politics and adopted a particular set of beliefs that they use as a basis for their own political actions and for judging the actions of others. Comparativists Evelyne Huber and John Stephens (2001), for instance, argued that the strength of social democratic ideology in several northern European governments partly explains why those states have exceptionally generous welfare policies.

Critics of this approach point to what they see as the underlying motives of ideology as the real explanation for political behavior. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) argued ideology is a means by which the ruling class convinces the population that its rule is natural, justified, or both (see the "Who Rules?" section on page 19 for a discussion of the ruling class). Clearly, this ties directly to the third dimension of power. Advocates of rational choice models might argue that a particular leader or group adopts a particular ideology because it is in its own self-interest; for example, business owners support an ideology of free markets because it maximizes opportunities to make profits. Similarly, advocates of a political culture approach see cultural values as lying behind ideology. In the United States, for instance, vague but deep-seated American values of individualism and individual freedom may explain why Americans are far less willing to support socialist ideologies than are Europeans.

Structures

The third broad approach to explaining political behavior is **structuralism**. Structuralists argue that broader structures in a society at the very least influence and limit and perhaps even determine political behavior. These structures can be socioeconomic or political. An early and particularly influential structuralist argument was **Marxism**, which argues that economic structures largely determine political behavior. Karl Marx contended that the production process of any society creates discrete social classes—groups of people with distinct relationships to the means of production. He argued that in modern capitalist society the key classes are the **bourgeoisie**, which owns and controls capital, and the **proletariat**, which owns no capital and must sell its labor to survive. According to Marx, this economic structure explains political behavior: the bourgeoisie uses its economic advantage to control the state in its interest, and the proletariat will eventually recognize and act on its own, opposing interests. These groups are acting on their interests, but those interests are determined by the underlying economic structure.

A more recent structuralist theory is **institutionalism**. Institutionalists argue that political institutions are crucial to understanding political behavior. A **political institution** is most commonly defined as a set of rules, norms, or standard operating procedures that is widely recognized and accepted and that structures and constrains political actions. Major political institutions often serve as the basis for key political organizations, such as legislatures or political parties. In short, institutions are the "rules of the game" within which political actors must operate. These rules are often quite formal and widely recognized, such as in the U.S. Constitution.

Other institutions can be informal or even outside government but nonetheless be very important in influencing political behavior. In the United States, George Washington established a long-standing informal institution, the two-term limit on the presidency. After he stepped down at the end of his second term, no other president, no matter how popular, attempted to run for a third term until Franklin Roosevelt in 1940. Voters supported his decision and reelected him, but after his

structuralism: Approach to explaining politics that argues that political behavior is at least influenced and limited and perhaps even determined by broader structures in a society, such as class divisions or enduring institutions

Marxism: Structuralist argument that says that economic structures largely determine political behavior; the philosophical underpinning of communism

bourgeoisie: The class that owns capital; according to Marxism, the ruling elite in all capitalist societies

proletariat: A term in Marxist theory for the class of free-wage laborers who own no capital and must sell their labor to survive; communist parties claim to work on the proletariat's behalf

institutionalism: An approach to explaining politics that argues that political institutions are crucial to understanding political behavior

political institution: A set of rules, norms, or standard operating procedures that is widely recognized and accepted by the society, structures and constrains political actions, and often serves as the basis for key political organizations

death, the country quickly passed a constitutional amendment that created a formal rule limiting a president to two consecutive terms. Informal institutions can be enduring, as the two-term presidency tradition shows. It held for more than 150 years simply because the vast majority of political leaders and citizens believed it should; in that context, no president dared go against it.

Broadly speaking, two schools of thought exist among institutionalists. **Rational choice institutionalists** follow the assumptions of rational choice theory outlined earlier. They argue that institutions are the products of the interaction and bargaining of rational actors and, once created, constitute the rules of the game within which rational actors operate, at least until their interests diverge too far from those rules. Barry Weingast (1997), for instance, claimed that for democracies to succeed, major political forces must come to a rational compromise on key political institutions that give all important political players incentives to support the system. Institutions that create such incentives will be self-enforcing, thereby creating a stable democratic political system. Weingast argued that political stability in early U.S. history was due to the Constitution's provisions of federalism, a particular separation of powers, and the equal representation of each of the states in the Senate. These gave both North and South effective veto power over major legislation, which enforced compromise and, therefore, stability. The Civil War broke out, in part, because by the 1850s the creation of new nonslave states threatened the South's veto power. This changed context meant that southern leaders no longer saw the Constitution as serving their interests, so they were willing to secede. Rational choice institutionalists argue that political actors will abide by a particular institution only as long as it continues to serve their interests. Therefore, a changed context requires institutions to change accordingly or face dissolution. By looking at institutions and their effects, however, they often include the second dimension of power in their analyses, in contrast to the rational choice theorists mentioned earlier who focus solely on the first dimension of power.

Historical institutionalists believe that institutions play an even bigger role in explaining political behavior. They argue that institutions not only limit self-interested political behavior but also influence who is involved in politics and shape individual political preferences, thus working in all three dimensions of power. By limiting who is allowed to participate, institutions can determine what a government is capable of accomplishing. Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman (1995), for example, argued that two key institutions—a strong executive and a coherent party system—shaped political participation in ways that allowed certain countries in Latin America and East Asia to respond positively to economic crises in the 1980s and 1990s, improving their economies and creating stable democracies. Beyond limiting who can participate and what can be accomplished, institutions can create political preferences. Because societies value long-standing political institutions, their preservation is part of political socialization: citizens come to accept and value existing institutions and define their own interests partly in terms of preserving those institutions. Historical institutionalists thus argue that institutions profoundly shape political behavior independent of people's self-interests and can even help create political values and beliefs, operating on all three dimensions of power.

Critics of institutionalism argue that institutions are rarely the actual explanation for political behavior. Skeptics who follow rational choice theory argue that institutions are simply based on rational actions and compromises among elites who will continue to be "constrained" by these only as long as doing so serves their interests. Scholars who focus on beliefs suggest that institutions are derived from a society's underlying values and beliefs or a more self-conscious ideology, which both shape institutions and explain political behavior.

rational choice institutionalists: Institutionalist theorists who follow the assumptions of rational choice theory and argue that institutions are the products of the interaction and bargaining of rational actors

historical institutionalists: Theorists who believe that institutions explain political behavior and shape individuals' political preferences and their perceptions of their self-interests and that institutions evolve historically in particular countries and change relatively slowly

Political scientists look to three sources as explanations for political behavior: interests, beliefs, and structures. Scholars can use each of these approaches to analyze the same political event. For instance, Chile made one of the most successful transitions to democracy in the 1990s. A rational choice institutionalist might argue that this resulted from the strategic interaction of the major political actors, regardless of what they personally believed about democracy. They came to a compromise with the former military regime and with one another around a set of constitutional rules that, given the political context, they thought was better for them than the available nondemocratic alternatives. Therefore, they agreed to act within the democratic "game." A political culture theorist would point to values in Chilean society that favored democracy, values that perhaps derived in part from the European origins of much of the population, as well as the country's past history with democracy. A historical institutionalist, on the other hand, would argue that Chile's prior stable democratic institutions were easy to resurrect because of their past success and that these institutions represented a legacy that many other Latin American countries did not have. So the question becomes, Which of these theories is most convincing and why, and what evidence can we find to support one or another explanation? This is the primary work of much of political science and the kind of question to which we return frequently in this book. The theories we use are summarized in Table 1.1.

Who Rules?

The second great question in comparative politics is, Who rules? Which individual, group, or groups control power, and how much do they control? At first glance, the answer may seem obvious. In a democracy, legislators are elected for a set term to make the laws. They rule, after the voters choose them, until the next election. Because of elections, it is the voters who really rule. In a dictatorship, on the other hand, one individual, one ruling party, or one small group (such as a military junta) rules. A dictatorship can have all the power and keep it as long as it pleases—or at least as long as it is able.

Political scientists, however, question this superficial view. Even in democracies, many argue that the voters don't really hold the power and that a small group at the top controls things. Conversely, many argue that dictatorships may not be the monoliths they appear to be, in that those officially in charge may unofficially have to share power in one way or another. Political scientists, in trying to dig beneath the surface of the question, have developed many theories that can be grouped into two broad categories: pluralist theories and elite theories.

Pluralist Theories: Each Group Has Its Voice

Pluralist theories contend that society is divided into various political groups and that power is dispersed among them so that no group has complete or permanent power. This is most obvious in democracies in which different parties capture power via elections. When pluralists look at political groups, however, they look at far more than just parties. They argue that politically organized groups exist in all societies, sometimes formally and legally but at other times informally or illegally. These groups compete for access to and influence over power. Policy is almost always the result of a compromise among groups, and no single group is able to dominate continuously. Furthermore, over time and on different issues, the power and influence of groups vary. A group that is particularly successful at gaining power or influencing government on one particular issue will not be as successful

pluralist theories: Explanations of who has power that argue that society is divided into various political groups and that power is dispersed among these groups so that no group has complete or permanent power; contrast to elite theory

TABLE 1.1

What Explains Political Behavior?

TYPE	INTERESTS: UNDERSTANDING WHAT INTERNAL FACTORS EXPLAIN POLITICAL ACTIONS	BELIEFS: UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECT OF VALUES OR BELIEFS			STRUCTURES: UNDERSTANDING HOW BROAD STRUCTURES OR FORCES SHAPE OR DETERMINE BEHAVIOR	
Theory or framework.	Rational choice.	Psychological theory.	Political culture.	Political ideology.	Marxism.	Institutionalism.
Assumptions.	Political actors bring a set of self-defined preferences, adequate knowledge, and ability to pursue those interests and rationality to the political arena.	Nonrational influences explain political behavior.	A set of widely held attitudes, values, beliefs, and symbols about politics shapes what actors do.	Systematic set of beliefs about how the political system ought to be structured motivates political action.	Economic structures determine political behavior. Production process creates distinct social classes—groups of people with the same relationship to the means of production.	Political institutions are widely recognized and accepted rules, norms, or standard operating procedures that structure and constrain individuals' political actions—the "rules of the game."
Unit of analysis.	Individual actors.	Group and individual identity and behavior.	Individual actors and groups, political institutions, discourses, and practices.	Individual actors and groups.	Groups and social classes in particular.	Interaction of both formal and informal institutions with groups and individuals.
Methods.	Observe outcome of political process; identify actors involved, relative power, and preferences; demonstrate how outcome was result of actors' self-interested interactions.	Explain actors' choices and actions by understanding their personal backgrounds and psychological states.	Modernist approach identifies clear attitudes, values, and beliefs within any particular political culture—for example, civic culture or postmaterialist culture. Postmodernist approach holds that cultures do not have fixed and clearly defined values but rather a set of symbols subject to interpretation; focuses primarily on political discourse.	Analyze written and verbal statements of political actors and correlate them with observed behavior.	Conduct historical analysis of economic systems.	Institutionalists follow rational choice theory; institutions are products of the interactions and bargaining of rational actors. Historical institutionalists examine the historical evolution of institutions to demonstrate how these institutions limit self-interested political behavior and shape individuals' political preferences.
Critiques.	Some difficulty predicting future behavior; hard to explain variation across cases.	Difficult to verify connections between internal state and actions, particularly for groups.	Political culture is not a monolithic, unchanging entity within a given country. Cultural values are not necessarily the cause of political outcomes; the causal relationship may be the other way around. If everything is subject to interpretation, then how can anything be explained or predicted?	Focus on ideology obscures what may be underlying motives, or the real explanation, for political behavior.	Ignores noneconomic motives and ignores groups other than social classes.	Difficult to determine if institutions rather than self-interest or culture limit behavior.

on another. No group will ever win all battles. Pluralists clearly tend to think about power in its first dimension; they do not believe that any one group has the ability to exclude other groups from the political arena or to influence how another group thinks to the extent necessary to gain permanent power over them.

This pluralist process is less obvious in countries that do not have electoral democracies, but many pluralists argue that their ideas are valid in these cases as well. Even in the Soviet Union under Communist rule, some analysts saw elements of pluralism. They believed that for most of the Soviet period, at least after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the ruling Communist Party had numerous internal factions that were essentially informal political groups. These were based on positions in the party, bureaucracy, economy, or region, as well as personal loyalty to a key leader. For instance, people in the KGB (the secret police) and the military were each a political group, quietly lobbying to expand the influence and power of their organizations. Leaders of particular industries, such as the oil industry, were a group seeking the ruling party's support for greater resources and prestige for their area of the economy. Pluralist politics were hidden behind a facade of ironclad party rule in which the Communist Party elite made all decisions and all others simply obeyed.

Dictatorships in postcolonial countries can also be analyzed via pluralism. On the surface, a military government in Africa looks like one individual or small group holding all power. Pluralists argue, however, that many of these governments have very limited central control. They rule through patron–client relationships in which the top leaders, the patrons, mobilize political support by providing resources to their followers, the clients. The internal politics of this type of rule revolves around the competition among group leaders for access to resources they can pass on to their clients. The top clients are themselves patrons of clients further down the chain. Midlevel clients might decide to shift their loyalty from one patron to another if they don't receive adequate resources, meaning those at the top must continuously work to maintain the support of their clients. In many cases, patrons use resources to mobilize support from others in their own ethnic group, so the main informal groups competing for power are ethnically defined (see chapter 4). Various factions compete for power and access to resources, again behind a facade of unitary and centralized power.

elite theories: Theories arguing that societies are ruled by an economic, gender, racial, or other small group that has effective control over virtually all power; contrast to pluralist theory

Elite Theories

Whereas pluralists see competing groups, even in countries that appear to be ruled by dictators, proponents of **elite theories** argue that all

President of Chile Michelle Bachelet greets attendees prior to delivering the annual presidential address to the nation at Congress Honor Hall in 2015. Feminist theorists often argue that women are kept out of political power because of the association of political leadership with military experience and prowess. Women heads of state throughout the world, though still small in number, have begun to challenge that norm.
Marcelo Benitez/LatinContent/Getty Images

societies are ruled by one or more sets of elites that have effective control over virtually all power. Elite theories usually focus on the second and third dimensions of power to argue that certain elites have perpetual power over ordinary citizens. The longest tradition within elite theory is Marxism, mentioned earlier. Marx argued that in any society, political power reflects control of the economy. In feudal Europe, for instance, the feudal lord, by virtue of his ownership of land, had power over the peasants, who were dependent on the lord for access to land and thus their survival. Similarly, Marx contended that in modern capitalist society, the bourgeoisie, by virtue of their ownership of capital, are the **ruling class**, as the feudal lords were centuries ago. The general population, or proletariat, is forced to sell its labor by working in the bourgeoisie's businesses in order to survive and must generally serve the desires of the bourgeoisie. Thus, in *The Communist Manifesto,* Marx famously called the modern state "the executive committee of the whole bourgeoisie."

The Marxist tradition is only one type of elite theory. C. Wright Mills (1956), in *The Power Elite,* argued that the United States was ruled by a set of interlocking elites sitting at the top of economic, political, and military hierarchies. Mills shared with the Marxist tradition an emphasis on a small group controlling all real power, but he did not see the economy as the sole source of this power. He believed that the economic, political, and military spheres, while interlocking, are distinct and that all serve as key elements in the ruling elite.

Recently, Jeffrey Winters (2011) agreed with Weber that elite power can derive from various sources but argued that "material power" in the form of extreme wealth is the basis for the power of a particularly powerful elite—oligarchs—who use that power primarily to protect their own wealth. In modern democracies, including the United States, he argues, oligarchs no longer need to hire their own security forces for protection (because the government protects property rights) but instead hire tax lawyers and lobbyists to protect their income from government redistribution.

Feminist scholars have also developed elite theories of rule based on the concept of **patriarchy**, or rule by men. They argue that throughout history men have controlled virtually all power. Even though women have gained the right to vote in most countries, men remain the key rulers in most places. Today, social mores and political discourse are often the chief sources of patriarchy rather than actual law, but men remain in power nonetheless, and the political realm, especially its military aspects, continues to be linked to masculinity. A leader needs to be able to command a military, "take charge," and "act boldly and aggressively"—all activities most societies associate with masculinity. The second and third dimensions of power help preserve male control despite women now having the same formal political rights as men. Men also continue to enjoy greater income and wealth than women and can translate economic status into political power. According to feminist theorists, men thus constitute an elite that continues to enjoy a near monopoly on political power in many societies.

Similarly, some analysts argue that a racial elite exists in some societies in which one race has been able to maintain a hold on power. Historically, this was done via laws that prevented other races from participating in the political process, such as under apartheid in South Africa or the Jim Crow laws of the southern United States. But as with feminists, analysts of race often argue that one race can maintain dominance through a disproportionate share of wealth or through the preservation of a particular political discourse that often implicitly places different races in different positions in a hierarchy. Michelle Alexander (2010) argued that laws and discourse around crime, drugs, and "colorblindness" constitute a "new Jim Crow" in the United States; they systemically disempower and disenfranchise black men, in particular, by disproportionately putting a large number of them

ruling class: An elite who possess adequate resources to control a regime; in Marxist theory, the class that controls key sources of wealth in a given epoch

patriarchy: Rule by men

TABLE 1.2

Who Rules?

	PLURALIST THEORY	ELITE THEORY
KEY ARGUMENTS	Society is divided into political groups.	All societies are ruled by an elite with control over virtually all power.
	Power is dispersed among groups.	Marxism: political power reflects control of the economy; it is based on the economic power of the bourgeoisie, who owns and controls capital and is the ruling elite in capitalist societies.
	No group has complete or permanent power.	The power elite: elite consists of military and political elite as well as economic elite.
	Even authoritarian regimes have important pluralist elements.	Patriarchy: the ruling elite is male; social mores and political discourse keep men in power. The political realm, especially the military, is linked to masculinity.
		Critical race theorists: the ruling elite is white; assumed superiority of white cultural characteristics keeps whites in power.

in the criminal justice system. More generally, race theorists contend that in the United States, cultural attributes associated with being white, such as personal mannerisms and accent and dialect of English, are assumed to be not only "normal" but implicitly superior and are thus expected of those in leadership positions. This gives an inherent advantage to white aspirants for political positions.

Determining whether pluralist or elite theories best answer the question of who rules requires answering these questions: Who is in formal positions of power? Who has influence on government decision making? Who benefits from the decisions made? If the answer to all these questions seems to be one or a select few small groups, then the evidence points to elite theory as more accurate. If various groups seem to have access to power or influence over decision making or both, then pluralism would seem more accurate. Table 1.2 summarizes these theories, which we investigate throughout this book.

Where and Why?

"What explains political behavior?" and "Who rules?" are central questions to all political scientists. The particular focus of comparative politics is to ask these questions across countries in an attempt to develop a common understanding of political phenomena in all places and times. The third major question that orients this book is "Where and why?" Where do particular political phenomena occur, and why do they occur where they do and how they do?

For instance, Sweden is famous for its extensive and expensive welfare state, whereas the U.S. government spends much less money and attention on providing for people's needs directly via "welfare." Why are these two wealthy democracies so different? Can their differences be explained on the basis of competing rational choices? Did business interests overpower the interests of workers and poor people in the United States, while a large and well-organized labor movement in Sweden overcame a small, weaker business class to produce a more extensive welfare state? Or has the Swedish Socialist Party, which has been dominant over most of the last century, simply been successful at convincing the bulk of the population that its social democratic ideology produces a better society, whereas Americans'

A speaker uses a bullhorn during a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Sacramento, California in 2018. Over 100 met to protest the killing of Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man shot by police. Michelle Alexander (2010) called the systematic exclusion of a large percentage of black men from full citizenship via imprisonment for minor crimes the "new Jim Crow." The Black Lives Matter movement exploded in 2014 and was aimed at ending police brutality and excessively harsh sentencing of drug crimes, to undo the "new Jim Crow."
Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

cultural belief in "making it on your own" leads them to reject any form of socialism? Or are the differences because a strong nongovernmental institution, the Landsorganisationen I Sverige (LO), arose in Sweden, uniting virtually all labor unions and becoming a central part of the policymaking process, whereas in the United States, the country's more decentralized labor unions were weaker institutions and therefore not as capable of gaining the government's ear on welfare policy? Comparative politics attempts to resolve this kind of puzzle by examining the various theories of political behavior in light of the evidence found.

We engage in similar comparative efforts when seeking to understand who rules. A case study of the United States, for instance, might argue (as many have) that a corporate elite holds great power in American democracy, perhaps so great that it raises questions of how democratic the system actually is. A Marxist might argue that this is due to the unusually centralized and unequal control of wealth in the United States. A political culture theorist would point instead to American culture's belief in individualism, which leads few to question the leaders of major businesses, who are often depicted as "self-made" individuals whom many citizens admire. An institutionalist, on the other hand, would argue that American political institutions allow corporations to have great influence by funding expensive political campaigns and that members of Congress have little incentive to vote in support of their parties and so are more open to pressure from individual lobbyists. A comparativist might compare the United States and several European countries, examining the relative level of corporate influence, the level of wealth concentration, cultural values, and the ability of lobbyists to influence legislators in each country. This study might reveal comparative patterns that suggest, for instance, that corporate influence is highest in countries where wealth is most concentrated, regardless of the type of political system or cultural values. We examine this kind of question throughout the book.

Plan of the Book

We proceed in this first part of the book by looking at the biggest questions involving the state: (1) what is it, how does it work, what makes it strong or weak; (2) the state's relationship to citizens and regimes; and (3) the state's relationship with nations and other identity groups. Part II looks at how governments and political systems work, including institutions in democracies and authoritarian regimes, participation outside institutional bounds, and regime change. Part III turns our attention to political economy questions and related policy issues. Every chapter includes key questions at the outset that you should be able to develop answers to and features that help you understand the ideas in the chapter. "In Context" boxes put particular examples into a larger context, and "Critical Inquiry" boxes ask you to develop and informally test hypotheses about

key political questions. Tables of data, maps, and illustrations help illuminate the subjects in each chapter.

Recurring studies of eleven countries illustrate points in more depth. Each chapter includes case studies from several countries chosen to illustrate the key debates and ideas covered in that chapter. The eleven countries include a majority of the most populous countries in the world and provide a representative sample of different patterns of modern political histories. They include four wealthy democracies (Britain, Germany, Japan, and the United States); two postcommunist countries (China and Russia); the largest and one of the most enduring democracies (India); the only extant theocracy (Iran); and three countries that established democratic systems in the wake of authoritarianism (Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria). So let's get going. ●

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