

COMPARATIVE POLITICS TODAY

A WORLD VIEW

Eighth Edition

Comparative Politics Today

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The editors and co-authors of the eighth edition of *Comparative Politics Today* dedicate this book to the memory of Gabriel A. Almond, a giant in the field of comparative politics and a friend, colleague, and leader, who passed away at the age of 91, shortly after this edition was completed.

PREFACE

The eighth edition of Comparative Politics Today continues to embody the system, process and policy framework that Gabriel Almond introduced to the comparative field and which has proved to be so useful for describing and explaining politics in different political systems. The early editions of this book in the 1970s pioneered the teaching of systematic comparison of the political cultures, diverse processes and varying performances of political systems throughout the world. This approach linked a theoretically informed overview with analyses of specific countries by leading specialists. Later editions also described the impact of enormous changes in world politics—such as democratization, the break-up of the Soviet empire, and intensified threats from ethnic conflict—shaping politics in many nations. These editions reflect Almond's creativity and his determination to show how the framework could adapt to the changing concerns of the political science community.

As in the popular seventh edition, this eighth edition begins with the theme of why governments exist, what functions they serve, how they create problems as well as solutions. We explore the debates about the costs and benefits of government in the history of philosophy and in the contemporary exchanges among academics and politicians. The first chapter also introduces the three great challenges that face most states in the world today: building a common identity and sense of community, fostering economic and social development, and securing democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. The second chapter in Part One sketches the concepts needed to compare different politics in very different societies: political system and environment, structures and functions, policy performance and its consequences.

Part Two elaborates important elements in the system, process and policy framework, discussing the causes and consequences of important aspects of political cultures, interest groups, parties and other aggregation structures, constitutions, key policymaking structures, types of public policies, and their

consequences. Tables, figures, and boxes in these five chapters provide examples, compare the systems described in Part Three, and discuss important trends, such as value changes, the rise of fundamentalism, democratization, the recruitment of women into leadership roles, the rule of law, and international interdependence.

Part Three presents systematic description and analysis of politics in twelve national states. In each case the chapters, written by distinguished specialists, begin with a discussion of current policy challenges facing citizens of that country and also provide an historical perspective. Each chapter then uses the system, process, and policy framework in a unique way to highlight the distinctive features of its politics, while providing systematic description that facilitates comparison to other countries. These rich country studies introduce systems from all the major regions of the world, and include five developed democratic countries (England, France, Germany, Japan, and the U.S.), six developing countries at various levels of development and democratization (Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Mexico, and Nigeria) and Russia, which has a fascinatingly complex blend of development and democratization, achievements, and problems. Most of the world's large and influential countries are thus included, and a wide range of political possibilities, problems, and limitations are illustrated.

As with each new edition, both the introductory sections and the country chapters have been updated to reflect current data and political events as well as recent political theory. The reshaping of world events following the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, plays a role in many places as well as in the United States. Since the seventh edition there have also been national elections in most democratic countries, including Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States, and particularly dramatic ones in Brazil and Mexico. China has experienced an important leadership change. These and other significant political events are analyzed in this eighth edition.

Two contributors to this volume are no longer among us. Our colleague and good friend Robert J. Mundt, long-time collaborator and co-author of the Nigeria chapter, died unexpectedly in December 2000; he was sadly missed in the revisions for this edition.

Gabriel Almond passed away in December 2002, just short of his 92nd birthday. His influence upon the study and teaching of comparative politics, and upon each of us, was enormous. He wrote at length about many important political topics, including the types of interest groups, the culture of democracy, the nature of fundamentalism, and the history of political science. One of his greatest achievements was his

continuing commitment to finding ways to understand, compare, and explain the most diverse forms of political life. This text is deeply shaped by that commitment, both by his own involvement in writing it and by his influence upon us. And one of his greatest legacies is the generation of students who have learned about comparative politics and our world through the insights he provided.

G. Bingham Powell, Jr. Kaare Strøm Russell J. Dalton

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BRIEF CONTENTS

	Detailed Contents ix Preface xvii Acknowledgments xix Contributors xxi
PART ONE	Introduction
	 1 Issues in Comparative Politics 1 2 Comparing Political Systems 31
PART TWO	System, Process, and Policy
	3 Political Culture and Political Socialization 46
	4 Interest Articulation 62
	5 Interest Aggregation and Political Parties 81
	6 Government and Policymaking 101
	7 Public Policy 129
PART THREE	Country Studies
	8 Politics in England, Richard Rose 156
	9 Politics in France, Martin A. Schain 206
	10 Politics in Germany, Russell J. Dalton 260
	11 Politics in Japan, Frances Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies 316
	12 Politics in Russia, Thomas F. Remington 366
	13 Politics in China, Melanie Manion 418
	14 Politics in Mexico, Wayne A. Cornelius and Jeffrey A. Weldon 466
	15 Politics in Brazil, Frances Hagopian 520
	16 Politics in Egypt, Ann Mosely Lesch 580
	17 Politics in India, Subrata K. Mitra 634
	18 Politics in Nigeria, Robert J. Mundt and Oladimeji Aborisade 690
	19 Politics in the United States, Austin Ranney 742

Index 787

DETAILED CONTENTS

Preface xvii Acknowledgments xix Contributors xxi

PART ONE Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Issues in Comparative Politics 1

What Is Politics? 1
Governments and the State of Nature 2
Why Governments? 3
When Does Government Become the Problem? 6
Political Systems 11
States 11
Building Community 16
Fostering Development 22
Securing Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Liberties 27
Key Terms 29

Suggested Readings 29

CHAPTER 2

Comparing Political Systems 31

Why We Compare 31
How We Compare 32
Systems: Environment and Interdependence 34
Structures and Functions 36
An Illustrative Comparison: Russia in 1985 and 2002 40
The Policy Level: Performance, Outcome, and Evaluation 43
Key Terms 44
Suggested Readings 44

PART TWO System, Process, and Policy

CHAPTER 3

Political Culture and Political Socialization 46

Political Culture 46 Mapping the Three Levels of Political Culture 46 Political Socialization 52 Agents of Political Socialization 53
Trends in Contemporary Political Cultures 58
Key Terms 60
Suggested Readings 60

CHAPTER 4

Interest Articulation 62

Citizen Action 62
Interest Groups 65
Access to the Influential 71
Policy Perspectives on Interest Articulation 75
Interest Group Development 76
Key Terms 78
Suggested Readings 78

CHAPTER 5

Interest Aggregation and Political Parties 81

Personal Interest Aggregation 81
Institutional Interest Aggregation 83
Competitive Party Systems and Interest Aggregation 84
Authoritarian Party Systems 92
The Military and Interest Aggregation 94
Trends in Interest Aggregation 96
Significance of Interest Aggregation 97
Key Terms 98
Suggested Readings 98

CHAPTER 6

Government and Policymaking 101

Constitutions and Decision Rules 101
Democracy and Authoritarianism 103
Separation of Government Powers 104
Geographic Distribution of Government Power 107
Limitations on Government Power 108
Checking the Top Policymakers 110
Assemblies 111
Political Executives 115
The Bureaucracy 122
Key Terms 126
Suggested Readings 127

CHAPTER 7

Public Policy 129

Government and What It Does 129 Extraction 130 PDF 请访问: www.ertongbook.com Distribution 133
Regulation 137
Community-Building and Symbolic Policies 140
Outcomes: Domestic Welfare 140
Domestic Security Outcomes 144
International Outputs and Outcomes 146
Political Goods and Values 148
Strategies for Producing Political Goods 150
Trade-offs and Opportunity Costs 153
Key Terms 154
Suggested Readings 154

PART THREE Country Studies

CHAPTER 8

Politics in England 156

Richard Rose

Current Policy Challenges 158
The Constraints of History 159
The Environment of Politics 162
The Structure of Government 167
Political Culture and Legitimacy 177
Political Socialization 180
Political Participation and Recruitment 183
Organizing Group Interests 186
Party System and Electoral Choice 190
Making and Delivering Government Policies 194
Policy Outcomes and Changes in Society 202
Key Terms 203
Suggested Readings 204

CHAPTER 9

Politics in France 206

Martin A. Schain

Performance and Prospects 252

Current Policy Challenges 207
A Historical Perspective 208
Economy and Society 209
Constitution and Governmental Structure 211
Political Culture 214
Political Socialization 218
Mass Participation and Voting 222
Recruitment and Style of Elites 227
Interest Groups 229
Political Parties 233
Policy Processes 243
The State and Territorial Relations 249

Key Terms 256 Suggested Readings 257

CHAPTER 10

Politics in Germany 260

Russell J. Dalton

Current Policy Challenges 262
The Historical Legacy 263
Following Two Paths 266
Social Forces 269

The Institutions and Structure of Government 271

Describing Delicing Colors 276

Remaking Political Cultures 276

Political Learning and Political Communication 281

Citizen Participation 284

Politics at the Elite Level 286

Interest Groups 287

The Party System 290

The Electoral System 296

The Policy Process 299

Policy Performance 303

The Policy Challenges of Unification 308

After the Revolution 310

Key Terms 311

Suggested Readings 312

CHAPTER 11

Politics in Japan 316

Frances Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies

Current Policy Challenges 318

Historical Origins of the Modern Japanese State 320

The Occupation 321

Political Institutions and the Policy Process 323

Electoral Systems and the Nature of Electoral Competition 332

The Japanese Party System 337

The Internal Organization of the LDP 344

Political Participation, Voting Behavior, and Interest Groups 345

Political Culture and Issue Cleavages 349

Policy Performance 352

Concluding Thoughts About Japan's Democracy 358

Key Terms 360

Suggested Readings 361

CHAPTER 12

Politics in Russia 366

Thomas F. Remington

Rebuilding Russia 367

Current Policy Challenges 368

Historical Legacies 369

The Contemporary Constitutional Order 373

Russian Political Culture in the Post-Soviet Period 381

Political Participation 384

Interest Articulation: From Statism to Pluralism 387

Parties and the Aggregation of Interests 390

The Politics of Economic Reform 400

Rule Adjudication: Toward the Rule of Law 406

Russia and the International Community 411

Key Terms 412

Suggested Readings 413

CHAPTER 13

Politics in China 418

Melanie Manion

Current Policy Challenges 420

Historical Setting 422

Political History of the PRC 423

Chinese Society 426

A Communist Party-State 427

Political Structures 428

Elite Recruitment 436

Rule by Law 436

Political Socialization 438

Political Culture 440

Political Participation 442

Interest Articulation and Aggregation 448

Policymaking and Implementation 450

Corruption 453

Policy Performance 455

Hong Kong 460

Taiwan 460

China's Political Future 461

Key Terms 462

Suggested Readings 462

CHAPTER 14

Politics in Mexico 466

Wayne A. Cornelius and Jeffrey A. Weldon

Current Policy Challenges 469

Historical Perspectives 470

Political Culture and Socialization 478

Political Structure and Institutions 482

Recruiting the Political Elite 493

Interest Representation and Political Control 494

Political Parties 496

Government Performance 507

Mexico's Political Future 515

Key Terms 517

Suggested Readings 517

CHAPTER 15

Politics in Brazil 520

Frances Hagopian

Current Policy Challenges 521

Historical Perspectives 523

Economy and Society 525

Institutions and Structures of Government 530

Political Culture 535

Political Recruitment and Political Participation 541

Political Representation and Interest Groups 548

Political Parties and Elections 553

The Policy Process 563

Policy Performance 567

International Relations 574

Prospects for the Future 575

Key Terms 575

Suggested Readings 576

CHAPTER 16

Politics in Egypt 580

Ann Mosely Lesch

Current Policy Challenges 581

The Importance of Place 582

The Legacy of History 586

Institutions and Structure of Government 591

Party System and Elections 600

Political Culture and Socialization 606

Political Participation and Recruitment 611

Articulation and Aggregation of Interests 613

Public Policy and Performance 621

Crisis of Legitimacy 628 Key Terms 629 Suggested Readings 630

CHAPTER 17

Politics in India 634

Subrata K. Mitra

Current Policy Challenges 636

Beyond Indian "Exceptionalism" 637

Some Basic "Givens" of the Indian Social Structure: From Hierarchy

to Democratic Plurality 639

The Twin Legacy of Colonial Rule and the Anticolonial Movement 646

Political Socialization, Recruitment, and Political Culture 649

Political Institutions and Policy Process 656

The Federal Structure 664

The Articulation and Aggregation of Interests 666

The Economy, Welfare, and Regulation 676

Conclusion: The Resilience of Pluralist Politics in India 681

Key Terms 683

Suggested Readings 684

CHAPTER 18

Politics in Nigeria 690

Robert J. Mundt and Oladimeji Aborisade

Current Policy Challenges 691

The Effects of History 692

Environmental Potential and Limitations 696

Political Culture and Subcultures 701

Political Socialization 708

Political Recruitment 712

Political Structure 714

Interest Articulation 720

Political Participation 723

Parties and Elections 723

Policy Formation and Implementation 729

Nigeria in Africa and in the World 736

Prospects for Development 737

Key Terms 738

Suggested Readings 738

CHAPTER 19

Politics in the United States 742

Austin Ranney

Current Policy Challenges 743

The United States Among the World's Nations 745

xvi Detailed Contents

The Constitutional System 748
Political Culture and Socialization 752
The Mass Communications Media 755
Political Participation and Recruitment 756
Recruitment of Leaders 758
Interest Articulation: Pressure Groups and PACs 760
The Special Characteristics of American Political Parties 764
The Policymaking Process in America 771
Policy Performance 774
American Exceptionalism: Myth or Reality? 779
Conclusion 783
Key Terms 783
Suggested Readings 783

Index 787