

POLITICAL SCIENCE

A COMPARATIVE INTRODUCTION

Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin

POLITICAL SCIENCE: A COMPARATIVE INTRODUCTION

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Preface

When a journalist asked British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan which aspect of the job caused him most difficulty, he replied, 'Events, dear boy, events.' We know just what he meant. Rewriting this book to take account of the dramatic events in the political world in the late 1980s and early 1990s has proved to be a challenging exercise.

In this new edition, we have given full coverage to the collapse of communism and to the emergence of postcommunist regimes in Eastern Europe. In rewriting all the sections on the second world, we aimed to give at least as much coverage to postcommunist governments as to their predecessors. In fact, limits of information and perspective mean that we have not kept completely to our own promise. But we think it has borne fruit anyway. We are delighted that Shaun Breslin, a young second-world specialist at Newcastle, agreed to join the existing authors for this edition – and we're even more pleased with his vivid coverage of the momentous developments in the second world.

On a minor note, we have used the past tense when referring to communist party states, except when discussing those states (notably China), where communist rulers still hang on to power.

The democratic revolution in the third world has been quieter, but perhaps no less important, than the changes in the second world. The retreat of the generals in Latin America has transformed the nature of regimes there. Elsewhere, international pressures have encouraged a transition towards democracy. We have sought to reflect these developments, too, in this edition.

All this raises the question: If democracy is now universal, why have we retained a three worlds approach? The answer is that we still think this is the best and simplest way to capture contrasts between countries. The political differences between Canada, Chile and Czechoslovakia remain fundamental, even if they all now share democratic forms. The political agenda in a country is set by where a country comes from, as well as where it is now. The agenda also depends on the country's relationship to the world economy. On both dimensions, the differences between the three worlds are still vast.

The world, however, continues to shrink. Traditionally, comparative politics texts, including this one, have underplayed the whole issue of

interdependence between nations. We have therefore added a new chapter on 'the nation-state in one world' to this edition. Its purpose is to draw out those features of global politics which impinge most on politics within the nation-state. It reflects our belief that the dynamics of politics rest neither in national nor in global politics, but rather in the interaction between the two.

This book conforms to the law that new editions are always bigger. 'Elections and voters' and 'the military and police' now rate chapters of their own. Indeed, the section on the police is entirely new. The two opening chapters have also been strengthened, in order to provide a general introduction to political concepts (Chapter 1) and to comparative politics specifically (Chapter 2). New sections in other chapters include: majority and consensus democracy (Chapter 3); 1989 – the year of revolutions (Chapter 4); postmaterialism (chapter 6); new politics, public opinion, opinion polls and the media (Chapter 7); and the welfare state (Chapter 16).

We're pleased that this book is used in several countries where English is not the first language. We owe a special duty of clarity to such readers and we have made an effort to improve our expression throughout the book. Alison Wright, a recent politics graduate, went through the text for us, simplifying paragraphs, sentences and words. Passive sentences were also transformed by her into active ones (though she missed that one!) We are grateful to her for this careful work and to Paul Gliddon, another politics graduate, for compiling the index. Thanks also to Keith Povey, our copy editor for three editions of the book, for his painstaking work.

In these days of expanding student numbers, it's important for texts to provide students with a framework for independent study. We have tried to achieve this by including discussion points and key readings at the end of each chapter. We've also added an appendix giving detailed advice on information sources. We hope this will be useful for students' essays and projects. The appendix includes a detailed list of recent country and area studies, many (not all!) of which were used in preparing this edition. We've also included more signposting in this edition, through a more detailed contents section and by adding chapter summaries. In response to feedback from students, this edition also contains more devices to break up the text and an extensive glossary of concepts.

We want to thank all our colleagues around the world who responded to our request for advice on how best to revise the book. The replies (and reading lists) really were helpful in setting the agenda for the revisions. Comments from experts on particular countries also helped us to broaden our range of examples, and in particular to

provide more coverage of Australasia, North America, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. We're especially grateful to the wise owls who advised us not to change too much!

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What began in the 1980s as an introduction to comparative government has now broadened out in the 1990s into a comparative introduction to politics. Although the book itself has changed over the years, our underlying aim has not. We have sought to write a clear and up-to-date introduction to politics for students beginning their study of the subject. We hope this edition goes a little further towards fulfilling that objective.

ROD HAGUE
MARTIN HARROP
SHAUN BRESLIN



Peters' projection of the world

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