



# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

A Global Introduction

*Michael J. Sodaro*



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## A Global Introduction

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Michael J. Sodaro

The George Washington University

With contributions by:

Nathan J. Brown

The George Washington University

Dean W. Collinwood

University of Utah

Bruce J. Dickson

The George Washington University

Joseph L. Klesner

Kenyon College

Timothy D. Sisk

University of Denver



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## COMPARATIVE POLITICS: A GLOBAL INTRODUCTION

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**MICHAEL JOSEPH SODARO** (chapters 1–18 and 21) is the principal author and editor of *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. As Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University, he is a member of the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington's Elliott School of International Affairs. He has a BA from Fordham University, an MA from the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. He earned a Certificate at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris and studied in Berlin in 1974–76. He has conducted research in France, Germany, Italy, and Russia. He is the recipient of the Marshall Shulman prize for his book, *Moscow, Germany, and the West from Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Cornell, 1990), and the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg prize for excellence in teaching at George Washington.

**NATHAN J. BROWN** (chapter 20, "Israel") is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University. He has a BA from the University of Chicago and an MA and Ph.D. from Princeton University. The recipient of Fulbright grants to conduct research and teach in Egypt, Israel, and the Arabian peninsula, he is the author of three books: *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt* (Yale, 1990), *The Rule of Law in the Arab World* (Cambridge, 1997), and *Constitutions in a Nonconstitutional World: Arab Basic Laws and the Prospects for Accountable Government* (Sunny, 2001). He is currently writing a book on Palestinian politics.

**DEAN W. COLLINWOOD** (chapter 19, "Japan") is Research Professor of Management and Director of the Global Business Program and of the U.S.-Japan and China Centers at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He has a BA from Brigham Young University, an MA from

the University of London, and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Tokyo in 1986–87 and is a past president of the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies. The author of several books on Japan and Korea, he is the editor of the Annual Edition of *Japan and the Pacific Rim*, published by Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.

**BRUCE J. DICKSON** (chapter 22, “China”) is Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University and the Director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies at George Washington’s Elliot School of International Affairs. He obtained his BA, MA, and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. In 1997 he published *Democratization in China and Taiwan* (Oxford). He is currently conducting research on relations between the Chinese Communist Party and the private sector.

**JOSEPH L. KLESNER** (chapter 23, “Mexico and Brazil”) is Professor of Political Science and Director of the International Studies Program at Kenyon College. He received his BA at Central College and his MA and Ph.D. at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The author of articles appearing in *Comparative Politics*, *Mexican Studies*, and the *Latin American Research Review*, in addition to many book chapters, he has worked on politics in Mexico and on public opinion and political culture in Latin America. His research has been supported by Fulbright grants and by funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**TIMOTHY D. SISK** (chapter 24, “Nigeria and South Africa”) is a Senior Research Associate at the Graduate School of International Studies and a faculty member in the Conflict Resolution Program at the University of Denver. He obtained his BA and MA from Baylor University and his Ph.D. from the George Washington University. After experience as a journalist in South Africa and a legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate, he served as a program officer and research scholar at the federally chartered United States Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. His books include *Democratization in South Africa* (Princeton, 1995), *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (Carnegie Commission, 1995), and, with Andrew Reynolds, *Elections and Conflict Management in South Africa* (U.S. Institute of Peace, 1998).

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# PREFACE

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The time appears ripe for a new introduction to comparative politics. Three motivations have inspired this fresh approach to the way we learn and teach the important subject of political life around the world.

*Concepts* The first motivating factor is a quest for *conceptual richness*: our aim is to provide greater coverage of the core concepts of comparative politics than students and instructors are likely to find in most other introductory textbooks. Rather than confining itself to just one particular approach (such as structural functionalism) or to just a few topics (such as state institutions), this book surveys a wide expanse of political concepts and terminology, drawing on seminal works of academic political science and traditional political philosophy. These ideas come to life through numerous illustrative examples taken from recent events around the world.

The first fifteen chapters of this book address such basic topics of comparative politics as democracy and democratization; authoritarianism; power; state institutions; electoral systems; voting behavior; parties and interest groups; class, ethnicity, gender, and other aspects of political sociology; nationalism; political culture; ideology (including Marxism, fascism, and Islam); dissent and revolution; political economy; and political development, among others. It is perhaps unusual for an introductory-level textbook on comparative politics to devote so many pages to concepts. It is often assumed that undergraduates cannot handle much conceptual material. The teaching experiences of this volume's authors, however, confirm precisely the opposite point of view. We are certain that students can learn the value of concepts and theories, *as long as they are clearly presented and as long as the students are shown how the conceptual tools of comparative*

*politics relate to real-world situations.* Throughout this volume the authors have persistently strived for clarity and ease of expression. We want this book to be interesting and fun to read. We also want students to appreciate the relevance of concepts and ideas to the events they read about in newspapers and see on television.

Terms such as “human rights,” “national identity,” “coalition government,” “liberalism,” “civil society,” “social democracy,” “voter dealignment,” “corporatism,” “clientelism,” “privatization,” “debt servicing,” “welfare state,” “newly industrializing countries,” “postmodern values,” “zero-sum game,” “free rider,” and a seemingly endless stream of others are the everyday stuff of political discourse around the world. What do they mean? More than ever before, students in today’s close-knit global environment need a firm grasp of the world’s political lexicon.

*Critical Thinking* The second motive underlying this textbook’s creation is even more overtly pedagogical in nature. One of the book’s unique features is that it systematically seeks to enhance the *critical-thinking skills* of its readers by introducing them to some of the ways scientific logic applies to the study of politics. At a rudimentary level and in a clearly written fashion, it explains the application of such elementary scientific devices as theories, hypotheses, variables, correlations, models, paradigms, and the like to the study of political phenomena. It also walks students through the logic of qualitative hypothesis testing in political science and provides numerous examples of how it is done. To drive home the step-by-step logic of this analytical technique, *virtually every chapter in the book contains a hypothesis-testing exercise.* (As the classical masters insisted, “*Repetitio est mater studiorum*”—“Repetition is the mother of studies.”) Like the conceptual definitions introduced in part I, these exercises are taken from real-world political phenomena and from influential works by scholars and political thinkers.

A central aim in this analytically oriented endeavor is to impart to our readers a clearer sense of what political science is all about than they may derive from many other introductory texts. We address head-on that nagging classroom question, “But, professor, is political science *really* a science?” Hypothesis testing and related techniques of scientific method are defining elements of the discipline and form the reigning paradigm for scholarly research. And yet few—if any—introductory textbooks on comparative politics (or, for that matter, on American politics or international relations) actually employ these methods or teach students how they can be used. The “scientific” side of the field tends to be confined to textbooks on the “scope and methods” of political science or handbooks on research methodology, publications typically aimed at fairly advanced political science majors or graduate students. We believe that students can, and should, be exposed to the methodological foundations of the discipline right from their very first courses. And we believe that students will especially appreciate their value if they can see how scientific logic *helps them understand the real world of politics.*

While trying to deepen our students' understanding of political science, we are also motivated by the widely perceived need in contemporary academia to engage students as directly and creatively as possible in sharpening their ability to think logically and coherently. As educators, we have an obligation to inculcate critical-thinking skills in our students as vital elements of their general education. Political science courses—even introductory ones—can be ideally suited to this heuristic purpose if the discipline's analytical premises and methods are spelled out plainly and explained precisely. Students need to realize that the analytical methods they learn in political science classes can be applied without too much tweaking in other fields as well, above all in cognate social sciences, though not exclusively. And they need to know that, wherever their career paths may lead them, a variety of professions will require well-honed analytical abilities, from the law and government service to a host of other careers less immediately associated with political science. Helping students learn *how to think for themselves* is one of the most important tasks this book undertakes as it exposes them to the rudiments of social scientific logic.

Meanwhile, our scientific forays do not misdirect us into ignoring the non-scientific sides of political reality. Values, ideals, norms, and preferences invariably play a central role in critical thinking about politics. How we address the normative questions of politics ("What *should* we do to make this a better world?") is just as important as how we investigate the *factual* realities of politics ("What *is* political reality?"). For many professional students of the subject, politics is as much an art as it is a science, as much an exercise in normative (value-centered) philosophy as it is an exercise in empirical (fact-based) analysis, and as much an attempt to craft real-world policies as it is an attempt simply to understand political reality. This book seeks to clarify the differences—and the dynamic interactions—between facts and values, between empirical science and normative political thought, and between policy analysis and policy prescription. Not only do we want our students to improve their analytical skills, we also challenge them to think through their own political orientations and to figure out *what they would do* in addressing some practical issues of political life.

Part I of this book, encompassing the first fifteen chapters, addresses these conceptual and analytical concerns in a crystal-clear style that is specifically aimed at students taking their first course in comparative politics.

**Countries and Leaders** The third factor that prompted the writing of this book is a desire to provide as much breadth and depth as possible in covering an assortment of *countries* around the world, integrating their treatment with the conceptual and analytical frameworks developed in part I. To this end, we devote the nine chapters of part II to eleven major nations: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Israel, Russia, China, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa. Each chapter highlights key historical events in the development of the country under investigation and explores its political system in detail.



To enliven these accounts and to illustrate how personalities interact with institutions, all of these chapters contain vivid biographical profiles of important *leaders*. The personages singled out for special attention have either made a decisive impact on present-day politics through their actions in the recent past or they are currently serving in a leadership capacity. These capsule biographies provide substantial grist for courses focused on the theory and practice of leadership. The country studies also treat some of the most salient political issues animating debate in these countries, such as economic policy, gun control, ethnic conflict, campaign financing, and the like, and they invite students to make comparisons with the ways roughly similar issues are dealt with in their own country.

All eleven of these nations have experienced important changes over the past ten years; in some cases these transformations have been truly revolutionary in nature. In Britain, France, and Germany, social democratic parties under the leadership of Tony Blair, Lionel Jospin, and Gerhard Schroeder, respectively, replaced conservative governments in 1997 and 1998. Japan's political system witnessed the collapse of the Liberal Democratic Party's grip on power in 1993 after nearly forty years of dominance, along with the collapse of its high-flying economy. Israel has undergone prolonged political instability in connection with the tortuous Middle East peace process.

Russia experienced perhaps the most profound upheavals of all the countries surveyed in part II. The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991—one of the most momentous political events of the twentieth century—was followed by a shaky start on the path to democracy under President Boris Yeltsin and his successor, Vladimir Putin. Among the many challenges Putin faces is the one he set for himself when he pledged to reassert the central government's authority over a country in the throes of disintegration, while simultaneously promising to bolster democratic freedoms. China's communist leadership appeared momentarily shaken by spontaneous pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989. Although the ruling elite smashed the protests, the growth of private enterprise under the party's auspices and the country's widening trade relationships with the outside world have raised the question of whether real political change may be part of China's imminent future.

In the developing world, Mexico experienced a revolution of its own as Vicente Fox won an unexpectedly solid victory in the presidential election of July 2000, ousting the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party from its stranglehold on the presidency after seventy-one years in power. Brazil in the 1990s was immersed in the process of consolidating the new democratic regime it had established in the previous decade, following more than twenty years of military rule. Under the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a former Marxist turned champion of market reforms, Brazil by decade's end confronted serious economic challenges, both domestic and international in nature, as well as enormous environmental hazards and a political system marked by a highly divided multiparty parliament. Across the

ocean, strikingly similar challenges connected with the transition to full-scale democracy face two of Africa's largest countries. Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation, elected Olusegun Obasanjo as its new president in 1999. A former general who once headed the government in the 1970s, Obasanjo promised to restore democracy to a country that had been governed by corrupt military dictators for most of its history as an independent state. South Africa, dominated for decades by a white minority representing less than one-fifth of the population, effected a clean break with whites-only rule, holding its first multiracial elections in 1994. Nelson Mandela, a democracy advocate who endured twenty-seven years of imprisonment for challenging white supremacy, was elected South Africa's first black president. His successor, Thabo Mbeki, took over in 1999, inheriting a country characterized by glaring economic inequalities and racial tensions that have not entirely died out.

Our in-depth explorations of these countries are grounded in the canons of comparative analysis. In addition to relating each country to various conceptual criteria for comparison generated in part I—such as conditions for democracy—the nine chapters of part II also make explicit comparisons to the United States and other relevant countries. Cross-references to pertinent portions of other chapters help readers make these connections. Our time line follows late events through the summer of 2000, when this book went to press. (A selection of important subsequent developments can be accessed via McGraw-Hill's comparative politics website, <[www.mhhe.com/comparative](http://www.mhhe.com/comparative)>)

Along with the eleven countries explored in part II, this book examines a broad sampling of additional countries in part I. These briefer country studies are intended primarily to illustrate concepts introduced in the first fifteen chapters. For example, various aspects of political power, such as class rule, autocracy, and theocratic authoritarianism, are illustrated with reference to countries like Haiti, Iraq, and Iran, respectively; the disintegration of nation-states is exemplified by the fate of Yugoslavia; and various conditions for democracy are applied to countries like Poland, Romania, South Korea, and India. There are numerous references to other countries as well, including the United States. The premise underlying these focused analyses of individual countries is that concepts and political realities are analytically inseparable: students cannot fully appreciate what is going on in individual nations without a clear understanding of concepts, and they cannot fully understand conceptual abstractions without a close look at how they apply in the real world.

*A Global Approach* Taken together, the three motivating purposes of this book—conceptual richness, critical thinking, and wide country coverage—have resulted in what we believe to be an unusually comprehensive one-volume introduction to comparative politics, an approach that is truly global in scope. We have also sought to unite high scholarly standards with an engaging style. This is not a dumbed-down textbook, nor is it excessively advanced for introductory-level

students. All of its contributors—accomplished scholars with a commitment to educating students—have labored mightily to translate sophisticated scholarship into a format readily accessible to today's undergraduates, a daunting scholarly task in its own right! We hope that students and teachers alike will find *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction* a useful—and readable—guide to the complexities of our highly globalized new millennium.

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A book of this size is inevitably the product of many hands. Both collectively and individually, my fellow authors and I are deeply grateful to a number of people whose help proved invaluable, whether in the *form of intellectual inspiration*, editorial support, research assistance, or that ever-important morale-boosting encouragement that scholars and scriveners tend to require in unlimited amounts.

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It is a particular pleasure for me to thank my five collaborators: Nathan Brown, Dean Collinwood, Bruce Dickson, Joseph Klesner, and Tim Sisk. I cannot imagine a more talented and cooperative group of contributors. Successful scholars in their own right, all five rightly regarded their contributions from the outset as serious works of scholarship. Their substantive expertise and writing skills have immeasurably enhanced the quality of this book, helping to make it what we intended it to be: a scholarly contribution to the discipline of political science and a creative approach to the education of our readers.

Each of us assumes final responsibility for our respective contributions. As the author of chapters 1–18 and 21, I am solely responsible for their content, including any errors or shortcomings they contain. I am also responsible for the book's overall concept and structure, which I tried to impose on my co-authors as gently as possible. While



I provided certain basic parameters and requirements—such as the list of conditions for democracy and the need to include a biographical profile and a hypothesis-testing exercise in each chapter—I gave the contributors free rein to employ their knowledge and analytical talents to the full. The quality of their chapters, in my view, thoroughly reflects the high standards we all set for ourselves.

Putting out a textbook of this length is a huge team effort. The authors are all indebted to the superb people at McGraw-Hill who kept our project on track year after year and then—dazzlingly!—put it all together in a few brief months. It was a pleasure to work with such competent professionals and delightful personalities as primary editor Monica Eckman, project manager Mary Lee Harms, and editorial coordinators Hannah Glover and Shannon Morrow. Our thanks also go to Michelle D. Whitaker and Kristie Goddard, who designed the cover; Pamela Carley, who tracked down the photos; and Beth Kundert and Carrie Braun, who arranged for my students at the George Washington University to read pre-publication versions of the manuscript. Behind them stands a small legion of people who made important contributions of their own to this volume's publication. I also want to thank Irv Rockwood, my editor at Dushkin Publishers, who got me started on this book and encouraged me to forge ahead.

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My co-authors and I would like to dedicate this book to our students. As an eternally youthful source of information, insight, amusement, joy, and—occasionally—bewilderment, it is the students at our colleges and universities who inspire us to write such tomes as this one, and with whom we wish to share our love of the world.

Michael J. Sodaro  
*October 2000*

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# BRIEF CONTENTS

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<b>Preface</b>	xvii	
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	xxiii	
 <b>PART ONE</b>		
<hr/> <b>CONCEPTS AND CRITICAL THINKING</b> <hr/>		
1. COMPARATIVE POLITICS: WHAT IS IT? WHY STUDY IT?	3	
2. MAJOR TOPICS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS	27	
3. CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT POLITICS: (I) ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES OF POLITICAL SCIENCE	51	
4. CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT POLITICS: (II) THE LOGIC OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING	75	
5. POWER	95	
6. THE STATE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS	117	
7. NATION-STATES, NATIONALISM, AND SUPRANATIONALISM		145
8. DEMOCRACY: WHAT IS IT?		165
9. DEMOCRACY: HOW DOES IT WORK? STATE INSTITUTIONS AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS		193
10. CONDITIONS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIZATION: TEN CONDITIONS—POLAND—ROMANIA		215
11. PEOPLE AND POLITICS: VOTERS—PARTIES—INTEREST GROUPS—DISSIDENCE—REVOLUTION		243
12. POLITICAL CULTURE AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY		269
13. IDEOLOGY		287
14. POLITICAL ECONOMY: LAISSEZ-FAIRE—CENTRAL PLANNING—MIXED ECONOMIES—WELFARE STATES		315
15. THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH KOREA—INDIA		341

<b>PART TWO</b>			
<hr/> <b>COUNTRIES AND LEADERS</b> <hr/>			
<b>16. THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	371	<b>20. ISRAEL Nathan J. Brown</b>	587
<b>17. FRANCE</b>	427	<b>21. RUSSIA</b>	633
<b>18. GERMANY</b>	485	<b>22. CHINA Bruce J. Dickson</b>	697
<b>19. JAPAN Dean W. Collinwood</b>	543	<b>23. MEXICO AND BRAZIL Joseph L. Klesner</b>	747
		<b>24. NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA Timothy D. Sisk</b>	809
		<b>Photo Credits</b>	847
		<b>Text and Line Art Permissions</b>	849
		<b>Index</b>	851



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# CONTENTS

---

<b>Preface</b>	xvii	<b>Key Terms</b>	24
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	xxiii	<b>Notes</b>	24
<b>PART ONE</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>CONCEPTS AND CRITICAL THINKING</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>1. COMPARATIVE POLITICS: WHAT IS IT? WHY STUDY IT?</b>	3	<b>2. MAJOR TOPICS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS</b>	27
A Global Introduction	6	What Is Politics?	27
Global Coverage of the Nations of the World	6	Democracy and Authoritarianism	28
Conceptual Comprehensiveness	6	Political Processes	31
Critical Thinking	7	Goals	33
Getting Started	9	Sources of Political Conflict	33
Comparative Politics and International Politics: What's the Difference? How Are They Connected?	10	Power	33
Global Interdependence	10	Resources	34
THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISES OF 1997-99	12	Social Identity	35
Democratization	19	Ideas	45
DEMOCRACY AND PEACE	21	Values	47
The Purposes of Comparison	23	Key Terms	49
		Notes	49
		<b>3. CRITICAL THINKING ABOUT POLITICS: (I) ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES OF POLITICAL SCIENCE</b>	51
		"What Is?": A Guide to Empirical Political Analysis	53
		Definition	54
		Description: Observing, Collecting, Comparing	54