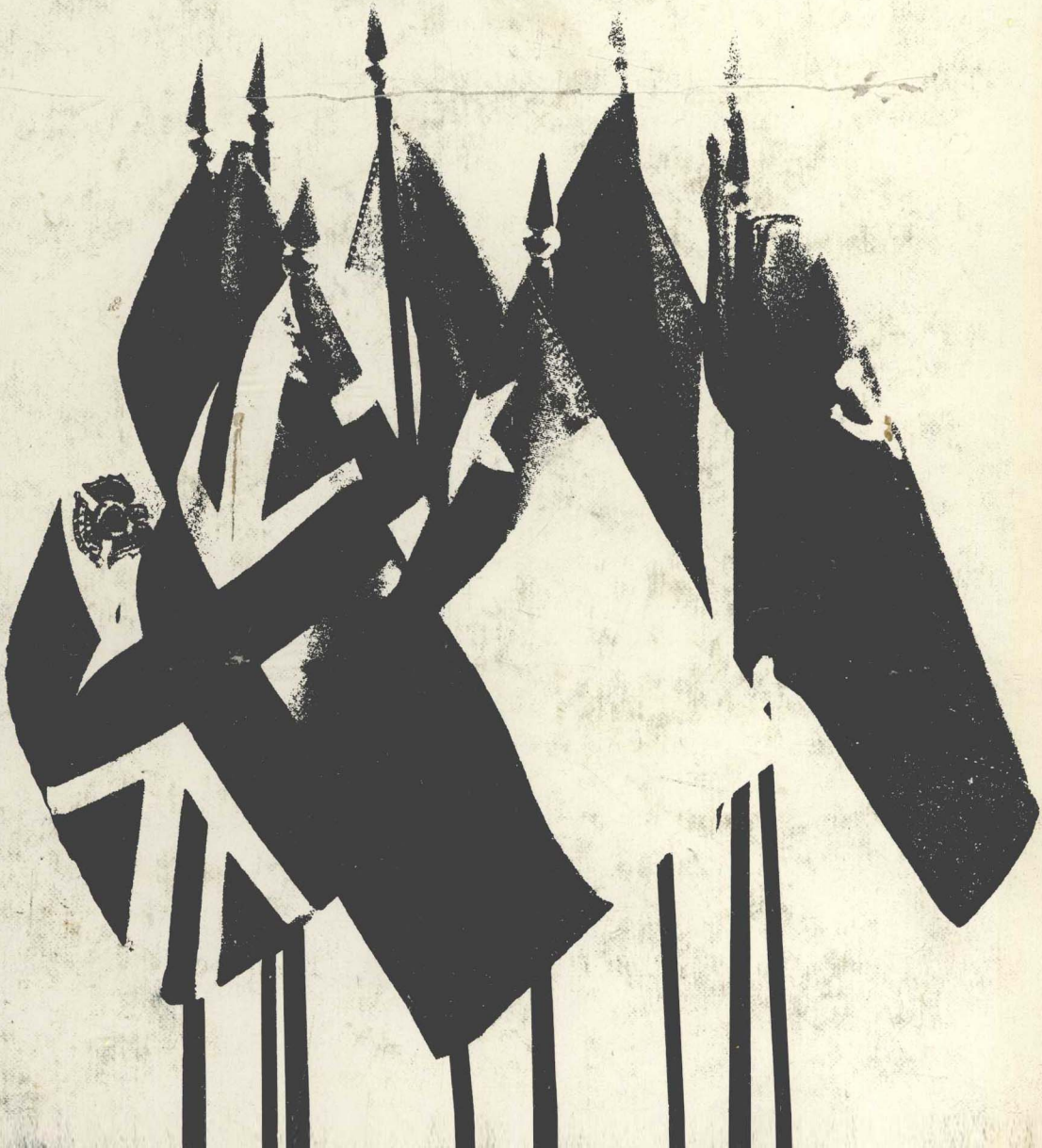
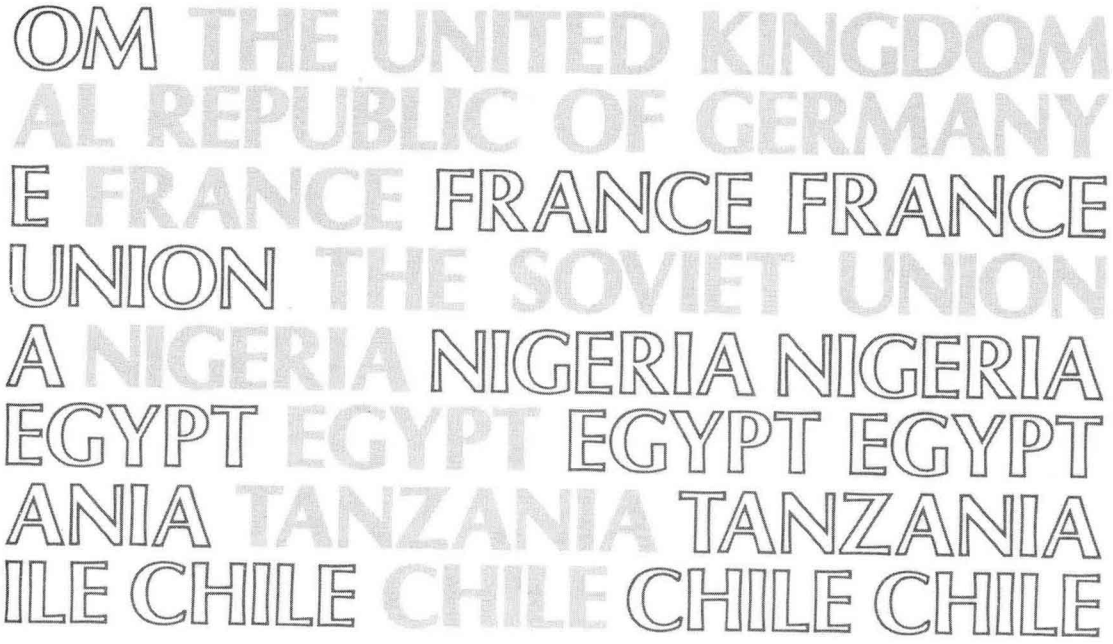
COMPARING NATIONS

The Developed and the Developing Worlds

Vaughn F. Bishop / J. William Meszaros





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Lexington, Massachusetts *Toronto*

To Our Parents

Published simultaneously in Canada.

Printed in the United States of America.

International Standard Book Number: 0–669–01142–8

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 79–66852

PREFACE

Instructors face a number of important decisions in designing an introductory course in comparative politics. They must decide what countries to include and which concepts or ideas to emphasize. Finally, they must concern themselves with the best way to introduce the logic of the comparative method. *Comparing Nations* provides a comprehensive approach to handling all of these decisions.

This text surveys four *developed* nations—the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and the Soviet Union—and four *developing* nations—Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania, and Chile—permitting a comparison of the political institutions and political patterns. It also introduces students to nation-states that have not been traditionally treated in comparative politics courses. The nations of the developing world are becoming more important in our lives, and few American students have any understanding of the political and cultural traditions they represent, or the problems and challenges they face.

To emphasize our view that politics is a universal phenomenon and that all nations face similar problems, we have chosen not to present the material in strict nation-by-nation fashion. Each chapter deals with a topic that is of traditional concern to comparative politics and is a major problem facing nation-states, whether developed or developing. Within each chapter there are separate discussions of each country. By our organization we have sought to encourage comparison. It is our hope that students using this book will not see nation-states as isolated, unrelated entities but as different nations facing similar problems.

The text begins with chapters on the logic of comparison and on the history and cultures of the eight nations. Chapters 4 through 6 focus on political participation, the role and importance of political parties, and different means of leadership selection. The discussion then moves to important governmental institutions—those that deal with the making and implementing of policy, those that serve symbolic functions, and those

whose purpose is to resolve conflict. The text concludes with an evaluation of the political performance of the eight nation-states, with emphasis on their adaptability to economic, social, and political changes.

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CHAPTER 1
COMPARING NATIONS

What tools are needed to compare the politics and governments of Great Britain, West Germany, France, the Soviet Union, Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania, and Chile?

Every day each of us is confronted with news reports from other countries, and, unfortunately, we often do not have the background to understand these news events. When reports circulate that the head of the Communist party of the Soviet Union is ill or contemplating retirement, we wonder who is likely to succeed him and by what means. When we hear that the British pound is declining in value or that there is a fresh outbreak of violence between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, we ought to ask how Great Britain, one of the world's oldest, ongoing parliamentary democracies will respond to these new crises. When the military takes over the government in Chile and Nigeria, we may ask why such a coup occurs in these two nations while in other nations the military stays out of politics. To answer these questions, we need facts.

Facts without a framework with which to put them into perspective are of little use. There are patterns that recur in politics, and we need to see how and why countries with the same basic political structure can be so different. For example, why are Britain and France, both with parliamentary traditions, so different in their political "styles"? Are there reasons why political violence is so common in some nations and rare in

others? Almost all nations have political parties, but what are the differences and similarities between parties like the Labour or Conservative parties in Great Britain and the Communist party in the Soviet Union? To answer these, and other, questions we need both facts and a general understanding of politics as practiced in other nations.

This is a comparative politics textbook that will discuss the "politics" and the "political systems" of eight "foreign" nations—the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), France, the Soviet Union, Nigeria, Egypt, Tanzania, and Chile. They are foreign because most Americans know so little about them and also because their political systems seem so different from what we are most familiar with—our own. You will read about the history of each nation and of the events that shaped each country's political traditions. Political events do not occur in a vacuum; they occur within the context of the traditions and culture of the nation. The personality and behavior of political leaders and the organizations and framework of the political system influence how politics is played and what the outcomes of the political game are. When you complete this text, you should have a better understanding not only of why specific events occur in other nations but also what effect these events may have on the future.

Many textbooks on comparative politics focus only on the major nations of Western Europe and the Soviet Union—no doubt because these nations are most often in the news, most visible, and most familiar; however, the nations of Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East are becoming increasingly important. The political spotlight has expanded to include the developing new nations as well as the developed older ones. After World War II the international community added many new members. In 1946 there were 51 charter member states of the United Nations; today there are over 140 member states. Almost every year a new nation proclaims its independence. Comparative politics today requires an understanding of both the big and the small nations, the young and the old, the familiar and the unfamiliar.

This new age of nationalism forces us to alter radically the way in which we think about and discuss politics; the concepts and vocabulary have changed with the times. In this chapter we present some of the terms commonly used in comparative politics, the various ways in which nations are compared, and a brief introduction to the politics of the eight nations that we will study.

Political Tradition, Political Systems, and the "Art of Comparison"

Several factors confuse most political discussions and make the systematic study of politics difficult. The first is the way we use political words. In our daily lives many of us are vague and imprecise when we use political

terms. Depending on how they are used, "socialism," "totalitarianism," and "democracy" can mean very different things. Many political discussions flare into arguments simply because people fail to use political terms consistently and uniformly.

The fact that our political beliefs differ from others and that our own beliefs can change compounds confusion. People may see politics as good or bad, exciting or boring, beneficial or hurtful. The politician may be a wise statesman one moment, a corrupt politician the next. For some, politics depends on whose "ox is being gored" at the time. When we achieve what we want through political activity, we are pleased and politically astute; but when our opponents win and we lose, we are not pleased.

Our definitions of politics and political activity also depend on what is being studied. When looking at the politics of personal interchange, we stress the personalities of those who are involved. At the local governmental level politics cannot be understood apart from such issues as schools, property taxes, and zoning. Parents are concerned with the quality and cost of local schools; property owners are concerned with the taxes needed to pay for public services and with preserving the value of their homes. In some communities people attempt to separate politics and government and argue that "politics" (which they view as bad) has no place in "government" (which is good). This produces a strange hybrid, "nonpartisan, good government."

At the national level the issues may appear less immediate but more important. Such tasks as protecting national security, regulating trade between nations, controlling and monitoring the economy, and developing nationwide policies are issues usually associated with the nation. A characteristic of national politics that elevates the study of government at this level is *sovereignty*. Sovereignty means there is no higher authority or power that can override or change the decisions made at this level.

In discussing politics, we use a political shorthand. We do not, for example, describe every detail of a nation when we analyze its politics; we classify and categorize. Countries are classified as "democratic," "authoritarian," or "totalitarian." With reference to their economies they are "capitalist," "socialist," or "communist." In addition, countries may be categorized as "traditional" or "modern," "developed" or "developing." Whatever the distinction drawn, the goal is to give us clues about how the system operates. Sometimes the category also conveys value judgements as to which systems are "good" and which are "bad."

A third level of politics is international, and involves the relationship between nations and groups of nations. Here the concerns focus on trade and cooperation between nations, attempts to provide worldwide security and order, and the need for cooperation between countries. Organizations like the United Nations seek to promote cooperation among nations and prevent violent conflict in the international community. It is un-

realistic, however, to expect (or necessarily even desire) that national boundaries will disappear in the near future.

Most commentators agree that, although it may be an appealing thought at times, the game of politics is not going to disappear. To understand more about politics, we study politics within various nations; and our understanding of each nation is increased because we have a basis for comparison.

Understanding politics then requires studying what the rules of the game are, how they develop, how the rules differ from nation to nation, and what the effects of the political game are on individuals and groups in the nation.

Demands, Decisions, and Power: The Primacy of Politics

Individuals and groups within society have certain specific expectations and demands. They expect certain things to occur and others not to occur; they expect to be provided certain benefits and services. Labor unions want higher pay and shorter working hours. Civil servants expect that their performance will be judged on how well they do their job and not on political concerns. Some religious groups lobby that their values be reflected in government policy, while other groups argue with equal force that religion and government need to be separate.

Individual and group expectations are often translated into demands. People with similar interests join together in interest groups to press for what they want in the political arena. When these groups make demands, political leaders must make decisions. For example, labor unions may demand that the government establish a minimum wage for all workers and limit the number of hours that can be worked per week. Leaders must respond to these demands, demands that sometimes conflict with the interests of another group. The interests of labor, for example, must be balanced against those of business.

This is the business of politics. Politics is the allocation of values, goods, and services; it is the making of decisions concerning "who gets what, when, and how."[1] The political contest involves choosing between different demands and deciding what can be delivered in what situations. If someone were to ask a politician to define utopia, the reply might well be, "A situation where all the demands of all citizens are met all of the time." Perhaps an even more perfect utopia (if that is possible) would be a situation in which there were no new demands.

Unfortunately for the politician, he or she does not operate in an imaginary or visionary world but in the real world. This means that political leaders must make choices. They must choose between alternatives.

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[1] Harold Laswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, and How* (New York: World Publishing, 1958).

If workers demand more, that may mean that others must settle for less. If one group's demands are met, another group's may have to be sacrificed.

Responding to demands is made doubly difficult because demands do not remain constant. People's expectations change. In developing nations, such as Nigeria and Tanzania, people expect that their economic well-being will improve. They expect, and demand, that their children have access to education, that they have steady jobs, and that health care be available. Other demands include the right to participate in the decision-making process and the right to voice opinions.

Demands made in developed nations are similar, although the most important issues may differ. In post-World War II Great Britain, for example, Britons demanded increased social services. The introduction of a national health service to provide care for all patients was one response to these demands. Minority groups in Britain, many from former colonies in Asia and Africa, are now demanding the right to full participation in the political system. These more recent demands regarding minority rights must be acted on as well.

Utopia then will never exist. The resources of the nation are limited and expectations can never be fully realized. When one demand is met, others arise. To understand the politics of other nations requires studying the conflicting demands and interests of individuals and groups within the society. These interests and demands become *cleavages* when they are the most important distinguishing characteristics between individuals. In some nations cleavages may be drawn along religious, ethnic, linguistic, or regional lines. In other nations class divisions—the rich, the middle, and the poor—may be the most significant. Great Britain, one of the most homogeneous nations in terms of race, religion, and language, has a sharp class cleavage between the upper and the lower classes. The Soviet Union, Nigeria, and Tanzania are nations faced with ethnic and linguistic cleavages. In Nigeria well over 250 different language groups coexist within the national boundaries, while in the Soviet Union there are 15 republics based on ethnic/linguistic criteria. France is characterized by rural/urban splits, regional differences, and religious divisions between the clerical and anti-clerical. West Germany has a regional cleavage (the north and the south), class divisions, and divisions between Catholic and Protestant.

Depending on the situation, cleavages may be politically important or unimportant. In Tanzania, for example, ethnic or tribal differences are not as important as they are in Nigeria. The question of the relationship between church and state in England was resolved in the sixteenth century during the rule of Henry VIII, but differences between Catholic and Protestant are very important in one part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland. There are some indications that class distinctions in France are becoming more important while traditionally important distinctions such as the one between rural and urban France are becoming less so.

Whatever the type of cleavage, conflicting interests and demands re-

quire political leaders to make decisions concerning the allocation and the distribution of goods, services, and values. To make and enforce decisions, leaders need *power*—the power to influence others and to have the capability of enforcing that influence if need be. Political powerholders are the men and women making decisions; the people and groups with which they constantly deal are the political participants. When participants view the exercise of power as legitimate or just, it becomes *political authority*. An individual, a group, or an institution has *legitimate authority* when the population of that community accepts the right of an individual, group, or institution to make decisions concerning their fate and the allocation of values. Only those over whom the power is being exercised can grant legitimacy.

For the political leader, or the would-be leader, power is needed to make and enforce decisions. Many potential resources are available and can be used for political purposes. One of the most common resources is physical coercion. Those individuals or groups in society that control the weapons of force can use them to make decisions, and to make sure that once the decisions are made they are carried out. In Nigeria in 1966 and in Chile in 1973 soldiers in the army used force to end civilian governments. All political systems, if they are to continue to make decisions, possess at least the potential threat of coercion. Where there is a general acceptance by the citizenry of the decision-makers' right to make decisions, coercion remains only a potential weapon; during periods of crisis or where there is a general nonacceptance of the decision-makers' right to make decisions, coercion may be used.

The rather tired maxim "knowledge is power" suggests a second resource of political power. The civil servant, the bureaucrat, the administrator, and the expert all have potential political power. They may have power because they have knowledge that few others possess. Specialized knowledge of nuclear physics, education, foreign affairs, or agriculture gives some potential political power in specific areas. Others may have power because of their ability to control and manipulate the administrative apparatus of the state. How many times, in how many different societies, have people complained that it is not the elected officials who make decisions, but faceless bureaucrats? The relationship between the "expert" and the political leader often leads to conflict, a conflict between those who possess knowledge and those who seek to control its application.

Economic power may be transformed into political power. Those individuals or groups who control the distribution or the allocation of economic resources may seek, if they so choose, to transform their economic wealth into political wealth—the power to make decisions. Economic power is important because it is convertible to other resources of power. It may be used to buy individuals, institutions, knowledge, or

access to influence. Wealth may be used to protect the wealthy, to ensure the more equal distribution of economic resources, or to control and influence the political leaders and decision-makers.

A specific individual can possess political power much greater than that conferred by office. A very few unique men and women may exercise control through the force of their personalities. *Charisma* is the term used to characterize political leaders who derive their power from the force of their personality. The leader becomes a living political symbol. Several examples are discussed in later chapters. General Charles de Gaulle in 1958 created the Fifth French Republic, a political system that represented General De Gaulle's political beliefs and which, for over ten years, was dominated by his presence. Likewise, the modern political history of Egypt has been shaped and influenced by the personal power of Gamal Abdul Nasser. In the Soviet Union, the symbol of Lenin continues to provide support and legitimacy for the system created after the 1917 revolution.

Finally, political power may be derived from a higher authority. People may be willing to accept decisions made by others because they feel that the powerholders possess a special authority. Some religious leaders exercise power in part because their followers think that they are the best equipped and qualified to provide for and interpret spiritual needs. Monarchs often ruled because of "the divine right of kings." In more secular and modern cases, power may rest with those who have won election to specific offices. In this case the vote, as sanctioned by the higher authority of a constitution, becomes the mandate to make decisions. In still other cases, individuals or in some cases political parties (such as the Communist party of the Soviet Union) have political power because they have developed and control the ideology that sets the goals of the nation.

In the following chapters the various resources of power available to and used by people and groups are discussed. Power is a complex concept, and its discussion raises several questions. Why, for example, is power centralized in one person or institution in some systems, while in others it is distributed among several different individuals and institutions? Why are some leaders more effective in exercising power than others? What causes changes in who has power and who does not? Studying power requires not only the analysis of resources of power, but also of how resources are transformed into political power, how power is used to make and enforce decisions, and how political power can change hands.

There are still other questions raised concerning power and its use. What, for example, causes the military in some nations to transform its *potential* coercive power to *active* power by intervening in the political arena? How can an individual with personal or charismatic power transform that power into other resources of political power? Under what

circumstances can a charismatic leader lose his personal power? These questions, and others, illustrate the complexity of the concept of political power.

Thus far we have concentrated on those who possess and exercise political power. To understand power and politics completely, however, requires studying those over whom power is being exercised. We need to know not only how these participants behave politically, but also how they think they ought to behave, what they view as their primary political role, and under what circumstances that role changes.

Although we may not think about them often, we all have political values—things we think are politically important. These values and beliefs differ from group to group in the society and from nation to nation. Civil servants, for example, value expertise over politics; soldiers in some societies are taught to value an apolitical role, while in others they think they should actively participate; legislators tend to believe that conflict should be resolved through debate rather than violence.

There are also differences between nations. Soviet citizens have different views of politics than do British and French citizens. A West German and a Nigerian might find that they do not think at all alike when it comes to politics. Differences between nations are the result, in part, of different historical and cultural experiences. France and the Soviet Union both underwent violent revolutions. Although the impact in each case was different, the revolutionary experience colors the way citizens in each nation think about politics. The experience of colonial rule changed the way Nigerians, Egyptians, and Tanzanians look at politics.

What is important to understand is that there are certain values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with nations. The process by which societal members learn their political values and what political behavior is expected is referred to as *political socialization*. Socialization includes both the values and the way they are learned. Friends, family, schools, and the media are examples of socialization agents. From a very early age future "citizens" begin to learn about politics, what is good and bad, what should be done, and what should not be done. Although the values and the specifics of the process differ from nation to nation, all peoples seek to ensure that the traditions and beliefs of the nation are passed from generation to generation.

To summarize, politics involves the allocation of goods, services, and values. Within the nation people with similar interests often join together in interest groups or political parties to make demands. These demands of various groups are sometimes conflicting. When there are sharp or severe divisions within a nation, these are referred to as "cleavages." The political leaders are responsible for making decisions concerning the allocation of goods, services, and values, and for managing conflict among the groups and interests in the nation. To make and enforce these decisions, the leaders need power. Political power is derived from many