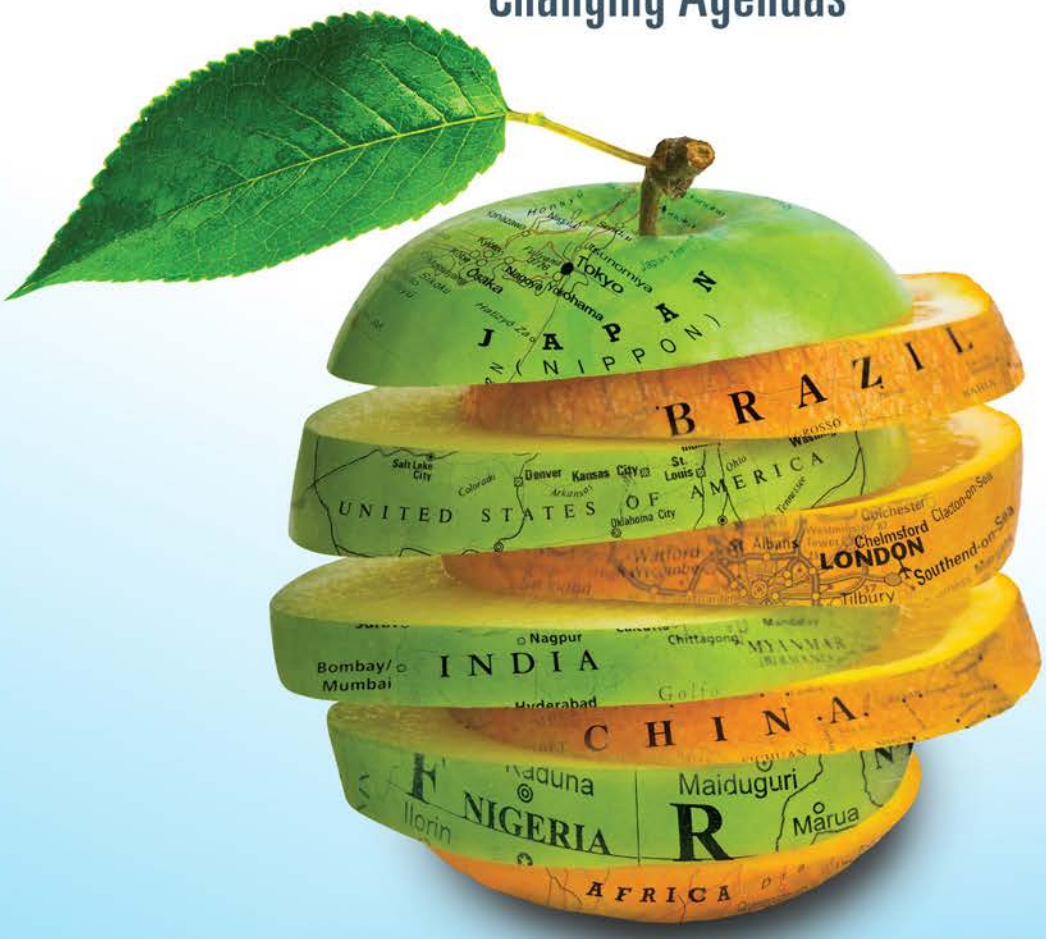
8th Edition

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Political Challenges and Changing Agendas



Kesselman • Krieger • Joseph

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8th Edition

Introduction to Comparative Politics

Political Challenges and Changing Agendas

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Preface

In the prefaces to several of the previous editions of *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (ICP), we brought up the title of Bob Dylan's 1964 song, "The Times, They Are a-Changin'" to describe how tumultuous politics around the world was when the book was published. Here is what we observed:

- "Politics throughout the world seems more troubled today than even a few years ago, when celebrations around the globe ushered in the new millennium."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics,* 3rd edition, © 2004.
- In recent years, the "world of politics was as turbulent as at any time in recent memory, with clear-cut trends more elusive than ever."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics,* 4th edition, © 2007.
- [We] have witnessed as much—or more—turmoil and uncertainty as the preceding years."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics,* 5th edition, © 2010.
- "The sixth edition of ICP . . . has been published soon after prodemocracy movements overthrew decades-old dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt, and repressive regimes unleashed deadly force against similar movements in Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Yemen."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics,* 6th edition, © 2013
- "When it comes to the degree of uncertainty, and the range and depth of challenges faced by ordinary citizens who yearn for stability, less strife, and a widening circle of opportunities, the present edition is no different than its predecessors."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 7th edition, © 2016

If there is a difference in the tone of the 8th edition of ICP, it may be that, although the times are certainly still a-changin', it now seems as if many of those political changes are for the worse. Where are equivalent developments fueling the optimism generated by the democratic promise of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 or the Arab Spring in 2011?

The political climate in much of the world these days is cloudy indeed, and for all-too-good reasons. For a start, there have recently been heightened geopolitical tensions, which, in the case of North Korea's continuing development of nuclear weapons, threaten devastating military conflict. In addition, civil wars and ethnic violence have engulfed many regions of the world, unleashing great destruction of life and property and giving rise to waves of refugees—which in turn fuel a nativist backlash in countries that feel threatened by the influx of migrants seeking safe haven. Finally, the thickening storm clouds also include the increasingly palpable reality that climate change is accelerating, including rising sea levels, global warming, and more frequent extreme weather events. There is a scientific consensus that the change is largely due to human actions (i.e., a hyperindustrialized assault on nature). But, at least with regard to the latter, all is not bleak: there is increased recognition of the need for concerted action at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

Whatever the direction of change, our mission in this book has remained the same. It is not to promote optimism or pessimism, but, as we noted in the preface of prior editions of ICP, to provide a clear and comprehensive guide to unsettled political times through comparative analysis.

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Country-by-Country Approach and Thematic Framework

We hope that the methods of comparative analysis will come alive as students examine similarities and differences among countries and within and between political systems. Our thematic approach facilitates disciplined analysis of political challenges and changing agendas within each country. Like previous editions of ICP, this edition employs a country-by-country approach structured around four core themes:

1. **A Globalizing World of States** focuses on the importance of state formation, the internal organization of the state, and the impact of the interstate system on political development. This theme emphasizes the interaction of globalization and state power.
2. **Governing the Economy** analyzes state strategies for promoting economic development and competitiveness, emphasizes the crucial role of economic performance in determining a state's political legitimacy, and stresses the interactive effects of economic globalization on domestic politics.
3. **The Democratic Idea** explores the challenges posed to the state by citizens' demands for greater participation and influence in democracies, mixed systems, and authoritarian regimes, and discusses the inevitable gap between the promise of democracy and its imperfect fulfillment.
4. **The Politics of Collective Identities** considers the political consequences of the complex interplay among class, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and nationality.

Our approach to comparative politics stresses the analysis of each country's politics by applying these four themes within a context shaped by globalization. This approach strikes a balance between a fine-grained analysis of the richness of each country's distinctive pattern of political development and explicit cross-country comparative analysis. In so doing, our text teaches students that the study of comparative politics is defined by a method that investigates similarities and differences in cases and, at the same time, poses and attempts to answer searching questions that really matter in the lives of students as active citizens. These are questions embedded in the thematic scaffolding of ICP.

Chapter 1 begins this book by describing the comparative method, presenting in some detail our four-theme framework, discussing how we classify the political systems of the countries covered in this book, and providing an overview of the organization of the country chapters.

Consolidated Democracies, Hybrid States, and Authoritarian Regimes

We classify the thirteen countries in this edition of ICP in three categories:

- *Consolidated democracies* (Britain, France, Germany, Japan, India, and the United States)
- *Hybrid states* (Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Nigeria, and Russia)
- *Authoritarian regimes* (Iran and China)

The book also includes a chapter on the European Union (EU), which, in addition to Britain, France, and Germany, is made up of twenty-five other member states that fall into the category of consolidated democracies. (Thanks to the outcome of the 2016 popular vote in the United Kingdom known as Brexit, Britain may no longer be a member of the EU during the life of this edition.)

In Chapter 1, we define the three regime types and explain the rationale for the typology. In particular, we warn against assuming that there is a linear movement from authoritarian regimes to hybrid states to consolidated democracies. Democratization is often a protracted process with ambiguous results or reversals, rather than a clearly delineated path toward completion. Thus, we stress that the countries that we classify as hybrid states are not riding a historical escalator mechanically leading to their transformation into stable or consolidated democracies. Indeed, we emphasize that in hybrid states, elements of democracy coexist with authoritarian practices, and that future political developments could lead any of these countries to move toward either more or less freedom for their citizens.

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We also emphasize that the boundaries dividing the three groups are not airtight. Russia is a good example of a country on the cusp between a mixed system and an authoritarian regime. Furthermore, scholars disagree about the appropriate criteria for classifying regime types, as well as about how to classify particular cases. Indeed, instructors may find it fruitful to encourage class discussion of alternative conceptual schemes for classifying groups of countries and how to best characterize the political system of given countries.

NEW Eighth Edition Content

- A new subsection called "Is Demography Destiny?" examines the political importance of demographic changes such as the graying population, the youth bulge, and migration.
- The subsection on "The Political Impact of Technology" in the previous edition has been retitled "The Political Impact of Technology and the Media" and supplemented by additional material on the press, social media, and other means of communication in the Information Age.
- The thoroughly updated introduction and country chapters provide analyses of major recent political developments throughout the world, including discussion of the following:
  - The dramatic 2016 Brexit vote in Britain and its impact on British and EU politics, as well as the loss of its parliamentary majority by the governing Conservative Party a year later
  - The election in 2017 of political newcomer Emmanuel Macron as French president and the upending of France's party system
  - The surprising Electoral College victory of Donald J. Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election as the result of an unanticipated nationalist and populist upsurge
  - The impeachment and removal from office of Brazil's president, Dilma Rousseff, and corruption charges involving her successor, Michel Temer
  - The crisis in South African politics resulting from youth protest, the erosion of the domination of the African National Congress (ANC), and corruption charges against President Jacob Zuma
  - The 2016 election as president of Nigeria of retired general Muhammadu Buhari, who had previously served as the nation's head of state from 1983 to 1985 after taking power in a military coup d'état
  - The reelection in 2017 of the reform-minded Iranian president Hassan Rouhani
  - Russia's continuing drift toward authoritarianism under Vladimir Putin
  - The consolidation of personal power by the head of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping, to a degree unprecedented since the eras of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping

Special Features That Teach

- **Country chapters** strike a balance between introducing comparative politics to students with little or no background in political science and maintaining coverage of the complexity of institutions, issues, processes, and events.
- **Consistent Country Chapter Organization.** At the beginning of each chapter, students will find a map, data on ethnicity, religion, and language specific to that country to aid in comparing countries, and some basic information about the country's political system. Each country chapter consists of five sections:
  - **The Making of the Modern State** begins with an opening vignette that illustrates an important feature of the country's contemporary politics. This is followed by a description of the country's geographic setting, a discussion of the critical junctures in the historical development of the state, and an overview of how the book's four central themes relate to the country. This section concludes by noting the significance of the country for the study of comparative politics.
  - **Political Economy and Development** analyzes the relationship between the state, the impact of economic development on society, current environmental issues, and the country's position in the global economy.

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  - **Governance and Policy-making** describes the general organization of the state, the executive branch, and other state institutions, including the judiciary, subnational levels of government, and the military, police, internal security, and other agencies of coercion. This section concludes with a description of the policy-making process.
  - **Representation and Participation** covers the country's legislature, party system, elections, political culture, citizenship, national identity, interest groups, social movements, and protest. The final subsection is a newly expanded one on the political impact of technology and the media.
  - **Politics in Transition** begins by highlighting a recent important development that is influencing the country's politics and then proceeds to an analysis of the major political challenges facing the country. This is followed by a new subsection on youth politics and the generational divide. The section ends with some concluding thoughts about the politics of the country in comparative perspective.
- **Focus questions** at the beginning of each major section in the country chapters provides students with some guidance about what is particularly important about that section.
- **Where Do You Stand?** questions at the end of each section in all chapters encourage students to develop and defend original arguments on controversial issues.
- An end-of-chapter **Summary** highlights the major themes and facts in the chapter.
- There are three **sidebar boxes** in each country chapter that highlight interesting and important aspects of politics:
  - The **Profile** box highlights biographies of important political leaders.
  - **The Global Connection** box provides links between domestic and international politics.
  - The **U.S. Connection** box compares an important feature of political institutions with its American counterpart or explores a crucial aspect of the country's relationship with the United States.
- **Making Connections** questions at the end of each sidebar box encourage students to link the topic of the box to the content of the chapter.
- **Maps, tables, charts, photographs, and political cartoons** enliven the text and present key information in clear and visually appealing ways. At the end of Chapter 1, various data are presented in a way that facilitates comparisons among the countries covered in this book.
- **Key terms** are set in boldface and defined in the margin of the page where the term is first introduced, as well as in a **glossary** at the end of the book. The glossary defines many key concepts that are used broadly in comparative politics.
- Each chapter concludes with a list of **suggested readings and websites**.

Not much is certain about what the political future will hold. But we believe that politics around the world will continue to be endlessly fascinating and that comparative analysis can be an important tool for trying to make sense of what happens and why. The times, indeed, are a-changin'! Welcome aboard!

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The Instructor's Manual contains chapter-specific learning objectives, an outline, key terms with definitions, and a chapter summary. In addition, it features a critical thinking question, lecture launching suggestion, and an in-class activity for each learning objective.

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W. A. J.

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1 Introducing Comparative Politics

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, and William A. Joseph

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SECTION 1

COMPARATIVE POLITICS IN A VOLATILE WORLD

Focus Questions

- How did the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks mark important turning points in world politics?
- Describe a discussion in which you used the comparative method to make a point.

November 9, 1989, was a day that changed the world. The heavily guarded concrete wall that had divided communist-ruled East Berlin from democratic West Berlin for nearly three decades was opened, and thousands of East Berliners flooded across the border to freedom. Within weeks of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the entire Soviet empire in Eastern Europe had crumbled.

For the first decade or so after the Russian Revolution of 1917 that brought a communist regime to power, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, the formal name of the Soviet Union) was a weak and beleaguered country. But Soviet power and influence increased greatly as a result of the rapid industrialization achieved under Josef Stalin's brutal rule and Russia's crucial role in the Allied coalition that defeated the Axis powers (Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and militarist Japan) in World War II. At the end of the war in 1945, the Soviet militarily occupied and installed pro-Soviet communist regimes in countries throughout Eastern Europe.

Cold War

The hostile relations that prevailed between the United States and the Soviet Union from the late 1940s until the demise of the latter in 1991.

For nearly the entire following half-century, world politics was dominated by a conflict, known as the **Cold War**, that pitted the Soviet Union against the United States and their respective allies across the globe. By the mid-1980s, citizens of the USSR and the communist states of Eastern Europe had grown increasingly discontented due to the poor performance of their countries' centrally planned socialist economies and the harsh dictatorships under which they lived.

In 1985, a decisive change occurred when the reform-minded Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and, as a result, ruler of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev introduced major political and economic reforms, with the goal of increasing support for the CPSU. He also ended repression of political opposition, relaxed controls on the media, and signaled that the Soviet Union would no longer interfere in the affairs of its Eastern European allies.

Gorbachev's reforms provide the context for understanding the significance of the Berlin Wall's fall on that fateful day in November 1989. In the preceding and subsequent months, every communist regime in Eastern Europe had crumbled in a series of largely peaceful revolutions. But Gorbachev's reform program failed to contain the winds of change, and in late December 1991, the USSR was dissolved and Russia was reborn. The Cold War was over.

The impact of the initial phase in this chain reaction of world-shaking political changes was analyzed in a widely noted 1989 article by political scientist Francis Fukuyama, entitled "The End of History?" (The article was later expanded into the similarly titled book *The End of History and the Last Man*.) Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War was not only immensely important in its own right but had even greater historical significance. It was, he said, "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."[1]

Several decades later, the idea that history ended with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and that Western democracy had vanquished all ideological challengers as a way to govern society seems extraordinarily

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quaint—and even rather naïve. In fairness, Fukuyama did not claim that important political challenges to **liberal democracy** would never recur. Rather, he claimed that the implosion of communism spelled an end to any globally influential ideological challenges to such a system of government and its underlying capitalist economy.

liberal democracy

A democratic system of government that officially recognizes and legally protects individual rights and freedoms and in which the exercise of political power is constrained by the rule of law.

September 11, 2001, was another day that changed the world. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon reflected the spread of an ideology, radical Islamism,* that challenges the very core values of liberal democracy. The persistence of Al-Qaeda, the organization that masterminded the 9/11 attacks, and the rise of the Islamic State are visible and violent reminders that Fukuyama's optimism may have been misguided.

Another source of recent monumental change in world politics was the Great Recession of 2008, which threw the global economy into a tailspin and undermined confidence in the liberal democracies where it started and where it hit hardest, particularly the United States. Partly in reaction to the impact of the recession, ultraconservative, hypernationalist, xenophobic, and populist movements have arisen in Western Europe, all of which reject some of the basic tenets of liberal democracy and trends in globalized capitalism. Notable examples include the Brexit vote in June 2016, which started the process of Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, and the second-place finish in France's May 2017 presidential election of Marine Le Pen, the candidate of the far-right National Front. Many scholars and political analysts have argued that the victory of first-time politician and populist candidate Donald J. Trump in the U.S. presidential elections in November 2016 was also indicative of the diminished luster of liberal democracy for many American citizens.

At the same time, other political developments in the United States, Britain, and France suggest just how unpredictable the power of populism can be. The surprising strength of Bernie Sanders's ultimately unsuccessful challenge to the Democratic Party establishment's favored candidate, Hillary Clinton, in the primaries was propelled mostly by young voters who were angry about growing inequality in the United States and the economic and political power of Wall Street. In France, Le Pen was decisively defeated by political newcomer Emmanuel Macron, whose liberal party, En Marche ! (Forward !), was founded less than a year before he was elected president. And in Britain, pollsters and pundits (including political scientists) were confounded when Prime Minister Theresa May's pro-Brexit Conservative Party lost its parliamentary majority and the anti-Brexit Labour Party, with its new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, advocating a radical left program, gained a large number of seats in the June 2017 snap election. May has remained prime minister (at least for the moment), but she is greatly weakened politically.

The only thing that seems clear at the moment is that **populism**, which is defined more by an antiestablishment, "power to the people" message and anger against existing political norms and policies and elite concentrations of power than by any particular ideological orientation, is a political force to be reckoned with in many parts of the world today.

populism

A style of mobilization by a political party or movement that seeks to gain popular support by emphasizing antiestablishment rhetoric, decrying elite concentrations of power as the source of national decline, and promising to be responsive to the needs of ordinary people.

The People's Republic of China, one of the world's only remaining communist regimes, and by far the largest, has been the fastest-growing major economy in the world for three decades. Through its proactive role in forming multilateral organizations and its aid to and investment in developing countries, China has been increasingly successful in promoting its model of state-led development and strong,

**Islamism* is the use of Islam as a political ideology. It is sometimes called *political Islam* and *Islamic fundamentalism*. All the world's other major religions also have taken political forms. For more on this topic, see Chapter 14, on Iran.

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authoritarian government as an alternative to slow-growing, politically volatile, capitalist, and liberal democracies.

And under Vladimir Putin, Russia, which after the collapse of the Soviet Union was apparently embarking on a transition to liberal democracy, has instead drifted toward authoritarianism. More broadly, the think tank Freedom House concluded in its 2017 *Freedom in the World* report, "With populist and nationalist forces making significant gains in democratic states, 2016 marked the 11th consecutive year of decline in global freedom."[2]

The Russian military takeover and annexation of Crimea, which then was part of independent, democratic Ukraine, as well as Russian cyberinterference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and 2017 French presidential election, have led to what some analysts have characterized as a new Cold War. Among the many developments that keep world politics unsettled and ever-changing are major violent conflicts in the Middle East (e.g., the ongoing civil war in Syria) and Africa (e.g., the activities of the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria), a bellicose regime in North Korea that is rapidly improving its nuclear arsenal, and China's aggressive assertion of its power in the South China Sea.

comparative politics

The field within political science that focuses on domestic politics of countries and analyzes patterns of similarity and difference among countries.

Clearly, history hasn't ended. Therefore, if we want to understand how our world has gotten to this point and how history may unfold in the future, the study of **comparative politics**—the subfield of political science that focuses on the similarities and differences among different types of political systems—becomes particularly important. Our aim in *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (ICP) is to provide students with the tools to bring some order out of the apparent chaos of kaleidoscopic political change that has become the norm in the contemporary world.

AP Photo; Stacy Walsh Rosenstock/Alamy

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001, mark two of the most transformational events in modern world politics.

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This book describes and analyzes how thirteen countries and the European Union both shape and are shaped by the world order created by the watershed political events noted previously. Each of these events marks what we call a **critical juncture** in political history, not only in international relations, but also in that of the countries included here and of the European Union.

critical juncture

An important historical event when political actors make critical choices that shape institutions and future outcomes in both individual countries and the international system.

This chapter is designed to help students navigate the large volume of information provided in ICP by introducing a thematic framework that organizes the politics of each of the countries and is combined with a thorough analysis of the political institutions and processes of each country.

Making Sense of Turbulent Times

The flash of newspaper headlines, television sound bites, and endless tweets can make politics at home and abroad look overwhelming and chaotic. Political analysis involves more than blogging, talking heads, or Monday-morning quarterbacking. It requires a longer historical context, a thorough grasp of countries' institutional configurations (political systems), and a framework for understanding unfolding political developments.

This book describes and analyzes the political history, government institutions, policy-making processes, and other key aspects of politics in a range of countries that represent a variety of political systems around the world. ICP examines the political similarities and differences in politics in Britain, France, Germany, Japan, India, the United States, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Nigeria, Russia, Iran, and China. The European Union is also included in the book because it is the most important regional organization created to provide political and economic integration among a large group of countries that, despite all being democracies, have quite divergent national interests. Brexit has called into question the viability of this noble effort to overcome such differences in order to promote peace and prosperity among member-states. The European Union has profound implications for the field of comparative politics, which has been based on the assumption that the individual **nation-state** is the most important unit of analysis in understanding world politics.

nation-state

A distinct, politically defined territory in which the state and national identity (that is, a sense of solidarity and shared values based on being citizens of the same country) coincide.

By using a framework that facilitates comparing similarities and differences in a representative sample of countries, we can understand the longer-term causes of political changes and continuities within nations. Each chapter explores a country's political development by reference to four themes that are central for understanding politics in today's world:

- *The Globalizing World of States:* The historical formation, internal organization, and interaction of states within the international order
- *Governing the Economy:* The role of the state in economic management
- *The Democratic Idea:* The spread of democracy and the challenges of democratization
- *The Politics of Collective Identities:* The sources and political impact of diverse **collective identities**, including class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and religion

collective identities

The groups with which people identify, including gender, class, race, region, and religion, and which are the "building blocks" for social and political action.

These themes, discussed next, help us make political sense of both stable and tumultuous times in countries around the world.

While the contemporary period presents an extraordinary challenge to those who study comparative politics, the study of comparative politics also provides a unique opportunity for understanding this uncertain era. In order to appreciate

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the complexity of politics in countries around the world, we must look beyond any single national perspective. Today, business and trade, information technology, mass communications and culture, immigration and travel, and politics forge deep connections—as well as deep divisions—among people worldwide. We urgently need a global and comparative perspective as we explore the politics of different countries and their interaction and interdependence with one another.

There is an added benefit of studying comparative politics: by looking at political institutions, values, and processes in different countries, the student of comparative politics acquires analytical skills that can also be used to examine his or her own country. After you study comparative politics, you begin to think comparatively. As comparison becomes second nature, we hope that you will look at the politics of your own country differently, with a wider, deeper, and more analytical focus that will inspire new reflections, interpretations, and insights. The contemporary world provides a fascinating laboratory for the study of comparative politics. We hope that you share our sense of excitement in the challenging effort to understand the complex and ever-shifting terrain of contemporary politics throughout the world.

Where Do You Stand?

There are more than 200 countries in the world. Is it time for other countries to take on more of the burdens of global leadership that the United States has shouldered since the end of World War II?

In what ways do you think the study of comparative politics will change how you understand the United States—or whatever country you call home?

SECTION 2

WHAT—AND HOW—COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPARES

Focus Questions

- What do we mean by globalization?
- How does increased cross-border contact among countries and peoples affect political, social, and cultural life within individual countries?

To "compare and contrast" is one of the most common human mental exercises, whether in the classroom study of literature, politics, or animal behavior, or in selecting dorm rooms or arguing with friends about your favorite movie. In the observation of politics, the use of comparisons is very old, dating in the Western world from the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who analyzed and compared the city-states of Greece in the fourth century BCE according to whether they were ruled by a single individual, a few people, or all citizens. The modern study of comparative politics refines and systematizes this age-old practice of evaluating some features of country X's politics by comparing it to the same features of country Y's politics.

Comparative politics is a subfield within the academic discipline of political science, as well as a method or approach to the study of politics.[3] The subject matter of comparative politics is the domestic, or internal, politics of countries.

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The discipline of political science is usually defined as comprising four areas of specialization: comparative politics, American politics, international relations, and political theory.

Because it is widely believed that students living in the United States should study the politics of their own country in depth, American politics is usually treated as one of the four subfields of political science. It is also usual elsewhere to separate the study of politics at home and abroad, so students in Canada study Canadian politics as a distinct specialty, Japanese students learn about Japanese politics, and so on. However, there is no logical reason why the United States should not be included within the field of comparative politics—on the contrary, there is good reason to do so. Comparative study can make it easier to recognize what is distinctive about the United States and what features it shares with some other countries. For this reason, we have included a chapter on the United States in ICP.

Special mention should be made of the distinction between comparative politics and international relations. Comparative politics involves comparing domestic political institutions, processes, policies, conflicts, and attitudes *within* different countries; international relations involves studying the foreign policies of and interactions *among* countries, the role of international organizations such as the United Nations, and the growing influence of global actors, from multinational corporations to international human rights advocates to terrorist networks. In a globalized world, however, domestic and international politics routinely spill over into one another, so the distinction between the two fields is somewhat blurry. Courses in international relations nowadays often analyze how internal political processes affect states' behavior toward each other, while courses in comparative politics highlight the importance of transnational forces for understanding what goes on within a country's borders. One of the four themes that we use to analyze comparative politics, the "globalizing world of states," emphasizes the interaction of domestic and international forces in the politics of all nations.

It still makes sense to maintain the distinction between comparative politics and international relations. Much of the world's political activity continues to occur within national borders, and comparisons of domestic politics, institutions, and processes enable us to understand critical features that distinguish one country's politics from another's. Furthermore, we believe that despite increased international economic competition and integration (a key aspect of **globalization**), countries remain the fundamental building blocks in structuring most political activity. Therefore, ICP is built on in-depth case studies of a sample of important countries around the world.

The comparative approach principally analyzes similarities and differences among countries by focusing on selected political institutions and processes. As students of comparative politics (we call ourselves **comparativists**), we believe that we cannot make reliable statements about most political situations by looking at only one case. We often hear statements such as: "The United States has the best health care system in the world." Comparativists immediately wonder what kinds of health care systems exist in other countries, what they cost and how they are financed, how it is decided who can receive medical care, how effectively they deliver health care to their citizens, and so on. As we know from the ongoing political fight over the Affordable Care Act enacted during the Barack Obama administration (and the Republicans' proposed replacement, the American Health Care Act), there is little agreement about what "the best" means when it comes to health care systems, even within the United States. Is it the one that provides the widest access? The one that is the most technologically advanced? The one that is the most cost effective? The one that produces the healthiest population?

globalization

The intensification of worldwide interconnectedness associated with the increased speed and magnitude of cross-border flows of trade, investment and finance, and processes of migration, cultural diffusion, and communication.

comparativist

A political scientist who studies the similarities and differences in the domestic politics of various countries.

World Bank

An international financial institution (IFI) comprising over 180 member-states that provides low-interest loans, policy advice, and technical assistance to developing countries with the goal of reducing poverty.

Human Development Index (HDI)

A composite number used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure and compare levels of achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living.

Global Gender Gap

A measure developed by the World Economic Forum of the extent to which women in 58 countries have achieved equality with men.

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THE INTERNET AND THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The Internet can be a rich source of information about the politics of countries around the world. The following are some of the types of information you can find on the Web. We haven't included URLs since they change so often. But you should be able to find the websites easily through a key-word search on Google or another search engine.

- **Current events.** Most of the world's major news organizations have excellent websites. Among those, we recommend for students of comparative politics the sites of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN), the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*.
- **Elections.** Results of recent (and often past) elections, data on voter turnout, and descriptions of different types of electoral systems can be found at the International Election Guide, Most Recent Elections by Country/Wikipedia, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- **Statistics.** You can find data that are helpful both for understanding the political, economic, and social situations in individual countries and for comparing countries. Excellent sources of statistics are the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World FactBook, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the **World Bank**.

  There are many websites that bring together data from other sources. These enable you not only to access the statistics, but also to chart or map them in a variety of ways. See, for example, Google Public Data, nationmaster.com, and gapminder.com.
- **Rankings and ratings.** Many organizations provide rankings or ratings of countries along a particular dimension, based on comparative statistical analysis. We provide the following examples of these in the data that appear at the end of this chapter: the UNDP **Human Development Index (HDI)**; the **Global Gender Gap**; the **Environmental Performance Index**; the **Corruption Perceptions Index**; and the **Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index**. Others you might consult are the UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, Freedom in the World ratings, the Index of Economic Freedom, and the Press Freedom Index. *A note of caution: Sites often have a political perspective that influences the way that they collect and analyze data. As with any Web source, be sure to check out who sponsors the site and what type of organization it is. And since Wikipedia is an open-source creation that can be edited by anyone, you should use it very carefully, and be sure to use other sources to verify any information that you find there.*
- **Official information and documents.** Most governments maintain websites in English. The first place to look is the website of the country's embassy in Washington, D.C.; Ottawa, or London. The United Nations delegations of many countries also have websites. Governments often have English-language versions of their official home pages, including governments with which the United States does not have official relations, such as Iran and North Korea.
- **The U.S. Department of State.** The State Department's website has background notes on most countries. American embassies around the world provide information on selected topics about the country in which they are based.
- **Maps.** The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas is probably the best currently available online source of worldwide maps at an educational institution.
- **General resources on comparative politics.** See the list of suggested websites at the end of this chapter.

MAKING CONNECTIONS How has access to the Internet changed the way you do research? Is there a down side?

Environmental Performance Index

Developed by Yale University and Columbia University, a measure of how close countries come to meeting specific benchmarks for national pollution control and natural resource management.

None of us would declare the winner for Best Picture at the Academy Awards without seeing more than one—and preferably all—of the nominated movies! Shouldn't we be as critically minded and engaged when we are comparing and evaluating critical public policy issues?

Some comparativists focus on comparing government institutions, such as the legislature, executive, electoral systems, political parties, or the judiciaries of different countries.[4] Others compare specific political processes, such as voting or policies on a particular issue, such as education or the environment.[5] Some comparative

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political studies take a thematic approach, analyzing broad topics, such as the causes and consequences of nationalist movements or revolutions in different countries.[6] Comparative studies may also involve comparisons of an institution, policy, or process through time in one country or several countries. For example, some studies have analyzed a shift in the orientation of economic policy that occurred in many advanced capitalist countries in the 1980s from **Keynesianism**, an approach that gives priority to government regulation of the economy, to **neoliberalism**, which emphasizes the importance of market-friendly policies.[7] And many comparativists study politics within a single country, often using a framework that draws on similarities and differences with other countries.[8]

Level of Analysis

Comparisons can be useful for political analysis at several different levels of a country, such as cities, regions, provinces, or states. A good way to begin the study of comparative politics, however, is with countries. **Countries** are distinct, politically defined territories that encompass governments, composed of political institutions, as well as cultures, economies, and collective identities. Countries are often highly divided by internal conflicts, people within their borders may have close ties to those in other countries, and business firms based in one country may have operations in many others. Nevertheless, countries are still the major arena for organized political action in the modern world. Countries also have historically been among the most important sources of a people's collective political identity.

Within a given country, the **state** is almost always the most powerful cluster of institutions. But just what is the state? The way the term is used in comparative politics is probably unfamiliar to many students. In the United States, it usually refers to the states in the federal system—California, Illinois, New York, Texas, and so on. But in comparative politics, the term *state* refers to the key political institutions responsible for making, implementing, and adjudicating important policies in a country. Thus, we refer to the "German state" and the "Mexican state." The state is synonymous with what is often called the "government," as in the government of the United States. But the state also implies a durable entity that remains despite changes in ruling party or executive administration, and in which the institutions that comprise the state generally endure unless overthrown from within or conquered by other states in war.

The most important state institutions are the **executive**—usually, the president and/or prime minister and the **cabinet**. Other key state institutions include the military, police, and **bureaucracy**. In some countries, the executive includes the communist party leadership (such as in China), the head of a military government (as in Nigeria until 1999), or the supreme religious leader (as in the Islamic Republic of Iran). Alongside the executive, the **legislature** and the **judiciary** comprise the institutional apex of state power. The interrelationships and functions of these institutions vary from country to country and through time within countries.

States usually—but not necessarily successfully—claim the right to make rules (notably laws, administrative regulations, and court decisions) that are binding for people within the country. Even democratic states—in which top officials are chosen by procedures that allow all adult citizens to participate in politics—can survive only if they can keep order internally and protect their independence with regard to other states and external groups that may threaten them. Many countries have highly repressive states, whose political survival depends largely on the ability of the military

Corruption Perceptions Index

A measure developed by Transparency International that ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians.

Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index

An index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), based in the United Kingdom, that measures and rank the state of democracy in 167 countries. It classifies the world's states as Full Democracies, Flawed Democracies, Hybrid Regimes, and Authoritarian Regimes.

Keynesianism

Named after the British economist John Maynard Keynes, an approach to economic policy in which state fiscal policies are used to regulate the economy in an attempt to achieve stable economic growth.

neoliberalism

A term used to describe government policies aiming to promote free competition among business firms within the market, including reduced governmental regulation and social spending.

country

A territory defined by boundaries generally recognized in international law as constituting an independent nation.

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