



OXFORD

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

DANIELE CARAMANI

FIFTH EDITION

Comparative Politics

COMPARATIVE
POLITICS

FIFTH EDITION

EDITED BY
DANIELE CARAMANI

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
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First edition 2011

Second edition 2014

Third edition 2017

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019955869

ISBN 978-0-19-882060-4

Printed in Italy by
L.E.G.O. S.p.A. Lavis (TN)

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Preface

About the book

In designing this textbook on *Comparative Politics*, the ambition was to produce an exciting, authoritative, and up-to-date teaching instrument. We have tried to write chapters of the highest standard in terms of their content, with information presented comparatively and supported by cutting-edge theories and a rigorous methodology. We aimed to provide comprehensive chapters in their substantive coverage of the field, and a worldwide range of countries.

We hope that the fifth edition will speak to comparative politics students at all levels, as well as to teachers who will use it for their classes, as did the first four editions. Our goal was to produce an integrated text with a maximum of cross-references between chapters. At the same time, the modular structure with self-contained chapters should maximize its appeal to lecturers and students, alongside accessible language enhanced by a number of learning features and a similar format throughout. This structure does not require that it is read cover to cover. The book can be used in any order, making it possible to compose courses with a 'variable geometry'. For the same reason, more but shorter chapters have been preferred.

Rationale for the book

The first important feature is that the volume provides a *comprehensive and wide-ranging coverage* of both the *subject areas* of comparative politics and the *geographical spread* of cases. The range of countries includes not only advanced industrial nations, but also developing regions and emerging economies (in post-communist countries, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa).

The range of topics is also more comprehensive than in most commonly taught courses in comparative politics. On the one hand, throughout the book attention is given to *theory and methodology*, and three chapters deal specifically with these topics in Section 1 on 'Theories and methods'. As far as possible, all chapters include the most important theoretical approaches in each field of the discipline and present the most recent advances and current debates. No specific approach has been privileged. Methodologically, it is based on rigorous comparative analysis and up-to-date empirical data.

On the other hand, the range of *substantive topics* is reflected in a number of chapters that add to the usual core areas of comparative politics courses. The book devotes a great deal of attention to multi-level institutions and actors (Chapters 11 and 15) and to non-institutional actors such as interest groups, social movements, and media (in Section 4 on 'Actors and processes'). Most importantly, perhaps, the book includes an entire section on 'Public policies' (Section 5)—not only how policies are made, but also their impact on economies and societies (with a focus on the welfare state and varieties of political economies). This gives a better balance between the 'input' and 'output' sides of the political system. Finally, the book has an entire section (Section 6 on 'Beyond the nation-state') on, first, supranational political systems (such as the European Union) and, second, interactions between political systems internationally. Theoretically, this section deals with major challenges to comparative politics.

The second important feature is the *analytical and comparative* approach of the volume. Information and data are presented thematically rather than country by country, and comparison is carried out on specific political, institutional, and socio-economic phenomena. For us, comparative politics should not be reduced to the one-by-one description of single countries. Case studies (see Appendix 1 'Country profiles') are theoretically useful only if inserted in a broader comparative

framework. We understand comparative politics in analytical terms, as a combination of substance (the study of political systems, actors, and processes) and method, i.e. identifying and explaining differences and similarities between cases through the test of hypotheses about relationships—law-like generalizations—between concepts and variables applicable in more than one context. This thematic, analytical, and comparative approach leads to the basic choice of organizing the book around major substantive themes.

The third important feature is that the book presents a large amount of *comparative empirical data*. The analytical approach of the book leads us to present information and data in tables and figures throughout the chapters (as well as in Appendix 2 ‘Comparative tables’ and Appendix 3 ‘World trends’).

Particular attention is given to historical trends, longitudinal data, and time series (see Appendix 3 ‘World trends’). The book includes a long-term perspective allowing a better appreciation of current changes. It thus combines *time and space dimensions*. There is a specific reason for this. The development of the modern nation-state and mass democracies in the nineteenth century is a unique change that has no previous equivalent. This change involved a totally new political organization—based on principles of individual equality, civil liberties, voting rights—and social organization, in particular with industrialization and the subsequent development of the welfare state. Therefore, an understanding of contemporary society cannot be complete without a long-term perspective highlighting the scope of these changes.

The empirical approach also allows us to provide students with the possibility of *analysing data* themselves. The Online Resources that accompany this book (<http://www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caraman15e>) include a large amount of *comparative data*, making this not just a learning device, but also a research-oriented data repository. Students can analyse data and lecturers can prepare exercises. Furthermore, a web directory allows students to look for and collect more data in the internet archives of international and national organizations, official and academic data collections, and websites specializing in elections, referendums, or survey data and opinion polls. We believe that comparative politics is an empirical discipline and that theories and methods are of no use if they are not combined with data.

In attempting to achieve these goals, we are aware that we have not produced an ‘easy’ book. However, we believe that most students are much better, more motivated, and harder working than is often assumed. It is when confronted with challenge and unexplored fields that young people enjoy learning, perform best, and acquire self-confidence. We are convinced that an effort on the part of students will be rewarding and that they will learn from this book and its website. Comparative politics is a broad and fascinating discipline dealing with important current world issues. Studying it will prove a lifetime investment.

Acknowledgements

We very much appreciate that Oxford University Press—our editors in the first four editions, Ruth Anderson, Catherine Page, Martha Bailes and Sarah Iles and Francesca Walker, and the fantastic editors of this fifth edition, Katie Staal and Sarah Iles—shared our approach with strong commitment and encouragement, and supported us substantially, technically, and logistically. From the first steps of the project up to its conclusion, their input has been remarkable and crucial to the successful completion of this volume.

When defining the line-up of contributors and bringing on board new contributors in the second and fourth editions, the criteria were those of excellence. I am very happy that it has been possible to bring together an outstanding group of ‘comparativists’ from a range of nationalities and academic traditions. All are currently engaged in research, and thus are ‘research-minded’ and in touch with the most recent advances in their fields of expertise. Building on the success of the previous editions, for this fifth edition I am delighted that it has been possible to bring on board Liesbet Hooghe, Natasha Lindstaedt, Gary Marks, Arjan Schakel, and Dieter Rucht. With these changes, we lose exceptional colleagues from previous editions: Paul Brooker, Hanspeter Kriesi, and John Loughlin. I wish to express grateful thanks on behalf of the whole group for their pleasant collaboration in past editions and for their outstanding scholarly contribution to the textbook. On a personal level, I am honoured that such a prestigious group of scholars has trusted me to lead this endeavour, and very thankful for their professional and collaborative spirit.

I would also like to thank Matt Qvortrup for the numerous comments and corrections on previous editions, and in particular for the constructive critiques received.

Finally, I would like to thank my research assistants over the various editions: Nina Buddeke, Beatrice Eugster, Stephanie Hess, Patrick Lengg, Matthias Meyer-Schwarzenberger, Alexander Schäfer, Siyana Timcheva, and Roman Hunziker for this fifth edition—for the marvellous job they did in preparing the Online Resources, the ‘Country profiles’, the data for the ‘Comparative tables’ and ‘World trends’, and, more generally, for supporting us throughout the project with extreme professionalism and dedication. Their substantial criticisms, too, allowed us to clarify obscure points in several chapters. I am deeply grateful to them for their engagement.

Daniele Caramani

July 2007, September 2010, September 2013, September 2016, September 2019

New to this edition

This fifth edition includes three new chapters, one of which (Chapter 11), by Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, and Arjan H. Schakel, addresses a brand-new topic on 'Multi-level governance', expanding the topic of federalism, decentralization, and subsidiarity to include the supranational level. Furthermore, Natasha Lindstaedt authors a new chapter on 'Authoritarian regimes' (Chapter 6) and Dieter Rucht a new chapter on 'Social movements' (Chapter 16).

This new edition continues to devote more attention to non-Western regions. Thematically, this means first following recent changes in global politics, most notably the backlash against democracy.

- We analyse recent anti-democratic trends in the Arab world, as well as in Turkey, Russia, South Africa, and some countries in Eastern Europe, but also a range of Western countries.
- Democracy promotion is accompanied by themes of autocracy promotion (from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, China, and Venezuela).
- We devote more attention to hybrid regimes such as competitive-electoral authoritarianism.
- Political culture is analysed also in non-democratic regimes, and the discussion of movements in non-democratic settings such as China has been added. Also, challenges to democracy in Western countries are analysed in changing political cultures.

Second, we continue to analyse the trend against globalization and its consequences, as well as the crisis of supranational integration in Europe with the British 'Brexit' from the European Union. This includes looking at protectionism and other aspects of the downside of globalization, such as trade 'wars'.

Finally, we examine the consequences of the backlash against globalization and of the migration and financial crises on the spectacular rise of populism in Europe, North America, and South America (Brazil and Mexico in particular) and its impact on party systems. Since the third edition (published in 2014), a number of landmark elections and referenda (including the Brexit vote in Britain in 2016) have taken place which have fundamentally altered the political landscape of many countries.

In addition:

- The 'Country profiles' in Appendix 1 have been thoroughly improved and updated with a standardized terminology and categories (such as for electoral systems) and the extension of the section on state formation. Sources have been streamlined and appear in full in the Online Resources. In the fourth edition, eight new countries were added.
- Countries in the 'Comparative tables' in Appendix 2 were increased to sixty in the fourth edition, of which fifty are the same as for the 'Country profiles'.
- The 'World trends' in Appendix 3 are based on new data and new categories, and are based on a better classification of countries in world regions. New 'World trends' graphs have been added on gender, trade, and democracy.
- The bibliography and further reading in each chapter has been updated with the latest literature.
- Data and information have been revised in each chapter (including the latest theoretical contributions in each field; tables, figures, and graphs; web links; and further reading).

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Abbreviations

The list of abbreviations does not include the names of political parties, trade unions, social movements, interest groups, or other organizations.

| | | | |
|---------|---|-------|--|
| 2RS | Two-round (electoral) system | ESCS | European Coal and Steel Community |
| AOC | <i>Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée</i> | ESDP | European Security and Defence Cooperation (European Union) |
| AV | Alternative vote (electoral system) | ESM | European Stability Mechanism |
| CAP | Common Agricultural Policy (European Union) | ESS | European Social Survey |
| CDI | Centre for Democratic Institutions (Australia) | EU | European Union |
| CFSP | Common Foreign and Security Policy (European Union) | F | fractionalization index |
| CIEP | constitutional inter-election period | FAO | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States | FCO | Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK) |
| CJR | constitutional judicial review | FDI | foreign direct investment |
| CLRAE | Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe | FPTP | first past the post (electoral system) |
| CMEs | coordinated market economies | GDP | gross domestic product |
| CMP | Comparative Manifesto Project | GEM | gender empowerment measure |
| CoR | Committee of the Regions (European Union) | GER | gross enrolment ratio |
| COREPER | Committee of Permanent Representatives of the EU | GMO | genetically modified organisms |
| DG | Democracy and Governance, Directorate General (European Union) | GNI | gross national income |
| DRG | democracy, human rights, and governance | GNP | gross national product |
| ECB | European Central Bank | GPI | gender parity index |
| ECJ | European Court of Justice | GWP | gross world product |
| ECSC | European Coal and Steel Community | HDI | human development index |
| EEA | European Economic Area | ICC | International Criminal Court |
| EEC | European Economic Community | ICP | International Comparison Programme |
| EED | European Endowment for Democracy | ICPSR | Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research |
| EIDHR | European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (European Union) | ICTs | information and communication technologies |
| EM–CC | European Model–Constitutional Court | IDEA | International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance |
| EMU | Economic and Monetary Union | IGO | international governmental organization |
| ENEP | effective number of elective parties | ILO | International Labour Organization |
| ENP | European Neighbourhood Policy (European Union) | INGO | international non-governmental organization |
| ENPP | effective number of parliamentary parties | IREX | International Research and Exchanges Board |
| EP | European Parliament | IRI | International Republican Institute (US) |
| EPD | European Partnership for Democracy | ISO | International Organization for Standardization |
| EPP | European People's Party | ITU | International Telecommunications Union |

| | | | |
|-------|--|--------|--|
| LAI | Local Authority Index | QCA | qualitative comparative analysis |
| LMEs | liberal market economies | QMV | qualified majority voting (European Union) |
| LSq | least square index | RA | research answer |
| MDSD | most different systems design | RAI | Regional Authority Index |
| MEP | Member of European Parliament | RD | research design |
| MLG | multilevel governance | RoP | Rules of Procedure (legislatures) |
| MMM | mixed-member majoritarian (electoral system) | RQ | research question |
| MMP | mixed-member proportional (electoral system) | RSS | really simple syndication |
| MP | Member of Parliament | SCJ | justice of the supreme court |
| MSSD | most similar systems design | SES | socio-economic status |
| MZES | Mannheim Centre for European Social Research | SGP | Stability and Growth Pact (European Union) |
| NAFTA | North American Free Trade Agreement | SIDA | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization | SNA | social network analysis |
| NDI | National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (US) | SMEs | social market economies |
| NED | National Endowment for Democracy (US) | SMO | Social Movement Organization |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development | SMP | single-member plurality (electoral system) |
| NGO | non-governmental organization | SoP | separation of powers |
| NIMD | Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy | STV | single transferable vote (electoral system) |
| NPM | New Public Management | TIV | trend indicator values |
| NSF | US National Science Foundation | TNC | transnational companies |
| OAS | Organization of American States | UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| OCA | optimal currency area | UFW | United Farm Workers |
| ODA | official development assistance | UN | United Nations |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development | UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| OMC | open method of coordination | UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| OPEC | Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries | USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe | USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| PACs | political action committees | WEF | World Economic Forum |
| PDA | personal digital assistant | WFD | Westminster Foundation for Democracy (UK) |
| PPP | purchasing power parities | WHO | World Health Organization |
| PR | proportional representation (electoral system) | WTO | World Trade Organization |
| PSTN | public switched telephone network | WVS | World Values Survey |

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Guided tour of learning features

This book contains a number of specially designed learning tools to help you develop the key knowledge and skills you need to study comparative politics.

Reader's guide

Comparative politics is one of the main disciplines in political science and international relations. It deals with internal political structures (executives), individual and collective actors (voters, parties, social movements), and processes (policy-making, communication and socialization processes). Its goal is empirical: describe, explain, and predict similarities and differences between countries, regions, or **supranational** systems (such as empires). Research can be done through the intensive analysis of a few cases (even one case) or through the analysis of many cases, and can be either synchronic (looking at a single point in time) or diachronic (not accounting for change over time) or diachronic. Comparative politics uses both **quantitative** and **qualitative** methods. It is often challenged by interdependence between countries.

Reader's guides

Each chapter opens with a reader's guide outlining what you can expect to cover in the chapter, helping you to know what to look for as you read.

Reader's guide

Multilevel governance is the dispersion of authority to jurisdictions within and beyond the nation-state. Three literatures frame the study of multilevel governance. Economists and public choice theorists explain multilevel governance as a functionalist adaptation to the provision of public goods at different scales. Political economists model the effects of private preferences and moral hazard on multilevel governance, and political scientists theorize the effects of territorial identity on multilevel governance. These approaches complement each other, and today researchers draw on all three to understand multilevel governance over time and across space. The tremendous growth of multilevel governance since the late twentieth century is a testament to its importance.



DEFINITION 1.1

'Comparative politics'

Comparative politics is one of the three main subfields of political science (alongside political theory and international relations) focusing on internal political structures, actors, and processes, and analysing them empirically by describing, explaining, and predicting their variety (similarities and differences) across political systems (and over time)—be they national political systems, regional, municipal, or even **supranational** systems.

Boxes

Throughout the book, 'Zoom-in' boxes, 'Definition' boxes, and 'For and against' boxes give you extra information on particular topics, define and explain key ideas, and challenge you to weigh up different ideas in order to think about what you have learned.

KEY POINTS

- This chapter addresses the meaning of democracy; types of democracy; the causes of democratization, and the future of democracy.
- Democracy is the dominant principle of legitimacy in our historical era.
- The number of democracies in the world expanded in the late twentieth century.

Key points

Each main chapter section ends with key points that reinforce your understanding and help you to assess your own learning.

Knowledge-based

1. What are the main stages of the policy cycle, and how does this concept enhance our understanding of policy-making?
2. Which actors—societal and political—participate in the single stages?
3. What is the role of political institutions in policy-making?

Critical thinking

1. How can we think of policy-making in terms of theory?
2. In which ways are policy typologies related to the policy-making process?
3. Which theoretical concepts cope with the effects of internationalization on domestic policy-making?

**FURTHER READING****Classics in European integration and EU politics**

Haas, E. B. (1958) [2004] *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950–1957* (South Bend, University of Notre Dame Press).

Majone, G. (1996) *Regulating Europe* (London: Routledge).

wise, of weak states. Again, political development including attempts at **democratization** are decided in an interplay between ‘domestic’ and ‘international’ elements.

The economic basis of sovereign statehood also been transformed. In the modern state, there was a segregated national economy; the major part of economic activity took place at home. In the pre-modern state, national economies are much

Country Profile Japan

Japan (*Nihon-koku/Nippon-koku*)

State formation

The foundation of Japan dates back to 660 bc. After more than 1,000 years of changing empires, Japan became a modern state in 1603. In 1854, Japan was forced to open up and sign a treaty with the US,

Knowledge-based questions

At the end of each chapter, knowledge-based questions allow you to check your progress and then revisit any areas which need further study.

Critical thinking questions

Following on from the knowledge-based questions, critical thinking questions allow you to reflect on the subject matter, apply your knowledge, and critically evaluate what you have learnt.

Further reading

Recommendations for further reading at the end of each chapter identify the key literature in the field, helping you to develop your interest in particular topics in comparative politics.

Glossary terms

Key terms appear in bold in the text and are defined in a glossary at the end of the book, identifying and defining key terms and ideas as you learn, and acting as a useful prompt when it comes to revision.

Comparative data section

Extensive empirical data are presented not only to illustrate ideas and concepts, but also for you to use in your own research and analysis, giving you a real sense of how comparative politics works in practice.

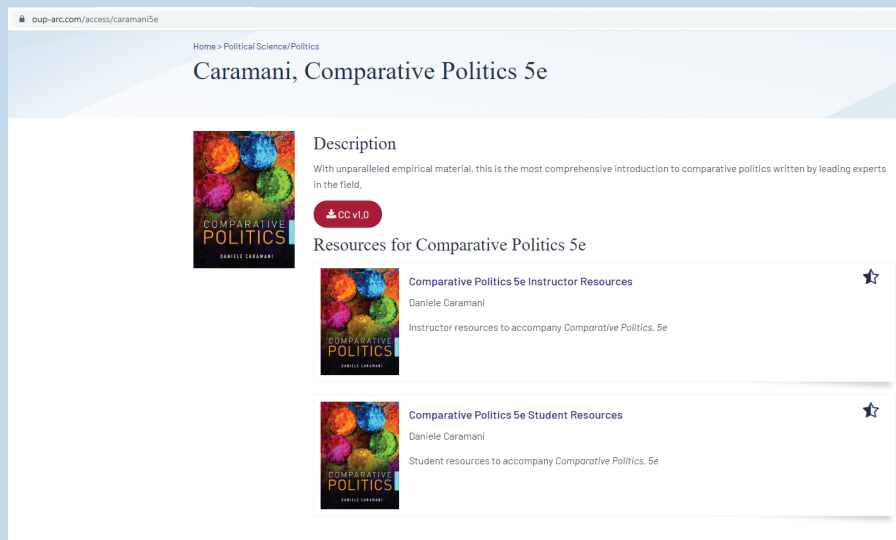
In the book you will find different forms of empirical data including:

- twenty **country profiles** (Appendix 1) with information on state formation, forms of government, legal systems, legislature, and electoral systems;
- **world data** on languages, religions, and socio-economic indicators, and **comparative tables** (Appendix 2) to directly compare different countries’ statistics across a range of important themes and issues;
- graphs of **world trends** (Appendix 3) on matters from military expenditure to urbanization.

Guided tour of the Online Resources

The Online Resources that accompany this book provide ready-to-use learning and teaching materials for students and lecturers. These resources are free of charge and designed to maximize the learning experience.

www.oup.com/he/caramani5e



FOR STUDENTS

These resources have been developed to help you understand how comparative politics works in practice. Extensive empirical data have been gathered by a team of researchers for you to use in your own research and analysis.

Comparative data sets

Comparative data are available for 200 countries, for use in analysis, essay writing, and lab-based exercises.

Information is taken from official national sources and international organizations, with indicators including: demography; health; human and social rights; gender equality; education; economy and development; communication and transport; geography and natural resources; the environment; and government and security.

Web directory

A web directory points you to databases compiled by international organizations, as well as international and national archives.

Country profiles

An interactive world map presents key information about fifty countries.

Flashcard glossary

A series of interactive flashcards containing key terms allows you to test your knowledge of important concepts and ideas.

Additional material

Additional material to complement the book is provided online, including redundant usage tables and boxes to provide further information and deepen your learning.

Web links

Carefully selected lists of websites direct you to the sites of institutions and organizations that will help you to broaden your knowledge and understanding, and provide useful sources of information in your comparative politics studies.

Review questions

Review questions help you to test your understanding of comparative politics.

FOR LECTURERS

These customizable resources are password protected, but access is available to anyone using the book in their teaching. Complete the short registration form on the site to choose your own username and password.

Test bank

Over 200 multiple choice and true/false questions can be downloaded to virtual learning environments, or printed out for use in assessment.

Figures and tables from the book

All figures and tables in the textbook are available to download electronically.

Seminar activities

Seminar activities are provided as a starting point for student discussion and interaction.

World map





| | |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| G | The Gambia |
| G-B | Guinea-Bissau |
| IS | Israel |
| L | Lebanon |
| Q | Qatar |
| R | Rwanda |
| T | Tajikistan |
| TU | Turkmenistan |
| U | Uganda |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| ZIM | Zimbabwe |



World data

| World data I The most spoken languages | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|------|--|
| Languages | Absolute figures (million) | % | Main geographical areas |
| Mandarin | 1,299.0 | 19.1 | China |
| Spanish | 442.0 | 6.5 | Spain, Latin America |
| English | 378.0 | 5.5 | UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand |
| Arabic | 315.0 | 4.6 | North Africa, Middle East |
| Hindi | 260.0 | 3.8 | India |
| Bengali | 243.0 | 3.5 | Bangladesh |
| Portuguese | 223.0 | 3.2 | Brazil, Angola, Portugal |
| Russian | 154.0 | 2.2 | Russia |
| Japanese | 128.0 | 1.8 | Japan |
| Lahnda | 119.0 | 1.7 | Pakistan |
| Javanese | 84.4 | 1.2 | Indonesia |
| Turkish | 78.5 | 1.1 | Turkey |
| Korean | 77.2 | 1.1 | South Korea |
| French | 76.8 | 1.1 | France, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada |
| German | 76.0 | 1.1 | Germany, Austria, Switzerland |
| Telugu | 74.8 | 1.1 | India |
| Marathi | 71.8 | 1.0 | India |
| Urdu | 69.2 | 1.0 | Pakistan |
| Vietnamese | 68.0 | 1.0 | Vietnam |
| Tamil | 66.7 | 1.0 | India |
| Italian | 64.8 | 0.9 | Italy, Switzerland |
| Persian | 61.5 | 0.9 | Iran, Afghanistan |
| Malay | 60.7 | 0.9 | Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand |

Note: Figures are approximate; the table includes languages spoken as a first language by more than 50 million people.

Source: G. F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig (eds) (2018) *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (21st edn) (Dallas, Texas: SIL International), <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

| World data 2 Religions in the world | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| Religious groups | Population 2015 (million) | % |
| Christians | 2,416 | 32.8 |
| Muslims | 1,720 | 23.4 |
| Hindus | 1,007 | 13.7 |
| Agnostics | 687 | 9.3 |
| Buddhists | 516 | 7.0 |
| Chinese folk-religionists | 446 | 6.0 |
| Ethnoreligionists | 267 | 3.6 |
| Atheists | 136 | 1.8 |
| New religionists | 65 | 0.8 |
| Sikhs | 25 | 0.3 |
| Jews | 15 | 0.2 |
| Spiritists | 14 | 0.2 |
| Daoists | 9 | 0.1 |
| Confucianists | 8 | 0.1 |
| Baha'is | 8 | 0.1 |
| Jains | 6 | 0.0 |
| Shintoists | 3 | 0.0 |
| Zoroastrians | 0 | 0.0 |
| Sum | 7,348 | 100.0% |

Note: Figures are approximate. Christianity includes Roman Catholicism (52.5%), Protestantism (17.6%), Orthodoxy (10.4%), and Anglicanism (3.8%), as well as Pentecostalism, Latter-Day Saints, Evangelicalism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Quakerism, etc. Islam includes Sunnis (83.0%) and Shiites (16.1%).

Source: World Christian Database (<http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org>).

World data 3 Socio-economic indicators

| Indicator | Western Europe | Central and Eastern Europe | Latin America | North America | Middle East and North Africa | Sub-Saharan Africa | Central and Northern Asia | Southeast Asia | Oceania | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| Population (in millions) | 412.5 | 351.5 | 514.8 | 491.0 | 523.6 | 1,057.0 | 3,460.9 | 648.6 | 40.9 | 7,500.8 |
| Population growth (annual %) | 0.7 | -0.1 | 0.9 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| Life expectancy at birth (years) | 81.9 | 76 | 75.1 | 79.4 | 75 | 62 | 73.7 | 72.6 | 74 | 72.5 |
| Urban population (% of total)* | 76.3 | 63.1 | 67.0 | 81.1 | 76.2 | 43.5 | 51.6 | 50.6 | 59.5 | 60.5 |
| Labour force participation (% of total population aged 15–64) | 75.7 | 69.3 | 69.4 | 71.8 | 57.4 | 68.3 | 68.4 | 70.2 | 64.4 | 68.1 |
| Labour force female (% of female population aged 15–64) | 70.6 | 62.7 | 58.7 | 62.8 | 29.8 | 62.3 | 55.0 | 62.1 | 58.0 | 58.1 |
| Unemployment (% of labour force) | 6.9 | 10.0 | 8.2 | 4.7 | 9.6 | 8.5 | 4.8 | 2.5 | 7.0 | 7.7 |
| Literacy rate (% of population 15+ years) | 96.2 | 98.9 | 92.0 | 94.9 | 83.6 | 62.8 | 83.8 | 87.3 | 91.0 | 82.1 |
| Health expenditure per capita (current US\$) | 4,485.4 | 667.1 | 598.4 | 4,859.4 | 776.1 | 111.0 | 516.9 | 391.3 | 968.4 | 1,011.6 |
| GDP per capita (current US\$) | 50,616.4 | 10,930.0 | 9,880.8 | 37,824.7 | 15,297.2 | 2,359.5 | 13,249.2 | 10,827.9 | 13,448.8 | 14,057.7 |
| GINI index (World Bank estimate)** | 30.9 | 31.6 | 46.1 | 39.6 | 35.2 | 43.6 | 33.9 | 36.4 | 38.4 | 38.2 |
| Agriculture, value added (% of GDP) | 2.9 | 5.6 | 6.1 | 2.0 | 5.6 | 20.4 | 12.4 | 12.6 | 15.3 | 10.5 |
| Industry, value added (% of GDP) | 20.6 | 25.3 | 24.2 | 24.7 | 36.6 | 23.5 | 27.3 | 37.2 | 15.2 | 25.4 |
| Services, etc., value added (% of GDP) | 67.8 | 55.9 | 60.0 | 68.1 | 52.2 | 47.8 | 53.8 | 48.1 | 67.7 | 55.9 |
| CO ₂ emissions (kt) | 135,611 | 124,399 | 35,204 | 2,085,860 | 133,064 | 15,877 | 717,564 | 126,976 | 29,475 | 946,092 |
| Energy use (kg of oil equivalent per capita) | 4,951.6 | 2,204.6 | 1,688.4 | 5,324 | 4,037.4 | 715.3 | 1,835.3 | 2,396.8 | 4,964.5 | 2,559.9 |
| Forest area (% of land area) | 24.7 | 34.9 | 41.1 | 35.3 | 3.9 | 30.6 | 22.2 | 49.5 | 50.3 | 32.0 |
| PM _{2.5} air pollution, mean annual exposure (micrograms per cubic meter)*** | 10.3 | 18.9 | 17.9 | 11.3 | 50.1 | 37.3 | 39.9 | 21.6 | 10.8 | 27.1 |

Notes:

*Urban population refers to people living in urban areas as defined by national statistical offices.

**Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality.

***PM_{2.5}—Particulate matter.

To avoid missing values, the aggregates contain the latest available data between 2010 and 2017 for each country.

Source: World Bank Data.

Introduction to comparative politics

Daniele Caramani

Chapter contents

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- The definition of comparative politics 2
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Reader's guide

Comparative politics is one of the main disciplines in political science, alongside political theory and international relations. It deals with internal political structures (institutions like parliaments and executives), individual and collective actors (voters, parties, social movements, interest groups), and processes (policy-making, communication and socialization processes, and political cultures). Its main goal is empirical: describe, explain, and predict similarities and differences across political systems, be they countries, regions, or **supranational** systems (such as empires or the European Union). This can be done through the intensive analysis of a few cases (even one case) or large-scale extensive analyses of many cases, and can be either synchronic (based on data collected at only one time point and not accounting for change over time) or diachronic (including a temporal dimension). Comparative politics uses both **quantitative** and **qualitative** data. Increasingly, the analysis of domestic politics is challenged by interdependence between countries through **globalization**.

Introduction

This book is about politics. It is a book about the most important dimensions of political life, not about one specific aspect (such as elections or policies). Furthermore, it is a *comparative* book, meaning that we look at a variety of countries from all over the world. It is not a book about politics in one place only. Also, it is not only about politics today, but rather about how politics

changed over time, beginning with the transition to mass democracy in the nineteenth century. In sum, it is a book about the long-term comparative study of politics.

But what, precisely, is politics? Politics is the human activity of *making public authoritative decisions*. They are public because, in principle, they may concern every aspect of a society's life. Political



decisions can apply to everyone who is part of a given **citizenship** and/or living in a specific territory (a state) and to every area (religion, environment, economy, and so forth). They are authoritative because the government that makes such decisions is invested with the (more or less legitimate) power to make them binding, meaning that they are supported by the possibility to sanction individuals who do not comply with them. ‘Authorities’ have the authority—as it were—to force individuals to comply through coercive means.

Politics is thus the *exercise* of the power of making such decisions. However, politics is also the activity of *acquiring* (and maintaining) this power. It is therefore both the *conflict or competition* for power, and its use. Who makes political decisions? How did they acquire the power to make them? Where does the authority to make such decisions come from? What decisions have been taken, why, and how do they affect the life of societies? These are the questions that comparative politics seeks to answer.

It goes without saying that these are important questions. *Which decisions are made* concerns our everyday lives. The decision to increase taxation is a political decision. So are the decisions to cut welfare benefits, introduce military conscription, or carry out military intervention in a foreign country, and invest in renewable energy. But also, *how decisions are made* is important. The way in which public and authoritative decisions are made varies a great deal. In democracies we, as citizens, are directly involved through elections or **referendums**. If we are unhappy with them, we can protest through demonstrations, petitions, or letters, or vote differently at the next election. In other types of government, individuals are excluded (as in authoritarian regimes). And, finally, *who makes or influences decisions* also counts. Many decisions on the maintenance of generous pension systems today are supported by elderly cohorts in disagreement with younger ones who pay for them.

Q DEFINITION 1.1

‘Comparative politics’

Comparative politics is one of the three main subfields of political science (alongside political theory and international relations) focusing on internal political structures, actors, and processes, and analysing them empirically by describing, explaining, and predicting their variety (similarities and differences) across political systems (and over time)—be they national political systems, regional, municipal, or even **supranational** systems.

Or, as another example, take the decision to introduce high taxation for polluting industries. Such a decision is heavily influenced by lobbies and pressure groups and by environmental activists. Configurations of power relationships can be very different, but all point to the basic fact that political decisions are made by individuals or groups who acquired that power against others through either peaceful or violent means.

KEY POINTS

- Politics is the human activity of making public and authoritative decisions. It is the activity of acquiring the power of making such decisions and of exercising this power. It is the conflict or competition for power and its use.
- Who decides what, and how, is important for the life of societies.

The definition of comparative politics

A science of politics

Even though the questions addressed in the Introduction above are very broad, they do not cover the whole spectrum of political science. Comparative politics is one of the three main subfields in political science, together with political theory and international relations.¹

Whereas political theory deals with normative and theoretical questions (about equality, democracy, justice, etc.), comparative politics deals with empirical questions. The concern of comparative politics is not primarily whether participation is good or bad, but rather the investigation of which forms of participation people choose to use, why young people use more unconventional forms than older age groups, and whether there are differences in how much groups participate. Even though comparative political scientists are also concerned with normative questions, the discipline as such is empirical and *value neutral*.

On the other hand, whereas international relations deals with interactions between political systems (balance of power, war, trade), comparative politics deals with *interactions within political systems*. Comparative politics does not analyse wars between nations, but rather investigates which party is in government and why it has decided in favour of military intervention, what kind of electoral **constituency** has

supported this party, how strong the influence of the arms industry has been, and so on. As a subject matter, it is concerned with power relationships between individuals, groups and organizations, classes, and institutions within political systems. Comparative politics does not ignore external influences on internal structures, but its ultimate concern is power configurations within systems.

As subsequent chapters clarify, the distinction between disciplines is not so neat. Many argue that, because of globalization and increasing interdependence between countries, comparative politics and international relations converge towards one single discipline. Indeed, the brightest scholars bridge the two fields. What is important for the moment is to understand that comparative politics is a discipline that deals with the very essence of politics where **sovereignty** resides—i.e. in the *state*: questions of power between groups, the institutional organization of political systems, and authoritative decisions that affect the whole of a community. For this reason, over centuries of political thought the state has been at the very heart of political science. Scholars like Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Montesquieu—and many others—were interested in the question, ‘How does politics work?’

Being a vast and variegated discipline, comparative politics constitutes a core discipline of political science and, as Peter Hall has asserted, ‘[n]o respectable department of political science would be without scholars of comparative politics’ (Hall 2004: 1).

Types of comparative politics

The term ‘comparative politics’ originates from the way in which the empirical investigation of the question ‘How does politics work?’ is carried out. Comparative politics includes three traditions (van Biezen and Caramani 2006).

1. The first tradition is the *study of single countries*. This reflects the understanding of comparative politics in its formative years in the US, where it mainly meant the study of political systems outside the US, often in isolation from one another and involving little comparison. Today, many courses on comparative politics still include ‘German politics’, ‘Spanish politics’, and so on, and many textbooks are structured in ‘country chapters’. As discussed in Chapter 3 ‘Comparative research methods’, case studies have a useful purpose, but only when they are put in comparative perspective and generate hypotheses to be tested in analytical case studies, such as



IMPORTANT WORKS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS 1.2

Aristotle

Aristotle (350 bc), *Ta Politika* (Politics)

The typologies of political systems presented in this work are based on a data compilation of the constitutions and practices in 158 Greek city-states by Aristotle’s students. Tragically, this collection is now lost (with the exception of *The Constitution of Athens*). This work represents the oldest attempt on record of a comparative empirical data collection and analysis of political institutions. Aristotle distinguished three true forms of government: those ruled by one person (kingship); by few persons (aristocracy); and by all citizens (constitutional government), of which the corrupt forms are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy.

implicit comparisons, the analysis of deviant cases, and proving grounds for new techniques (e.g. synthetic control).

2. The second tradition is *methodological* and is concerned with establishing rules and standards of comparative analysis. This tradition addresses the question of how comparative analyses should be carried out in order to enhance their potential for the descriptive cumulation of comparable information, causal explanations and associations between key variables, and prediction. This strand is concerned with rigorous conceptual, logical, and statistical techniques of analysis, also involving issues of measurement and case selection.
3. The third tradition of comparative politics is *analytical* in that it combines empirical substance and method. The body of literature in this tradition is primarily concerned with the identification and explanation of differences and similarities between countries and their institutions, actors, and processes through systematic comparison. It aims to go beyond merely ideographic descriptions and aspires to identify *law-like explanations*. Through comparison, researchers test (i.e. verify and falsify) whether or not associations and causal relationships between variables hold true empirically across a number of cases. It can be based on ‘large-N’ or ‘small-N’ research designs (N indicates the number of cases considered) with either similar or different cases. It can use either qualitative or quantitative data, or ‘logical’ or statistical techniques, for testing the empirical

validity of hypotheses. But ultimately, this tradition aims at explanation.

This book takes the latter approach.

Like all scientific disciplines, comparative politics is a combination of *substance* (the study of political institutions, actors, and processes) and *method* (identifying and explaining differences and similarities following established rules and standards of analysis). Like all sciences, comparative politics aims to say something general about the world, i.e. formulate generalizations beyond one or a few cases.

What does comparative politics do in practice?

1. To compare means that similarities and differences are *described*. Comparative politics describes the world and, building on these descriptions, establishes *classifications* and *typologies*. For example, we classify different types of electoral systems.
2. Similarities and differences are *explained*. Why did social revolutions take place in France and Russia but not in Germany and Japan? Why is there no socialist party in the US? Why is electoral **turnout** in the US and Switzerland so much lower than in most other democracies? As in all scientific disciplines, we formulate *hypotheses* to explain these differences and use empirical data to test them—to check whether or not the hypotheses hold true in reality. It is through this method that causality can be inferred, generalizations produced, and theories improved.
3. Comparative politics aims to formulate *predictions*. If we know that proportional representation (PR) **electoral systems** favour the proliferation of parties in the legislature, could we have predicted that the change of electoral law in New Zealand in 1996 from first past the post to PR would lead to a more fragmented **party system**?

Why is ‘comparative politics’ called ‘comparative politics’?

Comparative politics as a label stresses the analytical, scientific, and ‘quasi-experimental’ character of the discipline. It was in the 1950s and ’60s that the awareness of the need to carry out systematic comparisons for more robust theories increased. The ‘comparative’ label before ‘politics’ was added to make a methodological point in a discipline that was not yet fully aware of the importance of explicit comparison. However, single-case studies can be comparative in an implicit



IMPORTANT WORKS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS 1.3

Machiavelli

Niccolò Machiavelli (written 1513, published posthumously 1532), *Il Principe* (*The Prince*, Florence: Bernardo di Giunta)

This book was novel in its time because it told how principalities and republics are governed most successfully from a realist, or empirical, perspective and not how they should be governed in an ideal world. Machiavelli makes his argument through examples taken from real-world observations compared with one another. In *The Prince*, he compares mainly different types of principalities (hereditary, new, mixed, and ecclesiastic), whereas in *The Discourses on Livy* (*Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*) his comparison between princely and republican government is more systematic.

way, like Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835). As John Stuart Mill noted in his review of the book in 1840, Tocqueville contrasts US specificities with France in a quasi-experimental way. Similarly, books on single countries in the 1960s and early 1970s—on Belgium, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland—not only showed that ‘politics works differently over here’, but also included systematic, if hidden, comparison with the better-known cases of the US and Britain.

In practice, the label ‘comparative’ was needed as a battle horse. In an established discipline, this label could and should be dropped. Today, it goes without saying that the analysis of political phenomena is comparative, i.e. entails more than one case. Therefore, we should conclude that—since comparative politics covers all aspects of domestic politics—the discipline of comparative politics becomes ‘synonymous with the scientific study of politics’ (Schmitter 1993: 171). All the dimensions of the political system can be compared, so all is potentially comparative politics. As Mair noted, ‘[i]n terms of its substantive concerns the fields of comparative politics seem hardly separable from those of political

KEY POINTS

- Comparative politics is an empirical science that studies chiefly domestic politics.
- The goals of comparative politics are: to describe differences and similarities between political systems and their features; to explain these differences; and to predict which factors may cause specific outcomes.

science *tout court*, in that any focus of inquiry can be approached either comparatively (using cross-national data) or not (using data from just one country)' (Mair 1996: 311). The generality of the scope of coverage of comparative politics leads us now to talk about its substance in more depth.

The substance of comparative politics

What is compared?

The classical cases of comparative politics are *national political systems*. These are (still) the most important political units in the contemporary world. However, national systems are not the only cases that comparative politics analyses.

1. First, non-national political systems can be compared: *sub-national regional political systems* (state level in the US or the German *Länder*) or *supranational units* such as (i) regions (Western Europe, Central-Eastern Europe, North America, Latin America, and so on); (ii) empires (Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, Chinese, Roman, etc.); and (iii) supranational organizations (European Union, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), etc.).
2. *Types of political systems* can be compared (e.g. a comparison between democratic and authoritarian regimes in terms of, say, economic performance).
3. Comparative politics compares *single elements* of the political system rather than the whole system. Researchers compare the structure of parliaments of different countries or cabinets, the policies (e.g. welfare state or environmental policies), the finances of parties or trade unions, and the presence or absence of direct democracy institutions and electoral laws.

The various chapters of this book compare the most important features of national political systems. As can be seen in the contents at the beginning of the volume, the variety of topics is large, and comparative politics covers—in principle—all aspects of the political system. It has been argued that precisely because comparative politics encompasses 'everything' from a substantial point of view, it has no substantial specificity, but rather only a methodological one resting on comparison (Verba 1985; Keman 1993a). Yet there is a substantial specificity which resides in the empirical analysis of internal structures, actors, and processes.

It is also true that comparative politics has been through phases in which it focused on particular aspects. This evolution is described in the next two subsections.

From institutions to functions . . .

Comparative politics before the Second World War was mainly concerned with the analysis of the state and its institutions. Institutions were defined in a narrow sense, overlapping with state powers (legislative, executive, judiciary), civil administration, and military bureaucracy. Old institutionalism was formal, using as main 'data' constitutional texts and legal documents. This tradition can be traced back to constitutional authors such as Bodin, Montesquieu, and Constant. The emphasis on the study of formal political institutions focused, naturally, on the geographical areas where they first developed, namely Western Europe and North America.

While the study of state institutions remains important, the reaction against what was perceived as the legalistic study of politics led to one of the major turns in the discipline between the 1930s and the 1960s—a period considered by some to be the 'Golden Age' of comparative politics (Dalton 1991). The **behavioural revolution**—imported from anthropology, biology, and sociology—shifted the substance of comparative politics away from institutions. This tradition can be traced back to the macro-sociology of Spencer, Comte, Marx, Toqueville, and Weber, and led to theories of macro-historical sociology, cultural theories as well as neo-institutionalism, with a much broader conception of norms and their social



IMPORTANT WORKS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS 1.4

Montesquieu

Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1748)
De l'Esprit des Loix (On the Spirit of the Laws, Geneva: Barrillot et fils)

In this influential book, in which the idea of the separation of powers is presented systematically for the first time, Montesquieu distinguishes between republics, monarchies, and despotic regimes. He describes comparatively the working of each type of regime through historical examples. Furthermore, Montesquieu was really a pioneer of 'political sociology' as, first, he analysed the influence of factors such as geography, location, and climate on a nation's culture and, indirectly, its social and political institutions; and, second, did so by applying an innovative naturalistic method.

meaning, and a stronger emphasis on history. Pioneers of comparative politics such as Gabriel A. Almond, founder of the Committee on Comparative Politics in 1954 (an organization of the American Social Science Research Council), started analysing other aspects of politics than formal institutions, and observing politics in practice rather than as defined in official texts.

What triggered this revolution? Primarily, more attention was devoted to ‘new’ cases, i.e. a rejection of the focus on the West and the developed world. Early comparativists like James Bryce, Charles Merriam, A. Lawrence Lowell, and Woodrow Wilson—as Philippe Schmitter calls them, ‘Dead, White, European Men, but not Boring’ (Schmitter 1993: 173)—assumed that the world would converge towards Western models of ‘political order’ (Fukuyama 2011, 2014). With this state of mind, it made sense to focus on major Western countries. However, the rise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe (and, later, in China and Central America) and the breakdown of democracy where fascist dictatorships came to power—and in some cases lasted until the 1970s, as in Portugal, Spain, and Latin America, and to some extent also in Greece (Stepan 1971; Linz 1978; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986)—made it clear that other types of political order could exist and needed to be understood. After the Second World War, patterns of decolonization spurred analyses beyond Anglo-Saxon-style liberal democratic institutions. New **patrimonialist** regimes emerged in Africa and the Middle East, and populist ones in South America (Huntington 1968; O’Donnell 1973).

These divergent patterns could not be understood within the narrow categories of Western institutions. New categories and concepts were required, as was greater attention to other actors, such as revolutionary parties and clans under patrimonialistic leadership. The mobilization of the masses that took place in communist and fascist regimes in Europe, as well as under populism in South America, turned attention away from institutions and directed it towards ideologies, belief systems, and communication. This motivated comparativists to ask which were the favourable conditions for democratic stability, and thus to look into political cultures, **social capital**, and traditions of authority.²

Finally, the closer analysis of Europe also contributed to a shift away from the formal analysis of institutions. From the 1960s on, European comparative political scientists started to question the supposed ‘supremacy’—in terms of stability and efficiency—of Anglo-Saxon democracies based on majoritarian institutions and homogeneous cultures. Other types of democracies were not necessarily the unstable democracies of France, Germany, or Italy. The analyses of

Norway by Stein Rokkan (1966), Austria by Gerhard Lehmbuch (1967), Switzerland by Jürg Steiner (1974), Belgium by Val Lorwin (1966a, b), and the Netherlands by Hans Daalder (1966) and Arend Lijphart (1968a)—most published in Robert Dahl’s influential volume *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (1966)—as well as Canada, South Africa, Lebanon, and India, all showed that politics worked differently to the Anglo-Saxon model.

Although ethnically, linguistically, and religiously divided, these societies were not only stable and peaceful, but also wealthy and ‘socially just’ (most remarkably in the case of the Scandinavian welfare states). On the one hand, these new cases showed that *other types of democracies were viable*. Besides the ‘Westminster’ type of **majoritarian democracy**, these authors stressed the ‘consociational’ type with patterns of compromise between elites (rather than competition), ‘amicable agreement’, and ‘accommodation’—in short, *alternative practices of politics beyond formal institutions*. On the other hand, these new cases stimulated the investigation of the role of **cleavages** (overlapping vs cross-cutting), as in the case of welfare economies, as well as the role of elite collaboration in the political economy of small countries, which later led to important publications (see e.g. Katzenstein 1985; Esping-Andersen 1990).

What have been the consequences of the broadening of the geographical and historical scope?

First, it increased the *variety of political systems*. Second, it pointed to the *role of agencies* other than institutions, in particular parties and interest groups,



IMPORTANT WORKS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS 1.5

Tocqueville

Alexis Charles Henri Clérel de Tocqueville (1835)
De la Démocratie en Amérique (On Democracy in America, Paris: C. Gosselin)

Although this book represents a ‘case study’—an analysis of democracy in the US—it is an example of comparison with an ‘absent’ case, i.e. France and, more generally, Europe. In his implicit comparison, Tocqueville analyses the uniqueness of conditions in American society and geography that were favourable to the development of modern democracy. Tocqueville follows Montesquieu in going beyond public institutions to include social and cultural aspects. He speaks of aristocratic and democratic societies when comparing France with the US. Tocqueville was also strongly influenced by Montesquieu’s use of naturalistic methods.

civil society organizations, social movements, and media (Almond 1978: 14). Third, it introduced a *new methodology* based on empirical observation, large-scale comparisons, statistical techniques, and an extraordinary effort of quantitative data collection (see the following section).³ Fourth, a new ‘language’, namely **systemic functionalism**, was imported in comparative politics. The challenge presented by the extension of the scope of comparison was to elaborate a conceptual body able to encompass the diversity of cases. Concepts, indicators, and measurements that had been developed for a set of Western cases did not fit the new cases. It also soon became clear that ‘Western concepts’ had a different meaning in other parts of the world. What Sartori has called the ‘travelling problem’ (Sartori 1970: 1033) is closely related to the expansion of politics and appears when concepts and categories are applied to cases different from those around which they had originally been developed (see Table I.1).

The emphasis on institutions and the state was dropped because of the need for *more general and universal concepts*. Since the behavioural revolution, we speak of political systems rather than states (Easton 1953, 1965a, b). Concepts were redefined to cover non-Western settings, pre-modern societies, and non-state polities. Most of these categories were taken from the very abstract depiction of the social system by Talcott Parsons (1968). These more general categories could not be institutions that did not exist elsewhere, but their functional equivalents.

Functions dealing with the survival of systems were perceived as particularly important. From biology and cybernetics, David Easton and Karl Deutsch (Deutsch 1966a, b) imported the idea of the *system*—ecological systems, body systems, and so on—and identified ‘survival’ as its most important function. Similarly, in the 1950s—still in the shadow of the dark memory of the breakdown of democratic systems between the two world wars through fascism and communism—the most important topic was to understand why some democracies survived while others collapsed. Almond and Verba’s *The Civic Culture* (1963) is considered as a milestone precisely because it identified specific cultural conditions favourable or unfavourable to democratic stability.

... and back to institutions

It soon also became clear, however, that the price to be paid for encompassing transcultural concepts was that of an excessive level of abstraction. This framework was not informative enough and too remote with regard to the concrete historical context of specific systems. In the 1970s, European comparative political scientists like Rokkan, Lehbruch, and others (and even more so area specialists from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia) had already noted that the ahistorical categories of systemic functionalism did not allow the understanding of concrete cases.

The counter-reaction to systemic functionalism starts precisely in 1967 and involves (i) a shift of

Table I.1 Comparative politics before and after the ‘behavioural revolution’

| Dimensions of analysis | Before | After |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Unit | State | Political system |
| Subject matter | Regimes and their formal institutions | Social and cultural structures, all actors in the process of decision-making |
| Cases | Major democracies: US, Britain, France; analysis of democratic breakdown in Germany and Italy; authoritarianism in Spain and Latin America | Objective extension of cases (decolonization) and subjective extension with spread of discipline in various countries |
| Indicators/variables | West-centric, qualitative categories, typologies | Abstract concepts; empirical universals, quantitatively operationalized variables |
| Method | Narrative accounts and juxtapositions between cases | Machine-readable data sets and statistics; quasi-experimental comparative method |
| Data | Constitutional and legal texts, history | Survey (value and attitudes), aggregate (society and economy), and text (actors) data |
| Theory | Normative: institutional elitism and pluralism; no elaborate conceptualization | Empirical: structural functionalism, systems theory, neo-institutionalism, rational choice, cultural theories |

substantial focus; (ii) a narrowing of *geographical* scope; (iii) a change of *methodology*; and (iv) a *theoretical turn*.

Bringing the state back in

The shift of substantial focus consists of a return to the state and its institutions (Skocpol 1985). In recent decades, there has been a re-establishment of the centrality of institutions more broadly defined as sets of rules, procedures, and social norms. In the new-institutionalism theory (March and Olsen 1989; Hall and Taylor 1996; Thelen 1999; Ostrom 2007; Pierson and Skocpol 2002; Przeworski 2004a) institutions are seen as the most important actors, with autonomy and being part of real politics. Institutions, furthermore, are seen as determining the opportunity structures and the limits within which individuals formulate preferences.⁴

Mid-range theories

The excessive abstraction of concepts in systemic functionalism was also countered by a return of attention to varying historical structures, cultural elements, and geographic location, in which the specific context plays a central role (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Rather than general universalistic theories, mid-range theories stress the advantages of case studies or in-depth analyses of a few countries.

Some authors argue that the reawakening of attention to the state and its institutions is in fact a consequence of this narrowing of geographical scope (Mair 1996). The general language introduced by systemic functionalism—and which nearly discarded the state and its institutions—was needed to encompass a greater variety of political systems. Institutions have recently been re-appreciated because of a closer focus. Systemic functionalism did not forget institutions; they were simply ‘absorbed upward into the more abstract notions of role, structure and function’ (Mair 1996: 317). A regionally more restricted perspective giving up global comparisons does not require the same level of abstraction of concepts. Therefore, the shift of substantial focus is a consequence of less ambitious theoretical constructions. The change of substantial focus has been favoured by the narrowing of the geographical focus.

Case-oriented analysis

This narrowing of scope also entailed a methodological change. The counter-reaction to large-scale

comparisons came from the development of methods based on few cases (‘small-N’) (see Ragin 1987). They revitalize today a type of comparative investigation that had long been criticized because few cases did not allow the testing of the impact of large numbers of factors—the problem that Lijphart (1971, 1975) named ‘few cases, many variables’. This difficulty made the analysis of rare social phenomena, such as revolutions, impossible with statistical techniques. Hence, the great importance of this ‘new’ **comparative method**. It provides the tool for analysing rigorously phenomena of which only few instances occur historically (see next section ‘The method of comparative politics’ and Chapter 3 for more details).

Rational choice theory

At the end of the 1980s, another change took place in comparative politics, strengthening further the place of institutions. It was the change given by the increasing influence of rational choice theory in comparative politics, which can be traced back to political economy tradition of Smith, Bentham, Ricardo, and Mill.

Whereas the behavioural revolution primarily imported models from sociology, the change at the end of the 1980s was inspired by developments in economics. In addition, the rational choice change does not revolve around a redefinition of the political, for it applies a more general theory of action that applies equally well to all types of human behaviour, be it in the economic market, the political system, the media sphere, or elsewhere (Tsebelis 1990; Munck 2001).

This theory of action is based on the idea that actors (individuals, but also organizations such as political parties) are rational. They are able to order alternative options from most to least preferred and then, through their choice, seek the maximization of their preferences (utility). For example, voters are considered able to identify what their interest is and to distinguish the different alternatives that political parties offer in their programmes with regard to specific policies. Voters then maximize their utility by voting for the political party whose policy promises are closest to their interests. It is rational for political parties to offer programmes that appeal to a large segment of the electorate, as this leads to the maximization of votes.

It is clear from these premises that the place for ‘sociological’ factors on which the behavioural revolution insisted—such as socio-economic status and cultural traits—assume a lower key in rational choice models. These models have been crucial to understanding the behaviour of a number of actors.

In the field of party politics, examples include work by Downs (1957), Przeworski (Przeworski and Sprague 1986), and Cox (1997). Other examples include the work of Popkin (1979) on peasants in Vietnam, Bates (1981) on markets in Africa, Przeworski (1991) on democratization, Gambetta (1993, 2005) on the Mafia and suicide missions, Fearon and Laitin (1996) on ethnicity, and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) on the origins of political regimes.

Rational choice theory in political science owes a lot to the work of William Riker. He is the founder of the ‘Rochester School’ (Riker 1990; see also Amadae and Bueno de Mesquita 1999). Today, rational choice theory comes in various forms and degrees of formalization, ranging from ‘hard’ game-theoretical versions, in which the degree of mathematical formalization is very high, to ‘softer’ versions in which the basic assumptions are maintained but in which there is no formal theorizing. What is important to note is that the rational choice turn did not lead to a redefinition of comparative politics as a subject matter precisely because it does not offer a meta-theory that is specific to politics. The subject matter did not change under the impulse of rational choice theory. On the contrary, it has reinforced the pre-eminence of institutions in comparative politics. Rational choice institutionalism, in particular, sees institutions as constraints of actors’ behaviour (Weingast 2002). An example of this approach is the concept of ‘veto player’ developed by Tsebelis (2002).

At the end of the 1980s, another turn took place in comparative politics, strengthening further the place of institutions. It was the turn given by the increasing influence of rational choice theory in comparative politics.

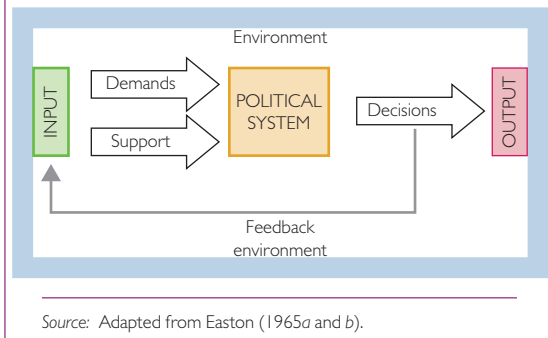
What is left?

As we have seen, there has been an almost cyclical process.⁵ However, comparative politics did not simply return to its starting point.

First, despite the recent narrowing of scope and the tendency to concentrate on ‘mid-range theories’, the expansion that took place in the 1950s and 1960s left behind an extraordinary variety of topics. A glance at the Contents shows how many *features of the political system* are dealt with in comparative politics.

Second, the great contribution made by the systemic **paradigm** has not been lost. We continue to speak of a political system and use this descriptive tool to organize the various dimensions of domestic politics. In fact, the structure and coverage of the book mirrors the political system as described by David Easton (see Figure I.1 and Box I.6). Easton’s work is a monumental theoretical construction of the structural-

Figure I.1 The political system



IMPORTANT WORKS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS I.6

Easton

David Easton (1953) *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf)

This volume is the first of a series of books by Easton on the political system. His work represents the most systematic and encompassing effort on the ‘theoretical side’ of the behavioural revolution. Scholars like David Easton and Karl W. Deutsch imported the notion of system from other scientific disciplines (biology and cybernetics). This notion soon replaced the formal concept of state and enlarged the field of comparative politics to non-institutional actors. The framework developed by Easton and his colleagues, and its conceptual components (input, output, feedback loop, black box, etc.), are common language today. Easton’s work remains the last major attempt to develop a general empirical theory of politics.

systemic paradigm, still unrivalled and probably the last and most important attempt to build a general empirical theory including all actors and processes of political systems.

Third, Easton’s concepts have marked the minds of political scientists, as well as those of the wider public. His attempt has been an extremely systematic one, with subsequent and cumulative contributors drafted towards one single goal. His concept of *political system*—as a set of structures (institutions and agencies) whose decision-making function is to reach the collective and authoritative allocation of values (*output*, i.e. **public policies**) receiving support as well as demands (*inputs*) from the domestic as well as the international environment