

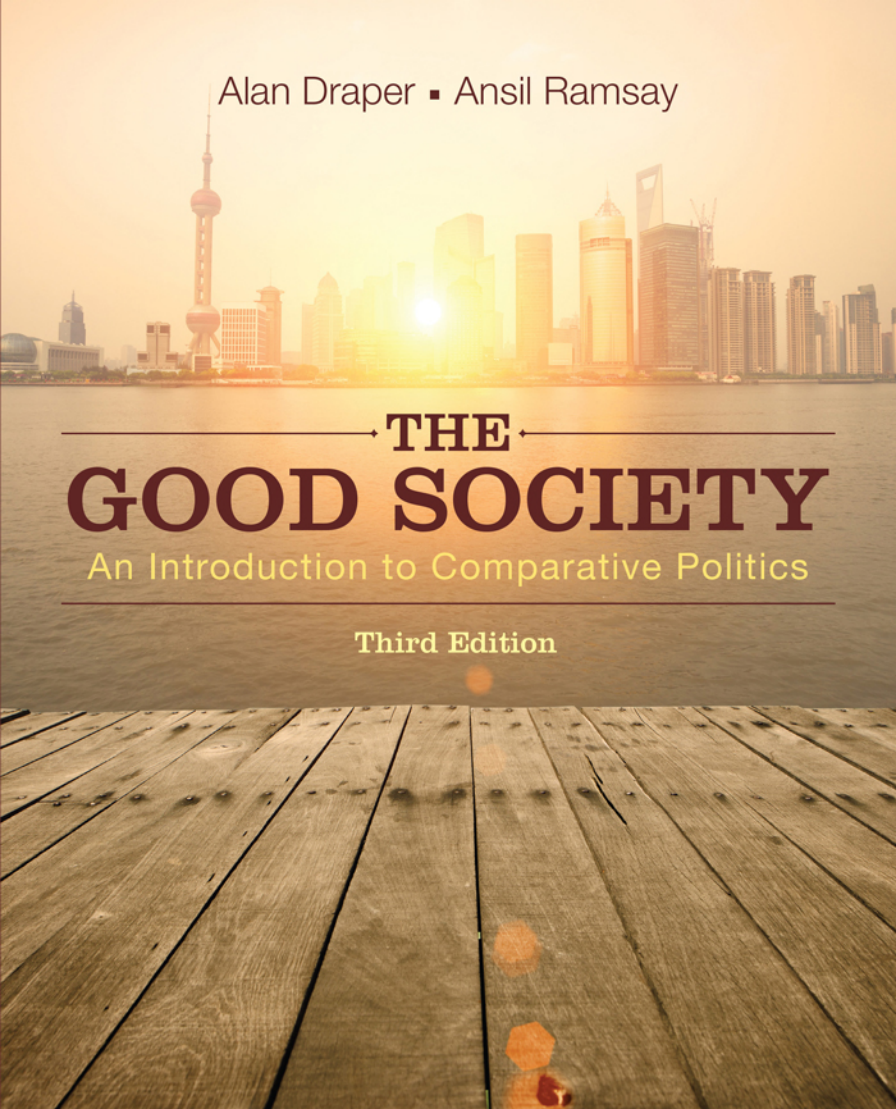
Alan Draper ■ Ansil Ramsay

THE

GOOD SOCIETY

An Introduction to Comparative Politics

Third Edition

The background of the cover features a city skyline, likely Shanghai, with the Oriental Pearl Tower on the left and various skyscrapers on the right. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the water and the buildings. In the foreground, a wooden pier with parallel planks leads from the bottom edge towards the water. There are some orange and red circular artifacts or reflections on the wooden planks in the lower right quadrant.

The Good Society

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The Good Society

An Introduction to Comparative Politics

Third Edition

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Preface

The *Lonely Planet* guidebook describes Siena, Italy, as a charming city whose medieval center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The travel guide recommends simply wandering the narrow streets of the city and visiting its ornate churches and small museums. In the very center of the city is its famous town square—the Piazza del Campo—where tourists eat and drink at outdoor cafes that line its perimeter. Twice a year, the square is packed with spectators who come to watch horses representing the city’s different neighborhoods race around its circumference. Crowds of up to 20,000 line the infield, shops, restaurants, and upstairs apartments to watch the horses compete. The event is so famous and picturesque that it served as the backdrop for the opening action sequence in the 2008 James Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*.

The most imposing and beautiful building on the town square is City Hall, the Palazzo Pubblico. It dates back to the 13th century, when the Republic of Siena was formed. The Siennese were remarkably progressive for their time, first freeing themselves from control by the Church and then from the aristocracy to form a self-governing city-state. Today, the Palazzo Pubblico is no longer the local seat of government but an art museum. Almost every room in the museum contains frescoes, paintings that are drawn on walls as opposed to canvas, from the epic period of the Republic of Siena (1287 to 1355). The most famous of the frescoes is a set of three, collectively known as “Allegory and Effects of Good and Bad Government” by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. These are located on the second floor of the museum, in the room where the Nine Governors and Defenders of the Republic of Siena, the city’s governing

council, would meet. On the room’s left wall is Lorenzetti’s painting of bad government. It portrays a society in ruins. Farms in the distance are abandoned or burning. The fields lie fallow. The city, which is portrayed on the right-hand side of the painting, is desolate. Buildings are rundown, and violence is pervasive. In one scene, a woman is being robbed; in another, a building is being destroyed; and in still another scene, someone lies unattended, bleeding from a wound. In the center of the painting, a devil figure representing Tyranny sits on the throne, surrounded by Cruelty, Treason, Fraud, Furor, Conflict and War. Justice lies bound and defeated at its feet.

On the opposite wall, Lorenzetti depicts the effects of good government, which are a counterpoint to the awful scenes on the other side of the room. Here, the Common Good, not tyranny, rules.¹ The effects of good government are evident in the scenes of wealth and serenity represented in the picture. Crops are bountiful, markets are lively, houses are well maintained, and people are portrayed dancing in the streets, practicing their crafts, and harvesting their fields. Peace and prosperity prevail.²

Unfortunately, the sharp contrast between good and bad government displayed so vividly in the Lorenzetti frescoes are still with us.

¹Nicolai Rubenstein, “Political Ideas in Siennese Art: The Frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo di Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (July–December, 1958), vol. 21, no. 3/4, pp. 179–207.

²Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300–1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

Some countries today display all the symptoms of bad government—carnage, poverty, and misery—shown in one of the frescoes, whereas others exhibit all the signs of good government—affluence, security, and happiness—that are depicted in Lorenzetti’s other painting. For example, consider the case of Juarez in Mexico and El Paso, Texas, in the United States, which are separated by the narrow band of the Rio Grande River. The Mayor of El Paso can actually see downtown Juarez from his office, but the quality of life for residents of the two cities could not be more different. In 2012, El Paso was ranked as the safest city in the United States with a population over 500,000,³ with only 16 homicides recorded in 2011; more than 1,000 people were murdered in Juarez that same year. The infant mortality rate—the number of newborns per 1,000 who die before their first birthday—in El Paso was 3.9 in 2010. In comparison, the infant mortality rate was five times higher across the river in Juarez, and although 78 percent of El Paso residents completed high school in 2010, only 63 percent did so in Juarez.

This tale of two cities is at the heart of our book *The Good Society*, whose central theme is why some countries are more successful than others at creating conditions that promote their citizens’ well-being. Why do people in the United States live so much better than those who live just across the border in Mexico? How can a river loom as wide as an ocean in terms of the quality of life for those who live on opposite shores? Why, in other words, do some countries reflect the symptoms of bad government found on the left wall in the room where the leaders of Sienna would meet, whereas others display the signs of good government found on the opposite wall in Sienna’s governing chambers?

These questions give unity to a wide range of topics in comparative politics by asking how

political institutions in different countries affect citizens’ quality of life. Students are interested in comparative politics—and appropriately so—because of what it might teach them about how different political institutions affect people’s lives. It is our experience that few students who enroll in “Introduction to Comparative Politics” are intrinsically curious about the details of other countries’ political institutions or about the conceptual repertoire of comparative politics. However, they are curious about why some countries do a better job than others of providing for their citizens. Students want to know how political systems work because they are interested in how they can work better. The wonderful, exciting quality of comparative politics is that it is in a privileged position to pose and answer such large and meaningful questions. Comparison permits students to make normative judgments about the merits of different political systems. These are the kinds of issues that first attracted us as students to comparative politics. We believe today’s students will find the fresh, normative approach to comparative politics in *The Good Society* equally compelling.

We believe the approach to comparative politics that *The Good Society* offers is a bold departure from existing comparative politics textbooks. Most textbooks in the field use the case study approach, in which students study a series of individual countries in depth. We find such textbooks to be richly descriptive but oddly uninformative. The case studies provide evocative detail but are not related to one another, nor is their collective meaning and significance clear. Textbooks using a thematic approach are also unsatisfying. They familiarize readers with core concepts in comparative politics but often fail to explain how those concepts could be applied or would be useful to explain the politics of any particular country. In short—and to be blunt—existing comparative politics textbooks generally offer either too little comparison or too little politics. They leave students asking “so what?” and wondering in what

³El Paso Ranks Safest City in US. (June 25, 2012) www.kvia.com/news/El-Paso-Ranks-Safest-City-In-US/.

ways the fine detail and conceptual clarity these textbooks offer matter.

We have not dispensed with case study and thematic approaches to comparative politics. We believe each is valuable, and we use them here by situating them within a larger argument about the *purpose* of government. We use case studies to typify different political models, and we illustrate how concepts can be applied to the study of individual countries. We offer case studies of individual countries to assess their performance against the standard of the good society. We review the conceptual nuts and bolts of the field because such terms as *state*, *market*, and *democracy* represent ways people have organized their lives. However, they are means to an end, not the end itself, which is to maximize people's ability to live well. *The Good Society* introduces students to a variety of countries and the conceptual apparatus of comparative politics in ways that we hope they will find relevant and meaningful.

New to This Edition

This is the third edition of the Good Society. While we continue to introduce concepts, describe political institutions, and assess government performance in different countries against the standards of the good society, there is also much that is new here. Revisions to the thematic chapters for the Third Edition include the following:

- **The introductory chapter** (Chapter 1) presents more vividly, with new updated examples, how higher economic growth does not necessarily result in better living conditions for people.
- **The chapter on political participation** (Chapter 3) devotes more attention to the political impact of social media. It also discusses the emergence of the Arab Spring that challenged dictators throughout the Middle East, and the rise of the Occupy Movement that protested rising inequality in Europe and the United States.

- **The chapter on political culture** now includes new sections on value change, describing changes from traditional to secular values, and survival to self-expression values. There is also an expanded section on social capital, and a new section on contentious identity politics.
- **The authoritarianism** chapter uses a new approach that focuses on how authoritarian regimes solve problems of power sharing and control. It also has new material on why most authoritarian Arab regimes survived the Arab Spring.
- **The chapter on democracy** includes more on the current period when democracies are neither growing in number nor receding. It argues that the third wave of democratic growth has crested, but democracy has neither consolidated nor collapsed.
- **The chapter on economic and human development** incorporates new scholarship by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson on extractive and inclusive institutions.

The chapters covering individual countries have been revised and updated for the Third Edition as follows:

- **New case study of the United Kingdom.** In this edition, the United Kingdom replaces the United States as the model of extreme market democracies. We believe the British case study will be more useful for faculty teaching American students about comparative politics.
- **Germany**—analyzes the 2013 election results, how Germany fared in the Great Recession, and Germany's emergence as the "indispensable nation" within Europe.
- **Sweden**—includes more coverage of foreign policy and more analysis of the cultural and political challenges that immigration and diversity pose in Sweden.
- **Brazil**—examines the massive popular protests in Brazil in 2013, the effect of slowing

economic growth on politics, and the rise of racially based politics.

- **Nigeria**—delves further into the problems posed by Nigeria’s weak state and includes new material on the growing threat of the Islamic fundamentalist group, Boko Haram.
- **Iran**—describes the 2013 presidential election and the surprising victory of Hassan Rouhani. It also considers whether President Rouhani will be able to carry out his reform program.
- **Russia**—includes more on the personalist regime led by President Vladimir Putin and his efforts to maintain authoritarian control by using nationalism, anti-Westernism, and the conservative social values of the Russian Orthodox Church.
- **China**—describes the transition of Chinese Communist Party leadership to Xi Jinping and the challenges he faces as economic and environmental protests increase, income and regional inequality worsen, and economic growth slows.

We also continued to provide more pedagogical assistance to users of the book. Several pedagogical features were retained from previous editions. These include emphasis on the practice of comparative politics, application of concepts to countries in “In-Depth” boxes that show how topics discussed in conceptual chapters may be applied to countries, “In Brief” text boxes to highlight key concepts in the chapter; key terms in boldface type, figures and tables, maps with accompanying economic and demographic data, and selected readings at the end of each chapter, to guide students to some of the best and most recent scholarship.

For the Third Edition, the pedagogy has been improved in the following ways:

- **Learning Objectives:** Learning objectives now appear at the beginning of each chapter and subheading. These aids signal students what to expect and indicate what they should take away from each section.

- **Improved presentation of data:** Scatter diagrams have been improved by adding countries’ names to their locations in the scatter diagrams. This makes it easier for students to see relationships among countries and stimulates questions about why some countries are outliers.

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Features

CHAPTER 1. COMPARATIVE POLITICS AND THE GOOD SOCIETY.

The opening chapter introduces students to the field of Comparative Politics and the comparative method. It then proceeds to ask: What does the good society look like? The answer to this question becomes the measure, the standard, by which we compare and evaluate how well different countries perform. We consider alternative visions of the good society, including gross national product and gross national happiness rankings, before presenting

our own view that is based on “the capabilities approach,” developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. According to this approach, the good society is one in which certain minimal conditions are met that permit people to flourish or thrive. These include physical well-being, safety from violence, the ability to make informed choices about one’s life, and the freedom to participate in meaningful political activity. After proposing ways to apply these concepts to compare how countries perform, we respond to different criticisms of this approach.

CHAPTER 2. THE STATE. Chapter 2 introduces students to the concept of the state. States are sovereign, meaning they are the ultimate authorities within a territory, creating and enforcing rules within it. As a result, groups struggle to gain control over the state and try to influence its procedures and decisions. The chapter then proceeds to describe the origins of the modern state and examines its components or parts, such as legislatures, judiciaries, executives, bureaucracies, militaries, and more local or regional authorities. It concludes by examining whether the quality of the state, correlates with our measures of the good society.

CHAPTER 3. STATE AND SOCIETY. Chapter 3 examines the ways in which states and societies are linked together through political parties, interest groups, social movements, and patron-client relations. The chapter also explores ways in which states try to use these linkages to gain more influence over society, at the same time groups in society try to exploit these connections to increase their influence over the state.

CHAPTER 4. POLITICAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY. This chapter first describes the civic culture and self-expression approaches to the study of political culture. It then turns to an analysis of social capital and collective action. The next section examines how political identities are formed, how groups based on national, ethnic,

and religious identities engage in political struggles, and why these struggles sometimes become violent. Finally, the chapter asks whether the level of generalized trust within countries affects the degree to which they approach the good society.

CHAPTER 5. POLITICAL ECONOMY. Chapter 5 looks at different economic systems and how each strikes a different balance between states and markets. It begins by arguing that markets are not antagonistic to states but presume them. Markets require states to set the rules so that production and exchange can take place. We then discuss the market’s virtues and vices, and the different means through which states intervene in the operation of market economies. The chapter then proceeds to discuss globalization. Finally, we examine whether more market-oriented economies do a better job than statist systems in promoting the capabilities of citizens.

CHAPTER 6. AUTHORITARIANISM. Chapter 6 defines authoritarianism as well as describing its different forms: monarchy, military rule, one-party rule, and personal rule. Each type of regime is discussed in terms of how it solves the problem of power sharing among members of the leadership group and the problem of authoritarian control over the population. It also examines the surprising persistence of authoritarianism in many countries, despite the trend toward democracy in recent decades. This section focuses on authoritarian rule in the Middle East, and why most Arab authoritarian regimes survived the Arab Spring. The chapter ends with an analysis of how well different types of authoritarian rule do in meeting the criteria of the good society.

CHAPTER 7. DEMOCRACY. Chapter 7 parallels the previous chapter by defining democracy and describes its two dominant forms, parliamentary and presidential systems. It also considers the successive waves of democratization and how electoral rules shape party competition and party systems. The chapter ends by assessing whether

democracies perform better than authoritarian states in contributing to economic development and in meeting the standards of the good society.

CHAPTER 8. ECONOMIC AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. This chapter begins by distinguishing between economic development and human development. It next examines how rich and poor countries differ in levels of poverty, capabilities, economic growth, and state strength. The chapter then examines five different explanations for why development gaps have emerged among countries: imperialism, geography, culture, colonialism, institutions, and leadership. It concludes with an examination of the relationship between economic development and meeting the standards of the good society.

CHAPTER 9. DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE GOOD SOCIETY. Chapter 9 begins our analysis of the developed countries, which include the rich democracies of North America and Western Europe, as well as those of Japan, New Zealand, and Australia. It examines three “families of nation,” or distinct models of politics and policy found within them: social democracies, extreme market democracies, and Christian democracies. We then offer case studies for each of the three types: Sweden represents the social democratic model; the United Kingdom typifies extreme market democracies; and Germany exemplifies the Christian democracies. Finally, the chapter compares these countries’ performance to see which of them—and the political models they represent—comes closest to meeting the standards of the good society.

CHAPTER 10. LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE GOOD SOCIETY. This chapter begins with a description of the main features of less-developed countries, while noting that they are a more numerous and diverse lot than their developed counterparts. Many of them are not democracies—and the quality of democracy

varies considerably among those that are—and they differ greatly in terms of economic performance. The chapter examines three common types of regimes with different degrees of democracy: flawed democracies that share some of the same features as democracies in high-income countries but fall short on others; semi-democracies that exist in a gray area between democracy and authoritarianism; and regimes that use the trappings of democracy to maintain authoritarian control. Brazil is presented as an example of a flawed democracy, Nigeria is offered as a model of semi-democracy, and Iran is submitted as a case study of how authoritarian regimes use elections as a means of authoritarian control. The chapter concludes with a comparison of how well these countries—and the types of regimes they represent—perform in promoting their citizens’ well-being and meeting the criteria of the good society.

CHAPTER 11. COMMUNISM, POST-COMMUNISM, AND THE GOOD SOCIETY. Chapter 11 begins with a discussion of the institutional features of communist regimes prior to their demise. It examines why the Soviet Union collapsed, why Russia was not able to sustain democratic politics and came under personal rule, and explores how the Chinese Communist Party has managed to avoid the fate of the Soviet Union. In both countries the chapter explains how authoritarian rulers solve problems of power sharing within the leadership group and control over the population. The chapter concludes by comparing the two countries’ degree of success in promoting their citizens’ well-being and approximating the good society.

Supplements

Pearson is pleased to offer several resources to qualified adopters of *The Good Society* and their students that will make teaching and learning from this book even more effective and enjoyable. Several of the supplements for this book are

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Acknowledgments

As authors, the first edition had all the excitement of a debutante's coming out party to us. We were the new kids on the block with a fresh approach for introducing students to Comparative Politics. The second edition was a chance to fix missteps and include new insights that only became apparent months after the debutante's ball had ended. Now that the book actually existed we could see more clearly ways to improve it. The third edition, we hope, is when we finally get things right—or, at least, more right. We have put the exuberance and mistakes of youth behind us and can offer a more mature text; one that still retains its unique normative thrust—the vision of our youth—but is now more seasoned and tested.

Writing is a solitary occupation, but publishing a book is not. It requires the help and cooperation of many people. We appreciate the confidence of our editor at Pearson, Charlyce Jones-Owen, who recognized and valued our distinctive approach to Comparative Politics. Only we know how much she has delivered for us. We are truly grateful. We also appreciate the outstanding work of the production team at nSight in charge of the production process. Their professionalism and skill made it a significantly better book. We owe special thanks to Mary Stone who guided us through the details of book production. She was meticulous and thorough, compensating for qualities that were too often in short supply on our end. She also showed extraordinary patience in responding to our requests for last minute changes to chapters. Gail Cocker and Sneha Pant then took over and midwived the book while it was in the last, most crucial, stage of labor. They coordinated multiple passes of the text, keeping track of the track changes we submitted. The devil, they say, is in the details. We did not fear the devil because they took care of him for us.

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Alan Draper
Ansil Ramsay

Chapter 1

Comparative Politics and the Good Society



Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Define comparative politics and illustrate the value and usefulness of studying it.
- 1.2** Outline the steps involved in doing comparative political analysis.
- 1.3** Analyze wealth and happiness as measures of the good society.
- 1.4** Define and apply the capabilities approach.

Introduction

1.1 Define comparative politics and illustrate the value and usefulness of studying it.

All of us want to enjoy richer, fuller lives. We may disagree about exactly what richer and fuller means—it may involve becoming the next Nobel Prize winner in medicine or an Olympic gold medalist in track and field—but we all want to realize our dreams, whatever they may be. Our ability to make our dreams come true depends in part on raw talent. As much as we would like to find a cure for a deadly disease or be an athletic star, most of us are not smart or athletic enough, no matter how hard we try or how much we study or practice. But our potential is constrained not only by the limits of our innate talents but by the kind of society we live in. As President Lyndon Baines Johnson explained in a famous address he gave in the 1960s, ability is not simply “the product of birth”; it is “stretched or stunted by the family that you live with, and the neighborhood you live in—by the school you go to and the poverty or richness of your surroundings. It is the product of a hundred unseen forces playing upon the little infant, the child, and finally the man.”¹

According to Johnson, our ability to realize our potential is conditioned by the circumstances in which we live. For example, it would be difficult at best to be a great scientist or outstanding athlete if we had to work six days a week making bricks, as some children do in Pakistan; if we had to subsist on one dollar a day, as millions do in India; or if we could not read or write, as is true for a majority of adults in the African country of Niger. People in such dire circumstances—deprived of a childhood, destitute, and denied an education—would find it exceedingly difficult to fulfill their potential, regardless of their natural gifts. On the other hand, some people are more fortunate and live in countries that help them realize their potential. People who are lucky enough to live in countries that require children to attend schools that actually teach them to read and write; who have access to health care, nourishment, and shelter; who are safe from physical assault and the ravages of war; and where there are large reserves of mutual trust in which governments and citizens play by the rules are in a much better place to succeed, to realize their potentials, than those who don't. The famed investor Warren Buffet attributed his economic success to the fact that, “When I was a kid, I got all kinds of good things. I had the advantage of a home where people talked about interesting things, and I had intelligent parents and I went to decent schools. . . . I was born at the right time and place.”² Of course, not everyone who went to good schools and grew up in a good home with loving parents is as economically successful as Warren Buffet, but Buffet is wise and humble enough to know that his success would not have been possible without them. In short, the quality of our lives is improved or impoverished, depending on the type of society we live in.

This book argues that some countries are better than others are at creating conditions that permit citizens to realize their potential. This issue is our entrance into the field of comparative politics. **Comparative politics** identifies similarities and differences between countries, explains why they occur, and probes their consequences. For example, some countries are organized in ways that permit their citizens to flourish and thrive, whereas in others, people's lives are blighted and stunted. Consider the case of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, two former Spanish colonies that border each other in Central America. Both possess sun-drenched beaches on their Caribbean and Pacific coasts, beautiful mountain ranges with verdant rainforests in their interiors, and arable farmland to produce goods and seaworthy ports from which to export them. Yet, with so much in common, the life chances of those who live in Costa Rica are much greater than those who live just across the border in Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, 22 out of every 1,000 babies died before their first birthday in 2012; infant mortality rates were half that in Costa Rica. Nicaraguans could expect to live six years less, on average, than citizens in neighboring Costa Rica, and Nicaragua's per capita income was less than one-third that of Costa Rica's in 2012. Why is the quality of life so much better in Costa Rica than in Nicaragua?

On the other hand, take the case of how natural disasters result in death and destruction in some cases and not in others. In 2008, a category 4 cyclone, Nargis, created a sea surge that went 7 miles upstream the densely populated Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. More than 100,000 people died as floods inundated homes and villages along the river. Sometimes whole villages were wiped out. Damage was estimated to be over \$10 billion. Just a year before, an even stronger, category 5, cyclone hit neighboring Bangladesh, but the government of Bangladesh had invested in warning systems, shelters, and coastal housing standards designed to withstand storm surges. Only 4,000 died when the storm struck because of precautions Bangladesh had taken. There is little governments can do to avoid the wrath of Mother Nature in the form of earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis, and cyclones, but there is much governments can do to mitigate their effects.³

Comparative politics enables us not only to compare different countries but to appreciate what is special or distinctive about our own. It provides a standard or point of reference that permits us to recognize unique features of our country by comparing it to another. We may find that what we take for granted and assume is common elsewhere in fact may be quite distinctive and unusual. For example, few countries have anything resembling the American two-party system. Indeed, few democracies model themselves on American political institutions and its system of checks and balances. The institutions that Americans take pride in, assume to be prevalent, and embody the essence of democracy are actually quite rare. Few democracies have adopted them. Comparative politics provides a sense of perspective with which to view—and check—ourselves. It helps us see ourselves better and with more insight.

Comparative Politics

A subfield of political science that studies similarities and differences among countries' politics, why they exist, and the consequences they have.

Finally, comparison is valuable because it helps us discover which policies work best in improving people's lives. Many countries face similar challenges, such as making sure that water is safe to drink, that garbage is collected, and that traffic moves safely. Comparative politics helps us discover what policies work best and reveals those that are ineffective. We can learn from other countries' successes and failures as they try to solve similar problems.

Comparative politics is a subfield of political science and is distinct from international relations, another subfield of the discipline with which it is sometimes confused. The former studies politics *within* countries; the latter studies politics *among* them. But the border separating these subfields is quite porous because what happens among countries can and often does affect what happens within them and vice versa. For example, international agreements among European countries to share a common currency, the Euro—which is within the domain of international relations—have led states to change the way they budget for taxes and spending and affected election results among the parties within them—all of which is the stuff of comparative politics. Comparative politics is not walled off from the other branches of political science but bleeds into them, just as it accepts transfusions from them as well.

The Logic and Practice of Comparative Politics

1.2 Outline the steps involved in doing comparative political analysis.

Just like the man who was pleased and surprised to learn he always had been speaking prose, readers might similarly be surprised to learn they have been doing comparative analysis all their lives. We compare all the time. Students compare the merits of different colleges when they decide where to enroll, and men and women compare the merits of potential partners when they decide whom to date. Instead of comparing colleges or potential dates, comparative politics analyzes how and why the politics of countries differ and what consequences those differences may have. However, comparative political analysis differs from the comparisons we normally make in its use of systematic procedures. Comparative political analysis requires practitioners to form hypotheses about how different variables or concepts are related to one another. **Hypotheses** simply present relationships that we expect to find among these variables. They often take the form of "if, then" statements, such as if a country's wealth increases, then its citizens will be healthier. The two variables in this hypothesis are a country's wealth and health. Differences in health among countries are the **dependent variable**, or what we are trying to explain, whereas differences in wealth among countries are the **independent variable**, or what we believe explains them.

Hypothesis

Proposed relationship among variables. An educated guess about how one thing affects another.

Dependent Variable

What the analyst is trying to explain; what the independent variable acts on.

Independent Variable

The agent of change in a hypothesis. What the analyst believes explains the change to the dependent variable.

How do we know which countries are wealthier or healthier? Wealth and health are only concepts. They are abstract and do not provide specific criteria with which to make comparisons among countries. For example, we might safely assume that Germany is wealthier than Bangladesh, but is it wealthier than Austria, its neighbor to the south? We might reasonably believe that Canadians are healthier than Haitians, but are they healthier than Americans? To make comparisons like these, we need to find measurable, real-world approximations for wealth and health to see whether Germans are wealthier than Austrians or Canadians are healthier than Americans. We need to **operationalize** our variables. This means finding specific, concrete alternatives to use in place of such abstract terms as *wealth* and *health*. For example, we can operationally define health, our dependent variable, in terms of life expectancy and compare it across countries. We can do the same for our independent variable, wealth, by using per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in place of it. Per capita GDP refers to the total value of a country's goods and services sold each year divided by the number of people in it. Both life expectancy and per capita GDP are measurable; they actually exist in the real world and capture the concepts of health and wealth they are meant to represent. Once we operationally define our variables, we can now determine whether and to what degree wealth influences health.

We might find that as per capita GDP increases, so does life expectancy, as our hypothesis anticipated, but this only reveals a correlation or pattern between our variables; it does not prove that our independent variable, wealth, actually caused life expectancy to increase. The positive result confirming our hypothesis might be due to other factors that we did not take into account. For example, before the polio vaccine was discovered, public health experts noted that polio outbreaks increased with the consumption of ice cream, leading to speculation that ice cream contributed to the crippling disease. It turned out that polio outbreaks were more common in the summer when people ate more ice cream, and that the summer treat was only associated with the disease but did not cause it.⁴ Ice cream was innocent of the vicious charge leveled against it once researchers included **controls** in their tests. Controls hold other factors constant to see whether we still obtain the same results or whether they were spurious due to intervening factors. For example, parenting studies found that teenagers who ate dinner regularly with their parents were healthier, happier, got in less trouble, and did better in school. However, when researchers controlled for income and other factors, they found that as long as parents found other ways to connect with their kids, they needn't worry that their teenager would end up a drug addict if they didn't have dinner regularly as a family.⁵

An excellent example of comparative research using controls was one recently conducted by Dan Zuberi. Zuberi was interested in whether Canadian workers lived better than their American counterparts. He conducted research in cities that were otherwise quite similar on either side of the border, Vancouver and Seattle, on workers who did the same job for the same employer

Operationalize Variables

When we substitute specific, real-life, measurable alternatives in place of concepts that are too abstract and general for use in testing hypotheses.

Control Variables

When researchers hold other factors constant so they can determine whether their independent variable, as opposed to some extraneous factor, was indeed responsible for a change to their dependent variable.

and belonged to the same union in each city.⁶ By doing so, Zuberi could have confidence that any difference in Canadian and American workers' life chances was not due to differences in occupation, employer, union status, or urban environment but, as he concluded, could be attributed to the political power Canadian workers enjoyed in comparison to their American counterparts. When we control for variables, we are more confident that any correlations we find are not accidental but are the result of causation. We are more confident that it is safe to eat ice cream without the fear that it increases our chances of contracting polio.

Comparative political analysis uses three methods to test hypotheses. One approach is to do a case study that examines a topic in depth within a single country. Case studies examine a particular case to develop or test hypotheses. For instance, political scientist Kellee Tsai's case study of China tested the hypothesis that the emergence of large numbers of capitalists (independent variable) would result in democratization within China (dependent variable). Supporters of the hypothesis believe private entrepreneurs will increasingly resent the restrictions imposed by the Communist Party and demand democratic reforms. However, contrary to these expectations, Tsai found that as the number of entrepreneurs in China increased, democratic reforms did not occur. Entrepreneurs have not been in the vanguard of democratic reform because Tsai found that they have been able to advance their interests through other means. Chinese entrepreneurs succeeded so well in promoting their interests through the one-party dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party that they had little need, or appetite, for democratic reform.⁷

The case study approach offers detail and depth, but it does so at the expense of breadth. Like a camera that zooms in for a close-up, the high definition that the case study of a single country provides comes at the expense of how much is included in the picture. Using the case study method, researchers may be confident about their results for the country they studied but cannot generalize beyond it with any assurance. Case studies are also susceptible to charges of selection bias in which researchers inappropriately select cases that confirm what they want to prove.

Another approach, the comparative cases method, attempts to make broad generalizations by examining a few countries in depth instead of just one, as case studies do. Political scientist Bo Rothstein uses the comparative cases method to explain why the Asian country of Singapore has been so much more successful than the Caribbean country of Jamaica in promoting economic development and the well-being of its citizens. Both were former British colonies, had similar per capita incomes, and were comparable in terms of population when they each achieved independence in the 1960s. If anything, Jamaica seemed better poised for success. It had large deposits of valuable raw materials, was less ethnically divided than Singapore, and followed a democratic path after independence, whereas Singapore did not. Yet by 2011, Singapore's gross national income per capita was over \$50,000 a year; Jamaica's was only \$6,500.⁸ Singaporeans live

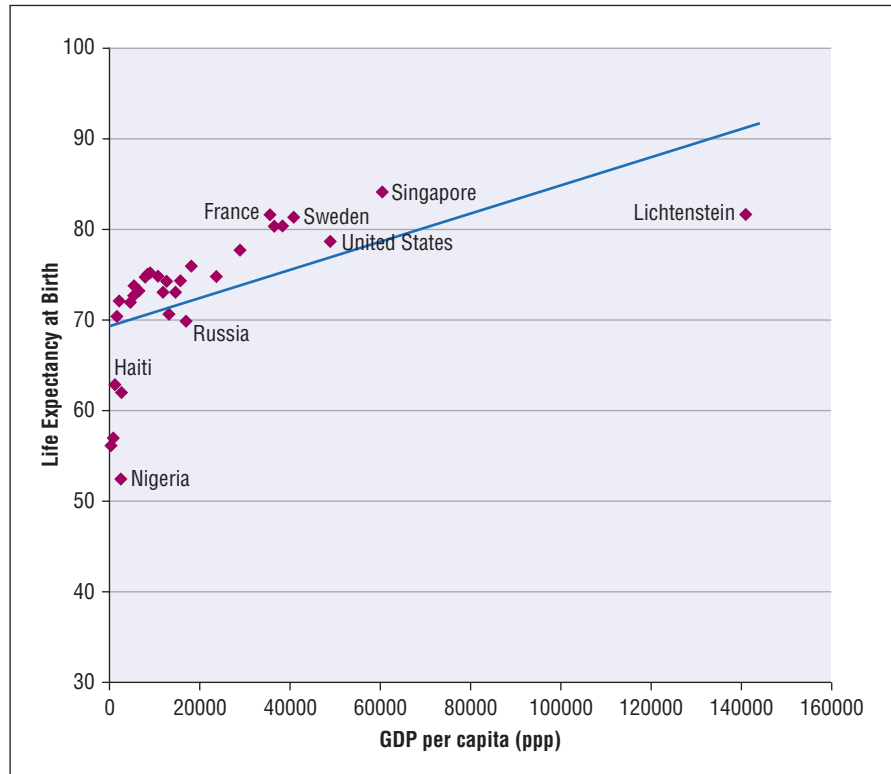
longer and enjoy much lower infant mortality and homicide rates. Rothstein believes the contrasts are explained by differences in the quality of government in the two countries. Jamaica's political leaders packed the civil service with political appointees who used their positions to trade favors for votes instead of implementing policies impartially. Political parties recruited police and criminal gangs to intimidate political opponents and coerce voters. Corruption and violence flourished at the expense of economic development and citizens' well-being. Singapore's leaders, by contrast, appointed and promoted civil servants according to merit. Rothstein believes that Singapore's professional and competent civil service is a key variable explaining its relative success in promoting economic development and improving its citizens' health and safety.⁹

But Jamaica and Singapore have many other differences between them that might account for why Singapore outperformed Jamaica since they became independent. It is hard to control for all the variables that might influence results when researchers use the comparative cases method. In addition, it is hard to distinguish the effects of a particular institution, such as a professional and competent civil service, from the conditions under which it functions. Perhaps other aspects about Jamaica and Singapore made the presence or absence of a professional civil service loom so large between them. It is difficult to isolate the effects of institutions, such as a professional civil service, from the circumstances in which they exist.¹⁰

Finally, researchers can compare many countries instead of just a few or just one. Such studies often use quantitative data. An example of this approach is provided in the following scatter diagram, testing the hypothesis that wealthier countries are healthier, which we mentioned previously. The independent variable, wealth—operationally defined as per capita GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), which adjusts for differences in living costs among countries—is located along the horizontal *x* axis on the bottom of the scatter diagram. The dependent variable, health—operationalized as life expectancy—is located along the vertical *y* axis. To avoid charges that we cherry-picked our countries to reach certain results, we selected countries in a neutral and impartial fashion to include in Figure 1.1. Starting from the country reporting the lowest average per capita GDP, the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa at \$400, we went up the chart and included every tenth country from the list of 226 we used to obtain our data, all the way to tiny Liechtenstein nudged between Austria and Switzerland in Europe, which topped the charts at a \$141,100. We let the chips fall where they may, which fortunately captured some familiar countries, such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, and France, but also included more obscure ones such as Djibouti and the Federated States of Micronesia. In addition to these countries, the figure includes the developed and less developed countries we profile in Chapter 9 (Britain, Germany, and Sweden) and Chapter 10 (Brazil, Iran, and Nigeria), as well as Russia and China highlighted in Chapter 11. Finally, the figure also includes the United States, which we thought might interest some readers.

Figure 1.1 Wealthier Is Healthier

SOURCES: For GDP per capita (PPP) see: www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?v=67. For “Life Expectancy for Countries, 2013” see: www.infoplease.com/world-statistics/life-expectancy-country.html



As can be seen in Figure 1.1, the relationship between wealth and health generally follows the pattern we expected to find: As per capita GDP increases, so does life expectancy. What is called the regression line running through the results represents the line closest to all the points in Figure 1.1. All the countries above the line performed better than predicted given their average per capita GDPs. They are getting more health for their wealth. Countries closest to the line are getting the average life expectancy you would expect given their average per capita GDP. All those below the line are getting less health than their wealth would have predicted. France is getting more health for its level of wealth than any other country, whereas Nigeria is getting the least.

The advantage of comparing many countries in this way is that it gives researchers confidence that their results apply broadly because of the number of countries included. Nevertheless, although this approach may reveal statistical relationships among variables, it does not provide as much insight as the other approaches about why those relationships exist. Depth is sacrificed for breadth. In addition, it is more difficult to find reliable and comparable data as the

number of countries included in the data set increases. Countries may differ in how they define activities and in their accuracy and efficiency in recording them.

In summary, proceeding systematically with comparative political analysis requires a lot more effort than proceeding intuitively, as we do when we make everyday comparisons. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort because forming hypotheses, operationally defining variables, and choosing a method to test them leads to more accurate results than relying on intuition and common sense. Proceeding systematically gives us a procedure to validate whose intuition is correct when people disagree. What is more, judgments relying on common sense are sometimes flat-out wrong because they do not incorporate controls. Relying on common sense to wean people from ice cream would not have done much to prevent polio. Furthermore, sometimes what we think we see plainly with our own eyes deceives us. The absence of conflict in societies marked by inequality may falsely lead us to believe that those at the bottom accept their fate as fair and legitimate. In fact, they may consider their conditions unjust but are reluctant to complain because they lack the power to change their circumstances and fear what may happen to them if they tried to do so.

Finally, doing systematic comparative political analysis can be very satisfying because it poses puzzles to solve. For instance, in 1948 Costa Rica erupted in civil war following a close election for president that was tainted by charges of fraud. The Congress in Costa Rica proceeded to select the winner who officially received fewer votes. A half-century later in another country, a similar scenario unfolded but people accepted the result without much fuss. In the 2000 U.S. presidential election, Republican and Democratic candidates finished in a dead heat amidst allegations of fraud, and the Supreme Court declared the candidate who received fewer votes the winner. Why did Costa Rica erupt in violence that claimed the lives of 300 people, but Americans calmly accepted the results? Why did losers protest violently in one case and go home peacefully in the other?¹¹ How can we explain this?

Solving puzzles like this can be interesting, but these are not just ordinary puzzles. They pertain to the quality of people's lives. It is important to solve them to find the right answer because people's well-being depends on it.

We have argued that the value of comparison is that it offers insight into how countries' political conditions differ and the consequences those differences have. It permits us to check our intuitions about a country's politics by examining whether they apply in other circumstances. But comparison is also useful because it permits us to evaluate and form judgments that help us make sense of the world around us. Those judgments may be empirical and objective, such as when we say that Sweden spends more on its welfare state (28 percent of GDP in 2012) than the United States (19 percent of GDP)¹² or that Germany has higher turnout in parliamentary elections (85.4 percent of registered voters) than Switzerland (56.5 percent of registered voters).¹³ Our judgments may be normative and moral, such as when we say that something is better or worse than something else, or that Sweden is kinder and gentler than the United States because it makes