Introduction to Comparative Politics

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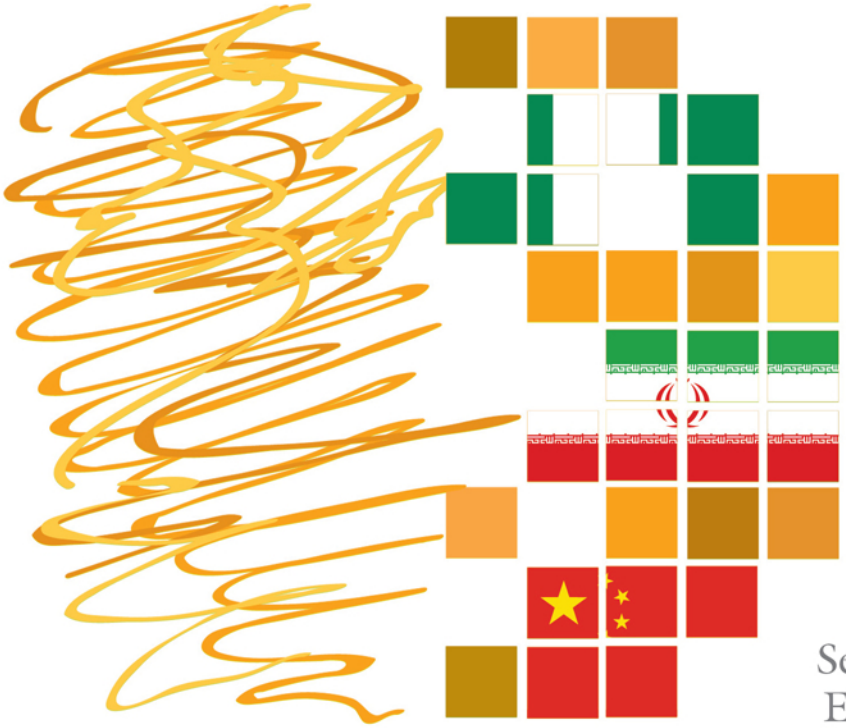

Seventh Edition

Introduction to
Comparative Politics
Political Challenges and Changing Agendas

SEVENTH EDITION

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Preface

The prefaces to several previous editions of *Introduction to Comparative Politics* (ICP) used Bob Dylan's words to observe that "the times, they are a–changin'." We reflect on how we began previous editions:

- "Politics throughout the world seems more troubled today than even a few years ago, when celebrations around the globe ushered in the new millennium."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 3rd edition. © 2004.
- In recent years the "world of politics was as turbulent as at any time in recent memory, with clear-cut trends more elusive than ever."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 4th edition. © 2007.
- "[We] have witnessed as much—or more—turmoil and uncertainty as the preceding years."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 5th edition. © 2010.
- "The sixth edition of ICP… has been published soon after prodemocracy movements overthrew decades-old dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt, and repressive regimes unleashed deadly force against similar movements in Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Libya, Syria, and Yemen."
  —*Introduction to Comparative Politics*, 6th edition. © 2013

When it comes to the degree of uncertainty, and the range and depth of challenges faced by ordinary citizens who yearn for stability, less strife, and a widening circle of opportunities, the present edition is no different than its predecessors. We write these lines just days after a highly controversial referendum was held in Crimea on the question of seceding from Ukraine. Less than 24 hours later, the Crimean parliament voted for Crimea's annexation by Russia, and Moscow moved quickly to make that a fact. Russian forces had taken control of Crimea just a couple of weeks before following a pro-European revolution in Ukraine had ousted an unpopular pro-Russian president. Russia's intervention in Ukraine raises fears in other parts of the former Soviet Union, particularly in the other states in the Black Sea region—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—that their hard-won independence is at risk.

The seventh edition of *Introduction to Comparative Politics* does not try to emulate the coverage of fast-breaking daily events by CNN, Fox News, and Twitter. Its mission is to provide students with a clear and comprehensive guide to these unsettled political times through comparative analysis.

Country-by-Country Approach and Thematic Framework

The methods of comparative analysis come alive as students examine similarities and differences among countries and within and between political systems. Our thematic approach facilitates disciplined analysis of political challenges and changing agendas within each country. Like previous editions of *Introduction to Comparative Politics*, this edition (ICP7) employs a country-by-country approach structured around four core themes:

1. **A Globalizing World of States** focuses on the importance of state formation, the internal organization of the state, and the impact of the interstate system on political development. We emphasize the interaction of globalization and state power.

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

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

Five Critical Junctures in Politics

Chapter 1 helps students navigate through the text by introducing the book's thematic framework, which is combined with a thorough analysis of the political institutions and processes of each country in the chapters that follow. It sets the stage and previews the thematic focus by noting:

1. 1989, which symbolizes the end of the Cold War, and the eruption of capitalist democracies that transcend East versus West divisions in Europe and much of the world;
2. 9/11/01, which reframes globalization, shifting attention away from the development gap and to terrorism, security, and the use of force;
3. 2008, a year of intense financial and economic crisis around the world;
4. 2011, when prodemocracy movements confronted repressive regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, and Japan was rocked by a severe earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster;
5. 2014, when Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine threatened to destabilize the post-Soviet global order and created the very real possibility of a "back to the future" scenario of a new Cold War between Russia and the United States and its European allies.

Chapter 1 also describes the comparative method; presents in some detail our four-theme framework; discusses how we classify the political systems of the countries covered in this book; and provides an overview of the organization of the country chapters.

Consolidated Democracies, Mixed Systems, and Authoritarian Regimes

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

- *Consolidated democracies* (Britain, France, Germany, Japan, India, and the United States)
- *Mixed systems* (Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Nigeria, and Russia)
- *Authoritarian regimes* (Iran and China)
- New to this edition is a chapter on the European Union, which, in addition to Britain, France, and Germany, is made up of twenty-five other member states that fall into the category of consolidated democracies.

In the Introduction, we define the three regime types and explain the rationale for the typology. In particular, we warn against assuming that there is a linear movement from authoritarian regimes to mixed systems

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to consolidated democracies. Democratization is often a protracted process with ambiguous results or reversals, rather than a clearly delineated path toward completion. Thus, we stress that the countries we classify as mixed systems are not riding a historical escalator mechanically leading to their transformation into stable or consolidated democracies. We call attention to "hybrid" regimes, in which some elements of democracy coexist with authoritarian practices.

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

NEW! Seventh Edition Content

The content of this edition of ICP has been shaped by our survey of what instructors found appealing about previous editions of the book and their recommended changes. Based on this feedback, we have made the following improvements:

- **NEW!** Shortened country chapters compared to the previous edition. The result is a more streamlined text that strikes a balance between introducing comparative politics to students with little or no background in political science while maintaining coverage of the complexity of institutions, issues, processes, and events.
- **NEW! Focus questions** at the beginning of each major section heading in the country chapters introduce students to the section that follows.
- **NEW! Making Connections** questions at the end of each feature box encourage students to link the topic of the box to the content of the chapter.
- **NEW! Where Do You Stand?** questions at the end of each section in all chapters encourage students to develop and defend original arguments on controversial issues.
- **NEW! Chapter on the European Union (EU).** Given the unique importance of the EU in shaping the political and economic life of its member states, ICP7 has added a chapter on the EU. Although the outline of the chapter varies slightly from those for country chapters, we have tried to make the treatment of the EU as close as possible to other chapters. The chapter is written by George Ross, one of the most distinguished specialists on European and EU politics.
- **NEW! Subsections on Environmental Issues, The Political Impact of Technology, and Youth Politics and the Generation Gap** highlight the particular importance of these issues.
- **NEW! The thoroughly updated introduction and country chapters** provide analysis of major recent political developments throughout the world. For example, the chapters on France, India, Iran, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States extensively analyze the implications of recent elections in these countries. The chapter on Russia discusses the crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. The China chapter analyzes the rise to power of Xi Jinping, who was installed as head of the Chinese Communist Party in November 2012 and as president of the People's Republic of China in March 2013.

Consistent Country Chapter Organization

At the beginning of each chapter, students will find a map, data on ethnicity, religion, and language specific to that country to aid in comparing countries, and some basic information about the country's political system. Each country chapter consists of five sections:

1. **The Making of the Modern State**, which begins with an opening vignette that illustrates an important feature of the country's contemporary politics. This is followed by a description of the country's

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geographic setting, a discussion of the critical junctures in the historical development of the state, and an overview of how the book's four central themes relate to the country. This section concludes by noting the significance of the country for the study of comparative politics.
2. **Political Economy and Development** analyzes the relationship between the state, the impact of economic development on society, current environmental issues, and the country's position in the global economy,
3. **Governance and Policy-making** looks at the general organization of the state, the executive branch, and other state institutions, including the judiciary, subnational levels of government, and the military, police, internal security and other agencies of coercion. This section concludes with a description of the policy-making process.
4. **Representation and Participation** covers the country's legislature, party system, elections, political culture, citizenship, national identity, interest groups, social movements, and protest. The final subsection is a new one on the political impact of technology.
5. **Politics in Transition** begins by highlighting a recent important event that is influencing the country's politics and then proceeds to an analysis of the major political challenges facing the country. This is followed by the new subsection on youth politics and the generational divide. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts about politics of the country in comparative perspective.

Special Features That Teach

Maps, tables, charts, photographs, and political cartoons enliven the text and present key information in clear and graphic ways. We have provided a more visually interesting presentation of data in a way that is intended to enhance cross-country comparative analysis. At the end of Chapter 1, various data is presented in a way that facilitates comparisons among the countries covered in this book.

Sidebar boxes in each country chapter highlight three interesting and provocative aspects of politics:

1. The **Profile** feature highlights biographies of important political leaders.
2. The **Global Connection** feature provides links between domestic and international politics.
3. The **U.S. Connection** feature compares an important feature of political institutions with its American counterpart or explores a crucial aspect of the country's relationship with the United States.

Key terms are set in boldface and defined in the margin of the page where the term is first introduced and in the complete glossary at the end of the book. The glossary defines many key concepts that are used broadly in comparative politics.

Student Research and Exploration. In Chapter 1, students are enabled to do further research using a sidebar box that discusses the use of the Internet in the study of comparative politics. It notes a variety of websites where students can find more information about the countries covered in the book. Each chapter concludes with a list of suggested readings and websites.

An end-of-chapter **Summary** highlights the major themes and facts in the chapter.

Supplemental Teaching and Learning Aids and Database Editions

Instructor Companion Website
ISBN: 9781285865416
This Instructor Companion Website is an all-in-one multimedia online resource for class preparation, presentation, and testing. Accessible through www.cengage.com/login with your faculty account, you will find the following available for download: book-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations; a Test Bank compatible

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with multiple learning management systems; an Instructor Manual; Microsoft® PowerPoint® Image Slides; and a JPEG Image Library.

The Test Bank, offered in Blackboard, Moodle, Desire2Learn, Canvas, and Angel formats, contains Learning Objective–specific multiple-choice and essay questions for each chapter. Import the test bank into your LMS to edit and manage questions, and to create tests.

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

The Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentations are ready-to-use, visual outlines of each chapter. These presentations are easily customized for your lectures and offered along with chapter-specific Microsoft® PowerPoint® Image Slides and JPEG Image Libraries.

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Student Companion Website

ISBN: 9781285865409

This free companion website for ***Introduction to Comparative Politics*** is accessible through cengagebrain.com and allows students access to chapter-specific interactive learning tools including flashcards, glossaries, and more.

CourseReader 0-30: Comparative Politics

Printed Access Code ISBN: 9781111477608
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CourseReader for Comparative Politics allows you to create your reader, your way, in just minutes. This affordable, fully customizable online reader provides access to thousands of permissions-cleared readings, articles, primary sources, and audio and video selections from the regularly updated Gale research library database. This easy-to-use solution allows you to search for and select just the material you want for your courses. Each selection opens with a descriptive introduction to provide context and concludes with critical-thinking and multiple-choice questions to reinforce key points.

CourseReader is loaded with convenient tools like highlighting, printing, note-taking, and downloadable PDFs and MP3 audio files for each reading. CourseReader is the perfect complement to any Political Science course. It can be bundled with your current textbook, sold alone, or integrated into your learning management system. CourseReader 0-30 allows access to up to 30 selections in the reader. Please contact your Cengage sales representative for details.

As our discussion of the critical junctures of 1989, 9/11/01, 2008, 2011, and 2014 suggests political change is a constant feature of our contemporary world. Not much is certain about what the future will hold—except that the political world will be endlessly fascinating and comparative analysis will continue to be an important tool for trying to make sense of it. Welcome aboard!

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M. K.
J. K.
W. A. J.

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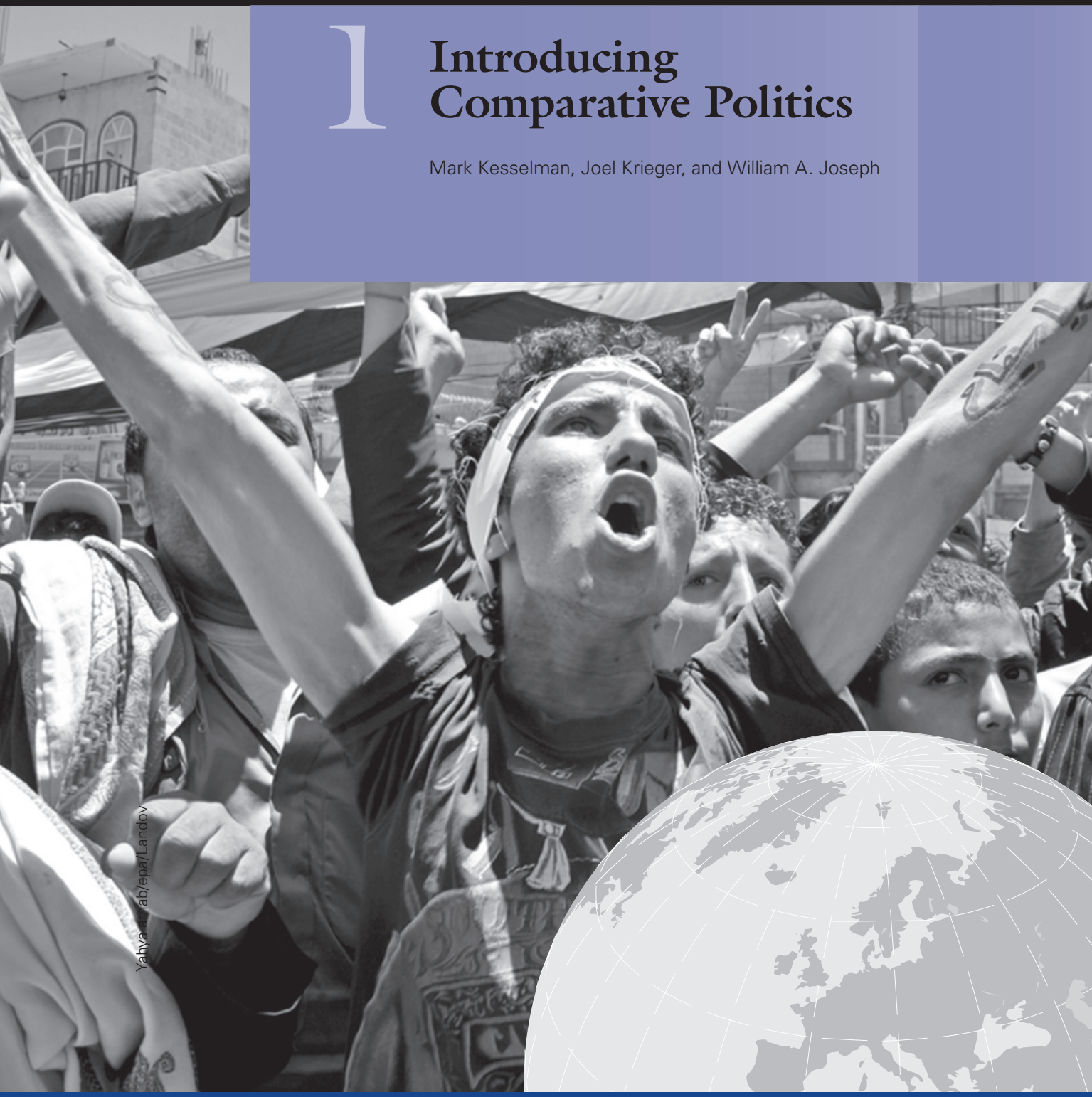
1 Introducing Comparative Politics

Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, and William A. Joseph



Yahya Arab/epa/Landov

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SECTION 1

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Focus Questions

- What are two examples of how comparison can bring to light features that might otherwise not be observed?
- Describe a discussion in which you used the comparative method to make a point.

It has been said that the personality of students and scholars tends to resemble the characteristics of what they study. We might stretch this observation to speculate that what fascinated you as a child might have attracted you to comparative politics. As a child did you love to observe the shape-shifting images through the lens of a kaleidoscope? If you did, then you are a natural for comparative politics—for you are sure to be fascinated by the endlessly shifting developments of the contemporary world of politics, and the range and depth of challenges faced by political elites and ordinary citizens around the world.

As a subject for study within political science, comparative politics is the only subfield within political science that defines a method in its name. Comparative politics is both a subject matter and a method of analysis. As a subject matter it studies the politics of your own and other countries and peoples by analyzing patterns of similarity and difference, primarily at the national (country) level.

The drumbeat of politics goes on and on, but as the French say, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The current era of politics remains a combustible and volatile mix in which uncertainty alternates with stability, and movements for peace and justice confront demonic forces that often divide societies along every axis of collective identities and divisions.

- Young people desperate for jobs and educational opportunity sometimes sinking together with—and sometimes pitted against—middle-aged job-holders and pensioners are burdened by what feels like perpetual austerity, gross inequality, and a loss of faith that things will improve.
- Ordinary citizens in every corner of the globe, from Occupy Wall Street activists in the United States to people in authoritarian regimes throughout the world, demanding democratic governments and the chance to enjoy the fruits of liberty.
- Ethnic, racial, and national tensions enflamed by hard times and a tightly integrated globalized global order, strain national unity—a precious and increasingly rare commodity.

Like the Internet technology that speeds up and transforms our lives, creates vast far-flung social networks, and makes possible the cell phone images and messages that flash instantly around the globe—and partly as a result of this technology—the political world is changing rapidly too.

Cold War

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

In a quarter century, we have witnessed the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which ushered in the end of the **Cold War** era; the attack on the World Trade Center towers in 2001, ushering in a new era of global insecurity in the face of mounting terrorism; and the Great Recession of 2008, which threw the global economy into a tailspin, heightened political conflict, and widespread anxiety about the future. More recently, we have witnessed bellicose rhetoric from Russian president Vladimir Putin, backed by military takeover of the Crimea, which prompted Western countries to expel Russia from the Group of 8 (G-8)—an exclusive club of the eight most industrialized nations in the world: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Despite overheated rhetoric, we are not on the precipice of a new Cold War—a nuclear confrontation akin to the Cuban missile crisis is unthinkable; and the financial integration of a globalizing world mitigates the likelihood of increasing hostility between Russia and the West.

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Russian president, Vladimir Putin (seated second on right), along with Crimean officials, signs the treaty of annexation in Moscow on March 18, 2014. The agreement made the former Ukrainian territory part of the Russian Federation.

Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

While the changes that have occurred in the past quarter century are momentous, they were not unique in magnitude. They were preceded by other—even more momentous—changes, notably the two world wars of the twentieth century. And they will doubtless be followed by other momentous changes in the not too distant future. How can we make sense of the bewildering march of world history? Our aim in *Introduction to Comparative Politics* is to provide the tools to help bring order out of the apparent chaos of kaleidoscopic political change.

Introduction to Comparative Politics studies how different countries both shape and are shaped by the world order created by watershed events such as those that occurred in 1989, 2001, 2008, 2011, and 2014. Each of these dates describes a particularly important moment—what we call a **critical juncture**—that helps define key transitional moments.

critical juncture

An important historical moment when political actors make critical choices, which shape institutions and future outcomes.

Chapter 1 helps students navigate through the text by introducing the book's thematic framework, which is combined with a thorough analysis of the political institutions and processes of each country. It sets the stage and previews the thematic focus by noting five important critical junctures in recent history.

1. 1989, which symbolizes the end of the cold war, and a wave of capitalist democracies that replaced the former East versus West divisions in Europe and much of the world;
2. September 11, 2001, which reframes globalization, shifting attention away from the development gap to terrorism, security, and the use of force;
3. 2008, a year that ushered in intense financial and economic crisis around the world;
4. 2011, when pro-democracy movements toppled repressive regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, and Japan was rocked by a severe earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster;
5. 2014, when a resurgent Russia, under the increasingly authoritarian leadership of Vladimir Putin, annexed the Crimea and violated the sovereignty of Ukraine.

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Making Sense of Turbulent Times

The flash of newspaper headlines, television sound bites, and endless tweets can make politics look overwhelming and chaotic. Through the study of comparative politics, we can better understand a rapidly changing world. Political analysis involves more than blogging, talking head debates, or Monday-morning quarterbacking. It requires both a longer historical context and a framework for understanding unfolding developments.

This book describes and analyzes government institutions, policy-making processes, and other key aspects of politics in a wide range of countries. By using a framework that facilitates analyzing and comparing similarities and differences in a representative sample of countries, we can understand longer-term causes of political changes and continuities within nations. Each chapter explores a country's political development by reference to four themes that are central for understanding politics in today's world:

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

collective identities

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

These themes, discussed below, help us make political sense of both stable and tumultuous times.

The contemporary period presents an extraordinary challenge to those who study comparative politics, but the study of comparative politics also provides a unique opportunity for understanding this uncertain era. In order to appreciate the complexity of politics in countries around the world, we must look beyond any single national perspective. Today, business and trade, information technology, mass communications and culture, immigration and travel, as well as politics, forge deep connections—as well as deep divisions—among people worldwide. We urgently need a global and comparative perspective as we explore the politics of different countries and their interaction and interdependence with one another.

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

Where Do You Stand?

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

How do you think the study of comparative politics will change the way you understand the United States—or whatever country you call home?

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WHAT—AND HOW—COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPARES

SECTION 2

Focus Questions

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

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

Comparative politics is a subfield within the academic discipline of political science as well as a method or approach to the study of politics.[1] The subject matter of comparative politics is the domestic politics of countries. Within the discipline of political science, comparative politics is one of four areas of specialization. In addition to comparative politics, most political science (or government) departments in U.S. colleges and universities include courses in political theory, international relations, and American politics.

comparative politics

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

Because it is widely believed that students living in the United States should study the politics of their own country in depth, American politics is usually treated as a separate subfield of political science. The pattern of separating the study of politics at home and abroad is also common elsewhere, so students in Canada study Canadian politics as a distinct specialty, and Japanese students master Japanese politics.

However, there is no logical reason why study of the United States should not be included within the field of comparative politics—and good reason to do so. Comparative study can make it easier to recognize what is distinctive about the United States and what features it shares with some other countries. This is why we have included a chapter on the United States in this book.

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

It still makes sense to maintain the distinction between comparative politics and international relations. Much of the world's political activity continues to occur within national borders, and comparisons of domestic politics, institutions, and

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globalization

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

processes enable us to understand critical features that distinguish one country's politics from another's. Furthermore, we believe that, despite increased international economic competition and integration (a key aspect of **globalization**), countries are still the fundamental building blocks in structuring most political activity. Therefore, *Introduction to Comparative Politics* is built on in-depth case studies of a sample of important countries around the world.

The comparative approach principally analyzes similarities and differences among countries by focusing on selected political institutions and processes. As students of comparative politics (we call ourselves **comparativists**), we believe that we cannot make reliable statements about most political situations by looking at only one case.

THE INTERNET AND THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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

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

There are many websites that bring together data from other sources. These enable you not only to access the statistics, but also to chart or map them in a variety of ways. See, for example, nationmaster.com and gapminder.com.

- **Rankings and ratings.** Many organizations provide rankings or ratings of countries along some dimension based on comparative statistical analysis. We provide the following examples of these in the data that appear at the end of this chapter: the UNDP **Human Development Index (HDI)**; the **Global Gender Gap**; the **Environmental Performance Index**; the **Corruption Perceptions Index**; and the **Freedom in the World rating**. Others you might consult are the UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM); the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators Project; the Index of Economic Freedom; and the Press Freedom Index. *A note of caution: Some of these sites may have a political perspective that influences the way they collect and analyze data. As with any Web source, be sure to check out who sponsors the site and what type of organization it is.*
- **Official information and documents.** Most governments maintain websites in English. The first place to look is the website of the country's embassy in Washington, D.C., Ottawa, or London. The United Nations delegations of many countries also have websites. Governments often have English-language versions of their official home pages, including governments with which the United States does not have official relations, such as Cuba and North Korea.
- **The United States Department of State.** The State Department's website has background notes on most countries. American embassies around the world provide information on selected topics about the country in which they are based.
- **Maps.** The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas is probably the best currently available online source of worldwide maps at an educational institution.
- **General comparative politics.** Several American and British universities host excellent websites that provide links to a multitude of Internet resources on comparative politics (often coupled with international relations), such as Columbia University, Emory University, Keele University (UK), Princeton University, and Vanderbilt University. Do a search for "comparative politics resources" with the university name to get to these websites.

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

*Definitions of key terms in this boxed feature appear in the Glossary, which begins on p. 697.

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We often hear statements such as: "The United States has the best health care system in the world." Comparativists immediately wonder what kinds of health care systems exist in other countries, what they cost and how they are financed, how it is decided who can receive medical care, how effectively they deliver health care to their citizens, and so on. As we know from the ongoing controversies over the Affordable Care Act, there is little agreement about what "the Best" means when it comes to health care systems. Is it the one that provides the widest access? The one that is the most technologically advanced? The one that is the most cost effective? The one that produces the healthiest population?

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

Some comparativists focus on comparing government institutions, such as the legislature, executive, political parties, or court systems, in different countries.[2] Others compare specific political processes, such as voting or policies on a particular issue, for example, education or the environment.[3] Some comparative political studies take a thematic approach and analyze broad topics, such as the causes and consequences of nationalist movements or revolutions in different countries.[4] Comparative studies may also involve comparisons of an institution, policy, or process through time, in one or several countries. For example, some studies have analyzed a shift in the orientation of economic policy that occurred in many advanced capitalist countries in the 1980s from **Keynesianism**, an approach that gives priority to government regulation of the economy, to **neoliberalism**, which emphasizes the importance of market-friendly policies.[5] And many comparativists study politics within a single country, often within a framework that draws on similarities and differences with other countries.[6]

comparativist

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

Keynesianism

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

During a recession, state budget deficits are used to expand demand in an effort to boost both consumption and investment, and to create employment. During periods of high growth when inflation threatens, cuts in government spending and a tightening of credit are used to reduce demand.

neoliberalism

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

Level of Analysis

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

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

country

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

state

The most powerful political institutions in a country, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the police, and armed forces.

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executive

The agencies of government that implement or execute policy.

cabinet

The body of officials (e.g., ministers, secretaries) who direct executive departments presided over by the chief executive (e.g., prime minister, president).

bureaucracy

An organization structured hierarchically, in which lower-level officials are charged with administering regulations codified in rules that specify impersonal, objective guidelines for making decisions.

legislature

One of the primary political institutions in a country, in which elected or appointed members are charged with responsibility for making laws and usually for authorizing expenditure of the financial resources for the state to carry out its functions.

judiciary

One of the primary political institutions in a country; responsible for the administration of justice and in some countries for determining the constitutionality of state decisions.

legitimacy

A belief by powerful groups and the broad citizenry that a state exercises rightful authority.

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

States claim, usually, but not always with considerable success, the right to make rules—notably, laws, administrative regulations, and court decisions—that are binding for people within the country. Even democratic states—in which top officials are chosen by procedures that authorize all citizens to participate—can survive only if they can preserve dominance internally and protect their independence with regard to other states and external groups that may threaten them. Many countries have highly repressive states whose political survival depends largely on military and police powers. Even in such states, however, long-term stability requires that the ruling regime have some measure of political **legitimacy**; that is, the support of a significant segment of the citizenry (in particular, more influential citizens and groups) who believe that the state is entitled to demand compliance. Political legitimacy is greatly affected by the state's ability to "deliver the goods" to its people through satisfactory economic performance and at least a minimum distribution of economic resources. Moreover, as the upheavals in the Arab world in 2011 dramatized, legitimacy is much more secure when there is some measure of democracy.

Thus, *Introduction to Comparative Politics* looks closely at both the state's role in governing the economy and the pressures exerted on states to develop and extend democratic participation.

You will see from the country chapters in this book that the organization of state institutions varies widely, and that these differences have a powerful impact on political, economic, and social life. Therefore, we devote considerable attention to institutional variations, along with their political implications. Each country study begins with an analysis of how the state has evolved historically; that is, **state formation**. One critical difference among states involves the extent to which citizens in a country share a common sense of nationhood; that is, a belief that the state's geographic boundaries coincide with the political identity of the people who live within those boundaries, what can be described as a sense of solidarity and shared values based on being citizens of the same country. When state boundaries and national identity coincide, the resulting formation is called a **nation-state**. A major source of political instability can occur when state boundaries and national identity do not coincide. In many countries around the world, nationalist movements within a state's borders challenge existing boundaries and seek to secede to form their own state, sometimes in alliance with movements from neighboring countries with whom they claim to share a common heritage. Such is the case with the Kurds, an ethnic group whose members live in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. Many groups of Kurds have fought to establish an independent nation-state of Kurdistan. When a nationalist movement has distinctive ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic ties opposed to those of other groups in the country, conflicts are likely to be especially intense. India and Nigeria, for example, have experienced particularly violent episodes of what has been termed ethnonationalist conflict. Tibet is an example of ethnic conflict within a country, China, whose population otherwise has a strong sense of national identity.

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Young people were at the forefront of the democracy movements that shook the Middle East and North Africa in 2011.

Yahya arhab/epa/Landov

Causal Theories

Because countries are the basic building blocks in politics and because states are the most significant political organizations within countries, these are two critical units for comparative analysis. The comparativist seeks to measure and explain similarities and differences among countries or states. One widely used approach in doing such comparative analysis involves developing **causal theories**—hypotheses that can be expressed formally in a causal mode: "If X happens, then Y will be the result." Such theories include factors (the **independent variables**, symbolized by X) that are believed to influence some outcome (the **dependent variable**, symbolized by Y) that the analyst wants to explain.

For example, it is commonly argued that if a country's economic pie shrinks, conflict among groups will intensify. This hypothesis claims what is called an inverse correlation between variables: as X varies in one direction (the economic pie shrinks), Y varies in the opposite direction (political and economic conflict over the economic pie increases). This relationship might be tested by statistical analysis of a large number of cases (Large N Analysis) or by analyzing one or several country cases in depth to determine how relevant relationships have varied historically (Small N Analysis). Even when the explanation does not involve the explicit testing of hypotheses (and often it does not), comparativists try to identify significant patterns that help explain political similarities and differences among countries.

It is important to recognize the limits on just how "scientific" political science—and thus comparative politics—can be. Two important differences exist between the "hard" (or natural) sciences like physics and chemistry and the social sciences. First, social scientists study people who exercise their political will and may act in an

state formation

The historical development of a state, often marked by major stages, key events, or turning points (critical junctures) that influence the contemporary character of the state.

nation-state

A country in which the state and national identity coincide.

causal theories

An influential approach in comparative politics that involves trying to explain why "if X happens, then Y is the result."

independent variable

The variable symbolized by X in the statement that "If X happens, then Y will be the result"; in other words, the independent variable is a cause of Y (the dependent variable).

dependent variable

The variable symbolized by Y in the statement that "If X happens, then Y will be the result"; in other words, the dependent variable is the outcome of X (the independent variable).

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