

Concepts and Methods in Comparative Politics

I. The Comparative Method

A. The Logic of Comparison

B. The Quest for Theory

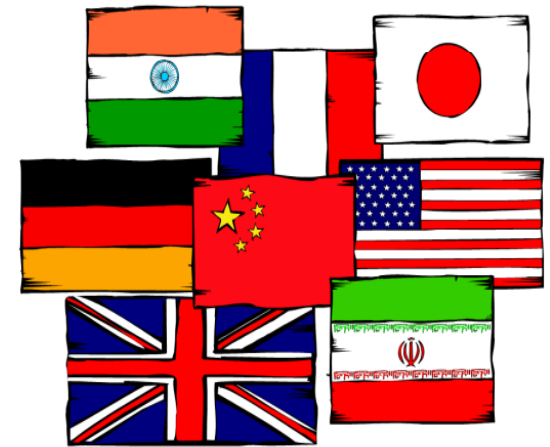
III. Themes for Comparative Politics

A. A World of States

B. Governing the Economy

C. The Democratic Idea

D. The Politics of Collective Identity





I. The Comparative Method

- Comparative Politics is both a SUBJECT and a METHOD
- Comparative Politics as a **Subject**
 - Examines *domestic* politics and government *within* numerous countries, whereas international politics looks at relations *between* different countries.
- Comparative Politics as a **Method**
 - Comparative political analysis
- Q: Should American adopt nationalized healthcare?
 - *Rudyard Kipling*: “What should they know of England who only England know”



B. The Quest for Theory

- **POLITICAL *SCIENCE* ???**

- **HYPOTHESES TESTING**

- Political **PROBLEM** → Formulate a **HYPOTHESIS**

- **Hypothesis:** a potential but unproven answer to an important political question.

- Examine **EVIDENCE** which either **SUPPORTS** (develop theory?) or **REFUTES** hypothesis (start again)

- **(Causal) Theory:** a set of concepts and hypotheses which posit cause and effect relationships between various social and political factors

- **LIMITATIONS OF POLITICAL THEORIES**

- Multicausality/Causal Complexity (inability to experiment)

- Human Free Will



A. A World of States

- **STATE:** Comprises the country's key political institutions that are responsible for making, implementing, enforcing, and adjudicating important policies for that country.
- **GOVERNMENT:** The leadership in power at a particular moment, roughly akin to an American administration.
- **CONSTITUTION:** Rules that specify the relationship between the state and its citizens and the different parts of the government
 - Formal and Informal Elements
 - Federal v. Unitary



A. A World of States

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Legislative:

- Number of Chambers: Unicameral or Bicameral
- Upper House and Lower House

Executive:

- Presidential and Parliamentary
- Head of State v. Head of Government

Judiciary:

- Common Law v. Roman Law
- Judicial Review (or Not)



B. Governing the Economy

- **Political Economy** refers to how government affect economic performance and how economic performance in turn affects a country's political processes
 - The interaction of STATES and MARKETS
- **Varieties of Capitalism**
- **Which Form of Capitalism Works Best?**
- **How to Measure Success?**
- **What Should Be the Goal?**
 - Growth v. Equity



C. The Democratic Idea

- **Trends in Democracy**
- **Political Parties:** organizations that seek to place their designated representatives in governmental positions.
 - ‘Catch-all’ v. Particularistic
 - One Party (Japan [1955-2009], Sweden); Two Party (US, UK); Multiparty (Germany, Italy, France)
- **Responsible Party Model:**
 - Parties formulate clear and coherent programs
 - Voters compare and select among competing programs
 - The winning party translates those programs into policies/laws
 - Repeat at next election cycle
- *This is the ideal against which party system performance is compared.*



C. The Democratic Idea

- **Elections:**
- Single Member District (plurality or majority) versus Proportional Representation
- **(Maurice) Duverger's Law:**
 - Proportional Representation → Multiparty System
 - Single Member Districts → Two Party System
- **Electoral Behavior**
- **Public Opinion and Legitimacy**
 - **Legitimacy:** A belief by powerful groups and/or the broad citizenry that a state exercises rightful authority.



D. The Politics of Collective Identity

POLITICAL CULTURE: the attitudes, beliefs, and symbols that influence political behavior.

- Developed via (a) socialization; (b) national experience (history)
- Varies across countries and within countries
- Political culture v. public opinion
- CAN change over time or with seismic events (i.e., Pearl Harbor, Vietnam, 9-11)



D. The Politics of Collective Identity

- **Nation:** A group of people who are culturally, linguistically, ethnically, historically etc. similar and develop a common bond.
- **Nationalism:** a political movement that emphasizes national distinctiveness and advocates the creation of a separate national state
- **Ethnicity:** A group of individuals having a distinct culture in common.
- **Race:** identification based on common biological characteristics

Nations v. States

The
“Kurdish
Problem”



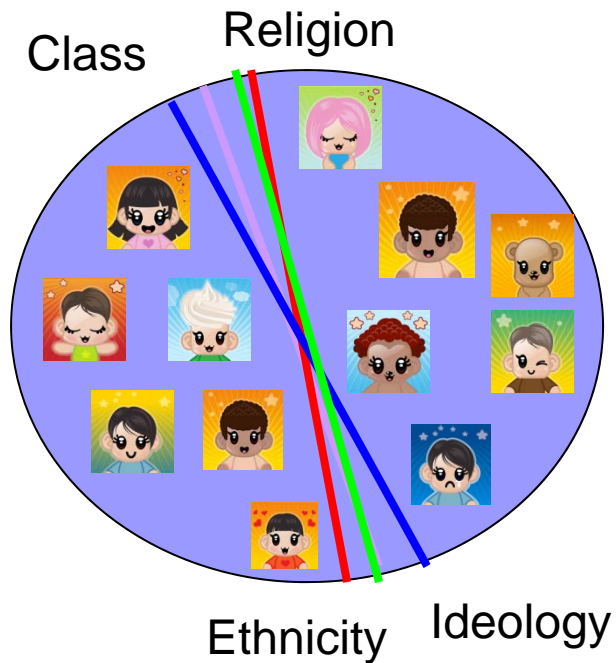


D. The Politics of Collective Identity

- **(Socio-Economic) Class:** one's relative position within the social and economic structure
 - Objective v. Subjective
- **POINT:** Collective identities...
 - Are inherently subjective
 - Both bring people together *and* drive them apart (double-edged sword)

Polarizing v. Cross-Cutting Cleavages

■ Polarizing



■ Cross-Cutting

