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UNIT 1 Why Comparative Politics?

Unit Overview

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1. Intensive Care for the United Nations, Thomas G. Weiss, *Current History*, November 2010

Sometimes, the relevance of studying the **political institutions and policies of foreign countries** is **underplayed** because there are regional and international agencies, such as the Organization of American States and the **United Nations**, that focus on such specifics. This article clarifies why this justification is dangerous: First, institutions with large memberships such as the UN are far from functional. Second, **sovereign** countries are generally reluctant to accept an **over-arching authority**. The author points out four significant problems with the UN that may require “radical” changes to achieve functionality. Notably, the solutions involve: (1) recognizing that no country is an island unto itself, i.e., **state** policies **reverberate** onto the **international** arena and vice versa; (2) **creative partnerships** that include rich and poor nations. Clearly, inattention to the politics and policies of foreign countries—even small ones—comes at a peril.

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2. Seeing “Islamic Terror” in Norway, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), *Global Research*, July 25, 2011

The article complements Article 1 to point out how overlooking politics and policies leads to erroneous conclusions. It also underscores the differences between political **punditry** versus **systematic** political **study**. This will be especially apparent when comparing the pieces cited here against Article 17 of Unit 3. Perhaps what is most alarming is this: The pieces cited in this report seem to be making a trade-off between paying attention to global trends versus those in the country. Yet, is Jennifer Rubin, political blogger of the *Washington Post*, right that “there are many more jihadists than blond Norwegians out to kill Americans, and we should keep our eye on the . . . far more potent threats . . .”?

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3. Britain’s Riots: A Society in Denial of the Burning Issues, Finian Cunningham, *Global Research*, August 9, 2011

If one thinks that the attack in Norway is an isolated incident unlikely to occur in other western industrialized democracies, Britain’s five-day riot and looting quickly dispels that thought. The author points out that explaining the incident as one of “law and order” overlooks its causes, which lie in the **institutional failure** to address poverty, high unemployment, and huge disparities in wealth, against a background of increasing erosion of **social welfarism**. Are there discernible similarities between the Norwegian incident and that in Great Britain?

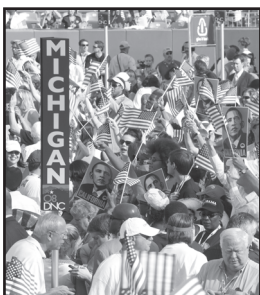
11

4. Flawed Miracle: India’s Boom Bypasses Rural Poor, Tom Wright and Harsh Gupta, *Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2011

This article brings in one of the hot emerging economies, India, to compare against the older western industrialized democracies. As one of the economic powerhouses of the BRIC group, will India be able to “grow” its way out of the social and political issues that weigh on the other less successful economies? Does economic growth offer the panacea to these problems? The answer: No. Indeed, the author traces much of the deep political and social discontent to the **failure of political institutions** to treat the root causes of underdevelopment. Instead of correcting the problems, the solutions adopted have fueled other problems like **corruption**. This has deepened political and **social discontent**, which may threaten the country’s continued economic and political development.

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5. **More Aid Is Not the Answer**, Jonathan Glennie, *Current History*, May 2010
It may be helpful to recast Africa in light of the issues and problems described in the preceding articles. The countries in sub-Saharan Africa seem mired in underdevelopment despite extensive aid. The author argues for a fundamental reorientation of aid-extension so that it does not veer between the two extremes: clamoring to “do something” even when they are ineffective; or adopting an ideological “anti-aid” position. Fundamentally, the author counsels the need to **strengthen political institutions and accountability**, so that a careful analysis of possible solutions in relation to other policies and factors is possible. 16
6. **It Takes the Villages**, Seth G. Jones, *Foreign Affairs* May/June, 2010
The author reviews three books on Afghanistan to show how “people on the ground” have a different perspective of how and what institutions will work to bring stability to Afghanistan. The author notes pointedly that “international efforts to establish security and stability from the center are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Afghanistan. . . .” Indeed, where power is diffused in countries such as Afghanistan and “many in South Asia and Africa,” a bottom-up strategy of **state-building** and **institutionalizing stability** is vital. 21
7. **The New Cocaine Cowboys**, Robert C. Bonner, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2010
The article hits home the importance of **institutions** and **institution-strengthening** for dealing with the drug cartels in Mexico. As the author points out, the drug problem threatens the 2000-mile border between the United States and Mexico. Yet, even as the United States is impelled by this threat to work with the Mexican authorities, the author makes it clear that the objective must be to eliminate the drug cartels and not to end drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States. He shows what it means in the context of Colombia and goes on to prescribe needed **institution-building** for Mexico. 26



UNIT 2

Studying Comparative Politics: Developing Theories, Culling Evidence, and Interpretation over Time

Unit Overview 32

8. **What Democracy Is . . . and Is Not**, Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, *Journal of Democracy*, Summer 1991
The term “democracy” is often used normatively to defend political decisions or outcomes. In this article, the authors outline what the term means conceptually, procedurally, and in principle. They also emphasize citizen participation as an integral concept to democracy. This is made clearer in the discussion on procedures, where the authors note that **citizen participation** underlies the procedures that realize **democracy**. Finally, the authors explain that **no single set of actual institutions, practices, or values embodies democracy**. 34
9. **Twenty-Five Years, Fifteen Findings**, Philippe C. Schmitter, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2010
Too often, we fail to consider that **theory and evidence**—much of what we take as given—are **challenged repeatedly and have evolved over time**. In this article, we find out the reactions of the previous author, Philippe Schmitter, to the theoretical and empirical challenges of the theory of democracy espoused, as well as a “refresher” of fifteen points he considers relevant to the understanding of democratic development after twenty-five years. 41
10. **Why Middle East Studies Missed the Arab Spring: The Myth of Authoritarian Stability**, F. Gregory Gause III, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2011
In the vein of “theory” meets “reality,” the author uses the onset of the Arab spring to flesh out Schmitter’s first of fifteen points: It is difficult to predict democratization. As the author reminds us, few anticipated the Arab Spring. Yet, this is exactly why theory-building remains a fruitful exercise: Theory is not “dead,” and theory-building demands the oversight be acknowledged, examined, and reconciled. Foremost among the oversight is the willingness to believe that the **military** will side with rulers; second is the underestimation of the role of **economic development**; third is the downplay of **citizens’ mobilization**. Alongside these oversights, the author also notes the progress in Middle-east studies that must be congratulated, including no longer explaining Arab in cultural terms, no longer using “old saws about how Islam is inimical to democracy,” and acknowledging the popularity of **democracy** as a concept in the **Arab world**. 48

The concepts in bold italics are developed in the article. For further expansion, please refer to the Topic Guide.

11. **Transitional Failure in Egypt and Tunisia**, Marina Ottaway, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 10, 2011

This article also shows how “theory” meets “reality” of democratization. In this article, Ottaway provides the evidence for Schmitter’s argument that civil society is a mixed blessing. Protesters in Tunisia and Egypt brought about revolutionary change in the political order in favor of accountability; yet, protest activity is now threatening law and order and the **institutionalization of democratic accountability**. As the author remarks, “too much needs to happen first . . .” and civil society is not patient.

53

12. **Advanced Democracies and the New Politics**, Russell J. Dalton, Susan E. Scarrow, and Bruce E. Cain, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2004

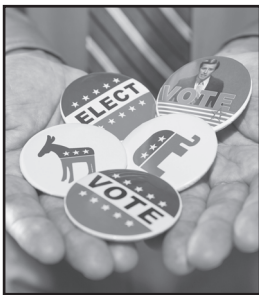
This article also gives flesh to the notion of theory is not dead: Thus, even in established democracies, democratic development continues. In these countries, citizens are demanding more access, greater transparency in policy-making, and more accountability in government. The authors also show how procedures other than elections meet these demands. In particular, the authors note three trends in the evolution of democracy. First, changes such as campaign financing and term limits affect **representation**. Second, initiatives and referenda, where citizens **participate directly in policymaking**, are increasing. Third, citizens and interest groups are using the courts to pursue **policy formation**. Clearly, transitional countries are not the only ones facing the problem of institution building; this is why continued study remains important.

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13. **Capitalism and Democracy**, Gabriel A. Almond, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, September 1991

In the articles on the Arab Spring in this unit, the authors note the importance of economy in mobilizing the citizens. This begs the question: How important is the economy to democratization? Does capitalism lead to institutional change? Does capitalism foster democracy or democratization? Gabriel Almond shows that the **relationship between capitalism and democracy** is not clear. Drawing on the work of other theorists, the scholar explores how capitalism both supports and subverts **democratic institutions**, as well as ways in which democracy may both subvert and foster **capitalist institutions**. While the direction of effect will continue to be debated, the author notes the indisputable relationship between the **economy, social equity, and political development**.

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UNIT 3

Political Participation: From Preferences to Policies

Unit Overview

70

14. **What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?**, Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy*, Yale University Press, 2000

The veteran scholar reiterates the theory in Unit 2: “Every actual democracy has always fallen short of democratic criteria.” Notwithstanding, he provides **six criteria** that form the minimum **institutional requirements** for democracy: elected officials; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship. It is notable that **institutions to facilitate citizen participation** underpin all six criteria. While **institutions and organizations** such as interest groups and political parties are sometimes viewed with skepticism and even suspicion, they facilitate citizen influence and are, thus, indispensable toward building a democratic country.

72

15. **Civil Society, Youth and Societal Mobilization in Democratic Revolutions**, Taras Kuzio, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 39, 2006

In this article, the author shows how youth movements in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, are consistent with the counterparts in the Middle East. Importantly, the author points out that the zeal of the youths had to be coached in order to viably challenge the former regime. Through **organizing** to confront electoral fraud, training to **mobilize** and **unify**, and contemporizing politics—incorporating modern communications like cellphones and texting, and using music and ridicule—to connect and raise awareness, the youth movements presented challenges that the authorities could not overcome with their traditional methods of portraying the groups as extremist, terrorist, or pro-Western anti-nationalists.

78

16. **Online Activism**, Guobin Yang, *Journal of Democracy*, July 2009

This article echoes the insights from the previous: First, modern technology has facilitated the expansion of political activism and emboldened political opposition, even in a

country such as China where political control is high. Second, he points out the success of such **political activism** in effecting change. The author maintains that an important underlying principle is **citizens' political attitudes** and gives three reasons to explain how online activity catalyzes activism.

89

17. Smart Dictators Don't Quash the Internet, Evgeny Morozov, *The Wall Street Journal*, February 19, 2011

If citizens have learned how to **mobilize**, then this article points out that governments—especially unaccountable ones—have also adapted to technology, the Internet, and social networking. As the author points out, governments have responded effectively to the use of technology in mobilization: China **filters** the Internet; Russia uses **online propaganda** chiefs or government-paid bloggers; and other governments have launched **cyberattacks** on the websites of bloggers and activist organizations. Such responses have allowed the government to pry into and monitor online activity; at a minimum, it has allowed criticism to burn itself out so that they pose few real challenges to the government.

92

18. China's Cyberposse, Tom Downey, *The New York Times*, March 3, 2010

There is also a dark side to using the **Internet to mobilize** citizens. The author points out that the technology is being used to mobilize **netizens** not only against the government but also against other citizens. In the name of fighting injustice and wrong-doing, campaigns of "harassment, mass intimidation, and public revenge" have been carried out. As the author points out, the reality of the Internet is that engaging in political discourse constitutes one of the smallest uses of the Internet.

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UNIT 4

The Executive: Instituting Accountability and Responsiveness

Unit Overview

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19. In Belated Inauguration, Ivory Coast's President Urges Unity, Adam Nossiter, *The New York Times*, May 21, 2011

The article describes the inauguration of Ivory Coast's Alassane Ouattara, but the more compelling story is what it took to have him seated as president: French and UN military strikes, on top of sanctions by the European Union, the United States, and regional governments to cripple former President Laurent Gbagbo's hold. The former president had refused to give up after losing elections. Instead, he launched an intensive campaign to keep power, using the military and shaking down the country's financial institutions, contributing to a long list of casualties in the process. The experience in the Ivory Coast speaks to some of the worst outcomes from an **unaccountable executive**.

102

20. Tangled Webs; Institutions, *The Economist*, June 11, 2011

This article shows how institutional weaknesses lead to **unaccountable executives** in Italy. In general, media independence is significant to providing information for the citizens, who are then responsible for holding the politicians accountable. In Italy, the lines between **media** independence and the government are blurred; add to that **political parties** that appear intent on winning elections rather than representation and it is a morass that fails to strengthen **political institutions** and **accountability**.

104

21. The General Election in Costa Rica, February 2010, Bruce M. Wilson and Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Cordero, *Electoral Studies*, 2011

In contrast to the previous article, this article describes how executives are constrained by **electoral systems**, **term limits**, as well as the need for support from the **legislature**. The Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE, Supreme Tribunal of Elections), an independent authority to evaluate the **integrity of elections**, shows how elections may be **institutionalized** to ensure democratic representation.

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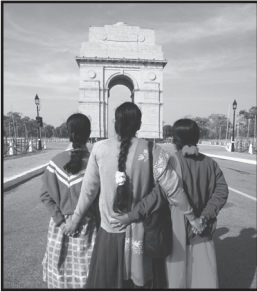
22. The Legislative and Presidential Elections in Indonesia in 2009, Andreas Ufen, *Electoral Studies*, 2010

This article reiterates the previous: Halfway cross the globe, the same institutions that constrain the executive also work in Indonesia. They are elections, legislatures, political parties, and an electorate that is ready to meet its commitment by going to the elections. The article shows that political parties do not even have to be aligned ideologically in order to effectively constrain the executive; however, they do have to focus on representation of the citizens.

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23. **The Resilient Authoritarians**, Martin Dimitrov, *Current History*, January 2008
 This article reminds us that institutions have to be strong in order to constrain strong executives. Consider the examples of China and Russia: The article points out that much of the resilience is tied to the governments' willingness to loosen some restrictions while playing up on *nationalistic* sentiments. The author notes how "*limited accountability*" and "*limited responsiveness*" may be used to stall democratic development.

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UNIT 5

The Legislature: Representation and the Effects of Electoral Systems

Unit Overview

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24. **Satisfaction with Democracy: Do Institutions Matter?**, Kees Aarts and Jacques Thomassen, *Electoral Studies*, 2008
 The article evaluates the bases of citizens' *satisfaction* with the legislature. The results from the study: Citizens expect legislatures to represent them and are more satisfied when legislators do so. In the process, the authors also explain how *electoral systems* generate different legislatures and how the legislatures differ in the ability to achieve *accountability* versus *representation*.

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25. **The Famous Dutch (In)Tolerance**, Jan Erk, *Current History*, March 2011
 This article provides another perspective on why legislatures should represent: failing that, they may lead to "*tyranny of the majority*." This article makes the point regarding the Netherlands, where the far right Party of Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands has made discrimination acceptable. For instance, the PVV has brought anti-immigration views into the mainstream by coding them as anti-Islam and capitalizing on fears of terrorism and extremism. The success of the PVV, in turn, appears to increase the acceptability of negative stereotypical views against minorities and xenophobia. If this negativity seems harmless, think again: the massacre in another Scandinavian country—Norway—clearly emphasizes that the need to pay heed to what democracy means for majority and minorities.

135

26. **When Politics Is Not Just a Man's Game: Women's Representation and Political Engagement**, Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci, *Electoral Studies*, 2008
 Given the potential problems of poorly represented legislatures identified in the previous two articles, this article considers how increasing women *representation* encourages greater representation and increases more diverse *participation* in the process. This certainly addresses the problem identified in Unit 2 regarding declining participation in advanced democracies.

141

27. **The Impact of Electoral Reform on Women's Representation**, Pippa Norris, *Acta Politica*, July 2006
 This article provides more evidence that *majoritarian* systems tend to reduce diversity, including gender diversity. In the process, the author provides a survey of *alternative* electoral systems and their effects on *diversity* and *representation*, and ways to ensure diversity and representation are not compromised.

152

28. **Social Pressure, Surveillance and Community Size: Evidence from Field Experiments on Voter Turnout**, Costas Panagopoulos, *Electoral Studies*, 2011
 If increasing participation is desirable, this article proposes another way to do so: using *social pressures*. The author notes that *participation* is usually thought to be community specific, so that larger communities may not have the same social pressure effect as smaller communities. Through a field experiment, author shows that social pressures are not affected by community size, thereby highlighting its utility.

161

29. **The Case for a Multi-Party U.S. Parliament?**, Christopher S. Allen, Original Work, 2007

The author considers how American political institutions have suffered under **divided government**. He suggests that America may benefit from the study of comparative politics and presents a brief mental experiment in institutional transplantation, where the **presidential** system is replaced by **parliamentary** institutions. It underscores the basic insight that **institutions** matter a great deal. They are not neutral, but have consequences for the **political process** itself.

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UNIT 6

Unelected Thugs or Expert Protectors? The Judiciary, Intelligence Agencies, and the Military

Unit Overview

176

30. **Reclaiming Democracy: The Strategic Uses of Foreign and International Law by National Courts**, Eyal Benvenisti, *The American Journal of International Law*, April 2008

The author notes that courts in several democracies have begun to apply international law and the jurisprudence of other national courts to their domestic laws. The article cites three areas where this judicial convergence is most notable: judicial review of global counterterrorism measures, the protection of the environment in developing countries, and the status of asylum seekers in destination countries. The author points out that in each of these areas, the judiciary does not actually aim to **displace executive priorities or legislative policymaking** with its judicial decisions. Rather, the aim is to push these branches of government to clarify policymaking. In doing so, the author points out that judiciaries are providing "**expanded policy space**" for domestic **deliberation**, which facilitates democratic development.

179

31. **Rule of Law, Russian-Style**, Kathryn Hendley, *Current History*, October 2009

Much of the focus on Russia's failure to institutionalize democracy has rested on the role of the executive, particularly Putin. This article points out that **institutional-building** in terms of defining and implementing rule of law is also short-changed, so that the popular adage in Russia is, "It is forbidden but if you really want to, then go ahead." But all is not lost; as the author points out, there are recent efforts to ensure **transparency**.

186

32. **Getting the Military out of Pakistani Politics: How Aiding the Army Undermines Democracy**, Aqil Shah, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011

The author uses the case of Pakistan to illustrate the vulnerabilities of political transitions to military control. Of particular concern is that the **instability of political transitions** may lead the international community to aid and abet such **military control**, in the hopes that it will lead more quickly to stability. The author explains why this is misguided and emphasizes the need to **build** and support **civilian institutions** instead.

188

33. **Thailand: From Violence to Reconciliation?**, Catharin Dalpino, *Current History*, September 2010

The author clarifies that perceptions of politics in Thailand have underestimated the role of the rural-urban distributional inequities, the role of money in politics, and the role of the military. In describing the **role of the military**, the author speaks to the concerns in the previous article: Using the military to **stabilize** the country may lead to an **oversized military role in politics**. Among the measures that the author highlights is the creation of several non-government agencies to bring political stability and development back on track.

192

34. **In Britain, Phone Hacking Sullies Famed Scotland Yard**, Anthony Faiola, *Washington Post*, July 11, 2011

This article shows how easy it is for investigative and intelligence bureaucracies such as the Scotland Yard to cross the line from protector to betrayal of **public interests**. The incident provides a timely reminder of the need to maintain **institution-building** and **institutional rules** to ensure **accountability**.

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UNIT 7

Trends and Challenges: Institutional Change through Capitalism, Globalization, or Supra-National Government?

Unit Overview

198

35. The True Clash of Civilizations, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Foreign Policy*, March/April 2003

Is there an institutional incompatibility between those of the West and those that follow Islam? The authors suggest that Samuel Huntington is correct in claiming that culture is important, but he is incorrect in assuming that political values are the main factor in the clash between the West and Islam. In their opinion, gender equality and sexual liberation may be more important. Even though Muslims want **democracy**, it is not sustainable without **tolerance** toward “sexual orientation and gender equality.” The authors also point out that the processes and institutions of democracy will remain “trappings” that do not further democratization unless resources are spent to foster human development and change the culture.

201

36. The Weekend Interview with Bernard Lewis: “The Tyrannies Are Doomed,” Bari Weiss, *Wall Street Journal*, April 2, 2011

The interview with historian Bernard Lewis echoes several conclusions made in this reader, including the need for multiple frameworks for democratic development in Unit 2, and the compatibility of Islam with democracy. His observation, “My own feeling is that the greatest defect of Islam and the main reason they fell behind the West is the treatment of women,” is consistent with the conclusions in the previous article to lend support to the idea that **social equality** underpins **democratic development**.

208

37. Authoritarianism’s Last Line of Defense, Andreas Schedler, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2010

The author reminds us that even as previously authoritarian countries embrace a host of democratic **institutions** ranging from constitutional **reforms** to improvements in the freedom of civic associations, these changes are accompanied by a wide range of controls. These include disempowerment, agent control, and fragmentation. However, the author is optimistic that these institutions, although manipulated, will facilitate democratic opening because they provide venues for debate, discussion, and opportunities for challenges.

211

38. Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2010

This article provides the empirical evidence of manipulation of **rules** and **institutions** in new democracies: access to resources, access to the media, access to the law. The authors point out that, as a result of the “uneven playing field,” some ruling parties are reelected by wide margins. This poses a problem to **democratic development** since there is no real competition for office, both during and between elections.

216

39. Democracy in Cyberspace: What Information Technology Can and Cannot Do, Ian Bremmer, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2010

The article provides a useful reminder that information technology only provides the **information**, not the actual **participation**, that underpinned political opening in several countries. The article also echoes several others in this reader to point out the dark side of such **mobilization** and that authoritarian governments are also using information technology to their advantage.

222

40. Not Ready for Prime Time, Jorge G. Castañeda, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2010

The article provides a reminder of why international agencies may not work. Some have proposed that an international agency such as the UN will work better if there was a rebalancing of the “world geopolitical order” that takes account of the emerging powers, such as the BRICs. The author describes some of the **institutional failures** in the BRICs to show how these countries may not be advocates for **democratic institution-building, accountability, and representation**.

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Test-Your-Knowledge Form

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The concepts in bold italics are developed in the article. For further expansion, please refer to the Topic Guide.