

# Introduction to Comparative Politics 2018

## Glossary

- 1. anarchy** The absence of any form of political authority or effective rule.
- 2. authoritarian regime** A system of rule in which power depends not on popular legitimacy but on the coercive force of the political authorities.
- 3. 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.
- 4. cabinet** The body of officials (e.g., ministers, secretaries) who direct executive departments presided over by the chief executive (e.g., prime minister, president).
- 5. causal theories** An influential approach in comparative politics that involves trying to explain why “if X happens, then Y is the result.”
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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.
- 8. communist party-state** A type of nation-state in which the communist party attempts to exercise a complete monopoly on political power and controls all important state institutions.
- 9. comparative politics** The field within political science that focuses on domestic politics and analyzes patterns of similarity and difference among countries.
- 10. comparativist** A political scientist who studies the similarities and differences in the domestic politics of various countries.
- 11. consolidated democracies** Democratic political systems that have been solidly and stably established for an ample period of time and in which there is relatively consistent adherence to the core democratic principles.
- 12. country** A territorial unit controlled by a single state.
- 13. critical juncture** An important historical moment when political actors make critical choices, which shape institutions and future outcomes.
- 14. democracy** From the Greek demos (the people) and kratos (rule). A political system featuring: selection to public offices through free and fair elections; the right of all adults to vote; political parties that are free to compete in elections; government that operates by fair and relatively open procedures; political rights and civil liberties; an independent judiciary (court system); civilian control of the military.
- 15. democratic transition** The process of a state moving from an authoritarian to a democratic political system.

- 16. 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).
- 17. dictatorships** A form of government in which power and political control are concentrated in one or a few rulers who have concentrated and nearly absolute power.
- 18. distributional politics** The use of power, particularly by the state, to allocate some kind of valued resource among competing groups.
- 19. Environmental Performance Index** Measures how close countries come to meeting specific benchmarks for national pollution control and natural resource management. (EPI)
- 20. executive** The agencies of government that make and implement (execute) policy.
- 21. failed states** States in which the government no longer functions effectively.
- 22. Global Gender Gap** Measures the extent to which women have achieved equality with men in five critical areas: economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and well-being. (GGG)
- 23. 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.
- 24. gross domestic product (GDP)** The total of all goods and services produced within a country that is used as a broad measure of the size of its economy.
- 25. gross national product (GNP)** GDP plus income earned by the country’s residents; another broad measure of the size of an economy.
- 26. hegemony** The capacity to dominate the world of states and control the terms of trade and the alliance patterns in the global order.
- 27. Human Development Index (HDI)** A composite number used by the United Nations to measure and compare levels of achievement in health, knowledge, and standard of living. HDI is based on the following indicators: life expectancy, adult literacy rate and school enrollment statistics, and gross domestic product per capita at purchasing power parity.
- 28. 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).
- 29. institutional design** The institutional arrangements that define the relationships between executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government and between the national government and sub-national units such as states in the United States.
- 30. International Corruption Perceptions Index** Defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain and measures the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among a country’s public officials and politicians. (ICPI)

- 31. International Monetary Fund (IMF)** The “sister organization” of the World Bank and also has more than 180 member states. It describes its mandate as “working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty.” It has been particularly active in helping countries that are experiencing serious financial problems. In exchange for IMF financial or technical assistance, a country must agree to a certain set of conditions that promote economic liberalization.
- 32. 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.
- 33. 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 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.
- 34. legislature** One of the primary political institutions in a country, in which elected members are charged with responsibility for making laws and usually providing for the financial resources for the state to carry out its functions.
- 35. legitimacy** A belief by powerful groups and the broad citizenry that a state exercises rightful authority.
- 36. middle-level theory** Seeks to explain phenomena in a limited range of cases, in particular, a specific set of countries with particular characteristics, such as parliamentary regimes, or a particular type of political institution (such as political parties) or activity (such as protest).
- 37. nation-state** Distinct, politically defined territory in which the state and national identity coincide.
- 38. neoliberalism** A term used to describe government policies aiming to reduce state regulation and promote competition among business firms within the market.
- 39. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** A treaty among the United States, Mexico, and Canada implemented on January 1, 1994, that largely eliminates trade barriers among the three nations and establishes procedures to resolve trade disputes. NAFTA serves as a model for an eventual Free Trade Area of the Americas zone that could include most nations in the Western Hemisphere.
- 40. political economy** The study of the interaction between the state and the economy, that is, how the state and political processes affect the economy and how the organization of the economy and strategic choices made by the government and state actors affect political processes.
- 41. purchasing power parity (PPP)** A method of calculating the value of a country’s money based on the actual cost of buying goods and services in that country rather than how many U.S. dollars they are worth.

- 42. rational choice theory** An approach to analyzing political decision making and behavior that assumes that individual actors rationally pursue their aims in an effort to achieve the most positive net result. The theory presupposes equilibrium and unitary actors. Rational choice is often associated with the pursuit of selfish goals, but the theory permits a wide range of motivations, including altruism.
- 43. social class** A group whose members share common world views and aspirations determined largely by occupation, income, and wealth.
- 44. social movements** Large-scale grass-roots action that demands reforms of existing social practices and government policies.
- 45. state** The most powerful political institutions in a country, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the police, and armed forces.
- 46. 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.
- 47. sustainable development** An approach to promoting economic growth that seeks to minimize environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources.
- 48. transitional democracies** Countries that have moved from an authoritarian government to a democratic one.
- 49. typology** A method of classifying by using criteria that divide a group of cases into smaller cases with common characteristics.
- 50. World Trade Organization (WTO)** A global international organization that oversees the “rules of trade” among its member states. The main functions of the WTO are to serve as a forum for its members to negotiate new agreements and resolve trade disputes. Its fundamental purpose is to lower or remove barriers to free trade.