

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)
Comprehensive Examination
Spring 2008

Directions: Answer THREE (3) questions: one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and one question from either part. Your answers will be judged for their responsiveness to the specific question, their skilled and ample citation of the relevant literature, and their clarity of organization. Any arguments you advance should be defended against plausible counter-arguments. The material used in your answer to any question should not substantially overlap with the material used in other questions. Take time to organize your answer.

Part I (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

1. When faced with a severely divided society can constitutional engineering bring about political stability? In other words, can certain kinds of electoral and governing systems bring about political stability and consolidated democracy? Review the relevant literature and discuss at least three case studies.
2. Drawing on your knowledge of the democratization literature, what sorts of factors would you hypothesize might account for the fact that some of the states that emerged from the collapse of Eastern European Communism and the old Soviet Union have developed into reasonably stable democracies and others have not?
3. "There is an enormous political science literature on political parties but there is no theory of political parties." Discuss.
4. Ira Katznelson argues, in the Lichbach and Zuckerman reader *Comparative Politics*, that rational choice theory is in the process of destroying the comparative politics field. Evaluate this argument, and the general relation of rational choice theory to political science.
5. One of the major arguments of historical institutionalists is that their questions are (in what they say is a contrast to the statisticians' questions) important in the outside world. If you agree, take one of those important questions and show how it might be evaluated through behavioralist research. Be sure to say from whom you take the question, and give specific theories, hypotheses, and sources of data in your research design.

Part II continues on the reverse side

Part II (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

6. Critique the O'Donnell-Schmitter "elite pacting" model. Given all its flaws, why is that model of democratization still with us after twenty years?
7. How has the study of political culture in comparative politics changed over the past twenty-five years?
8. In a number of Latin American countries over the past decade, traditional party systems have collapsed when confronted by "populist" social movements, leading to the election of radical governments such as in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. What does the literature tell us about this phenomenon?
9. Pakistan's current troubles constitute an interesting challenge to the field of comparative politics. Review our master theorists (Moore, Huntington 1968, etc.) and other comparativists of more recent vintage to see what explanatory leverage they provide.
10. What is the difference between majoritarian-based democracy and what is often called "consensual" democracy (involving, among other things, proportional representation). Discuss the appropriateness of each to different government types.
11. Should democracy be considered a universal or a relative value?
12. Dependency theory has been out of favor for many years among academics, yet countries in the developing world still remain much poorer than the advanced economies. What theories can be used now to explain these imbalances? Do they improve upon dependency theory?

**Remember to Answer Three Questions
One from Part I, One from Part II, and One from Either Part**

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