

(POS212)COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Course Outline

The course is meant to provide in-depth knowledge of comparative politics. Hence the course will be sub-divided into 4 different parts.

Part I: Introduction to Comparative Politics.

Part II: Will beam its search lights on consolidated or Advanced democracies in the world such as Britain, France, Germany, Japan, India and the United States of America.

Part III: Will deal with transitional democracies such as Russia, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and Nigeria.

Part IV: The last on the list will focus on the so called Authoritarian regimes such as Iran, China etc.

Introduction to Comparative Politics

The words 'Compare and Contrast' semantically seem to mean the same thing; or at best seem to be two sides of the same coin. As it is difficult to compare without contrasting, and vice versa. The word and tendency to compare is as old as mankind. Comparing and contrasting is a common human mental exercises over time. Every field of human endeavor whether science, Technology, liberal arts, or social sciences.

In case of political science, the use of comparisons is very old, dating in the western world from ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, who analyzed and compared the city-states of Greece in the 4th century. He compared these cities 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 X's politics.

I. Comparative Politics

Is a subfield within the academic discipline of Political science as well as a method or approach to the study of politics. The subject matter of comparative politics is the domestic politics of countries. Within the discipline of political science, comparative politics is one of areas of specialization.

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 institutions, as well as cultures, economies and collective identities.

II. Themes For Comparative Analysis

This topic will discuss four themes that is normally employed to organize the description of political institutions, processes, and issues. These themes help explain continuous and contrasts among countries. It provides a guide to understanding many features of contemporary. The themes are;

- ❑ A world of states,
- ❑ Governing the Economy,
- ❑ The politics of collective identities and
- ❑ The democratic idea.

- **Theme 1: A World of States**

A world of states, reflects the fact that for about 500 years, states have been major actors in global politics. There are nearly 200 independent states in the world today. International organizations such as the UN, private actors like transnational corporations, such as Microsoft, NGOs such as Amnesty International may play a crucial role in politics.

- **THEME 2: GOVERNING THE ECONOMY.**

The success of states in maintaining sovereign authority and control over their people is greatly affected by their ability to ensure that enough goods are produce and services delivered to satisfy the needs and demands of their populations. Citizens discontent with communist states in adequate economy performance where an important reason for the rejection of communism and disintegration of the soviet union and its alien in eastern Europe in 1989. In contrast, china's stunning success in promoting economic development has generated powerful support for the communist regime in that country.

● Theme 3: The Politics of Collective Identities

The politics of collective political identity involves efforts to mobilize identity groups to influence political outcomes, ranging from the state's distribution of benefits, to economic and educational policy or the basis for political representation, and even territorial claims. Identity based conflicts appear in most societies. Politics in democratic societies involves a tug of war among groups over relative power and influence, both symbolic and substantive. Issues of inclusion, political recognition, representation, resource allocation, etc. remain crucial in many countries.

Collective identities operate at the level of symbols, attitudes, values, and beliefs and material resources. In most cases groups are influenced by feelings of attachment and solidarity and the desire to obtain material benefits and political influence for their members. The non material benefits of collective identities are ethnicity, religions, etc.

● Theme 4: The Democratic Idea

One of the most important and astonishing political developments in recent years has been the rapid spread of democracy throughout much of the world. There is powerful evidence of strong appeal of democracy, that is, a regime in which the citizens exercise substantial control over choice of political leaders and decisions made by their governments.

- **BRITIAN**

- Location: Western Europe
- Capital city: London
- Population (2010) 60.8 million

The core of the British political organization is parliamentary sovereignty. Parliament can make or overturn any law; the executive, the judiciary or the monarch do not have any authority to restrict, veto, or otherwise overturn parliamentary action. In a classic parliamentary democracy, the Prime Minister is answerable to the House of commons (the elected element of parliament) and may be dismissed by it.

Second, Britain has long been a unitary state. By contrast to the United states, where powers not delegated to the national government are reserved for the states. No power are reserved constitutionally for sub-central units in the United Kingdom.

Third, Britain has a system of fusion of powers, at the national level. Parliament is supreme legislature executive and judicial authority and include monarch as well as the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The fusion of legislature and executive is also expressed in the function and personnel of the cabinet U.S. Presidents can direct or ignore their cabinets, which have no constitutionally mandated function, but the British cabinet bears enormous constitutional responsibility. Though collective decision – making the cabinet, and not the independent prime-minister, shapes, directs, and taken responsibility for government. In the recent time there were exceptions like Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, with extra-ordinary influence over the cabinet.

❖ Britain is a constitutional monarchy.

The Executive

The term cabinet government, emphasizes the key functions that cabinet exercises, responsibility for policy making, supreme control of government, coordination of all government departments.

Cabinet Government After the general election, the crown invites the leader of the party that emerges from the election with control of a majority of seats in the house of commons to form a government and serve as prime minister. The prime minster selects approximately two dozen ministers for the cabinet, prominent among them are the foreign office [equivalent of the U.S secretary of state], the home office [internal affairs], ministry of justice or attorney general, the chancellor of the exchequer [finance minister].unlike U.S and French constitution which prohibits a cabinet minister from serving in the legislature, British constitutional tradition requires overlapping membership between parliament and cabinet. A member of Parliament (MP) or less commonly, a member of House of Lords.

Institutional Differences

Among the institutional differences that matter most is the distinction between presidential system such as the U.S. and parliamentary system such as the U.K.

In a presidential system, the legislature and executive are independent. Both the legislature and the chief executive have their own fixed schedule for election and their own political mandate. The relationship between the legislature and executive may be cordial or antagonistic; hence some levels of compromises are expected from time to time.

Prime Ministers, in contrast must enjoy the support of the majority of the legislature to stay in office. In parliamentary system the Prime Minister and the legislators swim or sink together, hence they tend to cooperate and work through differences. In a presidential system like U.S., because the legislature and executive are mutually independent, one can swim, while the other sinks.

FRANCE

Official Name:	French Republic
Location:	Western Europe
Capital city:	Paris
Population (2007):	63.7 million

Introduction

France is among the world's formed countries, thank to its temperate climate, large and fertile land area, rich culture, and prosperous economy. Its natural beauty, super architecture, culture, and cuisine make France the most popular tourist destination in the world.

France occupies a key strategic position in Europe. It borders the Mediterranean sea in the south and shares borders with Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany on the North and East. Spain lies to the South West, Italy to the South East. With a population of over 63 million, France is among the most populous countries in Western Europe. But its large area – 211,000sq miles means that population density is how (about half that of Britain, Germany, and Italy).

French Revolution, 1789 – 1815

The French revolution of 1789 was a political and national revolution. It installed a republic to replace the French monarchy. This meant that political offices were supposed to be filled in the basis of individual talent rather than inheritance. It was an international revolution. It inspired national uprisings in Europe, although they were often supported by French armed intervention. It was liberal. It championed individual liberty in the political and economic spheres, as well as secularism and religious freedom. It was democratic. It proclaimed that all citizens have an equal right to participate in key political decisions.

The revolutionary regime proclaimed liberty, equality and fraternity while the revolution toppled the ancient regime it strengthened state institutions. Under Napoleon Bonaparte, state institutions were created to survive about 101 departments that comprise present day France were created. Each department is administered by a prefect appointed by the central government.

The Executive

France was the first major country to adopt a semi-presidential system. After the fall of communism, however, Russia was inspired by the French example. Many other countries since then have adopted a semi-presidential system, including Austria, Finland, Iceland, Pakistan, Portugal, Sri Lanka and (most recently) Iraq.

Most of the time, the French President possesses more power than the U.S. President: he directs the executive branch and is independent of the legislature. Yet he controls parliament's agenda and can dissolve parliament. When the same party coalition wins presidential and parliamentary elections, there is thus united control of the two branches, the president is more powerful than the chief executive in virtually any other democratic nation.

The Constitutional Presidency

A candidate for President must be a French citizen at least twenty-three years old. Presidents serve a five year term. There is no limit to how many terms a president can serve. There is no office of vice president if a president dies in office, the president of senate (the upper house of parliament) acts as interim president. A new presidential election is held within a short time.

The constitution grants the president the following political powers. The president names the prime minister, approves the prime minister's choice of other cabinet officials, and names high-ranking civil, military, and judicial officials.

- - The president presides over meetings of the council of ministers. Note that the constitution entrusts the president, not the prime minister, with this responsibility.

- The president conducts foreign affairs, through the power to negotiate and ratify treaties. He also names French ambassadors and accredits foreign ambassadors to France.
- The president direct armed forces, and has exclusive control over France's nuclear forces since 1964.
- The president may dissolve the National Assembly and call new elections.
- The president appoints three of the nine members of the constitutional council, including its president. He can also refer bills passed by parliament to the council to determine if they violate the constitution.
- Article 16 authorizes the president to assume emergency powers in a grave crisis, however, subject to check by constitutional council.

- Article 89 grants the president, with the approval of the Prime Minister, to propose constitutional amendments, subject to approval of both chambers of parliament, ratified by either national referendum or a 3/5 with of both houses of parliament meeting together as a congress.
- The president can organize referendum to approve important policy initiatives or re-organize political institutions.
- Articles 5 directs the president to be an arbiter to ensure “the regular functioning of the government authorities, as well as the continuance of the state.

Prime Minister

- The Prime Minister is responsible for translating general policies into specific programs and supervising the implementation of policy.
- The Prime-minister shepherds government proposals through parliament, drums up popular support for the president, takes the heat on controversial issues, and supervises the bureaucracy.
- Most cabinet members, also known as ministers, are senior politicians from the dominant parliamentary coalition. Cabinet ministers direct the government ministries. Positions in the cabinet are allotted to political parties in rough proportion to their strength in the parliamentary coalition. An attempt is also made to ensure regional balance.

United States of America

Location: North America between Canada and Mexico

Capital City: Washington DC

Population: (2010) 308.7 million

Size: 9,826,630 sq km about half the size of South America; slightly larger than China.

Introduction Geographic Setting

The limited states occupy nearly half of North America. Its only two neighbours Mexico and Canada, do not present a military threat and are linked in a comprehensive trade agreement: the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The US territory is rich in natural resources, arable land, navigable rivers, and protected ports. This abundance has led Americans to assume they will always have enough resources to meet national needs. Finally, the US has always had low population densities and has served as a magnet for international migration.

European colonialization led to the eventual unification of the territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. This process began in 1500s and reached its peak in 19th century when rapid population expansion was reinforced by an imperialist national ideology (manifest destiny) to expand all the way to the Pacific. Native Americans were pushed aside. The United States experimented with colonialism around 1900, annexing Hawaii's, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Political System Presidential system.

Regime History: Representative democracy,

Political structure: Federalism, with powers shared between the national government and fifty state governments; separation of powers at the level of national government among legislative, executive and judicial branches.

- ❑ **Executive:** President directly elected (with electoral college that officially elects president and vice president) for a four year term, cabinet is advisory group of heads of major federal agencies and other senior officials selected by the president to aid in decision-making but with no formal authority.



Legislature

Bicameral, congress composed of a lower house of Representatives of 435 members serving two-year terms and an upper house (senate) of 100 members (two from each state) serving six-year terms; elected in single-member districts (or in case of senate by simple plurality (some states require a majority of voters)).

Judiciary: Supreme court with nine justices nominated by President and confirmed by the senate.

Judiciary

For life time terms, with one of their number appointed as Chief Justice.

Below Supreme Court, there are about 750 Federal court judges who must be nominated by the President and approved by the Senate.

The Supreme Court judges can be removed from office only for serious dereliction of duty.

Sub National Government

The United States is a federation in which powers are divided between the national government in Washington DC and the government of 50 states, each with its own constitution, elected Governor, and state legislature and constitutional court.

The federal government is responsible for economic, foreign and defense policy.

State and Local Governments are responsible for managing most of the welfare system, maintaining the high ways, managing land use, executing federal laws and regulations, and overseeing education and policy.

The United States is too big and heterogeneous to be governed under a kind of unitary system of administration used in Britain and Japan.

- Federalism helps to deal with size and diversity of the country;
- Allows different states to adopt different positions on key issues that are more in tune with local opinion
- Offers citizens more opportunities for participation in government

Disadvantages of Federalism

- It can slow down the process of law making
- It can make people too focused on narrow goals and value rather than looking at the broader national interest.
- It can hamper the ability of the national to reduce economic and social differences within a country.

NIGERIA

Nigeria: A country in West Africa.

Population: 160 Million.

National Headquarter: Abuja.

Introduction

Nigeria is the biggest country in Africa, with an estimated population of about 145 Million.

Growing annually at 2.4 percent, the population is expected to double within 25 years, straining an infrastructure that is already inadequate.

Nigeria core economic problem is its heavy reliance in oil, which account for nearly 99% of exports. Not only does this mean that the size and health of the entire economy is driven by the international price of oil, but also are government revenues.

In social terms, Nigeria has several critical divisions. The most important is ethnicity. Between 250 and 400 different ethnics groups inhabits Nigeria. The biggest are the Hausa-Fulani in the North (28-30 percent of the population): the Yoruba in the Southwest (about 20 percent) and the Igbo in the Southeast (17 percent).

Nigeria is also divided by religion with a mainly Muslim North and non-Muslim South. Just half of Nigerians are Muslim, 45 percent are Christians and the rest followed traditional religions.

Nigeria is also divided by region, with a north that is dry and poor and south that is better endowed in resources and basic services: Lagos alone has 10 times the elementary school enrollment of the northern region and 6 times as many hospitals beds. Most of the best agricultural land is in the heavily populated south, while most of the northern half of the country is savannah or semi-deserts limiting the potential for agriculture.

Regional tension have been made worse by oil, most of which lies either in the South or off coast of Nigeria, but many of the other profits from which have gone to political elites in other parts of the country.

The Constitution

Nigeria has had nine constitutions since the world War II; namely Clifford constitution (1922); Richards constitution 1946-47; Macpherson constitution 1951; Lyttleton constitution 1954; Independence constitution 1960; Republican Constitution 1963; 1979 constitution to usher in second Republic; 1989 constitution of Nigeria's Aborted Third Republican of Babangida era and 1999 constitution of the Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The 1999 Presidential constitution of Nigeria borrows heavily from its predecessors. Nigeria constitution is both long and detailed in order to minimize chances of misinterpretation.

For instance Nigeria constitution has 320 articles while the US has just seven. Nigeria constitution of 1999 has several schedules, lengthy list outlining the policy responsibilities of the different branches of government, and just in case any one has any doubts- includes a glossary defining the meaning of terms such as authority, decision, government and law.

Although there are many similarities with the US model. It contains several features that reflect the peculiar problems and needs of Nigeria:

National Unity: with emphasis that Nigeria is indivisible and indissoluble.

- I. The duty of the state (country) is to offer loyalty, encourage inter-ethnic marriage, linguistics association or ties, religions harmony etc. it is hard to imagine this idea being added to the U.S constitution.
- II. It also included measures designed to make sure that national government is not dominated by one region or ethnic group.

For example President must win at least 25% of the vote in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states. And ministers must be drawn from all the 36 states of Nigerian federation.

- III. Seven articles discuss citizenship, and thirteen articles outline the fundamental rights of citizens e.g torture, slavery, forced labour, privacy of homes, Phone conversations etc. discrimination on the ground of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties.

The Executive: President

Under the fourth Republic the President is elected by direct universal vote to a four-year term in office, renewable once.

The Nigerian Presidential constitution is based on a clear division of power among executive, legislative and judiciary arms.

The President has the power of appointment, but all senior nominations must be approved by the senate.

President is the commander –in-chief of Nigerian Armed Forces, but he cannot declare war without the approval of the National Assembly.

He has power of veto, but this can be overturned by the National Assembly with a two-third majority.

The president governs in conjunction with a cabinet of ministers, formally (officially) known as the Government of the federation.

The number of ministers and their portfolios can be changed by the President without senate approval, but there must be one minister from each of Nigeria's 36 states, and all ministers must be confirmed by the Senate.

Nigeria also has a Vice President, who would step into Presidency in the event of the death, resignation, or removal of the incumbent.

In order to ensure that no single ethnic group dominates government, the constitution requires that vice President come from a different part of the country from that of President.

The Legislature: National Assembly

Nigeria has a bicameral legislature consisting of Federal House of Representatives and Senate. The combinations of the two constitute National Assembly.

The National Assembly has the power to check and balance the Executive.

Senate

Represents all the states of the Federation on equal basis: in other words, the senate has 109 members: three each from Nigeria's 36 States and one from the Federal capital Territory of Abuja.

Unlike the U.S. where U.S. Senators represents their entire state, Nigeria has opted for a system in which each state is divided into three senatorial districts, and the candidate who wins the most votes in each district is declared the winner.

Senators served fixed and renewable terms of four years, and they all come up for re-election at the same time.

The Senate is presided over by a president elected from among its members, otherwise known as Senate-President or President of the Senate. The Senate President is the third in hierarchy to the President of Nigeria after the Vice – President.

House of Representatives

The Federal House of Representative is the lower chamber with 360 members elected on a single – member, winner-take-all basis from distinct of roughly equal population size.

It is presided by a speaker elected among its members

Like Senate members are elected for fixed four-year and renewable terms and elections to both chambers are held at the same time.

In line with principle of separation of powers, any member of National Assembly appointed to a position in government, or wins a seat in state or local government must give up their National Assembly seat.

Both chambers must meet for at least six months each calendar year; have the same power to initiate, change and approve legislation; and normally conduct all their business in English.

Every member is expected to declare assets and liabilities before National conduct Bureau before taking up his/her seat in National Assembly.

Judiciary

The Supreme Court is the apex of the Nigeria Judicial System. It is headed by Chief Justice of the Federation. The National Judicial Commission normally nominates the most senior judge of Supreme Court following the vacancy of the office to the President. The President will in turn forward such name to the Senate for confirmation.

Below the Supreme Court is Federal court of Appeal – headed by President of court of Appeal.

There are Federal and State High courts and a separate system of sharia courts to deal with issues of Islamic law.

Sharia courts have been limited to about 12 northern states; they deal with matters of family law and petty crimes

ISLAMIC STATES

There are 25 Islamic states, and they are found in the Middle East and North Africa.

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Islamic States

Islam has long been a factor in global politics. But mainstream Western political science has failed until recently to give much thought to its broader political significance.

The tension between Islam and the west is nothing new, because the two sides have been at odds with each other for 1,200 years or more. What is the contention between the two blocs?

Western liberal democracy supports a separation of religion and state but unlike other monotheistic religion except perhaps Judaism, Islam provides theories of government and state and a comprehensive body of law.

Just because of West supports a separation of religion and state, it does not follow that this should apply to all cultures.

Islamic States have four defining qualities:

I. **Divided Political identities**

Part of the reason why Islam has so far failed to establish itself within Western political science is because there are large gaps between theory and practice in Islamic politics. There are problems; one Islamic government should be based on Shura (consultation) and rule by the “competent” that is ruler with faith, a clear vision of Islam, trustworthiness, initiative and leadership. In practice, few Muslim leaders could be described as competent, most Islamic states have experienced a tradition of patrimonialism.

Patrimonialism is situation where leadership develop around a cult of personality.

II. Religions States Tensions

Unlike Western democracy, religion plays an important role in politics, economics, and society in Islamic Countries. In some Islamic countries of Saudi Arabia and Brunei there are absolute monarchs; constitutional monarchies in Jordan and Bahrain, Islamic Republic in Pakistan, Iran, the Comoros and Mauritania etc.

In such situation, the democratic quality of the governance remains a suspect. The other argument is that Islam by nature is not democratic because Muslims are to obey injunctions rather than to question.

III. Mixed Economic and Social Fortunes

Islamic theory includes ideals that are found liberal democracies i.e element of capitalism and socialism.

Islam encourages honesty, dislikes, cheating, hoarding and theft. Islamic economic theory supports material progress and right to private property. It disapproves monopoly, hostile to materialism, encourages equitable distribution of wealth. It emphasizes the importance of placing wider community needs above personal gain. Islam emphasizes value of education, criticizes illiteracy and ignorance, and encourages brotherhood, community values, family and concern for the poor.

In practice, however, illiteracy and poverty are wide spread in the Islamic world; there are wide gap between the rich and the poor. Women are often treated as second class citizens.

Militants among the Islamic world often exploit the disaffection between the rich and the poor to strike.

IV. New Global Significance

The attention of the World is drawn to Islamic countries in the recent time by three issues: Oil, the instability in the Middle east and the activities of a small minority of extremists and militants.

The activities of militants have been made regional integration difficult.

The Arab League was formed in 1945 to promote Arab Nationalism.

Organization of the Islamic conference (OIC) was founded in 1969.

Oil has long been the main vehicle by which Islamic states has impacted international politics. Oil wealth has also been mis-managed and concentrated in the hands of wealthy few, rather than being more widely spread.

Features of Islamic States

- ❑ A mixed record of representative government with emerging democracy in some and authoritarianism in others.
- ❑ The weak, immature, poorly defined and unpredictable political processes with tendency to authoritarianism and paternalism.
- ❑ Relatively low level of national unity and loyalty to state.
- ❑ Most forms of political participation and representation directly or indirectly influenced by Islamic values.
- ❑ Poor records of the protection of individual rights under the law.
- ❑ Poor record on equality, with gender discrimination and little protection for minorities.
- ❑ Often ineffective political opposition, the only significant alternatives often being proscribed Islamist movements.

- ❑ Free market economies, but relatively little variety, and often considerable variations in wealth and poverty.
- ❑ Typically low levels of urbanization with considerable urban poverty and mixed quality infrastructure.
- ❑ Mixed technological development, but generally improving.
- ❑ A relatively poor quality of life when measured by the provision of education, health care, and other basic services.
- ❑ Low ratings in freedom House, economic Freedom, and Human development indices.
- ❑ New levels of regional and global influence and mainly in a negative sense.