

CHAPTER

# I

*The voyage of discovery consists of not seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.*

MARCEL PROUST

## Seeking New Lands, Seeing with New Eyes



### THE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND OBAMAMANIA

This is the seventh edition of *Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*. In starting the first six editions, I struggled—and failed—to find a single theme I could use to unite the countries and concepts it covers. Instead, I followed a less ambitious strategy by either discussing new leaders or a smattering of issues in the news that could serve as a jumping off point for the concepts and countries that followed.

This time, I had no trouble finding not just one theme, but two. At first glance, they may seem to tell us more about the book's subtitle than the core issues of comparative politics because they tend to focus our attention on how global forces affect domestic politics. But, as I hope you will see in this chapter and beyond, they also help us explain the similarities and differences in domestic politics of the countries we will be covering, which is the intellectual core of comparative politics.

When I began updating this book in January 2009, the world was in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Banks and insurance companies collapsed. The “big three” automakers were teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. All Americans were suffering. My own

investments were down by a quarter, which made me lucky and only because I have a great financial advisor.

At first, it seemed a largely American phenomenon brought on by risky mortgage loans and other financial gambles undertaken by some of our largest banks, insurance companies, and industrial corporations. But by the beginning of 2009, it had become clear that all countries and all economies were part of the crisis. Banks in Britain failed, too. Automobile companies in Sweden needed bailouts from their government and then didn't get them. Russians, who thought they had made fortunes when they bought stock a decade earlier, found themselves penniless. Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria were all hurt by the sharp drop in oil prices following a sharp rise in mid-2008. India and China had been among the most rapidly growing economies for a generation. Economic growth in both slowed by a few percent, but that dip from even higher rates of growth in the past few years will probably mean a massive increase in unemployment. Iran and Iraq faced economic difficulties that were magnified because of their position in the global war on terror. In perhaps the most tragic effect of the crisis, it is estimated that 3 million children in the less developed world will die from diseases caused by the poverty their countries will experience because of the shock to the global economic system.

In other words, the world is in serious trouble. We will probably recover before the eighth edition of this book is



Home prices decline at fastest rate in sixteen years.

published. But for the next two or three years, the economic downturn is almost certainly going to be the most important issue in country after country around the world.

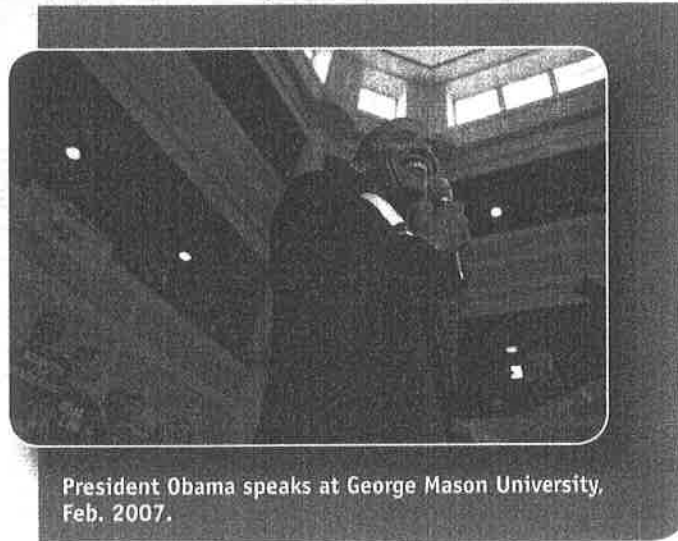
I started writing this chapter the day after Barack Obama was inaugurated as the forty-fourth president of the United States. Whether one voted for or against Obama, his inauguration marked one of the most important turning points in global politics in decades.

Many pundits concentrated on the fact that he was the first African American president. More importantly, his values and his style augured profound changes in American politics. We would no longer engage in anything approaching torture. The prison at Guantanamo Bay would be closed. New initiatives involving everything from the peace process in the Middle East to health care reform at home were suddenly on the agenda in Washington.

But there was something more significant and something harder to pin down about the new administration.

I had supported Obama throughout his two-year campaign for office. But, I hadn't expected to be so taken in by the challenges and opportunities his administration would face. It is by no means clear in the first months of his presidency that he and the rest of his team can solve the economic crisis or any of the other problems he inherited. Still, I'm old enough to have experienced the inaugurations of nine presidents as an adult. None of the others left me with the impression of how much change was actually possible.

In many of the countries considered in this book, the new administration has not had as big of an influence as the economic crisis. Nonetheless, we will see the impact of the shift from George W. Bush to Obama in most of the chapters that follow. In some cases, that impact is profound. ■



President Obama speaks at George Mason University, Feb. 2007.

## WHAT IS COMPARATIVE POLITICS?

But this is a book about comparative politics, not economics or the leadership of an admittedly remarkable individual. As such, I will use the crisis and Obama to introduce a number of countries *and* concepts, which we who write and teach about comparative politics have to explain.

No two countries have responded to the transition to the Obama presidency in the same way. Their different responses are a function of their histories, cultures, institutions, and position in our increasingly interdependent political and economic world.

As we will also see, the stakes of politics also vary from country to country. We are indeed living through tough times in countries like the United States. A number of my students have lost jobs and a few are on the verge of having their homes foreclosed. Every day the front pages of our newspapers show us how divided our political leaders are about the best ways to pull us out of the downturn. Yet, there is little or no doubt that the **regimes**—or forms of government—in these countries will survive, whatever happens to Obama and his colleagues who have to grapple with the crisis. We can't say that about some of the countries we will be covering, countries where the stakes are



Kyodo/AP Photo

Britain—Leaders from the G-20 major industrialized and emerging economies sit for the second day of their financial summit in London on April 2.

significantly higher. Russia has seen violent protests from unemployed workers, who were displaced because of the drop in oil prices. Mexico's violence between the government and the drug cartels has been worsened by the recession, which has taken a massive toll on most of the population.

The world's leaders finally addressed the crisis at the G-20 summit in early April. In addition to the policies enacted by their individual governments, the leaders committed themselves to strengthening regulation of the financial community and to providing about a trillion dollars in aid to the poorest countries of the world. The G-20 itself is evidence of how fast the world is changing. Until a few years ago, global economic policy was made by the leading capitalist powers, almost all of which were also established democracies. However, the G-20 includes less wealthy and less securely democratic countries such as Mexico, China, Brazil, and Indonesia.

By contrast, when I took my first comparative politics class in the late 1960s, we covered Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. We were supposed to include the Soviet Union, but the professor ran out of time. We only looked at the governments, political parties, and public policies of those countries. We can't do that any more. We have to include the entire world—or at least as much of it that can be crammed into five hundred pages and a semester's worth of classes. We also have to put domestic political life in its global context.

This is not an easy thing to do. Nonetheless, the study of comparative politics can help, maybe even help a lot. Those of us who teach and write about the subject disagree about almost everything *except* our goal of helping students and readers understand why countries react so differently to the world's divisive issues, which go far beyond the economic crisis and the change of leadership in Washington.

As should already be clear by now, we face a bewildering array of political issues. There are over 190 countries, all of which are unique as are their responses to the economic crisis and the sea change in politics in Washington. However, you will have to confront yet more issues that complicate matters further over the course of this term. We will also see welfare states, identity based conflict, terrorism, the environment, the status of women and racial minorities, and a whole lot more.

Indeed, there is such diversity in political life that, if we just focused on the contentious issues in the news, you would have a hard time retaining the material on any one country, let alone on the group of them your instructor will cover. To be sure, elections, conflict resolution, economic policy making, and the like are what drew most of us to political science in the first place. But, it is more important for you to read about the events and places and people discussed in the next sixteen chapters so that you can reach your own interpretation of political life. That means that we have to take a step back from the issues of the day and spend the rest of this chapter on the concepts and methods of comparative politics.

## All the News that Fits, We Print

To see that, you can do a simple comparison.

The *New York Times* claims that it includes “all the news that is fit to print” on its masthead.

Not so.

Read today’s editions of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. If you don’t have access to the hard copies, both are available online ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)). It will become clear all but immediately that the two best newspapers in the United States are dramatically different. The *Times* puts international news at the beginning of its first section and follows it with American national issues. The *Post* starts with U.S. domestic politics and then has a far shorter section on international news than the *Times*. After all, the *Post* is the “hometown” newspaper for the most powerful capital city in the world. Even its Style section has a lot of political stories.

Furthermore, the *Times* masthead’s statement is misleading because all the news that is fit to print doesn’t make it into the paper. Until 2006, it had little coverage of the genocide in Darfur. Indeed, the paper only has a handful of full-time correspondents in Africa as a whole, and it has more than any of its competitors.

In fact, the rule of thumb might be that these papers include all the news that fits around all the advertisements they have to run to turn a profit, which is harder and harder for them to do these days.

### More Information than You Require

If you want a humorous look at what the *New York Times* would look like if it actually included all the news that is fit to print, look at John Hodgman’s books, *The Areas of My Expertise* and *More Information Than You Require*.

Hodgman is a comedian, not a political scientist. His career has included time as a literary agent and a stint on *The Daily Show*. He is, in his own words, a famous minor television personality because of his role as PC in Mac ads.

His books are almost random collections of almost random and almost always useless factoids, only some of which Hodgman made up. I would not recommend reading all of either book. You would get a massive headache as a result of someone who wanted to fit all the news that fits.

I think he wants his readers to get that headache.

John Hodgman, *The Areas of My Expertise*. (New York: Dutton, 2005); John Hodgman, *More Information Than You Require*. (New York: Dutton, 2008).

## Method

The poor job covering international politics by even the world’s most esteemed newspapers reinforces why comparative politics is important. In addition to shedding light on pressing public policy issues, it gives us a lens to use in understanding the confusing array of political phenomena that befuddle even those of us who have spent our professional careers as teachers, scholars, or activists trying to come to grips with them.

On one level, comparative politics is simple. After all, we have all compared. Which college to go to? Which car to lease? Which MP3 player to buy? We may not always make the best decisions. Nonetheless, the judgments that we make invariably involve comparisons.

I wrote this paragraph on my super light Mac Book Air. I have a bigger screen on my desktop, but it was the first warm day of the year, so the deck beckoned. First comparison: inside or outside? Second comparison: why do I use a Mac? In 1984 when I bought my first computer, Macs were a lot easier to use. Twenty some desktops and laptops later, I’ve never seen the need to change. Were I making that comparison today, I might actually buy a Windows machine. Vista is almost as good as Mac OSX, and you can buy a Windows machine for a lot less.

The logic behind comparative politics is therefore not hard to see. I can learn more about something if I contrast it with something else of the same ilk. When I was in high school, my parents took me on a tour of twenty or more college campuses. I ruled out some immediately. Too big. Not coed. I applied to ten and then got into a depressingly small number of them. I still had to choose among four colleges. In other words, I had to compare again. I ended up at the right place, though for all of the wrong reasons. Comparison alone does not always work.

Of course, we are interested in comparing political phenomena, not colleges or computers. There is an extensive and often complicated literature on what it takes to do comparative political analysis. In practice, however, it is just about as easy to compare political phenomena as colleges or computers.

To take but one obvious example, when Obama had to choose a running mate in 2008, he compared Joe Biden with a number of other candidates and decided that someone with Biden’s vast experience would give his ticket the balance the youthful nominee needed.

Similarly, consider this example from the 2005 British general election. Of all the registered voters, 53 percent cast their ballots. That one fact tells us very little about Britain or its political system. But the picture changes dramatically once you add two more pieces of information. It was the lowest turnout since 1935, and it is rare that that many registered voters show up at the polls in American presidential

elections, which reached a modern record high of 56 percent in 2008.

With those two pieces of comparative data, you can learn a lot more and can pose far more insightful questions about elections in general. For example, why is turnout in British elections normally higher than that in the United States? Why has it been declining in recent elections? What difference does turnout make? Did the fact that only a quarter of the people voted for the Labour Party make it easier or harder for Prime Minister Gordon Brown to meet the challenges of what would be his first and perhaps his only term in office?

In sum, comparing doesn't make us brilliant, but it does allow us to put the academic and political options open to us in a broader and potentially useful perspective.

## Science

My colleagues and I call ourselves *political scientists*. It's a pretentious title because we have little in common with physicists or chemists with their fancy labs and huge research grants.

But, in two important ways we share a similar worldview.

On the first level, our job is to find general explanations for the phenomena we study. How does growing bean plants (which many of you had to do in biology labs) help us understand the way plants mature? Or how do elections around the world help us understand the role average people play in political life?

Science, then, is an attempt to develop a **theory** that covers an entire discipline, something often referred to as a **paradigm**. Given the complexity of politics around the world, no single and universally accepted theory is likely to emerge in your lifetime, let alone mine. Nonetheless, designing new and better theories is something we all can do, including students in introductory classes.

In this sense, *science* means moving upward in what the psychologist Chris Argyris called the ladder of inference. You will be reading about a number of countries. Your instructor will ask you a question like this one: "of what is Germany an instance?" Hopefully he or she will phrase it better. But the point of such questions is clear: how do we move from a handful of examples to regional, if not global, conclusions?

On the second level, we work more deductively. From this perspective, we focus on a hypothesis or a guess that cannot be proven. Political scientists test it using data they have gathered systematically. Such data can never prove a theory is true. However compelling the evidence might seem, there could be other cases and other times in which the theory is not confirmed.

Rather, the most interesting thing we can do is **falsify** the theory by finding at least one example in which it does

not hold true. Then, we have to try to figure out why that was the case. That usually means stepping back from the computer screen or piles of printout and thinking creatively.

Whether we work inductively or deductively, the goal is the same. How do we reach general conclusions about the political world even if we know full well that future events will prove us wrong?

## THE STATE: ONE FOCUS AMONG MANY

The discussion so far must seem more than a little abstract. Therefore, the rest of this chapter will bring everything discussed so far down to earth.

The **state** will be the focus of the book. It will not be the only concept we concentrate on, but it is the most important.

Political scientists do not agree on what the best focus of a text or course in comparative politics should be. I decided to focus on the state because it puts one of the most important topics in political life on center stage—the way scarce resources are allocated. In my political work, the state is the most important issue. In countries like the United States, how can we use the state to help solve the economic and other crises that seem so hard to tackle? In the former Soviet Union and other current and former Communist regimes, how can we create a state that can handle the rapid transition from Communism to democracy and capitalism simultaneously? And, most tragically for those of us who work in the conflict resolution field know, how can we, in the words of Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, fix the too many failed states in South America, Africa, and Asia?

Concentrating on the state also means focusing on the single most important common denominator of political life, **power**, which is most often defined as the ability to get people or groups to do *what they otherwise would not do*. Those last six words are important. They suggest that the exercise of power requires coercion. People typically have to be forced into doing things they don't want to do. The exercise of power does not always involve the use of physical force, but the threat to use it is almost always there.

Politics is not exclusively about power. In the pages that follow, you will encounter plenty of people who have been driven to act politically for other reasons, including the desire to help the poor or to promote social justice. There are also newer definitions of power that strip the necessity of coercion from it. However, as things stand now in most countries at most times, there is no escaping the connection between power and the ability to force adversaries to comply with one's wishes.

## What Is the State?

That means that the state is the first term in this book that we need to define with some precision. Many people use the terms **government**, state, **nation**, and regime interchangeably. In some countries, like the United States, it is not all that inaccurate to do so. When we consider the former Soviet Union or Iraq before the 2003 war, however, treating these terms as synonyms can be extremely misleading.

The **government** refers to a particular set of institutions and people authorized by formal documents, such as a **constitution**, to pass laws, issue regulations, control the police, and so on. For the moment, it is enough to note that the government rarely holds all the power available in a given country and, in some cases, can be far less influential than other actors. That is certainly true of failed states, where the government lacks the ability to do much of anything in a society wracked by civil war. To a lesser degree, it was true of Mexico before the 2000 election, when the long dominant party, the PRI, was far more important than any government institution.

The state is a broader concept that includes all the institutions and individuals that exercise power. In Russia, that will be easiest to see when we consider the role of the shadowy group of businessmen (yes, they are all men), known as the oligarchs, some of whom gained positions of influence under former President Boris Yeltsin and others of whom made their money under former President and current Prime Minister Vladimir Putin whose apparent demotion will also be a central topic in Chapter 9. In that sense, we also talk about **governance**, which the World Bank defines as “the exercise of political authority and the use of institutional resources to manage society’s problems and affairs.”

The regime refers to the institutions and practices that typically endure from government to government or, in American terms, administration to administration. This is, of course, a concept that burst onto the political scene when President George W. Bush began demanding, and later forced, a regime change in Iraq. However, it should be noted that it is a term political scientists have used for a half-century or more. As we will see in Parts 3 and 4, regime change is often on the political agenda in at least half of the world’s countries.

The **nation** is a psychological rather than an institutional concept. It refers to the cultural, linguistic, and other identities that can tie people together. Thus, the Chechens who want to secede certainly do not think of themselves as Russians. Indeed, as we will see in several chapters, a lack of national identity often reflects deep-seated ethnic and other divisions that can undermine support for any state, whatever institutional levers it may have at its disposal.

## Types of States

No two states are alike. Some, like the United States, are large, rich, stable, and powerful. Others, like Somalia, are

so poor, fragile, and weak that a state can barely be said to exist. About the only thing all states have in common is that what each state does—and doesn’t do—matters for its own citizens and for many others who live outside its borders.

Unfortunately, political scientists have still not reached agreement about the best way to classify states. Despite all the changes since the end of the Cold War, I have decided to stick with a traditional three-way classification:

- Industrialized democracies.
- Current and former Communist regimes.
- Less developed countries.

This way of dividing the world is outdated. Nonetheless, because the industrialized democracies and the once-solid Communist bloc each have many historical and contemporary traits in common, it still makes sense to use this framework.

The **industrialized democracies** present us with a paradox. On the one hand, they have the most resources and, so, the greatest potential for creating and sustaining powerful states. Like Great Britain, most are wealthy and have at least reasonably effective and popular political institutions. As Table 1.1 (also on the inside front cover) shows, the citizens of industrialized democracies enjoy standards of living similar to those of most Americans. Virtually everyone can read and write, and the infant mortality figures suggest that they benefit from at least basic health care coverage (except for the 47 million Americans who have no insurance).

On the other hand, these states also have the strongest built-in restraints on the use of power. Most of those limits on what leaders can do are laid out in constitutions and major pieces of legislation. What the state can do is also determined to some degree by public opinion and by the results of competitive elections that determine who the leaders are.

That paradox is reversed in the current and former **Communist** states. During their heyday, their states were extremely strong. The government controlled almost everything, from the schools to the press to the economy. Indeed, the term *totalitarianism* was coined to describe these and other states that sought complete control over their societies.

The collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, however, demonstrated that repression and central control were not enough to keep their states strong indefinitely. Among the many causes of this historical turning point, we will focus on the failure of Soviet-style regimes to adopt economic policies that improved the well-being of their citizens, which, in turn, reinforced hostility toward regimes that suddenly lost most of their political clout. There were many reasons for this failure. At or near the top of any list is the decision by Soviet and Eastern European leaders to give their people more freedom in order to reinvigorate their economies. Once that happened, they could no longer rely on repression, and they lost the political “glue” that kept them in power.

TABLE 1.1 Basic Data

COUNTRY	POPULATION IN (MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN 2009 EST)	AVERAGE POPULATION GROWTH 2009 EST (ANNUAL %)	GNP PER CAPITA (US\$) (2008 EST)	GROWTH IN GNP (2008 EST)	LITERACY (%)	INFANT MORTALITY (PER 1,000 BIRTHS)	AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY
Brazil	199	1.2	10,200	5.1	88	22	72
Canada	33	0.8	39,100	.4	99+	5	81
China	1,321	0.6	6,000	9	91	20	73
France	62	0.5	32,700	.3	99+	3	81
Germany	82	0.05	34,800	1	99+	4	79
India	1,160	1.5	2,800	6.6	61	30	70
Iran	66	0.8	12,800	6.5	79	36	71
Japan	127	-0.19	34,000	-0.7	99+	3	82
Mexico	111	1.1	14,200	1.7	91	18	76
Nigeria	150	2.3	2,300	6.1	68	94	47
Russia	140	-0.5	15,800	5.6	99+	11	66
South Africa	49	0.3	10,100	3.1	86	44	49
United Kingdom	61	0.3	36,500	0.7	99+	5	79
United States	301	0.9	6,900	1.1	99+	6	78
High Income	1,000	0.5	35,000	3.0	97	6	79
Low Income	2,400	1.8	1,900	8.0	60	75	48

Source: World Bank, *World Development Report*. [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org). United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report*. [hdr.undp.org/reports/global/hdr2009](http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/hdr2009).

Note: The World Bank and the UNDP do not put exactly the same set of countries into their poorest and richest categories. Therefore, the first, third, and fourth columns, which are based on the former, are based on slightly different calculation criteria from the others. That should not dramatically impact the findings, which would be stark whatever the criteria used.

The Chinese have followed a different path, implementing liberal economic reforms while retaining tight control over political life. So far, this strategy has “worked” in that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is still in power and is presiding over one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world. However, most observers doubt that the CCP can continue stifling dissent indefinitely.

The **less developed countries (LDCs)** are much harder to describe as a single group, which is hardly surprising given that there are more than 130 of them. Above all else, they are poor. In some, the average citizen has no more than one to five hundred dollars a year to live on. A billion people live on less than the equivalent of a dollar a day. Table 1.1 shows just how wide the gap is between the industrial democracies and the world’s poorest countries. As the shortage of doctors, the large number of young people, and the high degree of illiteracy in the poorest countries suggest, their governments face far more problems than the other two types of states. To make matters even worse, many LDCs still have not been able to forge states with functioning courts, bureaucracies, and other institutions that people in the industrialized democracies take for granted. Many LDCs, too, have experienced military coups and other forms of political upheaval that have sapped regimes of the popular support needed for the long-term strength of any state.

There are exceptions to this otherwise gloomy picture. The **newly industrialized countries (NICs)** have made great strides in breaking out of the trap of underdevelopment. The most famous are the Asian tigers—South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia—as well as a few other Asian countries and, perhaps, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile. Although there is still some debate about what allowed these countries to grow so rapidly since the 1970s, every list of causes includes the way their states were able to build cooperative relationships with business and labor, albeit sometimes through force.

### Strong and Weak States

We will also be asking why some states are stronger than others. Obviously, every state has tried to respond to the challenges it faces. Just as obviously, there is tremendous variation in what their leaders have been able to accomplish.

The distinction between strong and weak states is one of the most controversial in comparative politics. In a textbook for an introductory course, however, we can use a fairly simple definition.

**Strong states** take on more responsibilities and generally carry them out more effectively than do weaker ones. Comparativists have not been able to reach many firm conclusions about the factors that determine how strong a given state is. The best we can do is to note that, when viewed over the long term, strong states are relatively

wealthy, their regimes have widespread popular support, and their governing elites work reasonably effectively together. Repression can strengthen states in the short run. However, as events of the past two decades suggest, it may not be enough to sustain such states over the long term.

Basic patterns in state structure and power roughly coincide with the three types of countries outlined earlier. In particular, the former Communist states could not adapt to the changing social and economic conditions they faced in the 1980s because their strength lay in their ability to maintain order, not innovate. Similarly, poverty, internal divisions, and other factors are part of the reason most LDCs have relatively weak states.

No state comes close to being able to do whatever it wants whenever it wants. If anything, most states are losing the ability to shape their own destinies in the light of globalization, which we will consider shortly.

Finally, we will spend a lot of time on the distinction between the state and regime. In particular, we will see that industrialized democracies are able to weather most crises because there is all but total acceptance of the regime that insulates it from such divisive protests as those of the new left of the 1960s and 1970s. We will also see that most other regimes lack such bedrock popular support and that dissatisfaction with the government of the day more easily spills over to the regime and even, in some cases, to the existence of the country itself.

### Key Concepts and Questions

This course is about countries and concepts. If you want to truly understand what an introductory course in comparative politics is all about, focus on the concepts that will be highlighted in a box like this one in each chapter, listed at the end of each one, and defined in the glossary at the end of the book.

Given the discussion of the *New York Times* and its masthead, it should already be clear that you need to focus on concepts as well as names, dates, places, and events to master comparative politics.

For this chapter, concentrate on the following:

- Historically, how did the wrenching processes of state and nation building shape the countries covered in the rest of the book? Ask the same about the impact of imperialism over the last few centuries and globalization today.
- How do people and the institutions they form try to shape decision making? How does the structure of the state affect their efforts?
- You will be reading this book in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Think about how the concepts discussed in the rest of this chapter will help you understand politics in the awkwardly labeled twenty teens.

## Other Core Concepts

The state will not be the only concept we focus on. Most of the others, however, are based on issues that eddy out of the state and its actions. More importantly yet, if you do not master these concepts as well as the state, you will have a hard time understanding the mass of facts in the rest of the book.

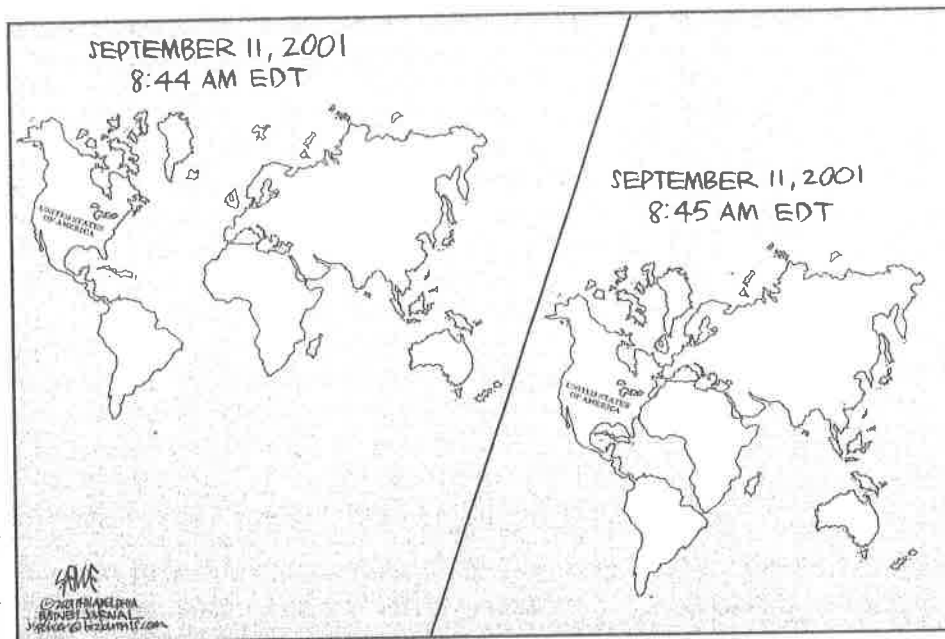
Sometimes, I will use a concept in slightly different ways from my colleagues, which is why I am returning to three of the ones introduced previously. The government can also be used to refer to the people in power at the moment, what Americans often call the administration. Obviously, the government is important. In addition, we will look at countries on two other levels. First is the regime, which is the set of institutions and practices that endures when one government is replaced by another. In an established democracy, much of the regime is defined by the constitution and other major laws. During the Communist era, the constitution was an all but meaningless document. The regime was created and controlled by the Communist Party. Second, we have to consider the **system**—another term we will use in two ways (see the section on templates that follows). In many countries, people challenge the regime as well as the government of the day. In some, they go further and question whether the country as a whole—the system itself—should continue to exist. Thus, when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it was not just the regime that disappeared; the country itself split into fifteen new independent states.

Most chapters, though not all, will examine the interplay between **democracy** and **capitalism**. Modern capitalism and democracy began to take hold at about the same time. Indeed, the American colonies declared their independence the same year that Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, the first great text on capitalist economics. As we will see, neither emerged easily anywhere and both exist in multiple forms. Finally, we will see that countries outside of Europe and North America are still struggling to democratize and create functioning market-based economies.

Whatever a country's type of political system, it will have a **political culture** that reflects the core values of its people. Political scientists rarely consider attitudes toward current leaders or issues as part of a country's culture. Rather, they focus on enduring opinions about a country's institutions and political practices. In many countries, much of the culture revolved around people's **identity** or how they define themselves in racial, linguistic, ethnic, or religious terms. Today, identity issues are among the most controversial in the most divided countries.

Countries also provide their people with vehicles for **political participation**. These opportunities vary tremendously. In the established democracies, people are free to





John Spencer. Reprinted with permission from the Philadelphia Business Journal.

vote in competitive elections, join interest groups that lobby on their behalf, and engage in at least peaceful protest. In authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, such opportunities rarely exist. Instead, the regime often goads people into forms of political behavior the regime approves of, something we will see most notably in Iran and China.

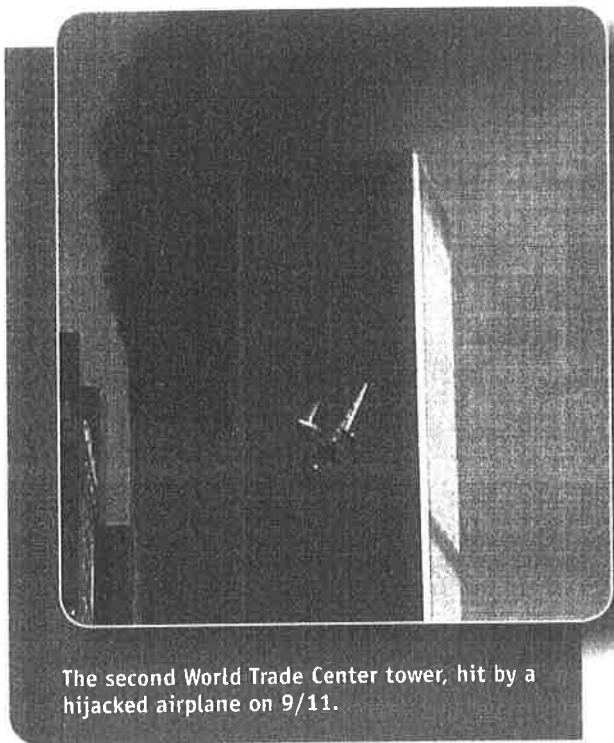
All states also make **public policy** that tries to shape how countries deal with political issues. Policies can regulate what citizens can do, as in the examples of driving speed and drinking age. Those examples also tell us that states are not always all that effective in enforcing regulations. Policies can distribute or redistribute resources. I almost certainly pay more income tax than you do. And some of my taxes go to support students at state universities here in Virginia that have some of the lowest tuition rates in the country. Other policies shift resources from wealthier to poorer people in what are loosely known as welfare programs. Yet others transfer money and services across generational lines, something that will increasingly happen in the industrialized democracies as my generation of baby boomers retires and incurs ever higher health care costs. Put simply, your generation will increasingly pay for mine, even if we can solve the pension and health care coverage policies that bedevil every country in the Western world. Finally, policies can be symbolic, for instance when political leaders only wear traditional clothing, drape themselves in flags, or have themselves driven in cars manufactured in their own countries.

Finally, there are a number of historical concepts, beginning with **imperialism**. From the end of the fifteenth

century until the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans took over much of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. It is hard to overestimate the impact imperialism had on the peoples who were colonized. In the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, colonists and their descendants came close to destroying the indigenous populations while taking over huge amounts of land. Elsewhere, the imperial powers redrew boundaries, often putting people who had been historical antagonists in the same jurisdiction. Often, too, they tried to impose their religions, cultures, and forms of government on people who found all three alien.

More recently, the political tensions and violence of the twentieth century still have a tremendous impact. One scholar estimates that as many as 100 million people died as a result of war and other forms of political violence. Political scientists coined the term **totalitarianism** to describe the most vicious of those regimes including Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin. The **Cold War** of the second half of the last century may be over, but it still has massive consequences for those countries that were or still are under Communist rule.

Today, one of the “hottest” and most controversial topics in political science is **globalization**, which refers to the rapid shrinking of social, economic, environmental, and political life. The world itself is not physically shrinking, of course. Nonetheless, advances in communication, travel, information technology, and much more have made it easier and easier for people to work with—and against—each other.



The second World Trade Center tower, hit by a hijacked airplane on 9/11.

There is no question that globalization is happening. But is it beneficial or harmful? It probably depends on the parts of the world and the kinds of people you focus on. Certainly, software engineers in the United States and India have done very well as a result. But textile workers in the United States have been all but wiped out. Obviously, the most visible and tragic example of the world we live in are the terrorist attacks of 2001 that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York and damaged parts of the Pentagon in Washington. In short, whatever we might think about the broader implications of globalization, it is inextricably caught up with terrorism and the other threats we face at the dawn of this new millennium.

### THREE TEMPLATES

The comparative method can be a powerful tool. Comparison, however, is not powerful enough on its own to lead us to the kinds of overarching conclusions we try to reach even in an introductory course. We also have to know what to compare, what questions to ask, and which criteria to use in evaluating the evidence we uncover.

Most political scientists believe that theories best provide that focus. Unfortunately, comparative politics is not chemistry, physics, or microeconomics, each of which has a paradigm that structures everything from cutting-edge research to introductory textbooks. The best tools available to

us are less powerful models that only allow us to see how the various components of a state are related to one another.

Think of models as equivalents of the templates for typical, routine tasks that computer companies provide when you buy their software. The three that follow weave together most of the themes discussed so far in this chapter and therefore will also help you keep revisiting the concepts you need for the rest of the book.

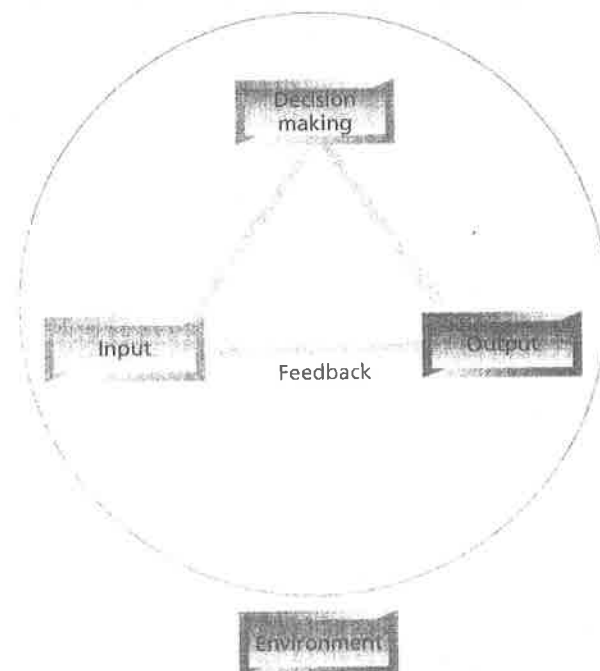
### The Political System

The chapters on individual countries are organized around a model known as **systems theory** (see Figure 1.1). Although most of the natural sciences are based on it, systems theory is no longer very popular in political science. Nonetheless, it is more useful for our purposes than its intellectual competitors because it allows us to see how a state's components interact over time and how nonpolitical and international forces shape what it can and cannot accomplish.

Systems theory revolves around five concepts: inputs, decision making, outputs, feedback, and the environment. **Inputs** are the ways average citizens and the groups they form engage in political life. David Easton, who adapted systems theory to political science, divided them into two types of activities: those that **support** and those that place **demands** on the state. Both come in many forms.

Individuals can act on their own by, for example, voting or writing a letter to the editor. However, most political activity, especially that of a demanding nature, is channeled

FIGURE 1.1 The Political System



through two types of organizations: interest groups and political parties. **Interest groups** deal with a limited range of issues and represent a narrow segment of a country's population. Examples include trade unions, business associations, and environmental groups that organize and "lobby" around specific issues and other concerns. By contrast, a **political party** tries to bring the interests of a number of groups together and to gain control over the government either on its own or in a coalition. A party need not build its support largely, or even primarily, through elections, as was the case in the former Soviet Union or in Iraq under the Baath Party.

The conventional wisdom is that British interest groups are weaker than American ones because it is harder to lobby effectively in a parliamentary system than in a presidential one, something we will explore in the next three chapters. Nonetheless, the Labour Party has traditionally done well at the polls because of its close ties to the Trade Unions Congress, which helped create the party in the first place and is still an integral part of its organization. On the other hand, the opposition Conservative Party has close links to the major business and trade associations.

Sometimes demands go beyond the conventional "inside the system" activities of interest groups and political parties. Protesters, for instance, tried to disrupt the April 2009 meeting of the leading economic powers to demonstrate their opposition to market-led plans for the recovery to the global crisis.

There is no better example of "outside the system" protest than the attacks on 9/11. Analysts will long debate what motivated the nineteen hijackers and their supporters. However, there seems little doubt that their faith and their hatred of Western politics and policies led them to be willing to take not only their own lives but those of thousands of people in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the four airplanes.

Political participation is also shaped by a country's political culture. In addition to the features mentioned above a culture reflects the impact of history on a society's beliefs. In Great Britain, the legacy of feudalism remains (albeit faintly) in the willingness of some working-class voters to trust their "social betters" with roots in the aristocracy. The widespread support of Shiite Islam is an important value supporting the continued rule of the Islamic Republic in Iran. Russians' values today are in large part shaped by more than seventy years of Communist rule. Finally, the Chechen case also shows us that not all countries are homogeneous and that some have strikingly different subcultures.

Easton's second main concept, **decision making**, covers the same intellectual ground as the state, and thus does not need much elaboration here. It is enough to note that we will examine states from two main angles: the structure of their institutions and the values, skills, and personalities of their leaders. Institutions matter more in older, established

regimes like Britain's, even though it does not have a written constitution. That is less the case in a country like Iran, where the ruling clerics often do political end runs around the elected institutions they created, or in Russia, where the institutions are not even two decades old and changed dramatically when the term-limited Putin left the presidency to become prime minister in 2008.

Inputs and decision making are important in their own right. However, their importance grows when we take the next step and explore what those decisions lead to—the system's **output** or public policy. We have seen some of what follows already, but it is important enough for the rest of the book to revisit those themes even before we reach the end of Chapter 1.

The most common type of policy regulates the behavior of individuals or organizations. Thus, Britain is struggling to find new ways of managing the constant traffic jams in its old cities by introducing tolls that drivers have to pay to enter them.

Other policies redistribute resources, sometimes to such a degree that they alter a society's basic patterns of wealth and power. That, of course, has always been the goal of Marxists and other socialists. But even with the growing support for market economies, states are still heavily involved in distributional politics. We saw this in the flurry of the stimulus packages introduced in 2009 in countries as different as the United States and China. Under more normal circumstances, Iranian authorities have channeled billions of dollars to companies and foundations they control in order to shape the way the country's economy modernizes.

Policies can also be symbolic. Under both Yeltsin and Putin, the Russian government tried to build support for the symbols pegged to a new state, including adopting a new national anthem. Even more obvious on this score is the fact that the Islamic Republic changed both Iran's flag and its national anthem when it came to power in 1979 to reflect its commitment to theological orthodoxy.

Systems analysis is also the most useful model for our purposes because it incorporates **feedback**, which is the process through which people find out about public policy and the ways in which their reactions to recent political events help shape the next phase of political life. Sometimes a decision directly affects an individual or group. More often, people only learn about a policy indirectly, either through the media or by word of mouth.

In each of the countries we will be covering in this book, the media play a powerful and frequently quite biased role in political life, either in supporting the state or in criticizing its policies. There are times, too, when people do not find out about state policies at all, which can result either from conscious attempts to keep these policies secret or from public apathy.

Feedback makes systems analysis particularly useful because it forces us to concentrate on how a system changes over time. Too many of the other models political scientists use provide the intellectual equivalent of snapshots that show what a system is like during a relatively brief period. Focusing on feedback, however, draws our attention to how the entire system has evolved over the years, thus turning the snapshot into the intellectual equivalent of a DVD.

Here the media play a critical role. Britain's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is renowned for the quality and impartiality of its coverage. By contrast, Putin was taken to task for his decisions to take away the licenses for all television stations that were not under government control. On the other end of the spectrum, the Iranian authorities are struggling to control access to television stations run by émigrés, which hundreds of thousands of people watch on nominally illegal satellite dishes.

The **environment** includes everything lying outside the political system. Systems are defined as being *bounded* or having an autonomous identity and organization. No system, however, is completely autonomous. All politicians and citizens must react to forces beyond their control. There are three types of forces that can limit—sometimes sharply—their ability to shape their own destinies.

The first is the impact of history on culture and politics in general as discussed previously. No country's history completely shapes what happens today. However, it does partially set the political stage, determining what is and is not likely to work. Second are the limits imposed by domestic social, economic, and physical conditions including Britain's innovative plan to force people who want to drive into central London to pay for the privilege. Finally, and today perhaps most importantly, there are the global forces that arise outside a country's border. Sometimes their impact is hard to miss, as when British and American forces invaded and occupied Iraq. Other times they are far harder to document, as when global media conglomerates assume control of a country's television stations and other outlets. Sometimes they can have massive consequences, as did the introduction of the euro in 2002.

## Historical and Contemporary Factors

Table 1.2 draws our attention to four types of forces that have largely determined the basic patterns of politics in all countries. The first row of the table highlights the historical forces that set the stage for the "dramas" of global political life today. Undoubtedly, the most important is imperialism, which led to the imposition of Western political, economic, and cultural institutions on the rest of the world. For example, although Iran was never formally colonized, the West had a profound and negative impact on its society and economy.

**TABLE 1.2** Factors Affecting the Development of States

	INTERNATIONAL	DOMESTIC
<b>Historical</b>	Imperialism	State building and nation building
<b>Contemporary</b>	Globalization and the end of the Cold War	Pressures from below

To this day, many former colonies are desperately poor and dependent on the policies and practices of the wealthy states and private corporations in the "north." Imperialism was also important in determining how the state itself was formed and then spread around the world.

Prior to the 1600s, the European monarchies were weak and decentralized. But the decision to expand abroad meant they needed more powerful states that could raise armies and feed, equip, and pay them.

State building never occurred smoothly. Everywhere, the growing power of the state left lasting scars. It was particularly difficult when one or both of two problems arose. First, when the state developed quickly, antagonisms arose toward a government that all of a sudden demanded more of its people. Second, when minority ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups were incorporated into the emerging state, this tended to produce tensions that undermined the state's ability to govern.

To complicate matters further, when the imperialist powers carved up the southern hemisphere, they did so largely for their own reasons, ignoring traditional boundaries and lumping together groups that had historically been antagonistic toward each other. As a result, new states such as Angola, Afghanistan, and Nigeria faced deeply rooted ethnic tensions, which made it all but impossible for leaders to agree on anything.

As a result, the difficulties associated with state building have been particularly pronounced in the less developed world. Gaining independence usually involved an intense struggle with the old imperial power. When the conflict was especially prolonged or violent, as in Vietnam or Algeria, the new country found itself physically and economically drained once it finally won independence.

As the second row in Table 1.2 suggests, you cannot understand everything about political life today by putting it into historical perspective. If you could, there would be little reason to take a course such as this one or to want to change a world whose basic contours are already set!

We dare not ignore the lingering impact of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The two countries emerged from World War II as the most dominant powers on earth, ushering in an unprecedented period in which a pair of superpowers shaped the

destinies of almost every other country. As the United States and the Soviet Union jockeyed for position, regional problems became global ones as well. When the superpowers' interests collided most directly, countries such as Vietnam, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan paid the price. Even such regional powers as Japan, Britain, Poland, Hungary, and the two Germanys saw their freedom to maneuver limited by the superpowers.

Twenty years after the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet bloc, no one is sure how those international forces will continue to play out. Some observers think supranational institutions like the United Nations (UN) or the European Union (EU) will play a larger and more constructive role in finding peaceful resolutions to the conflicts that still plague international and domestic political life. Others are more skeptical. Optimists thought the global shock wave caused by the attacks of 9/11 would unite the international community and go a long way toward eradicating terrorism once and for all. Pessimists worry that the subsequent wars and the occasional upsurge in terrorist activities will only sow the seeds for more, bloodier violence in the future.

There is no doubt, however, that international political forces will remain an important determinant of domestic events around the world. Since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo of 1973–74 and the economic downturn that followed, we have become aware of another global force limiting what individual states can do—the **international political economy (IPE)**, which is the term political scientists use to describe trade and other interactions that take place between countries. To some degree, the IPE is a legacy of imperialism. But as we are all painfully aware from the daily news reports about everything from the economic crisis to the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest, the IPE has taken on a life of its own.

The countries that are suffering as a result of globalization are indeed in a difficult bind. How can the poorest nations break out of poverty when those international dynamics are leaving them even further behind? How can countries as different as Mexico, Poland, and the United States solve their domestic problems when they owe billions of dollars to other governments and private financiers? How can a country like Brazil balance the needs of the environment with those of its impoverished citizens?

Finally, there is the traditional subject matter of comparative politics: what is happening within individual countries today? Because of what occurred in the past and because of what is taking place now outside their borders, few states fully control their own destinies even to the degree that they did a generation ago. Conversely, no state is completely at the mercy of globalization, although some states are better able to shape their future than others.

## State, Society, and Globalization

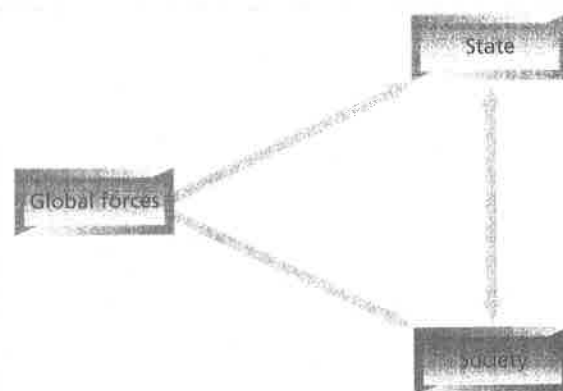
We can work through the third template quickly because Figure 1.2 deals with many of the phenomena covered in it. What makes this template different is its focus on the causal links among three key factors you can use to help stitch the pieces of this book together.

At least since Thomas Hobbes wrote in the seventeenth century, most political theorists have pointed out that individuals and the groups they form tend to seek ever more freedom and power. The more pessimistic of them have feared that people motivated by such self-interest would tear society apart if left to their own devices. Thus, like it or not, we have to create states to maintain order by keeping these centrifugal forces in check.

As a result, most political scientists believe that state and society exist in what they call an inverse relationship. For the power of one to increase, that of the other must be reduced. For example, when the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress in 1994, they were convinced that the way to give average Americans more power was to limit the jurisdiction of what they believed was a far too dominant state. Similarly, the creation of the National Health Service in Great Britain in 1948 left doctors less free to practice medicine as they saw fit and left affluent patients less able to choose their own health care options. Moreover, this inverse relationship seems to hold across all types of political systems. Giving more power to Soviet citizens in the 1980s came at the expense of the state and contributed to its collapse.

Figure 1.2 also draws our attention to the way globalization is reshaping political life by reducing the real ability of states to make and implement economic policy. Although international institutions, such as the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), play a critical role in this respect, rarely can we pinpoint exactly how such influence is wielded because these pressures are far subtler than those

**FIGURE 1.2** The Impact of Global and Domestic Forces on the State



used by the United States and other major powers in fighting the wars that continue to dominate international politics. Nonetheless, they are real and important enough that they may force us to change the ways in which we view global political life both as academics and as average citizens.

## Choices

I am lucky to spend a lot of time with people who are neither political scientists nor academics. None of them has influenced me more than Rushworth Kidder, the founder and president of the Institute for Global Ethics. Among the things that the institute does is help everyone from third graders to top CIA managers grapple with tough ethical choices, few of which are often easy to make.

Even more importantly, few are between right and wrong. Instead, most of us have to choose between ethically “good” options that are often incompatible with each other. Kidder asks us to focus on four such dilemmas that will be at the heart of the rest of this book:

- Truth versus loyalty.
- Individual versus community.
- Short term versus long term.
- Justice versus mercy.

Rushworth M. Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices*. (New York: William Morrow, 1995).

## A WORLD IN CRISIS?

It should be clear already that we live in a troubled world. Every country we will cover faces major problems, some of which could have disastrous consequences.

That is the point of view most of my students tend to take. But I then try to show them that crisis does not necessarily mean that political life is a disaster waiting to happen, which is how we typically use that term in the West.

The ancient Chinese developed their language using characters based on modified pictures instead of an alphabet. The two they brought together to render what we mean by **crisis** includes the notion of danger, which is so central to Western thought, and also opportunity.

The first sixteen chapters of this book will focus on the dangers. The last one will draw your attention to the opportunities. It will draw heavily on the work my colleagues and I do as conflict resolution and peace-building practitioners and will stress the need to “think outside the box,” as the cliché has it.

## USING THIS BOOK

At least at first glance, you are at the beginning of what will be a typical introductory course with a typical textbook. However, to fully master the material, you will have to go beyond the typical because you will constantly be confronted with controversial questions that do not have clear and obvious answers but will have a direct bearing on your life for years to come.

In short, you will have to do more than memorize the notes you take in class or the key points you highlight throughout these pages. Courses that deal with new, complex, and controversial subjects succeed only when students stretch themselves to consider unsettling ideas, question their basic assumptions, and sift through evidence to reach their own conclusions. Therefore, if you are going to truly understand comparative politics, you have to take to heart the advice of the French novelist Marcel Proust that begins this chapter. You will be seeing new lands in Proust’s terms because much of this book and your course will focus on places you do not know much about. But, if Proust is right, you will not get very far in this voyage of discovery unless you also try to see these lands through what will be the new “eyes” of comparative politics.

This book has a number of features that make the “active learning” side of the course as useful (and, I hope, as enjoyable) as possible, beginning with the structure of the book itself. The core of the book covers politics in the three kinds of states mentioned previously—industrialized democracies, current and former Communist regimes, and the LDCs. Each part begins with an overview chapter that explores the key trends, theories, and ideas about that type of state. The rest of the part is devoted to case studies of countries that exemplify the different aspects of that particular type of state. The countries discussed in this book were chosen because they are important in their own right and because you can use them as intellectual springboards for reaching more general conclusions about the political trends (re)shaping our world. They include:

- ☛ **Industrialized democracies:** the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and the EU.
- ☛ **Current and former Communist regimes:** Russia and China.
- ☛ **The less developed world:** India, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, and Mexico.

Additional chapters on Canada, Japan, Brazil, and South Africa can be found at the book’s companion site at [www.cengage.com/politicalscience/hauss/comparativepolitics7e](http://www.cengage.com/politicalscience/hauss/comparativepolitics7e)

Additionally, another important aspect of the learning tools is the list of key terms. These are terms that are