

**COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**  
**May 2010**

**IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS:** This is a closed-book, closed-notes exam. No materials outside of what you have stored in your head may be used to assist you in writing essays in response to the following questions.

**Major Field Instructions:** Answer one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and two questions from Part III. You have six hours to complete the examination.

**Minor Field Instructions:** Answer one question from Part I and either one question from Part II and one question from Part III or two questions from Part III. You have four and one-half hours to complete the examination.

Part I: General Theory

1. The various strands of "institutionalist" literature in comparative politics devote a great deal of theorizing to identifying how and when institutions lock in a stable "equilibrium" or "path," but the real world of politics is also characterized by significant change. To what degree can institutionalist theories account for institutional change, or do we need to bring in other factors like changes in the social structure or values to account for change?
2. Mark Blyth once entitled an article, "Structures Do Not Come with an Instruction Sheet". Evaluate the contributions and limits of ideational explanations in comparative politics.

Part II: Comparative Methodology

1. Recently some of the leading scholars in comparative politics have employed multi-method research strategies usually involving some combination of quantitative, formal and qualitative analysis. Bennett and George (2005) contend that multi-method studies benefit from "complementary comparative advantages" and can generate more rigorous inference and more reliable findings than single method research. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of multi-method research strategies.
2. James Mahoney and Gary Goertz (2006, 227) observe, "The quantitative and qualitative research traditions can be thought of as distinct cultures marked by different values, beliefs and norms." Assess the strengths and limits of the quantitative and qualitative research traditions with regard to causal explanation.

### Part III: Applied Theory

1. Many nations with institutions labeled "coordinated capitalism" by the Varieties of Capitalism (VOC) literature are facing pressures to reform these rules and structures because of globalization, ideological challenges, and the rise of the service economy. Explain the pattern of institutional adaptation with references to theories of institutional and social change and at least two cases.
2. Most nations stick stubbornly to electoral rules established long ago, but the world has seen a growing number of electoral system changes over the past twenty years. Can the pattern of change and non-change be explained entirely by the short-term electoral incentives of parties and politicians, or do we need to take into account the policy preferences of political actors to account for the observed pattern?
3. In recent years, ethnic conflict has been studied from rational choice, constructivist and institutional perspectives. Select at least two of these perspectives and critically assess their respective strengths and weaknesses. Offer your observations regarding the advantages and disadvantages of developing an analytical framework that combines the perspectives you have selected.
4. Przeworski, Limongi, Alvarez and Cheibub (2000) contend that endogenous theories of democratization, based on the argument that economic development promotes democracy, are less powerful than exogenous theories which explain the association between economic development and democracy because development makes it less likely that affluent democracies will revert to authoritarian regimes. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of endogenous and exogenous theories.
5. Atul Kohli (2004, p. 2) writes, "... the creation of effective states within the developing world has generally preceded the emergence of industrializing economies. This is because state intervention in support of investor profits has proved to be a precondition for industry to emerge and flourish among late-late-developers." Discuss the contributions and limits of state intervention in promoting industrialization in developing countries.