

The Past and Present of Comparative Politics

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Comparative politics emerged as a distinct field of political science in the United States in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent evolution of the field was driven largely by research associated with U.S. universities. The influence of U.S. academia certainly declined from its high point in the two decades following World War II. Indeed, by the late twentieth century, comparative politics was a truly international enterprise. Yet the sway of scholarship produced in the United States, by U.S.- and foreign-born scholars, and by U.S.-trained scholars around the world, remained undisputable. The standard for research in comparative politics was set basically in the United States. In sum, a large part of the story of comparative politics has been, and continues to be, written by those who work and have been trained within the walls of U.S. academia.¹

This chapter focuses on the past and present of comparative politics in the United States. The discussion is organized around three issues: the definition of the field's subject matter, the role of theory, and the use of methods. These three issues are the basis for an identification of distinct periods in the history of comparative politics and for assessments of the state of the field. Attention is also given to the link between comparative politics, on the one hand, and other fields of political science and other social sciences,

1. Basic references on the history of political science in the United States by political scientists include Crick (1959), Somit and Tanenhaus (1967), Waldo (1975), Ricci (1984), Seidelman and Harpham (1985), Almond (1990, 1996, 2002), Farr and Seidelman (1993), Gunnell (1993, 2004), Easton, Gunnell, and Stein (1995), Adcock (2003, 2005), and Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson (2007). On the relationship between political science and its sister disciplines, see Lipset (1969), Ross (1991), and Doggan (1996). On political science in the United States relative to other countries, see Easton, Gunnell, and Graziano (1991); and for a discussion of convergences and divergences of practices in the most recent period in the United States and Western Europe, see Norris (1997), Schmitter (2002), and Moses, Rihoux, and Kittel (2005). For overviews of comparative politics written by U.S. scholars, see Eckstein (1963) and Apter (1996); for overviews of this field written by Europeans, see Daalder (1993), Mair (1996), and Blondel (1999).

on the other hand, and, more briefly, to political events and the values held by scholars of comparative politics.

The argument presented here is as follows. Since the institutionalization of political science as an autonomous discipline, a process initiated in the late nineteenth century, the evolution of comparative politics was punctuated by two revolutions: the behavioral revolution, which had its greatest impact on comparative politics during the immediate post–World War II years until the mid-1960s, and the second scientific revolution, which started around the end of the Cold War and is still ongoing. On both occasions, the impetus for change came from developments in the field of American politics and was justified in the name of science. However, the ideas advanced by, and the impact of, these two revolutions differed. The behavioral revolution drew heavily on sociology; in contrast, the second scientific revolution imported many ideas from economics and also put a heavier emphasis on methodology. Moreover, though each revolution centrally involved a tension between traditionalists and innovators, the current revolution is taking place in a more densely institutionalized field and is producing, through a process of adaptation, a relatively pluralistic landscape.

Beyond this characterization of the origin and evolution of comparative politics, this chapter draws some conclusions about the current state of the field and offers, by way of parting words, a suggestion regarding its future. Concerning the present, it stresses that scholars of comparative politics—comparativists for short—have accomplished a lot and produced a vast amount of knowledge about politics, but also have fallen short of fulfilling the field’s mission to develop a global science of politics due to some serious shortcomings. Specifically, the lack of a general or unified theory of politics, and the failure to produce robust, broad empirical generalizations about world politics, are highlighted. Concerning the future of comparative politics, this chapter suggests that potentially paralyzing or distracting divisions among comparativists, which hamper progress in the field, will only be overcome when comparativists appreciate both the depth of the roots of comparative politics in a humanistic tradition and the vital importance of its scientific aspirations.

The Constitution of Political Science as a Discipline, 1880–1920

Political science, which had to be constituted as a discipline before the subfield of comparative politics could be formed, can trace its origin to a number of foundational texts written in many cases centuries ago. It can date its birth back to antiquity, and thus claim to be the oldest of the social science disciplines, in light of the work of Greek philosophers Plato (427–

Table 2.1. Classical Social Theory, 1776–1923

Country	Author	Some Major Works
Britain	Adam Smith (1723–90)	<i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (1776)
	David Ricardo (1772–1823)	<i>On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation</i> (1817)
	John Stuart Mill (1806–73)	<i>The Principles of Political Economy</i> (1848) <i>Considerations on Representative Government</i> (1861)
France	Auguste Comte (1798–1857)	<i>Course in Positive Philosophy</i> (1830–42)
	Alex de Tocqueville (1805–59)	<i>Democracy in America</i> (1835) <i>The Old Regime and the French Revolution</i> (1856)
	Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)	<i>The Principles of Sociology</i> (1876–96)
	Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)	<i>The Division of Labor in Society</i> (1893) <i>Rules of the Sociological Method</i> (1895)
Germany	Karl Marx (1818–83)	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (1848) <i>The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</i> (1852) <i>Capital</i> (1867–94)
	Max Weber (1864–1920)	<i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> (1905) <i>Economy and Society</i> (1914) <i>General Economic History</i> (1923)
	Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923)	<i>The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology</i> (1915–19)
Italy	Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941)	<i>The Ruling Class</i> (1923)
	Robert Michels (1876–1936)*	<i>Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy</i> (1915)

*Though German by birth, Michels is generally seen as an Italian thinker.

347 BC), author of *The Republic* (360 BC), and Aristotle (384–322 BC), author of *Politics* (c. 340 BC). In the modern era, important landmarks include the Italian Renaissance political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli's (1469–1527) *The Prince* (1515) and French Enlightenment political thinker Baron de Montesquieu's (1689–1755) *On the Spirit of Laws* (1748). More recently, in the age of industrialism and nationalism, political analysis was further developed by European thinkers who penned the classics of social theory (see Table 2.1).

Political thought in the United States, a new nation, necessarily lacked the tradition and the breadth of European scholarship. Indeed, significant contributions, from *The Federalist Papers* (1787–88), written by Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804), James Madison (1751–1836), and John Jay (1745–1829), to the writings by German émigré Francis Lieber (1800–1872), the first professor of political science in the United States, did not match the broad corpus of European work. In addition, the relative backwardness of the United States was apparent in higher education. Many teaching colleges existed in the United States, the oldest being Harvard, founded in

1636. But the first research university, Johns Hopkins University, was not established until 1876, and a large number of Americans sought training in the social sciences in Europe, and especially in German universities, the most advanced in the world from 1870 to 1900. Yet, as a result of a series of innovations carried out in U.S. universities, the United States broke new ground by constituting political science as a discipline and hence opened the way for the emergence of comparative politics as a field of political science.

The clearest manifestations of the process pioneered by the United States were various institutional developments that gave an organizational basis to the autonomization of political science. One new trend was the growing number of independent Political Science departments. Also critical was the formation of graduate programs, the first one being Columbia University's School of Political Science founded by John W. Burgess in 1880—the event that opens this period in the history of political science—and hence the expansion of Ph.D.s trained as political scientists in the United States. Finally, a key event was the founding of the discipline's professional association, the American Political Science Association (APSA), in 1903. These were important steps that began to give the new discipline a distinctive profile.

This process of autonomization involved a differentiation between political science and history, the discipline most closely associated with U.S. political science in its early years.² Many of the departments in which political science was initially taught were joint Departments of Politics and History, and APSA itself emerged as a splinter group from the American Historical Association (AHA).³ Moreover, the influence of history, but also the desire to establish a separate identity vis-à-vis history, was evident in the way political scientists defined their subject matter.

Many of the founders of political science had been trained in Germany, where they were exposed to German *Staatswissenschaft* (political science) and historically oriented *Geisteswissenschaft* (social sciences). Thus, it is hardly surprising that, much in line with German thinking at the time, the state would figure prominently in attempts to define the new discipline's subject matter. But since history, as an all-encompassing discipline, also addressed the state, they sought to differentiate political science from history in two ways. First, according to the motto of the time that "History is past Politics and Politics present History," political scientists would leave the past as the preserve of historians and focus on contemporary history. Second, they would eschew history's aspiration to address all the potential factors that went into the making of politics and focus instead on the more

2. On the relationship between political science and history during this period, see Ross (1991, 64–77 and Ch. 8) and Adcock (2003).

3. The AHA was founded in 1884.

delimited question of government and the formal political institutions associated with government.⁴

This way of defining the subject matter of political science bore some instructive similarities and differences with the way two other sister disciplines—economics and sociology—established their identities during roughly the same time.⁵ The birth of economics as a discipline was associated with the marginalist revolution and the formation of neoclassical economics, crystallized in Alfred Marshall's (1842–1924) *Principles of Economics* (1890), that is, with a narrowing of the subject matter of Smith's, Ricardo's, and Mill's classical political economy. In contrast, sociologists saw themselves establishing a discipline that explicitly represented a continuation of the classical social theory of Comte, Tocqueville, Spencer, Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Pareto, Mosca, and Michels, and, proclaiming an interest in society as a whole, defined sociology as the mother discipline, the synthetic social science. Thus, like economists, and in contrast to sociologists, political scientists defined their discipline by betting on specialization and opting for a delimited subject matter.

But the way in which the subject matter of political science was defined differed fundamentally from both economics and sociology in another key way. These sister disciplines defined themselves through theory-driven choices, economics introducing a reorientation of classical theory, sociology seeking an extension of classical theory. In contrast, the process of differentiation of political science vis-à-vis history was largely a matter of carving out an empirically distinct turf and involved a rejection, rather than a reworking, of European grand theorizing and philosophies of history. In sum, political science was born out of history and as a result of efforts to distinguish the study of politics from the study of history. But the birth of this new discipline also entailed a break with, rather than a reformulation of, the classical tradition.

The way in which political science was born had profound implications for the research conducted during the early years of political science (see Table 2.2). Most critically, the discipline was essentially bereft of theory, whether in the sense of a metatheory, which sought to articulate how the key aspects of politics worked together, or of mid-range theories, which focused on just one or a few aspects of politics.⁶ Indeed, the formal-legal

4. For formal definitions of the subject matter of political science, see Somit and Tanenhaus (1967, 23–27 and 63–69).

5. Useful markers are the founding of the American Economic Association (AEA) in 1885 and of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in 1905. On the birth of economics and sociology, and the way these two disciplines defined their subject matters, see Ross (1991, Chs. 6 and 7).

6. A metatheory is defined here as a scheme that logically connects and integrates partial theories and thus is critical in the construction of general theory. A mid-range theory is defined,

approach that was common in the literature of this period was largely atheoretical, in that it did not propose general and testable hypotheses. Research also addressed a fairly narrow agenda. Political scientists studied the formal institutions of government and presented arguments, which largely reflected the prevailing consensus about the merits of limited democracy, on the institutional questions of the day, such as the reforms adopted in the United States after the Civil War and the constitutional changes in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷

In terms of methods, the U.S. reaction to what was seen as the excessively abstract and even metaphysical aspects of European philosophies of history had the positive effect of grounding discussion in observables, that is, in empirical facts. But most of this work consisted mainly of case studies that offered detailed information about legal aspects of the government, at best presented alongside, but not explicitly connected to, more abstract discussions of political theory.⁸ Moreover, it tended to focus on a fairly small set of countries and not to provide systematic comparison across countries.

The limitations of the early research done by political scientists in the United States notwithstanding, the establishment of political science as an autonomous discipline was a critical development that prepared the ground for future growth. In Europe and elsewhere, the strength of sociology, an imperialist field by definition, worked against the establishment of a discipline focused on the study of politics.⁹ Thus, in breaking with the more advanced European tradition by establishing political science as a distinct

following sociologist Merton (1968, 39–73), as a theory with a more limited scope than what he called grand theory.

7. To be sure, not all political scientists viewed their discipline as concerned with government and formal institutions. For example, Arthur Bentley's (1870–1957) *Process of Government* (Bentley 1908) went beyond formal political institutions and prefigured subsequent work on interest group politics. However, it is telling that this book was written by an outsider and ignored for four decades. For other exceptions to the dominant formal-legal work of the period, see Eckstein (1963, 13–16) on evolutionary theory and Ross (1991, Ch. 8) on research on extralegal institutions and social and economic factors. Moreover, exceptional works from this period, such as *Politics and Administration* by the first APSA president Frank Goodnow (1859–1939), display a concern with theory that begins to be systematic (Goodnow 1900; on Goodnow, see Adcock 2005).

8. This literature is generally characterized and criticized as “descriptive.” Yet this label is not accurate in that description is one of the key goals of the social sciences and description requires theory and thus is not an antinomy of theory.

9. While the APSA was founded in 1903, most other national political science associations were not created until after World War II. For example, political science associations were founded in France in 1949, in Britain and the Netherlands in 1950, in Germany in 1951, in Greece in 1959, in Denmark in 1965, in Chile in 1966, in Austria in 1971, in Italy in 1973, and in Argentina in 1983. The International Political Science Association (IPSA) was founded in 1949.

Table 2.2. The Origins and Evolution of Comparative Politics in the United States

Dimensions		Period			
		1. The Constitution of Political Science as a Discipline, 1880–1920	2. The Behavioral Revolution, 1921–1966	3. The Post-Behavioral Period, 1967–1988	4. The Second Scientific Revolution, 1989–present
I. Subject matter		Government and formal political institutions	The political system Informal politics Political behavior	The state and state-society relations Formal political institutions Political behavior	The state and state-society relations Formal political institutions Political behavior
II. Theory	i. Metatheories	None	Structural functionalism	Theories of the state	Rational choice and game theory, rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism
	ii. Mid-range theories	None	On interest groups, political parties, political culture, bureaucracy, the military, democratization, and democratic stability	On state formation, revolutions, varieties of authoritarianism and democracy, democratic breakdowns and transitions, the military, political parties, democratic institutions, political culture, corporatism, social democracy, models of economic development, economic reform	On state collapse, civil conflict, ethnic conflict, varieties of democracy, electoral and other democratic institutions, political parties, electoral behavior, citizen attitudes, political culture, social movements, economic and policy making, varieties of capitalism
III. Methods		Case studies and some small-N comparisons	Case studies and small-N comparisons Cross-national, statistical analysis	Case studies and small-N comparisons Cross-national, statistical analysis	Case studies and small-N comparisons Cross-national, statistical analysis Within-country, statistical analysis Formal theorizing

IV. Assessment	i. Strengths theory	Establishment of a distinctive subject matter for the discipline	Attempt at metatheorizing Incorporation of a focus on societal actors	Theorizing grounded in case knowledge Growing attention to political processes and change	Emphasis on action (actors and choice) and institutions Recognition of the problem of endogeneity
	ii. Strengths empirics	Emphasis on empirical grounding in observables	More comparative analysis Broadening of empirical scope	More rigorous comparative analysis Long-term historical analysis	More comparative analysis and rigorous testing
	iii. Weaknesses theory	Formal legal approach as atheoretical and narrow	Lack of integration of mid-range theories The state as a black box and politics as an outcome of nonpolitical factors Overly structural and functionalist analysis	Lack of integration of mid-range theories	Lack of integration of mid-range theories
	iii. Weaknesses empirics	Lack systematic comparison Narrow empirical scope	Lack of testing of structural functionalism		Lack of testing of formal theories
V. Relationship to other disciplines and fields within political science, and to theories, schools, and approaches	i. Reaction against . . .	European grand theorizing and philosophies of history	History	Reductionism Evolutionism, the view that societies develop in a uniform and progressive manner Functionalism	Area studies
	ii. Borrowing from . . .	History: the German historical school Legal studies	American Politics field Sociology: Parsonian Sociology Anthropology Psychology	Sociology: Historical Sociology Marxism: Western Marxism Latin American dependency	American Politics field Economics

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VI. Research context	i. Political events and trends	The “social question” in the U.S. Gilded Age, European democratization and constitutional reform, World War I, the Russian Revolution	Great Depression, the New Deal, fascism, World War II, independence of African and Asian countries, the Cold War, McCarthyism, the civil rights movement	The Vietnam War, 1969, European social democracy, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in the South and East, global democratization, the fall of communist systems	Post–Cold War, globalization, market reforms, ethnic conflicts, 9/11, the Iraq wars
	ii. Values of comparativists	Consensus around Whig (antimajoritarian) tradition of limited democracy: conservatives and moderate liberals	Consensus around liberal values	Conflicting values: liberals, conservatives, and radicals	Consensus around democracy, but conflict over neo-liberalism and globalization

discipline with its own organizational basis, the United States opened a new path that would allow it to catch up and eventually overtake Europe.¹⁰

The Behavioral Revolution, 1921–1966

A first turning point in the evolution of U.S. political science can be conveniently dated to the 1921 publication of a manifesto for a new science of politics, which implied a departure from the historical approach embraced by many of the founders of political science in the United States, by the University of Chicago professor Charles Merriam (1874–1953) (Merriam 1921).¹¹ This publication was followed by a series of National Conferences on the Science of Politics, which were important events for the discipline, in 1923, 1924, and 1925. It was also followed by the formation of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), the world's first national organization of all the social sciences, based largely on Merriam's proposal to develop the infrastructure for research in the social sciences. And it signaled the rise of the Chicago School of political science, an influential source of scholarship in the 1920s and 1930s.¹² However, the impact of Merriam's agenda on the study of comparative politics would not be felt in full force until the behavioral revolution swept through the field in the 1950s and 1960s.

One reason the impetus for a new approach to political science was temporarily muted was that it was centered in, but also restricted to, the study of American politics. Initially, political science was conceived as practically synonymous with the study of comparative politics or, as it was usu-

10. This break with the classical social theory tradition was not a uniquely U.S. phenomenon. Indeed, as Adcock (2005) shows, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century U.S. political scientists drew on the works of German, English, and French scholars who themselves departed from the tradition of classical social theory and sought to develop a more institutional approach. But it was in the United States that the push to carve out a distinct political subject matter gained the momentum needed to establish political science as a new discipline.

11. The emphasis on science could be seen as the working out on U.S. soil of the European *Methodenstreit* (methodological controversy), which had endured from 1883 through roughly 1910 and was eventually lost by the German historical school of Ranke. But it also reflected Merriam's concern with developing a political science that moved away from speculative thinking and that, by focusing on problem solving, had policy relevance. In this sense, the call for a new science of politics had its roots in American pragmatism and the work of James and Dewey (Farr 1999).

12. The Chicago School refers to Charles Merriam himself, Harold Gosnell (1896–1997), Harold Lasswell (1902–78), Leonard White (1891–1958) and Quincy Wright (1890–1970). The label is also extended to graduate students trained at Chicago, such as Gabriel Almond (1911–2002), V. O. Key Jr. (1908–63), David Truman (1913–2003), and Herbert Simon (1916–2001), who holds the distinction of being the only political scientist ever awarded a Nobel Prize, in economics. On the Chicago School and some of its key members, see Almond (1990, 309–28; 1996, 65–68; 2002, Chs. 3 and 4).

ally called in those days, comparative government.¹³ Indeed, Burgess and other founders of political science were strong proponents of a “historical-comparative” method. But as the boundaries between political science and other disciplines were settled, another process of differentiation, leading to the formation of fields within political science, began to unfold. This secondary, internal process of differentiation reflected the increased weight of U.S.-trained Ph.D.s and cemented the view that the study of American politics was a distinct enterprise within political science. In turn, more by default than by design, comparative politics was initially constituted as a field that covered what was not covered by American politics, that is, the study of government and formal political institutions outside the United States. This would be an extremely consequential development, whose effect was noted immediately. Even though Merriam’s ideas were embraced by many in the field of American politics, the new structure of fields insulated comparativists from these new ideas.

Another reason the impact of Merriam’s agenda was not felt at once had to do with timing and, specifically, the rise of the Nazis in Germany and the onset of World War II. On the one hand, due to these events, a considerable number of distinguished European and especially German thinkers immigrated to the United States and took jobs in U.S. universities.¹⁴ And these émigrés reinserted, among other things, a greater emphasis on normative political theory in political science. On the other hand, many Americans who proposed a recasting of political science joined the U.S. government and participated in the war effort. This produced a general hiatus in political science research and put any revolution in the discipline on hold.

This transitional period came to a close with the end of World War II and the ushering in of the behavioral revolution.¹⁵ As in the 1920s, the

13. This was the case even though the term *comparative politics* had been coined some time before, in 1873, by Oxford scholar Edward Freeman (1823–92) (Freeman 1873).

14. The list of German political scientists who came to the United States includes Theodore Adorno, Hanna Arendt, Karl Deutsch, Max Horkheimer, Otto Kirchheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Hans Morgenthau, Franz Neumann, Leo Strauss, Eric Vogelien, and Karl Wittfogel.

15. Eckstein (1963, 18–23) appropriately characterizes the most influential books in comparative politics of this period—*Theory and Practice of Modern Government* (1932), by British professor Herman Finer (1898–1969), and *Constitutional Government and Politics* (1937), by German-born Harvard professor Carl Friedrich (1901–84)—as “transitional” works between the prior formal-legal literature and the subsequent behavioral literature. The advances made in these works were significant. Thus, rather than offering country-by-country discussions, as was the case of British author and ambassador to the United States James Bryce’s (1838–1922) *Modern Democracies* (1921), these two books presented institution-by-institution analyses and, going beyond a sole emphasis on formal-legal aspects, addressed political parties, interest groups, and the mass media. Yet, their approach to issues of theory and methods had changed little. That is, even though these texts made reference to political theory, they were characterized by a disjuncture between their theoretical and empirical aspects and they did not rely on rigorous

impetus for change came from the field of American politics and was led by various members of the Chicago School. But this time around the proponents of change had a more ambitious statement of their agenda and also controlled greater organizational resources, including the Committee on Political Behavior established within the SSRC in 1945.¹⁶ Moreover, the calls for change were not limited, as before, to the field of American politics. Rather, through a number of key events—an SSRC conference at Northwestern University in 1952, several programmatic statements, and, most important, the creation of the SSRC's Committee on Comparative Politics chaired by Gabriel Almond during 1954–63—behavioralism spread to comparative politics.¹⁷

Behavioralism in comparative politics, as in other fields of political science, stood for two distinct ideas. One concerned the proper subject matter of comparative politics. In this regard, behavioralists reacted against a definition of the field that restricted its scope to the formal institutions of government and sought to include a range of informal procedures and behaviors—related to interest groups, political parties, mass communication, political culture, and political socialization—that were seen as key to the functioning of the political system. A second key idea was the need for a scientific approach to matters of theory and methods. Behavioralists were opposed to what they saw as vague, rarified theory and atheoretical empirics, and argued for systematic theory and empirical testing.¹⁸ Thus, be-

methods. In sum, Finer's and Friedrich's texts represented a synthesis and maturation of traditional research that was relatively unaffected by calls for a new science of politics.

16. Three key books that gave momentum to the behavioral revolution were Lasswell and Kaplan (1950), Truman (1951), and Easton (1953). Though the influence of the Chicago School was quite patent in the launching and spread of behavioralism, in the 1950s and 1960s Yale University—where Almond, Dahl, Deutsch, Lane, Lasswell, and Lindblom taught—was the most exciting center for political science research. Also noteworthy as a site for the cross-fertilization of ideas was the Stanford Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, established in 1954 as a result of a Ford Foundation initiative. On the early impact of behavioralism, see Truman (1955); and on the political science literature of the 1940s and 1950s more broadly, see Lindblom (1997). On the SSRC and its various committees, see Sibley (2001) and Worcester (2001); and on political science at Yale during 1955–70, see Merelman (2003).

17. The statements that launched the new agenda for comparative politics included the report on the SSRC's Interuniversity Research Seminar on Comparative Politics at Northwestern University (Macridis and Cox 1953) and the programmatic papers by Kahin et al. (1955) and Almond, Cole, and Macridis (1955). On the 1952 Northwestern University conference as the birthplace of "modern comparative politics," see Eckstein (1998, 506–10); and on the SSRC Committee on Comparative Politics, see Gilman (2003, Ch. 4).

18. As Dahl (1961b, 766), a leading figure in the behavioral revolution in political science, wrote, behavioralism was "a protest movement within political science" by scholars who questioned the "historical, philosophical, and the descriptive-institutional approaches . . . of conventional political science" and who subscribed to notions of systematic theory building and empirical testing.

havioralists sought to bring about major changes in the established practices of comparative politics. And their impact on the field would be high.

Behavioralism's broadening of the field's scope beyond the government and its formal institutions opened comparative politics to a range of theoretical influences from other disciplines. The strongest influence was clearly that of sociology. Indeed, Weberian-Parsonian concepts played a central role in structural functionalism (Parsons 1951), the dominant metatheory of the time, and some of the most influential contributions to comparative politics were written by scholars trained as sociologists.¹⁹ Moreover, anthropology had some influence on structural functionalism, as did social psychology on the literature on political culture (Almond and Verba 1963). Thus, behavioralists helped political science overcome its earlier isolation from other social sciences and this reconnection to other disciplines was associated with a salutary emphasis on theorizing.

The central role given to theory was counterbalanced, however, by some shortcomings. The redefinition of the field's subject matter instigated by the behavioralists led comparativists to focus on societal actors and parties as intermediary agents between society and the state. Nonetheless, to a large extent, behavioralists focused attention on processes outside of the state and offered reductionist accounts of politics. The state was treated as a black box and, eschewing the possibility that the constitution of actors and the ways in which they interacted might be shaped by the state, politics was cast as a reflection of how social actors performed certain functions or how conflicts about economic interests were resolved politically. In other words, politics was not seen as a causal factor and a sense of the distinctiveness of comparative politics as a field of political science was thus lost.

Another shortcoming of this literature concerned the approach to theorizing as opposed to the substance of theories. The most ambitious theorizing, well represented by Almond and James Coleman's edited volume *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (1960), sought to develop a general theory of politics. Yet the key fruit of these efforts, structural functionalism,²⁰ had serious limitations. In particular, for all the talk about science among proponents of structural functionalism, much of the literature that used

19. This link with sociology was not unprecedented. For example, the influence of sociologists Pareto and Mosca is evident in Lasswell's *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (1936). But the extent of the interplay between sociologists and comparativists was much greater in this period. A prominent example of this interplay is Lipset, who wrote many influential texts on political sociology (Lipset 1959, 1960a) and has the distinction of having served as president of both the American Political Science Association (1979–80) and the American Sociological Association (1992–93).

20. Though structural functionalism was the dominant metatheory at the time, it was not the only one. On the different metatheories of this period, see Holt and Richardson (1970, 29–45).

this metatheory fell short of providing testable propositions and testing hypotheses. Another strand in the literature, more concerned with mid-range theorizing, did generate testable hypotheses and conduct empirical testing. An example was Seymour Lipset's *Political Man* (1960a), which included his widely read *American Political Science Review* article on the link between economic development and democracy (Lipset 1959). But this mode of theorizing lacked precisely what structural functionalism aimed at providing: a framework that would offer a basis for connecting and integrating mid-range theories, that is, for showing how the various parts connected to form the whole. These mid-range theories tended to draw on metatheories other than structural functionalism; for example, a Marxist notion of conflict of interests played a fairly prominent role in the works of political sociologists. Yet these metatheories were less explicitly and fully elaborated than structural functionalism.²¹ In sum, though these two literatures were parts of the same modernization school that sought to come to terms with the vast processes of socioeconomic and political change in the post-World War II years, their metatheories and mid-range theories were not linked together and hence the twin goals of generating general theory and testing hypotheses were not met.

In terms of methods, behavioralism also introduced notable changes. Though the dominant form of empirical analysis continued to be the case study and the small-N comparison, comparative analyses became more common and the scope of empirical research was expanded well beyond the traditional focus on big European countries. More attention was given to small European countries. Interest blossomed in the Third World, as comparativists turned their attention to the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa and the longstanding independent countries of Latin America.²² Moreover, comparativists studied the United States and thus broke down the arbitrary exclusion of the United States from the scope of comparative politics.²³ Another key methodological novelty was the introduction of statistical research. Such research included fairly rudimentary cross-national statistical analyses, as offered in the pioneering survey-based study *The Civic Culture*, by Almond and Sidney Verba (1963).²⁴ And it was associated with efforts to develop large-N cross-national data sets on

21. On the lack of an explicit metatheory that would frame the research agenda of political sociology, see Lipset and Bendix (1966, 6–15).

22. On the political development literature on Third World politics, see Huntington and Dominguez (1975) and Almond (1990, Ch. 9).

23. The tradition of studying the United States in comparative perspective, pioneered by de Tocqueville, would be a feature of important works in comparative politics in the 1960s (Lipset 1960a, 1963; Moore 1966; Huntington 1968).

24. For an overview of cross-national survey research through the late 1960s, see Frey (1970).

institutional and macro-variables, a key input for quantitative research, through initiatives such as the Yale Political Data Program set up by Karl Deutsch (1912–92).²⁵ Comparativists could rightly claim to be engaged in an enterprise of truly global empirical scope.

All in all, the stature of U.S. comparative politics grew considerably in the two decades after World War II. Despite its shortcoming, the field had become more theoretically oriented and more methodologically sophisticated. Moreover, the identity and institutional basis of the field was bolstered by developments such as the expansion of SSRC support for fieldwork and research, the creation of an area studies infrastructure at many research universities,²⁶ and the launching of journals specializing in comparative politics and area studies.²⁷ Comparative politics in the United States was maturing rapidly. And its new stature was evident in the new relationship established between comparativists working in the United States and scholars in Europe. In the 1960s, comparativists in the United States began reconnecting with classical social theory²⁸ and collaborating with European scholars.²⁹ But now, unlike before, the United States had a model of comparative politics to export.

25. On the Yale Political Data Program, see Deutsch et al. (1966) and the quantitative data it generated, the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (Russett et al. 1964). Another new database was Banks and Textor's *Cross-Polity Survey* (1963).

26. The expansion of area studies centers was spurred by federal funding to U.S. universities through Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. The exchange of knowledge among area students was further fostered by the establishment of area studies associations. The Association for Asian Studies (AAS) was founded in 1941, the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS) in 1948, the African Studies Association in 1957, and the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) and Middle East Studies Association (MESA) in 1966.

27. Key journals for the field as a whole included *World Politics*, a journal geared to research in comparative politics and international relations that was first published in 1948, and *Comparative Politics* and *Comparative Political Studies*, both launched in 1968. Area-focused journals were usually created by area studies associations.

28. Key European classics became more accessible to U.S. scholars with their publication in English in the 1960s. For example, Robert Michels's *Political Parties* (1915) was published in English in 1962, Russian scholar Moisei Ostrogorski's (1854–1919) *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (1902) in 1964, and Max Weber's *Economy and Society* (1914) in 1968.

29. During the behavioral period, the international links of U.S. universities were largely limited to Europe. As Almond (1997, 59) notes, of the 245 scholars associated with the SSRC's Committee on Comparative Politics since its creation in 1954 through the late 1960s, 199 were from the United States and most of the non-U.S. scholars were European. In exchanges with Europe, a key figure was Norwegian scholar Stein Rokkan, who played an important role in forums such as the Committee on Political Sociology (CPS) of the International Sociological Association (ISA), established in 1960, and in institutionalizing European social science through the creation of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in 1970. On the rebuilding and reorientation of European comparative politics after World War II, see the personal accounts in Daalder (1997a).

The Post-Behavioral Period, 1967–1988

The ascendancy of behavioralism in comparative politics came to an end in the mid-1960s or, more precisely, in 1966. Critiques of behavioralism had started earlier, in the mid-1950s, and behavioral work continued after 1966. Moreover, elaborate metatheoretical formulations by leading voices of the behavioral revolution were published in 1965 and 1966 (Easton 1965a, 1965b; Almond and Powell 1966). But these works signaled the culmination and decline of a research program rather than serving as a spur to further research. Indeed, the initiative quickly shifted away from the system-builders who had taken the lead in elaborating structural functionalism as a general theory of politics. The publication one year later of Lipset and Stein Rokkan's "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments" (1967b) marked the onset of a new intellectual agenda.³⁰

The authors who contributed to the new scholarship were diverse in many regards. Some were members of the generation, born in the 1910s and 1920s, which had brought behavioralism to comparative politics. Indeed, some of the most visible indications of change were publications authored by members of that generation, such as Lipset's collaborative work with Rokkan, Samuel Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968), and, later, Giovanni Sartori's *Parties and Party Systems* (1976).³¹ But rapidly the early works of the next generation began to reshape the field with their analyses of consociationalism (Lijphart 1968a), corporatism (Schmitter 1971), the military (Stepan 1971), authoritarianism (O'Donnell 1973), and revolution (Scott 1976; Skocpol 1979). Thus, the new literature was spawned by both members of an established generation and a generation that was just entering the field.

These authors were also diverse in terms of their national origin and the values they held. The shapers of the new agenda included several foreign-born scholars working in the United States and, for the first time, these were not only Europeans primarily from Germany.³² Moreover, the political

30. Sartori (1969, 87–94) makes a strong case for seeing Lipset and Rokkan's (1967b) work on party formation as a landmark study that departed in key ways from the previous literature.

31. The SSRC's Committee on Comparative Politics itself continued to operate until 1979 and published several works in the 1970s (Binder et al. 1971; Tilly 1975; Grew 1978) that reflected the new trends in the field. However, the intellectual agenda was not being set, as had been the case before, by this committee.

32. Among the scholars who made major contributions to comparative politics after 1967, some were born in the United States but had lived in Europe for many years (Schmitter), others were born in Europe (Linz, Sartori, Lijphart, Przeworski), and yet others had grown up in Latin America (O'Donnell). Thus, though this new group still primarily had European roots, it included for the first time voices from the Third World. In addition, this new group, unlike the group of European émigrés who came to the United States in the 1930s, had usually studied in the United States and received their Ph.D.s from U.S. universities.

values of many of these authors departed in a variety of ways from the broadly shared liberal outlook of the previous period.³³ The experience of fascism and World War II continued to weigh heavily on the minds of many scholars. But the U.S. civil rights movement (1955–65) and the Vietnam War (1959–75) had given rise to conservative and radical positions concerning democracy in the United States and U.S. foreign policy. Relatedly, outside the United States, the urgency of questions about political order and development made democracy seem like a luxury to some.

This diversity makes it hard to pinpoint the novelty and coherence of the new period in the evolution of comparative politics. On the one hand, though the emergence of a new generation was in part behind the move beyond behavioralism, the shift did not coincide solely with a generational change. Part of the new literature was authored by members of the generation born in the 1910s and 1920s and, in cases such as Lipset, these authors had even been closely associated with the behavioral literature. Moreover, many of the younger generation had been trained by behavioralists.³⁴ Thus, the new literature evolved out of, and through a dialogue with, the established literature, and not through a clean break. On the other hand, the decline in consensus around liberal values was not replaced by a new consensus but rather by the coexistence of liberal, conservative, and radical values. This lack of consensus did introduce an element of novelty, in that many of the key debates in the literature confronted authors with different values and in that the link between values and research thus became more apparent than it had been before. But these debates were not organized as a confrontation between a liberal and a new agenda. Indeed, the difference between conservatives and radicals was larger than between either of them and the liberals. Hence, the new literature cannot be characterized by a unified position regarding values.

Yet the novelty and coherence of the body of literature produced starting in 1967 can be identified in terms of the critique it made of the modernization school and the alternative it proposed. The most widely shared critique focused on the behavioralists' reductionism, that is, the idea that politics can be reduced to, and explained in terms of, more fundamental social or economic underpinnings. In turn, the alternative consisted of a re-vindication of politics as an autonomous practice and an emphasis on the importance of political determinants.³⁵ The new literature, it bears noting,

33. On the emergence of a consensus around a pluralist, liberal conception of democracy in the interwar years, see Gunnell (2004). On the conflict over values in the 1960s, see Ladd and Lipset (1975).

34. For example, Lijphart's dissertation committee was chaired by Almond and Schmitter's dissertation committee included Lipset.

35. Other important critiques concerned the evolutionism and functionalism of modern-

was not authored by system-builders but rather by scholars who rejected the work done by the system-builders of the behavioral period. Indeed, the new literature did not propose an equally elaborate and ambitious alternative framework for the study of comparative politics and hence it is most appropriate to label the new period in the evolution of field as “post-behavioral.”³⁶ But the changes introduced by the new literature were extremely significant.

The centrality given to distinctly political questions implied a redefinition of the subject matter of comparative politics. This shift did not entail a rejection of standard concerns of behavioralists, such as the study of political behavior and interest groups. But issues such as interest groups were addressed, in the literature on corporatism, for example, from the perspective of the state.³⁷ What was new, as Theda Skocpol (1985a) put it, was the attempt to “bring the state back in” as an autonomous actor and thus to see state-society relations in a new light. The new literature also brought back the formal institutions that had been cast aside by behavioralists. After all, if politics was to be seen as a causal factor, it made sense to address the eminently manipulable instruments of politics, such as the rules regulating elections, the formation of parties, and the relationship among the branches of the government.³⁸ In short, the critique of behavioralism led to a refocusing of comparative politics on the state, state-society relations, and political institutions.

The approach to theorizing also underwent change. Theorizing during this period was less geared to building a new metatheory that would replace structural functionalism and more focused on developing mid-range theories. Metatheoretical questions were debated, and a large literature on theories of the state was produced. But the frustrations with the adaptation of Parsonian categories to the study of politics led to a certain aversion to top-

ization theory. The critics of evolutionism questioned the view that societies could be seen as developing in a uniform and progressive manner and, more specifically, that the end point of history was in evidence in the United States. These critics tended to argue, as an alternative, for a historicist approach. The work of Moore (1966) and O'Donnell (1973) emphasized these themes. The critique of functionalism was slower to come to a head, and was most clearly articulated as a question of what constituted an adequate explanation by Barry (1970, 168–73) and Elster (1982). The alternative to functionalism was an approach that put emphasis on choice and actors.

36. Some critics of the behavioralist literature, who drew on Western Marxism and Latin American dependency studies, did seek to offer a new alternative paradigm (Janos 1986, Ch. 3). And this literature had some impact in comparative politics. But it was never as strong in political science as in sociology and was criticized, or simply ignored, by the scholars who pioneered the new post-behavioral agenda.

37. On this shift in perspective in the study of interest groups, see Berger (1981).

38. The revalorization of formal institutions gained impetus from the seminal works on electoral laws by Duverger (1954), a French jurist and sociologist, and Rae (1967).

heavy grand theorizing that precluded the elaboration of ambitious and encompassing frameworks, and certainly no metatheory was as dominant as structural functionalism had been in the previous period.³⁹ Hence, efforts at theorizing were not seen as part of an attempt to generate an integrated, unified theory and thus produced unconnected “islands of theory” (Guetzkow 1950). But the freedom from what was seen, by many, as a theoretical straitjacket opened up a period of great fertility and creativity. Old questions, about interest groups, political culture, and the military, continued to be studied. New questions, on matters such as state formation and revolution, varieties of authoritarianism and democracy, democratic breakdowns and transitions, democratic institutions, social democracy, and models of economic development, garnered much attention. Moreover, research on these questions did much to advance theories and concepts that brought political processes to life and to address the question of political change, a feat particularly well attained in Juan Linz’s *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (1978) and Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter’s *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986). In sum, the knowledge base of comparative politics was rapidly expanded and was increasingly shorn of reductionist connotations.⁴⁰

The story regarding methods is more complicated. To a large extent, research during this period relied on case studies and small-N comparisons. These were the staples of area studies research, which sought to capitalize on in-depth country knowledge gained usually while conducting fieldwork. In addition, the use of statistics, introduced in the previous period, continued. As before, attention was given to survey research and the generation of data sets.⁴¹ Moreover, a quantitative literature started to develop on

39. Alford and Friedland (1985) distinguish three perspectives—pluralist, managerial, and class—in the literature of these years. For a review and assessment of the theories of the state, that spans the Marxist literature, and things such as the Miliband-Poulantzas debate, as well as the literature by economists, including works by Tulloch and Buchanan and the public choice school that comparativists were barely reading in the 1980s, see Przeworski (1990).

40. Though the new literature can be read as offering an alternative to the reductionism of the modernization literature, it also filled a key gap: the analysis of political change. Structural functionalism was a theory of statics, that is, of the functioning of a system, and the discussion of change, that is, modernization, had centered on social and economic aspects. Indeed, there was very little in the literature prior to the late 1960s on political change per se. For an overview of some of the central works on comparative politics during this period, see Migdal (1983) and Rogowski (1993).

41. Two important contributions in the 1970s to the cross-national survey literature were Inglehart (1977) and Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978). Regarding data, some efforts focused on updating and improving data sets launched in the early 1960s. Banks, who had worked on the *Cross-Polity Survey* (Banks and Textor 1963), started publishing the widely used and regularly updated Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive in 1968. Two new versions of the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* were also published during this period (Taylor and

issues such as electoral behavior, public opinion, and democracy.⁴² Thus, even as structural functionalism as a metatheory was largely abandoned when the field of comparative politics altered course in the mid-1960s, the methodological dimension of behavioralism—its emphasis on systematic empirical testing—lived on.

But a methodological schism was also starting to take root. Indeed, during this period, quantitative research was not at the center of the agenda of comparative politics and, to a large extent, was ignored by scholars working within the dominant qualitative tradition. Hence, though comparativists began to take an interest in quantitative analysis in the 1960s, in tandem with political science as a whole, thereafter they started to fall behind other political scientists and especially Americanists in this regard. Precisely at a time when a concerted push to develop quantitative methods suitable for political science, and to expand training in these methods, was taking off,⁴³ comparativists followed a different path.

The relatively low impact of the quantitative literature that went by the label of “cross-national” research during this period was not due to a lack of emphasis on methods in comparative politics. In the first half of the 1970s, comparativists produced and discussed a series of methodological texts about case studies and small-N comparisons.⁴⁴ This was, relatively speaking, a period of heightened methodological awareness in comparative politics. Rather, the standing of quantitative research was due to certain limitations of this literature. As the debate on the political culture literature based on survey data shows, comparativists frequently had serious reservations about the theoretical underpinnings of much of the quantitative re-

Hudson 1972; Taylor and Jodice 1983). In addition, in the 1970s two new influential databases were created. Freedom House started to publish its annual indexes of political and civil rights in 1973 and the first version of Polity was released in 1978. For an overview of the broader, international data movement, see Scheuch (2003).

42. For an overview of the quantitative literature on electoral behavior and public opinion until the late 1980s, see Dalton (1991). On the quantitative literature on democracy, see Jackman (2001).

43. Earlier, in 1948, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan had begun summer training courses in quantitative methods. But it was the establishment of the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at Michigan in 1962 that really provided the institutional infrastructure and the motor for a turn toward a scientific, quantitatively oriented political science. Another significant marker was the admittance of political science into the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1965. The momentum continued and eventually quantitatively oriented political scientists launched a publication—*Political Methodology*, subsequently renamed *Political Analysis*—in 1975, began a tradition of annual summer methods conferences of the Society for Political Methodology in 1984, and constituted the APSA section on Political Methodology in 1985.

44. Key works published at the time on what was usually referred to as “the comparative method” include Smelser (1968, 1976), Przeworski and Teune (1970), Sartori (1970), Lijphart (1971), and Eckstein (1975). See also George (1979) and Skocpol and Somers (1980).

search.⁴⁵ In addition, the quantitative literature did not speak to some of the most pressing or theoretically relevant issues of the day. Largely due to the lack of data on many countries, quantitative research was most advanced in the study of functioning democracies, precisely at a time when most of the countries in the world were not democracies and issues such as elections, democratic institutions, and even citizen attitudes were simply not germane.⁴⁶

The rationale for this segregation of quantitative research from the mainstream of the field notwithstanding, it had important consequences for the field's evolution. Within comparative politics, this situation led to the development of two quite distinct, quantitative and qualitative, research traditions that did not talk to each other.⁴⁷ In turn, within political science, it led to a growing divide between comparativists and Americanists. Comparativists were largely aloof of advances spurred primarily by scholars in the neighboring field of American politics, where the sophistication of quantitative methods was steadily developing (Achen 1983; King 1991; Bartels and Brady 1993). Indeed, comparativists were not only not contributing to this emerging literature on quantitative methodology; they hardly could be counted among its consumers. The question of common methodological standards across fields of political science was becoming a source of irrepressible tension.

The Second Scientific Revolution, 1989–Present

A new phase in the evolution of comparative politics began with a push to make the field more scientific, propelled in great part by the American Political Science Association (APSA) section on Comparative Politics, constituted in 1989 with the aim of counteracting the fragmentation of the field induced by the area studies focus of much research. This emphasis on science, of course, was reminiscent of the behavioral revolution and statements about the limitations of area studies research even echoed calls made by behavioralists.⁴⁸ Moreover, as had been the case with the behavioral

45. For a discussion of the theoretical critiques of the quantitative political culture literature, see Johnson (2003).

46. For example, Lijphart's *Democracies* (1984), a pioneering study in the revival of institutional analysis that relies extensively on quantitative analysis, had little to say to the student of authoritarian regimes.

47. For a sense of the fundamental differences in perspective, see the counter-posed views of Sartori (1970), an advocate of qualitative research, and Jackman (1985), an advocate of quantitative research.

48. In the very first paragraph of the preface to *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Almond emphasized "the importance of moving from an 'area studies' approach . . . to a genuinely comparative and analytical one" (Almond and Coleman 1960, vii).

revolution, this second scientific revolution in comparative politics was not homegrown but, rather, was the product of the importation of ideas that had already been hatched and elaborated in the field of American politics. Nonetheless, there were some significant differences in terms of the content and impact of the behavioral revolution that swept through comparative politics in the 1950s and 1960s and the new revolution that began to alter the field in the 1990s.

The advocates of this new revolution shared the same ambition of the behavioralists who aspired to construct a general, unified theory. But they also diverged from earlier theoretical attempts to advance a science of politics in two basic ways. First, the proposed metatheories drew heavily on economics as opposed to sociology, which had been the main source of the old, structural-functionalist metatheory. This was the case of the game-theoretic version of rational choice theory, as well as of rational choice institutionalism, a related but distinct metatheory that introduced, in a highly consequential move, institutions as constraints.⁴⁹ Second, the new metatheories did not lead to a redefinition of the subject matter of comparative politics, as had been the case with behavioralism. That is, while behavioralists proposed a general theory of politics, which had direct implications for what should be studied by comparativists, rational choice theorists advanced what was, at its core, a general theory of action.⁵⁰ Indeed, rational choice theory offers certain elements to study decision making under constraints, but these elements do not identify what is distinctive about political action in contrast to economic or social action. In effect, rational choice theory is seen as a unifying theory, which can integrate theories about action in different domains, precisely because it is not held to apply to any specific domain of action.

49. This argument about economics and sociology deserves some clarification. During the previous period comparativists had drawn on the work of economists, but these tended to be historical or institutional economists in the tradition of Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), such as Gerschenkron, or relatively unorthodox economists, such as Hirschman. In turn, some sociologists, including prominent scholars such as Coleman (1990a) and Goldthorpe (2000), have embraced rational choice theory. But even sociologists that focused on the economy and economic action tended to see the economy as part of society and rational action as a variable (Smelser and Swedberg 1994).

The popularity of rational choice theory in political science owed much to the work of William Riker (1920–93), of Rochester University. In turn, rational choice institutionalism owed much to the widely read book by the economist North (1990). For Riker's programmatic statements, see Riker (1977, 1990); on Riker and the Rochester school, see Amadae and Bueno de Mesquita (1999). For a discussion of the origins of rational choice theory, and the key role played by the RAND Corporation, see Amadae (2003). For an early though largely ignored call for political scientists to shift from theories drawn from sociology to economics, see Mitchell (1969).

50. On the sense in which rational choice theory might be considered a general theory, see Munck (2001).

In turn, with regard to methods, the drive to be more scientific took two forms. One, closely linked with rational choice theorizing, was the emphasis on logical rigor in theorizing, which was taken much farther than had been the case before with the advocacy of formal theorizing or formal modeling as a method of theorizing.⁵¹ The other, much more of an outgrowth of the methodological aspirations of behavioralists and the maturation of political methodology, centered on the use of quantitative, statistical methods of empirical testing.⁵²

The impact of this new agenda with three prongs—rational choice, formal theory, and quantitative methods—has been notable. Some rational choice analyses in comparative politics had been produced in earlier years.⁵³ But after 1989 the work gradually became more formalized and addressed a growing number of issues, such as democratization (Przeworski 1991, 2005), ethnic conflict and civil war (Fearon and Laitin 1996), voting (Cox 1997), government formation (Laver 1998), and economic policy (Bates 1997a). An even more formidable shift took place regarding quantitative research. Political events, especially the global wave of democratization, made the questions and methods that had been standard in the field of American politics more relevant to students of comparative politics. Moreover, there was a great expansion of available data sets. New cross-national time series were produced on various economic concepts, on broad political concepts such as democracy and governance, and on a variety of political institutions.⁵⁴ There was also a huge growth of survey data, whether of the type pioneered by Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes's *The American Voter* (1960)—the national election studies

51. It bears clarifying that there is not a necessary link between rational choice theory and formal theorizing. There is rational choice theorizing that is advanced without formal methods, and formal methods can be linked to other theories.

52. Though these two forms of methods are in principle supplementary, their respective users have at times been critical of each other. For example, Green, an advocate of quantitative methods, strongly criticized the failure of formal theorists to produce empirical results (Green and Shapiro 1994); and the tendency of some quantitative researchers to engage in “mindless number crunching” has been criticized by formal theorists. Nonetheless, there has been a definite push to bridge the gap between formal theories and quantitative empirical methods (Morton 1999; Camerer and Morton 2002). One important NSF-supported initiative in this regard has been the summer institutes on Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models (EITM), running from 2002 to 2005.

53. Samuel Popkin's *The Rational Peasant* (1979), which was read as a rational choice response to James Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976), was one of the first widely discussed applications of rational choice theory to a question of concern to comparativists. Another key early work was Bates's *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (1981). For reviews that address this earlier literature, see Bates (1990) and Keech, Bates, and Lange (1991).

54. One important source of economic data was Penn World Tables (Summers and Heston 1991). For an overview of data sets on politics, see Munck and Verkuilen (2002) and Munck (2005).

model—or the broader and explicitly cross-national surveys such as the regional barometers and the World Values Survey.⁵⁵ And, as the infrastructure for quantitative research in comparative politics was strengthened, the number and the sophistication of statistical works increased rapidly.

Some of this statistical research, such as Adam Przeworski et al.'s *Democracy and Development* (2000), revisited old debates about the determinants and effects of democracy. Yet other works focused on electoral behavior and citizen attitudes, and the legislative and executive branches of government, issues that had long been concerns within American politics. Also, going beyond the kind of cross-national, statistical analysis familiar to comparativists since the 1960s, this quantitative research began to use within-country, statistical analysis, a standard practice in the field of American politics. Moreover, though much of this work was not linked or at best poorly linked with formal theorizing, even this gap was gradually overcome, especially in the work of economists who began to work on standard questions of comparative politics (Persson and Tabellini 2000, 2003).

However, in spite of the significant change brought about in the field of comparative politics by this new literature, the agenda of the second scientific revolution did not bring about as profound a transformation of comparative politics as the behavioral revolution did in the 1950s and early 1960s. The effect of this agenda was limited due to opposition from the Perestroika movement, a discipline-wide reaction to the renewed emphasis on scientific approaches to the study of politics.⁵⁶ But another key factor was the existence of other well-established approaches to theory and methods. Indeed, the post-1989 period has lacked anything as dominant as structural functionalism or the modernization school had been during the behavioral period, and is best characterized as a period of pluralism. In contrast, the new revolution in comparative politics triggered a heightened awareness about issues of theory and methods among a broad range of comparativists, which has led to real diversity and a relatively healthy interaction among scholars holding different views.

The most polarizing issue has been the status of rational choice theory. There is undeniably something to claims that many comparativists have blindly rejected the ideas of rational choice theorists and, likewise, there is a basis for the worries expressed by some regarding the hegemonic aspira-

55. The first regional barometer, the Eurobarometer, began operations in 1973. The other barometers started to track public opinion in post-communist nations in 1991, in Latin America in 1995, in Africa in 1999, and in Asia in 2001. The World Values Survey started collecting data in 1990–91. On these and other cross-national surveys, see Norris (2004).

56. The Perestroika movement started in October 2000 with an e-mail sent by an anonymous “Mr. Perestroika” to a number of political scientists, criticizing trends in the American Political Science Association (APSA) and the association’s flagship journal, the *American Political Science Review*. On the Perestroika movement, see Monroe (2005).

tions of rational choice theorists (Lichbach 2003). But the polemics surrounding rational choice theory have actually diverted attention away from a core problem. The introduction of rational choice theory in the field has had a salutary effect, because it has forced scholars to sharpen their proposals of alternative views and helped to structure theoretical debates. Indeed, the contrast between rational choice theory and structural approaches, and between institutional and cultural approaches, has helped to frame some of the thorniest theoretical issues faced in the field. Nonetheless, as rational choice theorists began to include institutions in their analysis, and as debate centered on rational choice institutionalism (Weingast 2002) and historical institutionalism (Thelen 1999; Pierson and Skocpol 2002) as the two main alternatives, it became hard to detect precisely what was distinctive about these metatheories.⁵⁷

The convergence on institutions has served to highlight that rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism face a common issue, the fact that the institutions seen as constraints on politicians are themselves routinely changed by politicians or, in other words, that institutions are endogenous to the political process. But these different metatheories have not proposed well-defined solutions to this core issue in the analysis of political action, failing to distinguish clearly and to link theories of statics and dynamics. Moreover, these metatheories fail even to differentiate appropriately among issues related to a general theory of action as opposed to a general theory of politics. Hence, despite a lot of talk about paradigms, the basis for either a debate among, or an attempt at synthesis of, these different metatheories remains rather clouded.

A different situation developed concerning methodology. Along with the increased use of quantitative methods, there was a reinvigoration of qualitative methodology. This process was initiated practically single-handedly by David Collier with a critical assessment of the state of the literature (Collier 1991, 1993).⁵⁸ It was fueled by Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba's influential *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994) and various critiques of small-N research.⁵⁹ And it was consolidated with important new statements about qualitative methodology (Brady and Collier 2004; George and Bennett 2005).⁶⁰ In addition, this revival of interest

57. On these and other metatheories commonly used in comparative politics in the 1990s, see Hall and Taylor (1996) and Lichbach and Zuckerman (1997).

58. Collier is also the author, with Ruth Berins Collier, of *Shaping the Political Arena* (Collier and Collier 1991), a book that was widely seen as an exemplar of rigorous qualitative research.

59. Important critiques of small-N research, which were important precursors of King, Keohane, and Verba's (1994) implicit critique of standard practices, were authored by Geddes (1991) and Lieberman (1991).

60. This process has also led to the institutionalization of research and training in qualita-

in qualitative methodology was associated with various efforts to build bridges among different methodologies, whether through an exploration of the link between statistical, large-N methods and qualitative, small-N research (Brady and Collier 2004); the use of case studies as a tool to test formal theories, a proposal advanced by advocates of “analytical narratives” (Bates et al. 1998; Rodrik 2003), and the possibility of “a tripartite methodology, including statistics, formalization, and narrative,” an option articulated by David Laitin (2002, 630–31; 2003). Thus, the debate about methods, in contrast to the debate about theory, has led to a clear sense of the potential contributions of different methods and hence to the identification of a basis for synthesis.

Finally, in terms of substantive research, the influence of rational choice theory has no doubt increased the influence of ideas from economics in comparative politics and this has opened new avenues of research (Miller 1997). But unlike in the 1950s, the new scientific revolution of the 1990s did not bring a major shift in the focus of empirical research. Rather, there is a great degree of continuity with regard to the mid-range theorizing that had been done during the previous fifteen to twenty years. And it is noteworthy that, at this level of theorizing, the cross-fertilization among researchers coming from different traditions is not uncommon. Thus, though charges of economic imperialism have been made and in some instances might be justifiable, the relationship between economics and comparative politics has been a two-way street. Some economists have taken comparative politics seriously, drawing in particular on the insights about political institutions offered by comparativists. The work of economists has been used by comparativists to revitalize research on central issues such as the state and citizenship (Przeworski 2003). And economists have revisited debates launched by classics of comparative historical analysis, such as Barrington Moore’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), and of area studies research, such as Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto’s *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1979).⁶¹ Indeed, when it comes to substantive research, the cleavage lines between rational choice theorists and the rest, between formal and verbal theorists, and between quantitative and qualitative researchers, lose a large degree of their force.

This disjuncture between the programmatic statements that, since 1989, have so often emphasized divisions regarding issues of theory and methods,

tive methods through the initiation of an annual training institute on qualitative research methods, run by the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM) in 2002, and the founding of the APSA section on Qualitative Methods in 2003.

61. This book was first published in Spanish in 1969. For the new research by economists, see Sokoloff and Engerman (2000) and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006). On the links between these classics of comparative politics and recent research by economists, see Przeworski (2004a).

and the actual practices of comparativists, is attributable to many factors. The lack of clarity regarding the differences among metatheories, and the fact that methods are after all only tools, are surely contributing factors. But this disjuncture is also probably associated with the values held by comparativists. After 1989, consensus among comparativists concerning democracy as a core value has been high enough to override divisions rooted in contentious issues such as neo-liberalism and globalization. And, given this consensus, passions usually flamed by conflicts over political values, a feature of the previous period in the history of comparative politics, have been channeled instead into debates about theory and methods. As a consequence, research in comparative politics has lost something, due to a relative lack of value-driven engagement of comparativists with politics. But the field has also gained something, as attested by the production of a rich and rigorous literature, many times drawing on different traditions, on big and pressing questions.⁶²

Conclusion

This retrospective on comparative politics suggests that the field has made significant progress. Metatheories have come and gone. The relationship with other fields of political science and with sister disciplines has changed repeatedly. Yet, despite this instability, a focus on a distinctively political subject matter has become largely the norm, mid-range theorizing on a range of important questions has grown steadily, and the methods used in the field have become increasingly sophisticated. Comparativists have accomplished a lot and produced a vast amount of knowledge about politics around the world.

But there are a number of shortcomings. The first concerns theory. The proliferation of mid-range theorizing has yielded valuable insights about politics but also fragmentary knowledge. Yet, comparativists have largely abandoned the aspiration of the system-builders who sought to elaborate an explicit metatheory of politics in the 1950s and 1960s. In turn, despite some recent attempts to integrate theories of statics and dynamics, there is a strong tendency to segregate the study of statics, which takes key parameters of the analysis as given and fixed, from the study of dynamics, which is

62. For a broad overview of research in comparative politics during this period, see Laitin (2002). For overviews on more delimited research agendas, see the chapters by Barnes, McAdam et al., Hall and Migdal in Lichbach and Zuckerman (1997), and by Kohli, Alt, Gamm and Huber, Geddes, and Thelen in Katznelson and Milner (2002). On the contributions of the comparative historical tradition, see the chapters by Goldstone, Amenta, and Mahoney in Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003), and on area studies scholarship, see Szanton (2004). See also Wiarda (2002).

concerned precisely with the change of these parameters and thus does not take them as given. Thus, a key challenge facing comparativists is the development of a general or unified theory of politics, which integrates both mid-range theories of various substantive issues and theories of statics and dynamics.

The second shortcoming concerns empirics. Despite major advances in recent times, comparativists lack good measures for many of the concepts used in their theories. Likewise, despite significant improvements, comparativists still rarely use methods that would subject their hypotheses to rigorous testing. A telltale sign of the magnitude of the challenge concerning empirical analysis is that much research that is given the label of comparative politics is not even strictly speaking comparative, that is, it does not compare at the very least two political systems. Taken together, these limitations seriously weaken comparativists' ability to produce strong findings. Thus, another challenge facing comparativists is the establishment of robust, broad empirical generalizations about world politics.

How comparativists might fruitfully go about tackling these challenges is a complex question, which goes beyond the scope of this chapter. But some broad lessons can be drawn from the history of the field. Comparative politics has been and remains a diverse field and many times comparativists have shown that this diversity can be a source of strength. But comparativists have also shown a tendency to accentuate paralyzing or distracting divisions. Thus, if the field is going to further contribute to its mission to develop a global science of politics, it is imperative that comparativists work with a greater sense of common purpose. And this will only be possible when comparativists recognize two fundamental points. One is that the study of politics is inextricably linked with normative concerns and that, in the absence of an explicit consideration of the values involved in politics, the stakes and rationale of research will be obscured. A second point is that, to answer normatively important questions, researchers must not only be passionate about their subject matter. In addition, it is necessary that they use appropriate scientific methods.

What is required, in short, is an appreciation of both the depth of the roots of comparative politics in a humanistic tradition and the vital importance of its scientific aspirations. The souls of comparativists are not stirred solely by a substantive interest in global politics and, even less so, by the methods used to learn about this subject matter. Hence the future of comparative politics is likely to hinge on the ability of comparativists to overcome weakening divisions and to blend their concern with substance and method, politics and science.