

**Comparative Politics Candidacy Examination – Prof. Shabad  
Autumn 2010  
Day 1- eight hours**

*Directions:* Answer four of the following questions, two each from parts A and B. Note that certain questions cannot be combined.

*Important:* In questions where a choice of theoretical arguments or body of literature is given to you, you may not use the same body of research that is discussed in any other question. Also, be sure to provide empirical evidence in support of your claims.

PART A: Please answer **TWO** of the following questions. You may **NOT** respond to both questions #3 and #4.

- 1) “The idea that a high concentration of wealth leads to intensified class conflict and democratic instability goes back at least as far as Aristotle” (Kaufman 2009). What are the political consequences of economic inequality?
- 2) Initially many scholars had expected the pressures of global integration would undermine distinctive national political economies, leading to convergence around a single – presumably liberal – model of economic organization. While globalization has certainly induced change, few contemporary observers would make the case that a race-to-the-bottom that induced convergence has occurred. Indeed, literatures like the ‘varieties of capitalism’ (and its extensions to the developing world), or scholarship on the causes of, and reactions to, neoliberal reform in the developing world have underscored the continued viability of qualitatively distinct domestic political economies in the era of globalization. Consider either the advanced industrial countries or the developing world. First, outline the contemporary range of variation in the shape of the domestic political economy, highlighting what has, and what has not, changed over the course of the past 30 years of global economic integration. Second, consider the factors that might explain whatever pattern of convergence/divergence around/from liberal orthodoxy that you outlined. Be sure to provide empirical support for your explanation for what drives movement toward liberalism and what supports the survival of non-orthodox alternatives. If, alternatively, you reject the question’s premise and do not think that globalization has induced any significant degree of convergence, please account for the observed movement in a more liberal direction across many quite different political economies.
- 3) What advice might comparativists have for emerging democracies contemplating constitutional engineering to enhance the government’s (a) stability, (b) cohesion, (c) decisiveness, and (d) clarity of responsibility?

**OR**

- 4) Under what circumstances is ethnic heterogeneity compatible with stable democracy? Under what conditions is it not? Are there specific institutions that render the two compatible? Are there other types of arrangements that increase the threat to democracy posed by ethnic divisions? Illustrate your argument with reference to empirical cases from two world regions.

PART B: Please answer TWO of the following questions. You may NOT respond to both questions #7 and #8.

- 5) Recent research in the study of comparative politics has sought to establish the micro-foundations of macro-level political outcomes.
- Illustrate this trend in the field of comparative politics by discussing two or three examples, providing a critique of each that states whether scholars have adequately achieved this goal through their work.
  - Stake a claim as to why such foundations are, or are not, necessary for the field.
- 6) ‘Causal inference’ plays an increasingly important role in political science. Discuss some of the ways in which social scientists attempt to establish causality with observational data. Discuss how some classic contributions fare relative to the gold standard(s) you identify. What do you think should be the role of causal inference in comparative politics? Which alternative goals do you see? Are there trade-offs?
- 7) Of late, there has been an increase in production of arguments that are in one way or another path-dependent in their structure. This has frequently taken place in the same literature in which more traditional arguments of an “if X, then Y” nature are also commonplace. This raises important research design questions about the appropriate ways in which path-dependent and path-independent arguments can be tested against each other. Consider any one of the following literatures:
- party system development or electoral institution development;
  - regime formation;
  - welfare state development and/or retrenchment.
- For this literature, lay out characteristic path-dependent and non-path-dependent accounts, and develop a discussion of the distinctive challenges involved in comparatively evaluating the two types of arguments on an empirical basis. What research design has done this most appropriately? What should be improved in it? Or, alternatively, if this has not been accomplished successfully, please sketch out what you think would be an appropriate research design for evaluating the competing hypotheses you have laid out.

**OR**

- 8) Comparative politics is deluged with cross-national regressions attempting to isolate the marginal effect of some variable of interest on an important political outcome. Often such regressions attempt to control for regime type, which is dealt with either as a dichotomous variable (democracy vs. non-democracy) or a continuous one. What does it mean to control for regime type? Is there a correct way to do so? Making use of at least two examples, explain why.