

University of Notre Dame
Department of Political Science
Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics – Driessen
May 2007

Part I: (Please respond to one of the following questions.)

Question I

Describe the contributions of three works in the canon written before 1975 and three works written in 1990 or after. What theoretical insights have they contributed, and/or what body of literature did they launch? Have their insights been largely supported or unsupported by research that has followed? What accounts for the lasting impact of the older works? In twenty years from now, will the newer works still be on this list of the “best-known”? Why or why not?

Question II

John Stuart Mill’s method of similarity and method of difference could be said to be the classic methods of comparative politics. Contrast these Millian methods with a) a statistical approach such as regression and b) process-tracing. What do these newer methods have in common with Mill’s methods? What is different about them? Are they improvements? Are Mill’s methods now obsolete?

Part II: (Please respond to one of the following questions.)

Parties and Elections

Are political parties less important in democratic politics today than 50 years ago, as Philippe Schmitter claims in his article, “Parties Are Not What They Once Were?”

Regimes and Regime Change

Some attempts to understand democratization (some of which may deserve to be called “theories”; others may be merely “hypotheses,” “propositions,” “frameworks,” or “approaches”) call attention to processes at the micro level, such as strategic bargaining among elites and pact-making. Other attempts to understand democratization call attention to factors and processes at the macro level, such as class structure, modernization, social cleavages, institutions, characteristics of the state, or diffusion. If you were going to write a dissertation on democratization, would you rather a) work exclusively at the micro level, b) work exclusively at the macro level, or c) try to bridge these levels of analysis? Why? Justify your decision by discussing one book or article on democratization that inspires you and contrasting it with two others that you consider inferior in some way.

Part III: (Please respond to the following question)

Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion/Africa

Individuals have multiple social identities and there has been a great deal of debate about what makes certain social identities more or less politically salient than others. Compare and contrast the major arguments put forward to explain why ethnic identity has been more politically salient in sub-Saharan than in many other regions of the world and then offer some explanations for the variation in the political salience of ethnic identity that we find *within* sub-Saharan Africa. Further, explain why religious identity may be more politically salient in Nigeria than in Kenya. Would you say that politicized religious identity is necessarily more or less economically and politically destabilizing than politicized ethnic identity? Why or why not?