

University of Notre Dame
Department of Political Science
Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics – Schuenke
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?”

Social Movements and Revolution

Given the high, individualized, and certain costs of participation in response to grievances and the diffuse and uncertain benefits, many scholars suggest that rational people should never rebel. That they sometimes do rebel anyway leads scholars to posit “solutions” to the rebel’s dilemma, or ways that rebels overcome the problem of collective action. Some posit theories that are intended to be broadly generalizable, and they claim that certain variables are consistently important for explaining why people protest. Others assert that there is no single “solution” to the rebel’s dilemma and that instead the collective action problem could be solved in a variety of ways. In your opinion, are there some variables that must be present for protest to emerge? If so, what are these critical variables, and what is the evidence that they matter? Or is it more of a grab bag, with some variables relevant in certain circumstances and other variables relevant in other circumstances? If you believe the latter, what is your evidence, and what then is the best that we can hope to accomplish by studying political protest and rebellion? Support your answer

with empirical examples from at least three different social movements, protests, revolutions, or grievances that were expected to generate protest but did not. Be sure to provide clear definitions of all terms and concepts.

Part III: (Please respond to the following question)

The State/Latin America

For many years, scholars of Latin America have spoken of “state failure.” Have states in the region, in fact, failed? Is state failure more glaring in some countries than in others? Is state failure more glaring in some policy areas than in others? Write an essay that sketches out where – in what countries and in what policy areas – you believe states have failed – or succeeded – in Latin America. Then mount an argument for *why* you judge these states to have succeeded or failed. Please refer to at least three countries in your answer. If you choose to go beyond three countries, you may deal with additional cases briefly and schematically.