

Comparative Government

Dr Chao-Yo Cheng



Weel 1: Comparing



Today's plan

- ▶ Module organization and logistics (30 mins)
 - Module organization
 - Weekly syllabus and assessment
 - Student support and ground rules
- ▶ Refresher lecture and Q&A (1-1.5 hr)
 - Why and what to compare
 - Theory as explanation
 - Case selection, empirical strategies and research design
- ▶ Reading exercise: "Democratic Development in Africa" (1 hr)



Module organization



- ▶ Students can opt to attend one of the two sections listed below
 - Tuesdays, 2-5pm (BCB 208): Dr Chao-Yo Cheng (convenor)
 - Wednesdays, 6-9pm (BCB 312): Dr Kevin Manton
- ▶ Activities: Q&A, "refresher" lecture, reading exercise/workshop etc

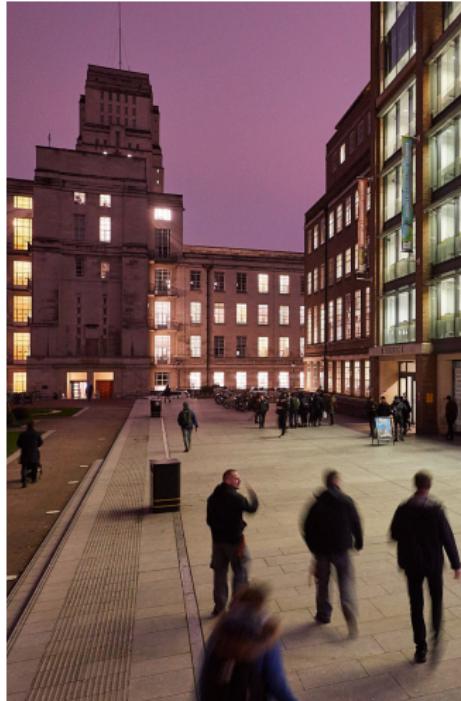


Assessment

- ▶ Seminar log (20%): a structured write-up of the discussion addressing both Sections 1 and 2 in the **lecture** outline (500 words max)
- ▶ Mini critical review (20%): a critical review of a selected **seminar** article between Weeks 1-4 in light of class discussion of the chosen week (500 words max)
- ▶ Essay (60%): a synthetic **analysis** of based on a recent event in the past 12 months (1,500 words max)



Student support



Module convenor

- ▶ Office hours (Friday 2-4pm)
- ▶ c.cheng@bbk.ac.uk

Module administration

- ▶ Ask (<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/ask>)
- ▶ fhss-edusss@bbk.ac.uk

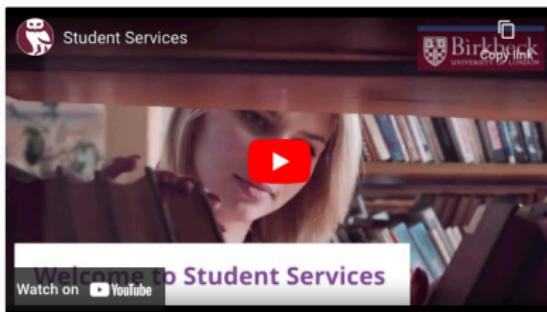
Student Services



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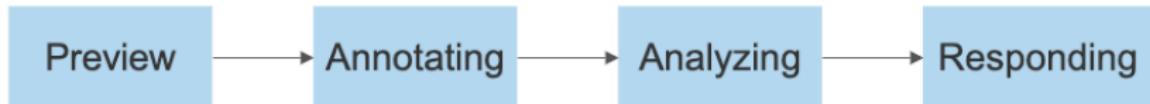


Ground rules and tips

- ▶ **Active learning:** We embrace *interactive* learning; come to in-person seminars/tutorials, having watched the lecture videos and completed the readings for the week
- ▶ **Stability with flexibility:** We aim for stability, but acknowledge the need for flexibility
- ▶ **Good communication:** We want to make this *fantastic*; please be your own best advocate and give us feedback and constructive suggestions
- ▶ **Safety:** We all want to keep you safe during your year at Birkbeck but need to work collaboratively with you to make that happen



Strategic/deep reading in social sciences (UC Berkeley)



- ▶ **Preview:** Get as much information about the reading before you actually read it
- ▶ **Annotating:** Read with a pencil and making notes as you read
- ▶ **Analyzing:** Break the reading apart to see how different parts relate to each other
- ▶ **Responding:** Think again how the reading relates the topic of each week; come up with questions



STUDY SKILLS

We offer online and face-to-face advice, guidance and support to help all Birkbeck students develop the study skills they need for academic success at university. This includes:

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- Specialist, subject-based help via our [Learning Development Tutors and resources](#).
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Find out more about the new online writing tool that will help you improve your assignments.

ONLINE TUTORIALS

We offer a range of online resources to help you study effectively and fulfil your potential.

<https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/learning-development>



“Refresher” lecture

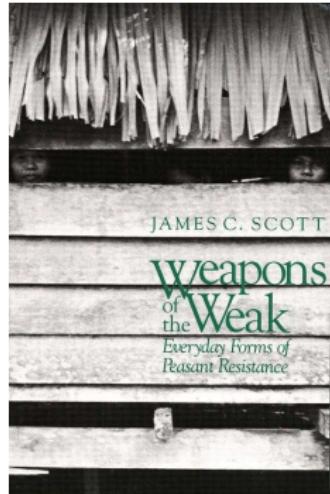
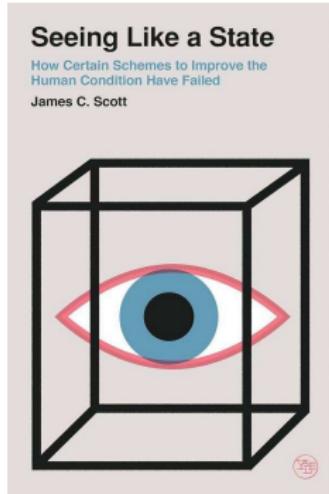
- ▶ Why and what to compare
- ▶ Theory as explanation
- ▶ Case selection, empirical strategies and research design



Why and what to compare

- ▶ **Why compare:** From state-sponsored area studies to theory-driven "comparative politics"
- ▶ What to compare?
 - Cross-sectional: Cross-national (global/regional) versus single-country
 - Over time: Historical versus contemporary
 - Key: Scope condition and "variations"





<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/28/books/james-scott-dead.html>







<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/gallery/2016/feb/09/one-hundred-years-of-soas-in-pictures>



Why and what to compare

- ▶ Why compare: From state-sponsored area studies to theory-driven "comparative politics"
- ▶ **What to compare?**
 - Cross-sectional: Cross-national (global/regional) versus single-country
 - Over time: Historical versus contemporary
 - Key: Scope condition and "variations"



Cross-national: Natural resources and authoritarianism



Volume 73, Number 4 - October 2011

World Politics

Article contents

Abstract

References

Does Oil Hinder Democracy?

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 13 June 2011

Michael L. Ross

Show author details ▾

Article Metrics

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66 Cite

Abstract

Some scholars suggest that the Middle East's oil wealth helps explain its failure to democratize. This article examines three aspects of this "oil impedes democracy" claim. First, is it true? Does oil have a consistently antidemocratic effect on states, once other factors are accounted for? Second, can this claim be generalized? Is it true only in the Middle East or elsewhere as well? Is it true for other types of mineral wealth and other types of commodity wealth or only for oil? Finally, if oil does have antidemocratic properties, what is the causal mechanism?

The author uses pooled time-series cross-national data from 113 states between 1971 and 1997 to show that oil exports are strongly associated with authoritarian rule; that this effect is not limited to the Middle East; and that other types of mineral exports have a similar antidemocratic effect, while other types of commodity exports do not.

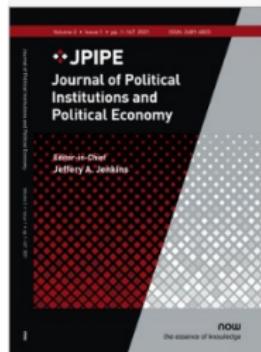
The author also tests three explanations for this pattern: a "rentier effect," which suggests that resource-rich governments use low tax rates and patronage to dampen democratic pressures; a "repression effect," which holds that resource wealth enables governments to strengthen their internal security forces and hence repress popular movements; and a "modernization effect," which implies that growth that is based on the export of oil and minerals will fail to bring about the social and cultural changes that tend to produce democratic government. He finds at least limited support for all three effects.



Regional: Pandemic and support for regional integration

Volume 2, Issue 1

11 March 2021



Article Contents

Determinants Of Public Support For European Integration

Data And Methodology

Results

Conclusion

References

RESEARCH ARTICLE | MARCH 11 2021

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Public Support for European Integration: Evidence from Germany

Jay N. Krehbiel; Sivaram Cheruvu

+ Author & Article Information

Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy (2021) 2 (1): 63–80.

<https://doi.org/10.1561/113.00000030>

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The European Union increasingly relies on the willingness of citizens to support the delegation of authority from their national governments to European institutions. Major policy crises have the ability to profoundly shape public support and opposition to greater European integration. In this article, we consider the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for public support of greater European integration. We build on the utilitarian approaches to develop an account of the pandemic's implications for citizens' views on the need for more EU-level policy making. We contend that higher levels of concern for COVID-19 correspond to higher support for further European integration. We then go on to argue that this relationship is conditioned by ideology. We find support for our hypotheses using a nationally-representative survey of 4400 German respondents fielded in April and May 2020.

Keywords: European Union, European integration, public opinion, COVID-19 pandemic



National (w/o comparison): Pandemic and attitudes towards benefits in the United Kingdom

Journal of Social Policy (2025), 54, 714–733
doi:10.1017/S0047279423000466

ARTICLE



Welfare attitudes in a crisis: How COVID exceptionalism undermined greater solidarity

Robert de Vries¹ , Ben Baumberg Geiger² , Lisa Scullion³ , Kate Summers⁴ , Daniel Edmiston⁵ , Jo Ingold⁶, David Robertshaw⁷ and David Young⁸

¹University of Kent, Canterbury, UK, ²King's College London, London, UK, ³University of Salford, Salford, UK, ⁴London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, ⁵University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, ⁶Deakin University, Burwood, Australia, ⁷Leeds University Business School, Leeds, UK and ⁸University of Bath, Bath, UK

Corresponding author: Robert de Vries; Email: r.devries@kent.ac.uk

(Received 18 November 2022; revised 15 August 2023; accepted 24 August 2023; first published online 04 October 2023)



Abstract

COVID-19 had the potential to dramatically increase public support for welfare. It was a time of apparent increased solidarity, of apparently deserving claimants, and of increasingly widespread exposure to the benefits system. However, there are also reasons to expect the opposite effect: an increase in financial strain fostering austerity and self-interest, and thermostatic responses to increasing welfare generosity. In this paper, we investigate the effects of the pandemic on attitudes towards working-age unemployment benefits in the UK using a unique combination of data sources: (i) temporally fine-grained data on attitudinal change over the course of the pandemic; and (ii) a novel nationally representative survey contrasting attitudes towards pandemic-era and pre-pandemic claimants (including analysis of free-text responses). Our results show that the pandemic prompted little change in UK welfare attitudes. However, we also find that COVID-era unemployment claimants were perceived as substantially more deserving than those claiming prior to the pandemic. This contrast suggests a strong degree of 'COVID exceptionalism' – with COVID claimants seen as categorically different from conventional claimants, muting the effect of the pandemic on welfare attitudes overall.

Keywords: welfare attitudes; COVID-19; structural topic models; free-text responses



National (w/ comparison): Community organizations and local public goods provision in rural China

American Political Science Review

Vol. 101, No. 2 May 2007

DOI: 10.1017/S0003055407070153

Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China

LILY L. TSAI *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Why would government officials in authoritarian and transitional systems where formal democratic and bureaucratic institutions of accountability are often weak ever provide more than the minimum level of public goods needed to maintain social stability? Findings from a unique combination of in-depth case study research and an original survey of 316 villages in rural China indicate that even when formal accountability is weak, local officials can be subject to unofficial rules and norms that establish and enforce their public obligations. These informal institutions of accountability can be provided by encompassing and embedding solidary groups. Villages where these types of groups exist are more likely to have better local governmental public goods provision than villages without these solidary groups, all other things being equal.



Timing matters: “Endogenous” democratization



A Quarterly Journal of
International Relations

Volume 74, Number 4 October 2012

World Politics

Article contents

Extract

References

Endogenous Democratization

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 13 June 2011

Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes

Article

Metrics

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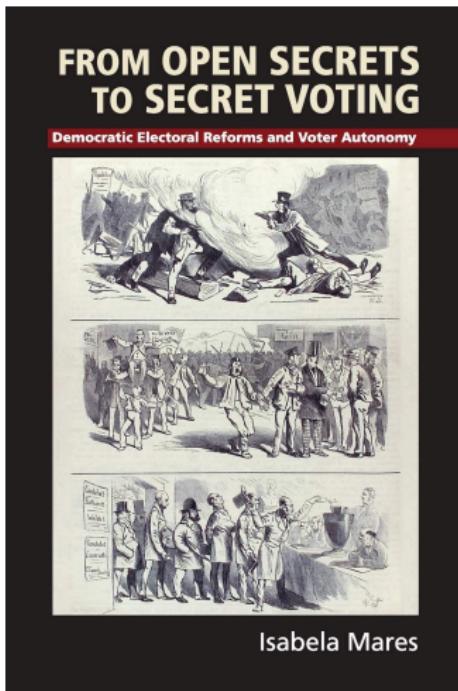
Cite

Extract

The authors show that economic development increases the probability that a country will undergo a transition to democracy. These results contradict the finding of Przeworski and his associates, that development causes democracy to last but not to come into existence in the first place. By dealing adequately with problems of sample selection and model specification, the authors discover that economic growth does cause nondemocracies to democratize. They show that the effect of economic development on the probability of a transition to democracy in the hundred years between the mid-nineteenth century and World War II was substantial, indeed, even stronger than its effect on democratic stability. They also show that, in more recent decades, some countries that developed but remained dictatorships would, because of their development, be expected to democratize in as few as three years after achieving a per capita income of \$12,000 per capita.



History is useful: German elections in the 19th century

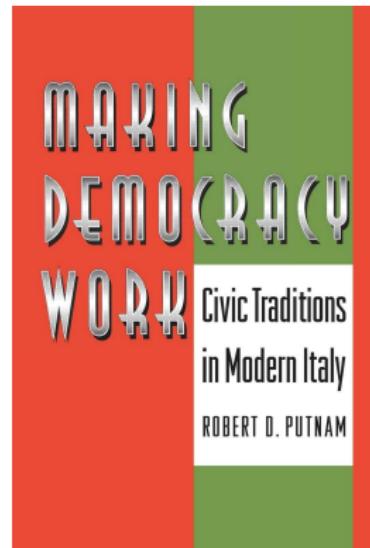
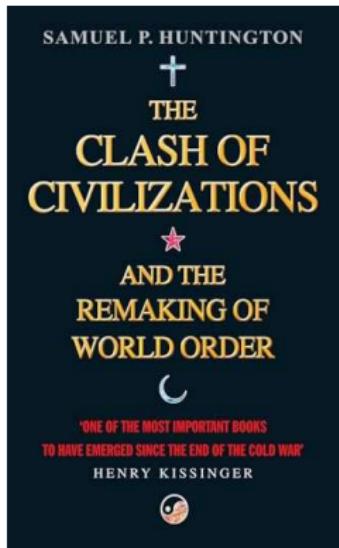
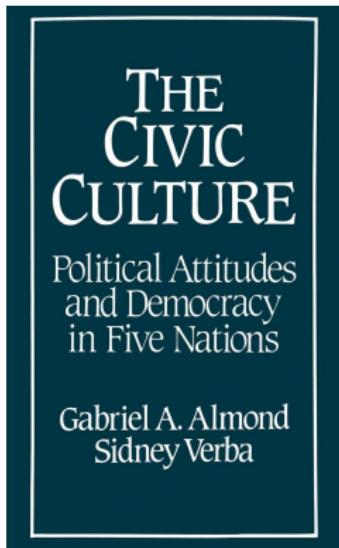


Theory and concepts in comparative politics

- ▶ Key concepts
 - Regime, government and governance (and where institutions fit in?)
 - Power (capacity) versus authority (rights)
- ▶ Why theory matters or not
 - Theory as explanation
 - Theory as ideology
- ▶ Question: Can/should culture be used to explain politics? How about "personal" experiences and identity?



Culture and politics



Oil, Islam, and Women

MICHAEL L. ROSS *University of California, Los Angeles*

Women have made less progress toward gender equality in the Middle East than in any other region. Many observers claim this is due to the region's Islamic traditions. I suggest that oil, not Islam, is at fault; and that oil production also explains why women lag behind in many other countries. Oil production reduces the number of women in the labor force, which in turn reduces their political influence. As a result, oil-producing states are left with atypically strong patriarchal norms, laws, and political institutions. I support this argument with global data on oil production, female work patterns, and female political representation, and by comparing oil-rich Algeria to oil-poor Morocco and Tunisia. This argument has implications for the study of the Middle East, Islamic culture, and the resource curse.



Methods: Case selection, empirical strategies and research design

- ▶ Case selection
 - Cross-national (global or regional) and single-country
 - Representative, exemplary, prototypical and deviant
- ▶ Research design: Methods of agreement versus methods of difference
- ▶ Empirical strategies: Qualitative, quantitative and computational (or "mixed")



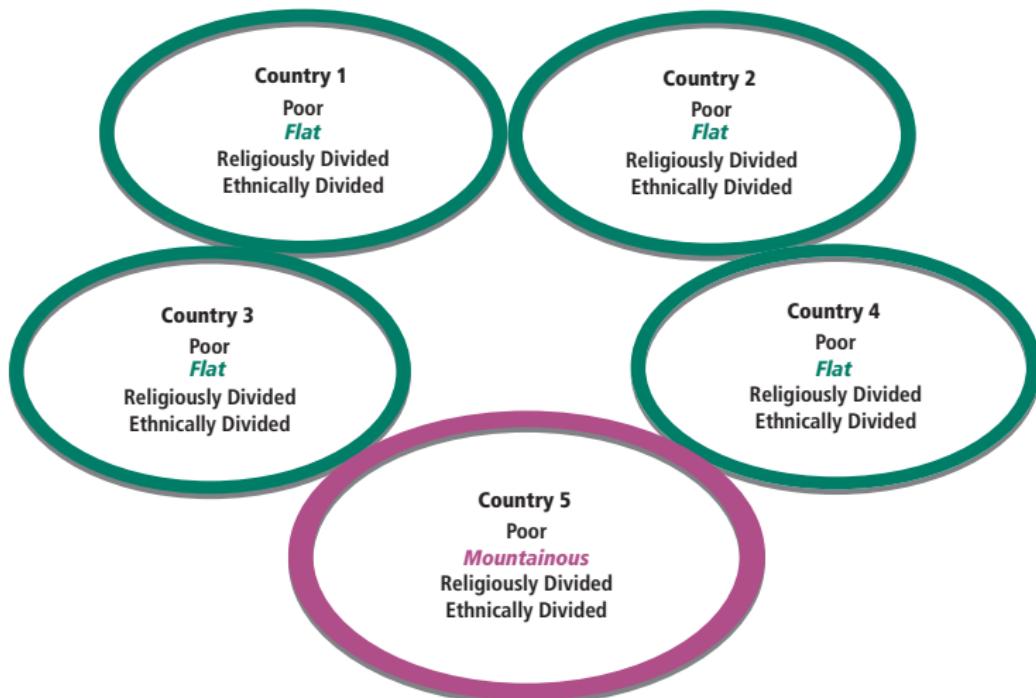
Figure 1.1 Using the Method of Agreement

Countries 1 through 4 all went to war, and by comparing them against each other, you will note that they “agree” on only one attribute: ethnic diversity. The country that did not “agree” on this characteristic also did not go to war. The method of agreement finds the thing that all countries have in common—and in this example leads to the conclusion that ethnic diversity is a cause of civil war.



Figure 1.2 Using the Method of Difference

Countries 1 through 4 all remained at peace—and all share several characteristics. Country 5 went to war, and the only way it differs from the other countries is in its terrain. Using the method of difference in this example suggests a causal relationship between rough terrain and civil war.



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Qualitative: Case study, ethnography and elite interviews



[The Journal of Asian
Studies](#)

Article contents

[Extract](#)

[References](#)

The Transformation of Ethnic Politics in India: The Decline of Congress and the Rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur

Published online by Cambridge University Press: **26 March 2010**

Kanchan Chandra

Article Metrics

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Extract

The politics of ethnicity—caste, religion, and language—has been central to politics in twentieth-century India. However, as the dominant Indian National Congress declines in favor of a number of smaller parties, the manner in which ethnic identities are being invoked in the political arena is being transformed. The key aspect of this transformation is not, as it is usually understood, the replacement of a single multiethnic party with a collection of monoethnic parties. Many of the smaller parties are in themselves multiethnic, although the coalitions that they seek to build are usually narrower than those built by Congress. Rather, the key aspect is the change in the type of ethnic politics that dominates the political arena. Congress plays a coded ethnic card, invoking ethnic identities quietly in its selection of candidates but not openly in its identification of issues; targets certain ethnic groups without openly excluding others; builds differentiated ethnic coalitions across constituencies and states; and courts the support of these ethnic coalitions through the distribution of patronage but never through the rhetoric of identity.



Quantitative: Statistical analysis of survey data



A Quarterly Journal of
International Relations

Volume 73, Number 4 October 2021

World Politics

Article contents

Abstract

References

The Popularity of Authoritarian Leaders

A Cross-National Investigation

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 23 September 2020

Sergei Guriev and Daniel Treisman 

Article

Supplementary materials

Metrics

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Abstract

How do citizens in authoritarian states feel about their leaders? While some dictators rule through terror, others seem genuinely popular. Using the Gallup World Poll's panel of more than one hundred-forty countries in 2006–2016, the authors show that the drivers of political approval differ across regime types. Although brutal repression in overt dictatorships could cause respondents to falsify their preferences, in milder informational autocracies, greater repression actually predicts lower approval. In autocracies as in democracies, economic performance matters and citizens' economic perceptions, while not perfectly accurate, track objective indicators. Dictators also benefit from greater perceived public safety, but the authors find no such effect in democracies. Covert censorship of the media and the Internet is associated with higher approval in autocracies—in particular, in informational ones—but ratings fall when citizens recognize censorship. In informational autocracies, executive elections trigger a ratings surge if there is leader turnover, but, unlike in democracies, reelected autocrats enjoy little honeymoon.



How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression

GARY KING *Harvard University*

JENNIFER PAN *Harvard University*

MARGARET E. ROBERTS *Harvard University*

We offer the first large scale, multiple source analysis of the outcome of what may be the most extensive effort to selectively censor human expression ever implemented. To do this, we have devised a system to locate, download, and analyze the content of millions of social media posts originating from nearly 1,400 different social media services all over China before the Chinese government is able to find, evaluate, and censor (i.e., remove from the Internet) the subset they deem objectionable. Using modern computer-assisted text analytic methods that we adapt to and validate in the Chinese language, we compare the substantive content of posts censored to those not censored over time in each of 85 topic areas. Contrary to previous understandings, posts with negative, even vitriolic, criticism of the state, its leaders, and its policies are not more likely to be censored. Instead, we show that the censorship program is aimed at curtailing collective action by silencing comments that represent, reinforce, or spur social mobilization, regardless of content. Censorship is oriented toward attempting to forestall collective activities that are occurring now or may occur in the future—and, as such, seem to clearly expose government intent.

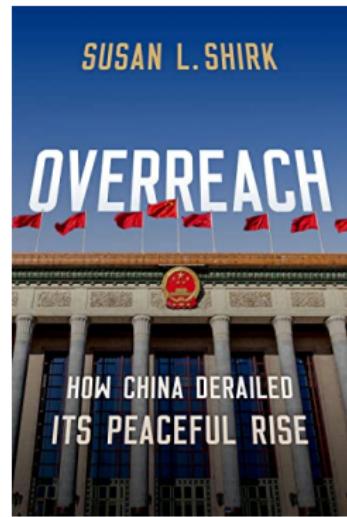


Discuss before break

- ▶ Any particular "cases" or topic would like to explore more?
- ▶ How does "globalization" change the study of comparative politics?
- ▶ Is there anything from the lecture that you would like to know more about? Is there anything from the lecture that you are not clear about?



Elite politics (political succession) and foreign policymaking in China





Marjane Satrapi

"If I have one message to give to the secular American people, it's that **the world is not divided into countries**. The world is not divided between East and West. You are American, I am Iranian, we don't know each other, but we talk together and we understand each other perfectly. **The difference between you and your government is much bigger than the difference between you and me**. And the difference between me and my government is much bigger than the difference between me and you. And our governments are very much the same."

