

*Librería*  
***Bonilla y Asociados***  
*desde 1950*



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**Sinopsis**

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My feelings about the seventh edition of Countries and Concepts are contained in a possibly apocryphal early edition of Pravda, printed at the height of the Bolshevik Revolution, that advised its readers: "No news today. Events moving too fast." This edition of Countries and Concepts is full of changes. Britain, France, and Germany have replaced their conservative governments with ones of the center-left. Russia may be lurching toward authoritarianism. Only Japan does not change in any dramatic way. A tour of Japan convinced me that Japan does change, but slowly and reluctantly, always trying to preserve its core of Japaneseness. New to This Edition

The major innovation in the seventh edition is the building into the text of the booklet Political Geography of Countries and Concepts, which was earlier offered as a supplement. Beth Gillett Mejia, former Executive Editor for this book and now Director of Marketing, feels that geography is so important that it should not be left as a side issue. Students are often weak in geography these days; the subject seems to have been dropped from most school curricula. I have been offering Political Geography at Lycoming for some years, at the behest of Lycoming's education department, because students were doing poorly on the geography section of state teacher exams. I hear concerns about students' lack of geographical knowledge from other instructors, so Countries and Concepts tries to remedy this.

Other changes in the text are the addition of several instructional features to help emphasize concepts and definitions:

Key Websites: Each part opens with an annotated list of key website addresses to help students with further research. Questions to Consider: Each chapter opens with a list of "Questions to Consider" to prime students for the main points. Key Terms: Chapters now have running marginal glossaries, labeled "Key Terms," to make sure students are building their vocabularies as they read. The definitions listed are those of a political scientist; in other contexts one might find different definitions. For further review, a list of key terms has been added to the end of each

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chapter. The page number that follows each listed key term indicates the page upon which the corresponding marginal definition box appears. (These terms and their definitions also appear in the end-of-book Glossary.) Feature Boxes: Most of the feature boxes now have category heads\_Geography, Democracy, Political Culture, Comparison, or Key Concepts\_to give them greater focus and continuity. Structure and Purpose

The structure and purpose of *Countries and Concepts* continue as before. The book analyzes four European nations and Japan at some length and four Third World nations more briefly. It does not attempt to create young scholars out of college sophomores. Rather, it sees comparative politics as an important but usually neglected grounding in citizenship that we should be making available to our young people. I agree with the late Morris Janowitz (in his 1983 *The Reconstruction of Patriotism: Education for Civic Consciousness*) that civic education has declined in the United States and that this poses dangers for democracy. Our students are often ill-prepared in the historical, political, economic, geographical, and moral aspects of democracy, and to expose such students to professional-level abstractions in political science ignores their civic education and offers material that is largely meaningless to them. An undergraduate is not a miniature graduate student.

Accordingly, the seventh edition of *Countries and Concepts* is designed to include a good deal of fundamental vocabulary and concepts, buttressed by many examples. It is readable. Many students don't do assigned readings; with *Countries and Concepts*, they have no excuse that the reading is long or boring.

Some reviewers have noted that *Countries and Concepts* contains values and criticisms. This is part of my purpose. The two go together; if you have no values, you have no basis from which to criticize. Value-free instruction is probably impossible. If successful, it would produce value-free students, and that, I think, should not be the aim of the educational enterprise. If one knows something with the head but not with the heart, one really doesn't know it at all.

Is *Countries and Concepts* too critical? It treats politics as a series of ongoing quarrels for which no very good solutions can be found. It casts a skeptical eye on all political systems and all solutions proposed for political problems. As such, the book is not out to "get" any one country; it merely treats all with equal candor. *Countries and Concepts* tries to act as a corrective to analyses that depict political systems as well-oiled machines or gigantic computers that never break down or make mistakes. Put it this way: If we are critical of the workings of our own country's politics\_and many, perhaps most, of us are\_why should we abandon the critical spirit in looking at other lands?

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The seventh edition continues the loose theoretical approach of the previous editions with the simple observation that politics, on the surface at least, is composed of a number of human conflicts or quarrels. These quarrels, if observed over time, usually form patterns of some durability beyond the specific issues involved. What I call patterns of interaction are the relationships among politically relevant groups and individuals\_what they call in Russian kto-kovo: Who does what to whom? There are two general types of such patterns: (1) between elites and masses, and (2) among and within elites.

Before we can appreciate these patterns, however, we must first study the political culture of a particular country, which leads us to its political institutions and ultimately to its political history. Thus we have a five-fold division in the study of each country. We could start with a country's contemporary political quarrels and work backward, but it is probably better to begin with the underlying factors as a foundation from which to understand their impact on modern social conflict. This book goes from history to institutions to political culture to patterns of interaction to quarrels. This arrangement need not supplant other approaches. Instructors have had no trouble utilizing this book in connection with their preferred theoretical insights.