The Palgrave Handbook of Political Elites

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Brief description of handbook’s scope and content

The study of political elites (small cohesive and stable groups which enjoy a disproportionate level of power in political systems) has a long theoretical tradition in the study of politics (from Mosca, Pareto to Max Weber, from Schumpeter to Dahl, Sartori, Mills, Bottomore, Parry and Scott) and it has produced a significant body of empirical research (summarized by Putnam in 1976 and extended greatly during the 40 years since by many scholars, not least those associated with the IPSA Research Committee on Political Elites). This rich theoretical and research effort lacks a systematic, contemporary appraisal. The proposed Handbook will powerfully map the studies of and knowledge about political elites that have accumulated and it would show how the study of political elites contributes to a better understanding of political phenomena.

The Handbook will begin, following a substantial Introduction by the editors, with a Section devoted to old and new theoretical approaches to political elites that highlight both continuity and innovation. A second section will document and discuss methodological techniques and instruments devised for the study of political elites. A third section will analyse specific features of different types of political elites found among democratic and non-democratic regimes. The fourth section will discuss the attributes of sector components of political elites (administrative, business, military, etc.) and how they relate to each other. The fifth section will explore the attributes and resources of elites vis-à-vis mass populations, while a final section will discuss a series of challenges political elites face in the twenty-first century.

Each of the six sections will be presaged with a brief introduction that provides an overview of themes elaborated in section chapters. Those chapters will document the most significant recent advances in theory and research and highlight unresolved questions about relevant aspects of political elites. With this structure and an extensive bibliography, the Handbook will enable readers to obtain a comprehensive view of what is
known and not known about political elites and their consequences for politics.

The Handbook will be edited by a half dozen of the most active scholars of political elites, all of whom have played leading roles in the Research Committee on Elites. But it would be wrong to view the proposed Handbook as centred on the Committee and what its members have done. A much wider net will be cast to ensure that important scholars of political elites not associated with the Committee will be fully represented in the Handbook.

The Handbook will be an authoritative reference work for academics, undergraduate and graduate students in political science, sociology, political economy, political psychology, communications, and for media.
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- The relevance of political elites today
- The Handbook’s structure

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## Part II Studying Political Elites: Research methods
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