Is it possible to compare French presidential politics with village leadership in rural India? Most social scientists – even those of opposing methodological and philosophical persuasions – are united in thinking such unlikely juxtapositions are not feasible. We think they are.

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**John Boswell** is Associate Professor in Politics at the University of Southampton, UK. He is the author of *The Real War on Obesity* (2016).

**Jack Corbett** is Professor of Politics at the University of Southampton, UK. He is the author or editor of five books and more than sixty articles and book chapters. He holds honorary appointments at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, the Australian National University, and the Centre for Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University, Australia.

**R. A. W. Rhodes** is Professor of Government (Research) at the University of Southampton, UK. He is the author or editor of 40 books and 200 articles and book chapters, most recently, *Network Governance and the Differentiated Polity. Selected Essays. Volume I*; and *Interpretive Political Science. Selected Essays. Volume II* (2017). He is a fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and the United Kingdom. In 2014, the Political Studies Association (PSA) awarded him its Special Recognition Award. In 2015, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) awarded him their biennial Lifetime Achievement Award.
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John Boswell
University of Southampton

Jack Corbett
University of Southampton

R. A. W. Rhodes
University of Southampton
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