



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

Comparative government and politics provides an introduction to the wide, diverse world of governments and political practices that exist in modern times. Although the course focuses on specific countries, it also emphasizes an understanding of conceptual tools and methods that form a framework for comparing almost any governments that exist today. Additionally, it requires students to go beyond individual political systems to consider international forces that affect all people in the world, often in very different ways. Six countries form the core of the course: Great Britain, Russia, China, Mexico, Iran, and Nigeria. The countries are chosen to reflect regional variations, but more importantly, to illustrate how important concepts operate both similarly and differently in different types of political systems: "advanced" democracies, communist and post communist countries, and newly industrialized and less developed nations. This book includes review materials for all six countries.

Goals for the course include:

- Gaining an understanding of major comparative political concepts, themes, and trends
- Knowing important facts about government and politics in Great Britain, Russia, China, Mexico, Iran, and Nigeria
- Identifying patterns of political processes and behavior and analyzing their political and economic consequences
- Comparing and contrasting political institutions and processes across countries

- Analyzing and interpreting basic data for comparing political systems

WHAT IS COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS?

Most people understand that the term **government** is a reference to the leadership and institutions that make policy decisions for a country. However, what exactly is **politics**? Politics is basically all about power. Who has the power to make the decisions? How did power-holders get power? What challenges do leaders face from others – both inside and outside the country's borders – in keeping power? So, as we look at different countries, we are not only concerned about the ins and outs of how the government works; we also look at how power is gained, managed, challenged, and maintained.

College-level courses in comparative government and politics vary in style and organization, but they all cover topics that enable meaningful comparisons across countries. These topics are introduced in the pages that follow, and are addressed with each of the countries covered separately.

The topics are:

- The Comparative Method
- Sovereignty, Authority, and Power
- Political and Economic Change
- Citizens, Society, and the State
- Political Institutions
- Public Policy

TOPIC ONE: THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

Political scientists sometimes argue about exactly what and how countries should be studied and compared. One approach is to emphasize **empirical data** based on factual statements and statistics, and another is to focus on **normative** issues that require value judgments. For example, the first approach might compare statistics that reflect econom-

ic development of a group of countries, including information about Gross National Product, per capita income, and amounts of imports and exports. The second approach builds on those facts to focus instead on whether or not the statistics bode well or ill for the countries. Empiricists might claim that it is not the role of political scientists to make such judgments, and their critics would reply that the empirical approach alone leads to meaningless data collection. The approaches give us different but equally important tools for analyzing and comparing political systems.

As for research in any social science, comparative government and politics relies on scientific methods to objectively and logically evaluate data. After reviewing earlier studies, researchers formulate a **hypothesis**, a speculative statement about the relationship between two or more factors known as **variables**. Variables are measurable traits or characteristics that change under different conditions. For example, poverty levels in a country may change over time. One question that a comparative researcher might ask is, "Why are poverty rates higher in one country than in others?" The research then leads in the direction of discovering **causation**, or the idea that one variable causes or influences another. An **independent variable** is one that influences the **dependent variable** because its action depends on the influence of the independent variable. So, a credible hypothesis might be that poverty level (a dependent variable) is caused by low levels of formal education (an independent variable). A **correlation** exists when a change in one variable coincides with a change in the other. Correlations are an indication that causality *may* be present; they do not necessarily indicate causation. Comparative researchers seek to identify the causal link between variables by collecting and analyzing data.

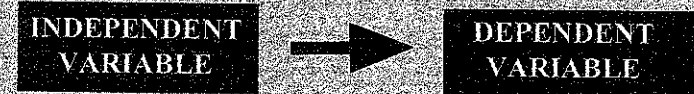
How do we go about comparing countries? The model most frequently used until the early 1990s was the **three-world approach**, largely based on cold war politics. The three worlds were 1) the United States and its allies; 2) the Soviet Union and its allies; and 3) "**third world**" nations that did not fit into the first two categories and were economically underdeveloped and deprived. Even though the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, this approach is still taken today by many comparative textbooks. Comparisons are based on democracy vs.



TOPICS IN COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT: VARIABLES, CAUSATION, AND CORRELATION

Variables – measurable traits that change under different conditions.

Causation – the idea that one variable (the independent variable) causes another (the dependent variable)



Correlation exists when a change in one variable accompanies a change in another.

authoritarianism and communism vs. capitalism. Even though this method is still valid, newer types of comparisons are reflected in these trends:

- **The impact of informal politics** – Governments have formal positions and structures that may be seen on an organizational chart. For example, Great Britain is led by a prime minister and has a House of Lords and a House of Commons. In comparison, the United States has a president, a Senate, and a House of Representatives. You may directly compare the responsibilities and typical activities of each position or structure in Britain to its counterpart in the United States. However, you gain a deeper understanding of both political systems if you connect **civil society** – the way that citizens organize and define themselves and their interests – to the ways that the formal government operates. **Informal politics** takes into consideration not only the ways that politicians operate outside their formal powers, but also the impact that beliefs, values, and actions of ordinary citizens have on policymaking.

- **The importance of political change** – One reason that the three-world approach has become more problematic in recent years is that the nature of world politics has changed. Since 1991, the world no longer is dominated by two superpowers, and that fact has had consequences that have reverberated in many areas that no one could have predicted. However, it creates an opportunity to compare the impact of change on many different countries.
- **The integration of political and economic systems** – Even though we may theoretically separate government and politics from the economy, the two are often intertwined almost inextricably. For example, communism and capitalism are theoretically economic systems, but how do you truly separate them from government and politics? Attitudes and behavior of citizens are affected in many ways by economic inefficiency, economic inequality, and economic decision making. They then may turn to the government for solutions to economic problems, and if the government does not respond, citizens may revolt, or take other actions that demand attention from the political elite.

Keeping these trends in mind, in this book we will study countries in three different groups that are in some ways similar in their political and economic institutions and practices. These groups are:

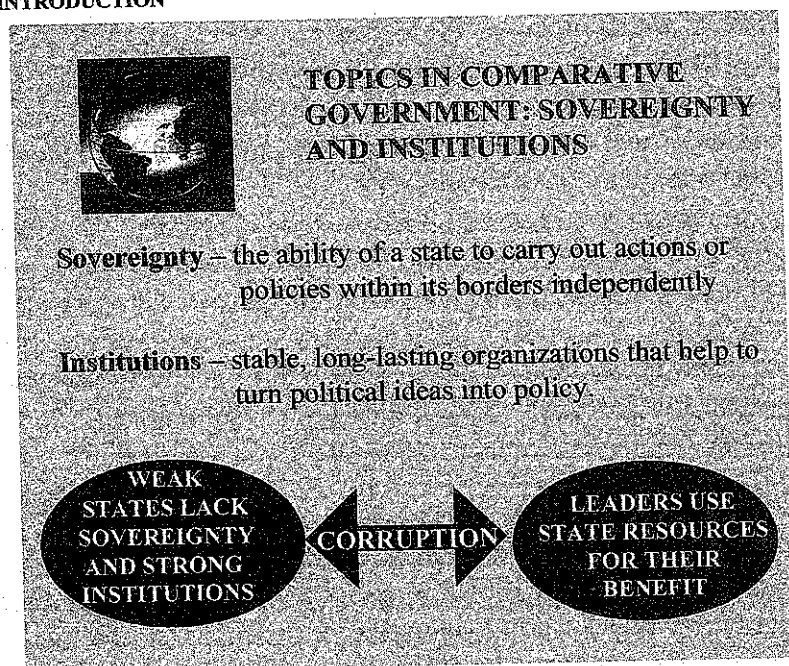
- **“Advanced” democracies** – These countries having well established democratic governments and a high level of economic development. Of the six core countries, Great Britain represents this group.
- **Communist and post-communist countries** – These countries have sought to create a system that limits individual freedoms in order to divide wealth more equally. Communism flourished during the 20th century, but lost ground to democratic regimes by the beginning of the 21st century. Russia (as a post communist country) and China (currently a communist country) represent this group in our study of comparative government and politics.

- **Less developed and newly industrializing countries** – We will divide the countries traditionally referred to as the “Third World” into two groups, still very diverse within the categories. The newly industrializing countries are experiencing rapid economic growth, and also have shown a tendency toward democratization and political and social stability. Mexico and Iran represent this group, although, as you will see, Iran has many characteristics that make it difficult to categorize in this scheme. Less developed countries lack significant economic development, and they also tend to have authoritarian governments. Nigeria represents this group, although it has shown some signs of democratization in very recent years.

Important concepts that enable meaningful comparisons among countries are introduced in this chapter, and will be addressed in each of the individual countries separately. However, it is important to remember that the main point of comparative government and politics is to use the categories to compare among countries. For example, never take the approach of “Here’s Britain,” “Here’s Russia,” without noting what similarities and differences exist between the two countries.

TOPIC TWO: SOVEREIGNTY, AUTHORITY, AND POWER

We commonly speak about powerful individuals, but in today’s world, power is territorially organized into **states**, or countries, that control what happens within their borders. What exactly is a state? German scholar Max Weber defined state as the organization that maintains a monopoly of violence over a territory. In other words, the state defines who can and cannot use weapons and force, and it sets the rules as to how violence is used. States often sponsor armies, navies, and/or air forces that legitimately use power and sometimes violence, but individual citizens are very restricted in their use of force. States also include **institutions**: stable, long lasting organizations that help to turn political ideas into policy. Common examples of institutions are bureaucracies, legislatures, judicial systems, and political parties. These institutions make states themselves long lasting, and often help them to endure even when leaders change. By their very nature, states exercise **sovereignty**, the ability to carry out actions or policies within their borders independently from interference either from the inside or the outside.



A state that is unable to exercise sovereignty lacks autonomy, and because it is not independent, it may be exploited by leaders and/or organizations that see the state as a resource to use for their own ends. Frequently, the result is a high level of corruption. The problem is particularly prevalent in newly industrializing and less developed countries, largely because their governments lack autonomy. For example, military rulers in Nigeria stole vast amounts of money from the state during the 1990s, making it one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Today Nigeria's tremendous revenues from oil largely evaporate before they reach ordinary citizens, providing evidence that corruption is still a major issue in Nigeria.

States, Nations, and Regimes

States do much more than keep order in society. Many have important institutions that promote general welfare – such as health, safe transportation, and effective communication systems – and economic stability. The concept of state is closely related to a **nation**, a group of people that are bound together by a common political identity. Na-

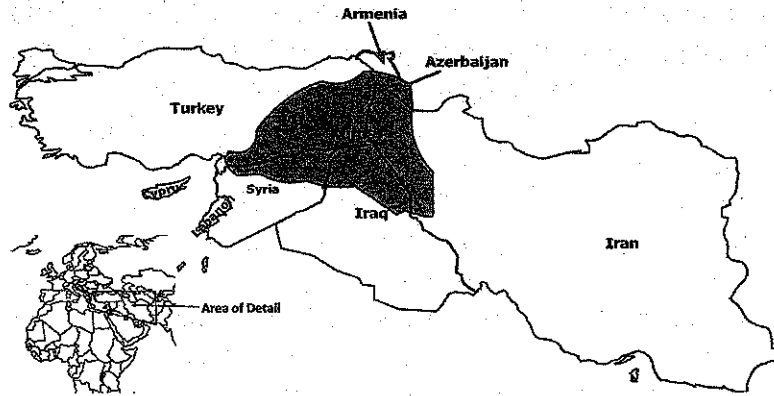
nationalism is the sense of belonging and identity that distinguishes one nation from another. Nationalism is often translated as patriotism, or the resulting pride and loyalty that individuals feel toward their nations. For more than 200 years now, national borders ideally have been drawn along the lines of group identity. For example, people within one area think of themselves as “French,” and people in another area think of themselves as “English.” Even though individual differences exist within nations, the nation has provided the overriding identity for most of its citizens. However, the concept has always been problematic – as when “Armenians” live inside the borders of a country called “Azerbaijan.” Especially now that globalization and fragmentation provide counter trends, the nature of nationalism and its impact on policymaking are clearly changing.

Variations of the Nation State

A **binational** or **multinational state** is one that contains more than one nation. The former Soviet Union is a good example of a multinational state. It was divided into “soviet republics” that were based on nationality, such as the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. When the country fell apart in 1991, it fell along ethnic boundaries into independent nation-states. Today Russia (one of the former soviet republics) remains a large multinational state that governs many ethnic groups. Just as ethnic pressures challenged the sovereignty of the Soviet government, the Russian government has faced “breakaway movements” – such as in Chechnya – that have threatened Russian stability. Minority ethnic groups may feel so strongly about their separate identities that they demand independence. **Stateless nations** are a people without a state. In the Middle East the Kurds are a nation of some 20 million people divided among six states and dominant in none. Kurdish nationalism has survived over the centuries, and has played an important role in the politics that followed the reconfiguration of Iraq after the Iraqi War that began in 2003.

Core Areas

Most of the early nation-states grew over time from **core areas**, expanding outward along their frontiers. Their growth generally stopped



A Stateless Nation. The Kurds have had a national identity for many centuries, but they have never had a state. Instead, 20 million Kurds are spread in an area that crosses the formal borders of six countries: Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

when they bumped up against other nation-states, causing them to define boundaries. Today most European countries still have these same core areas, and many countries in other parts of the world also have well defined core areas. They may be identified on a map by examining population distributions and transportation networks. As you travel away from the core area, into the state's **periphery** (outlying areas), towns get smaller, factories fewer, and open land more common. Clear examples of core areas are the Paris Basin in France and Japan's Kanto Plain, centered on the city of Tokyo. States with more than one core area – **multicore states** – may be problematic, especially if the areas are ethnically diverse, such as in Nigeria. Nigeria's northern core is primarily Muslim and its southern core is Christian, and the areas pull the country in different directions. To compensate for this tendency for the country to separate, the capital city was moved from Lagos (in the South) to Abuja, near the geographic center of the state.

A multicore character is not always problematic for a country. For example, the United States still has a primary core area that runs along its northeastern coastline from Washington D.C. to Boston. A secondary core area exists on the West Coast that runs from San Diego in the south to San Francisco in the north. Arguably, other core areas have developed around Chicago and other Midwestern cities, and Atlanta in

the South. Despite the multiple core areas, regional differences do not threaten the existence of the state, as they do in Nigeria.

The rules that a state sets and follows in exerting its power are referred to collectively as a **regime**. Regimes endure beyond individual governments and leaders. We refer to a regime when a country's institutions and practices carry over across time, even though leaders and particular issues change. Regimes may be compared by using these categories: democracies and authoritarian systems.

Democracies


This type of regime bases its authority on the will of the people. Democracies may be **indirect**, with elected officials representing the people, or they may be **direct**, when individuals have immediate say over many decisions that the government makes. Most democracies are indirect, mainly because large populations make it almost impossible for individuals to have a great deal of direct influence on how they are governed. Democratic governments typically have three major branches: executives, legislatures, and judicial courts. Some democracies are **parliamentary systems** – where citizens vote for legislative representatives, who in turn select the leaders of the executive branch. Others are **presidential systems** – where citizens vote for legislative representatives as well as for executive branch leaders, and the two branches function with separation of powers. Democratic governments vary in the degree to which they regulate/control the economy, but businesses, corporations, and/or companies generally operate somewhat independently from the government.

- **Parliamentary systems** – In this type of democracy, the principle of **parliamentary sovereignty** governs the decision-making process. Theoretically, the legislature makes the laws, controls finances, appoints and dismisses the prime minister and the cabinet, and debates public issues. In reality, however, strong party discipline within the legislature develops over time, so that the cabinet initiates legislation and makes policy. The majority party in the legislature almost always votes for the bills proposed by its leadership (the prime minister and cabinet members). Even though the opposition party or parties

are given time to criticize, the legislature eventually supports decisions made by the executive branch. Because the prime minister and cabinet are also the leaders of the majority party in the legislature, no separation of powers exists between the executive and legislative branches. Instead, the two branches are fused together. Also typical of the parliamentary system is a separation in the executive branch between a **head of state** (a role that symbolizes the power and nature of the regime) and a **head of government** (a role that deals with the everyday tasks of running the government). For example, in Great Britain, the queen is the head of state who seldom formulates and executes policy, and the prime minister is the head of government who directs the country's decision-making process in his or her position as leader of the majority party in parliament.

- **Presidential systems** – In this type of democracy, the roles of head of state and head of government are given to one person – the president. This central figure is directly elected by the people and serves as the chief executive within a system of **checks and balances** between the legislative and executive (and sometimes judicial) branches. The **separation of powers** between branches ensures that power is shared and that one branch does not come to dominate the others. As a result, power is diffused and the policymaking process is sometimes slowed down because one branch may question decisions that another branch makes. In order for presidential systems to truly diffuse power, each branch must have an independent base of authority recognized and respected by politicians and the public. The United States is a presidential system, as are Nigeria and Mexico. As we will see, an important question is whether or not the branches have truly independent bases of authority in Mexico and Nigeria.

Some countries combine elements of the presidential and parliamentary systems, as is illustrated in Russia's 1993 Constitution. Although Russia is far from a democracy today, the Constitution clearly provides for a **semi-presidential system** where a prime minister coexists with a president who is directly elected by the people and who holds a significant degree of power. Until recently, the Russian president has



**TOPICS IN COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT:
REGIME TYPE – DEMOCRACY**

Parliamentary System	Presidential System
Principle of parliamentary sovereignty – Legislature makes laws, controls finances, appoints and dismisses prime minister. No separation of powers – Prime minister and cabinet are leaders of the majority party in the legislature. Separation in the executive branch exists between a head of state and a head of government.	Roles of head of state and head of government are combined (president). President is directly elected by voters. A system of checks and balances and separation of powers exists between branches of the government. "Gridlock" is a common problem.

had a disproportionate amount of power, but the prime minister's position became much more important after Vladimir Putin took the position in 2008. Since Putin was elected president again in 2012, the presidency has regained its previous power. In other semi-presidential systems – such as France and India – the power balance between the two executives is quite different.

Authoritarian Regimes

In this type of regime, decisions are made by political **elites** – those who hold political power – without much input from citizens. These regimes may be ruled by a single dictator, an hereditary monarch, a small group of aristocrats, or a single political party. The economy is generally tightly controlled by the political elite. Some authoritarian regimes are based on **communism**, a theory developed in the 19th century by Karl Marx and altered in the early 20th century by V. I. Lenin

and Mao Zedong. In these regimes, the communist party controls everything from the government to the economy to social life. Others practice **corporatism** – an arrangement in which government officials interact with people/groups outside the government before they set policy. These outside contacts are generally business and labor leaders, or they may be heads of huge **patron-client** systems that provide reciprocal favors and services to their supporters.

Common characteristics of authoritarian regimes include:

- A small group of elites exercising power over the state
- Citizens with little or no input into selection of leaders and government decisions
- No constitutional responsibility of leaders to the public
- Restriction of civil rights and civil liberties

Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism

A common misconception about authoritarian regimes is that they are not legitimate governments. If the people accept the authority of the leaders, and other countries recognize the regime's right to rule, authoritarian regimes may be said to be legitimate.

Many people think of authoritarianism and **totalitarianism** as the same thing, but the term "totalitarian" has many more negative connotations, and is almost always used to describe a particularly repressive, often detested, regime. For example, during the Cold War era, westerners often referred to the Soviet Union as a "totalitarian regime." However, authoritarian systems are not necessarily totalitarian in nature. Unlike totalitarian regimes, authoritarian governments do not necessarily seek to control and transform all aspects of the political and economic systems of the society. Totalitarian regimes generally have a strong ideological goal (like communism) that many authoritarian systems lack, and authoritarian governments do not necessarily use violence as a technique for destroying any obstacles to their governance.

Military Rule

One form of nondemocratic rule is **military rule**, especially prevalent today in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. In states where legitimacy and stability are in question, and especially when violence is threatened, the military may intervene directly in politics, since it often is the only organization that can solve the problems. Military rule usually begins with a **coup d'état**, a forced takeover of the government. The coup may or may not have widespread support among the people. Once they take control, military leaders often restrict civil rights and liberties, and, in the name of order, keep political parties from forming and elections from taking place. Military rule usually lacks a specific ideology, and the leaders often have no charismatic or traditional source of authority, so they join forces with the state bureaucracy to form an authoritarian regime. Military rule may precede democracy, as occurred in South Korea and Taiwan during the 1990s, or it may create more instability as one coup d'état follows another, reinforcing a weak, vulnerable state.

Corporatism in Authoritarian and Democratic Systems

Modern corporatism is a method through which business, labor, and/or other interest groups bargain with the state over economic policy. In its earliest form corporatism emerged as a way that authoritarian regimes tried to control the public by creating or recognizing organizations to represent the interests of the public. This practice makes the government appear to be less authoritarian, but in reality the practice eliminates any input from groups not sanctioned or created by the state. Only a handful of groups have the right to speak for the public, effectively silencing the majority of citizens in political affairs. Often non-sanctioned groups are banned altogether. For example, in Mexico's one-party system that existed for most of the 20th century, oil wells and refineries were placed under the control of state-run PEMEX, and many private oil businesses were forced out of the country. Corporatism gives the public a limited influence in the policymaking process, but the interest groups are funded and managed by the state. Most people would rather have a state-sanctioned organization than none at all, so many participate willingly with the hope that the state will meet their needs.

A less structured means of **co-optation**, or the means a regime uses to get support from citizens, is **patron-clientelism**, a system in which the state provides specific benefits or favors to a single person or small group in return for public support. Unlike corporatism, clientelism relies on individual patronage rather than organizations that serve a large group of people. Responsibilities and obligations are based on a hierarchy between elites and citizens. We will see example of clientelism in China, Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria.

More recently corporatist practices have emerged in democratic regimes as well. In democracies, corporatism usually comes into play as the state considers economic policy planning and regulation. In some cases, such as in Scandinavian countries, many major social and economic policies are crafted through negotiations between the representatives of interests and the government agencies. In democracies that have nationalized industries, the directors are state officials who are advised by councils elected by the major interest groups involved. In democracies that do not nationalize industries, many regulatory decisions are made through direct cooperation between government agencies and interests.

A basic principle of democracy is **pluralism**, a situation in which power is split among many groups that compete for the chance to influence the government's decision-making. This competition is an important way that citizens may express their needs to the government, and in a democracy, the government will react to citizens' input. **Democratic corporatism** is different from pluralism in two ways:

- 1) In democratic pluralism, the formation of interest groups is spontaneous; in democratic corporatism, interest representation is institutionalized through recognition by the state. New groups can only form if the state allows it.
- 2) In democratic pluralism, the dialogue between interest groups and the state is voluntary and the groups remain autonomous; in democratic corporatism, organizations develop institutionalized and legally binding links with the state agencies, so that the groups become semi-public agencies, acting on behalf of the state. As a result, groups and individuals lose their freedom.

Just how much corporatism a democracy will allow before it becomes an authoritarian state is a question of much debate. For example, in the United States, the National Recovery Act of 1934 was judged by the Supreme Court to be unconstitutional, largely because it gave the government too much say in private industries' hiring and production decisions. In more recent years, U.S. government agencies have been criticized for hiring people from private interest groups to fill regulatory positions, allegedly giving special interests control of policy and destroying the ability of the government to guard the public interest. In the 1970s, labor unions in Great Britain were often accused of strong-arming public officials, including the prime minister, into passing labor-friendly policies into law. In all of these cases, the entangling of government and private interests has been criticized for undermining the principle of diffusion of power basic to a democracy.

The Democracy Index

The *Economist* Intelligence unit began publishing a "**democracy index**" in 2007, in which the organization ranks countries around the globe in terms of their democratic practices. The index is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation; and political culture. Countries are categorized into four types of regimes: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes. Of the core countries, the United Kingdom is categorized as a full democracy; Mexico as a flawed democracy; and Nigeria, Russia, China, and Iran as authoritarian regimes. Each year, some changes occur, including the recent reclassification of Russia from a "hybrid regime" to an authoritarian regime.

Democracy Index 2012, by regime type

	no. of countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	25	15.0	11.3
Flawed democracies	54	32.3	37.2
Hybrid regimes	37	22.2	14.4
Authoritarian regimes	51	30.5	37.1

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit

Legitimacy

Who has political power? Who has the authority to rule? Different countries answer these questions in different ways, but they all answer them in one way or another. Countries that have no clear answers often suffer from lack of political **legitimacy** – or the right to rule, as determined by their own citizens.

Legitimacy may be secured in a number of ways, using sources such as social compacts, constitutions, and ideologies. According to political philosopher Max Weber, legitimacy may be categorized into three basic forms:

- **Traditional legitimacy** rests upon the belief that tradition should determine who rules and how. For example, if a particular family has had power for hundreds of years, the current ruling members of that family are legitimate rulers because it has always been so. Traditional legitimacy often involves important myths and legends, such as the idea that an ancestor was actually born a god or performed some fantastic feat like pulling a sword out of a stone. Rituals and ceremonies all help to reinforce traditional legitimacy. Most monarchies are based on traditional legitimacy, and their authority is symbolized through crowns, thrones, scepters, and/or robes of a particular color or design. Traditional legitimacy may also be shaped by religion, so that political practices remind people of deep-seated ancient beliefs. For example, the Inca believed that their chief ruler, called the Inca, was a deity descended from the sun, and his status as a god-king was reflected in his elaborate dress, with fine textiles woven just for him. Although the belief in a god-ruler is not generally accepted in the modern world, many leaders in the Middle East today base authority on their ability to interpret *sharia* (traditional religious) law.
- **Charismatic legitimacy** is based on the dynamic personality of an individual leader or a small group. Charisma is an almost indefinable set of qualities that make people want to follow a leader, sometimes to the point that they are willing to give their lives for him or her. For example, Napoleon Bonaparte was

a charismatic leader who rose in France during a time when the traditional legitimacy of the monarchy had been shattered. By force of personality and military talent, Napoleon seized control of France and very nearly conquered most of Europe. However, Napoleon also represents the vulnerability of charismatic legitimacy. Once he was defeated, his legitimacy dissolved, and the nation was thrown back into chaos. Charismatic legitimacy is notoriously short-lived because it usually does not survive its founder. A modern example of a charismatic leader was Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela, who led the country from 1999 until his death in 2013. Chavez so dominated Venezuelan politics with the force of his personality that many observers fear for the stability of the country in his absence.

- **Rational-legal legitimacy** is based neither on tradition nor on the force of a single personality, but rather on a system of well-established laws and procedures. This type of legitimacy, then, is highly institutionalized, or anchored by strong institutions (such as legislatures, executives, and/or judiciaries) that carry over through generations of individual leaders. People obey leaders because they believe in the rules that brought them to office, and because they accept the concept of a continuous state that binds them together as a nation. Rational-legal legitimacy is often based on the acceptance of the rule of law that supersedes the actions and statements of individual rulers. The rule may take two forms: 1) **common law** based on tradition, past practices, and legal precedents set by the courts through interpretations of statutes, legal legislation, and past rulings; and 2) **code law** based on a comprehensive system of written rules (codes) of law divided into commercial, civil, and criminal codes. Common law is English in origin and is found in Britain, the United States, and other countries with a strong English influence. Code law is predominant in Europe and countries influenced by the French, German, or Spanish systems. Countries in the comparative government course that have code law systems are China, Mexico, and Russia.

Most modern states today are based on rational-legal legitimacy, although that does not mean that traditional and charismatic legitimacy are not still important. Instead, they tend to exist within the rules of rational-legal legitimacy. For example, charismatic leaders such as Martin Luther King still may capture the imagination of the public and have a tremendous impact on political, social, and economic developments. Likewise, modern democracies, such as Britain and Norway, still maintain the traditional legitimacy of monarchies to add stability and credibility to their political systems.

Many factors contribute to legitimacy in the modern state. In a democracy, the legitimacy of leaders is based on fair, competitive elections and open political participation by citizens. As a result, if the electoral process is compromised, the legitimacy of leadership is likely to be questioned as well. For example, the controversial counting of votes in Florida in the U.S. presidential election of 2000 was a crisis for the country largely because the basic fairness of the electoral process (an important source of legitimacy) was questioned. Factors that encourage legitimacy in both democratic and authoritarian regimes are:

- **Economic well-being** – Citizens tend to credit their government with economic prosperity, and they often blame government for economic hardships, so political legitimacy is reinforced by economic well-being.
- **Historical tradition/longevity** – If a government has been in place for a long time, citizens and other countries are more likely to view it as legitimate.
- **Charismatic leadership** – As Max Weber said, charisma is a powerful factor in establishing legitimacy, whether the country is democratic or totalitarian.
- **Nationalism/shared political culture** – If citizens identify strongly with their nation, not just the state, they are usually more accepting of the legitimacy of the government.
- **Satisfaction with the government's performance/responsiveness** – Chances are that the government is a legitimate one if citizens receive benefits from the government, if the govern-

ment wins wars, and/or if citizens are protected from violence and crime.

Political Culture and Political Ideologies

Historical evolution of political traditions shapes a country's concept of who has the authority to rule and its definition of legitimate political power. This evolution may be gradual or forced, long or relatively brief, and the importance of tradition varies from country to country. **Political culture** refers to the collection of political beliefs, values, practices, and institutions that the government is based on. For example, if a society values individualism, the government will generally reflect this value in the way that it is structured and in the way that it operates. If the government does not reflect basic political values of a people, it will have difficulty remaining viable.

Political culture may be analyzed in terms of **social capital**, or the amount of reciprocity and trust that exists among citizens, and between citizens and the state. Societies with low amounts of social capital may be more inclined toward authoritarian and anti-individual governments, and societies with more social capital may be inclined toward democracy. Some argue that Islam and/or Confucianism are incompatible with democracy because they emphasize subservience and respect for differing statuses in life. Social capital, then, is not valued. Critics of social capital theory say that it relies too heavily on stereotypes, and that it ignores the fact that democracy has flourished in traditional societies, such as India, South Africa, and Turkey.

Types of Political Culture

The number and depth of disagreements among citizens within a society form the basis for dividing political cultures into two types: consensual and conflictual.

- **Consensual political culture** – Although citizens may disagree on some political processes and policies, they tend generally to agree on how decisions are made, what issues should be addressed, and how problems should be solved. For example, citizens agree that elections should be held to select leaders, and they accept the election winners as their leaders. Once the leaders take charge, the

problems they address are considered by most people to be appropriate for government to handle. By and large, a **consensual political culture** accepts both the legitimacy of the regime and solutions to major problems.

- **Conflictual political culture** – Citizens in a **conflictual political culture** are sharply divided, often on both the legitimacy of the regime and solutions to major problems. For example, if citizens disagree on something as basic as capitalism vs. communism, conflict almost certainly will be difficult to avoid. Or if religious differences are so pronounced that followers of one religion do not accept an elected leader from another religion, these differences strike at the heart of legitimacy, and threaten to topple the regime. When a country is deeply divided in political beliefs and values over a long period of time, political subcultures may develop, and the divisions become so imbedded that the government finds it difficult to rule effectively.

No matter how we categorize political cultures, they are constantly changing, so that over time, conflictual political cultures may become consensual, and vice versa. However, political values and beliefs tend to endure, and no political system may be analyzed accurately without taking into consideration the political culture that has shaped it. So when the Russian president dictates a major change of policy, the Chinese government enforces economic development of rural lands, the British prime minister endures another round of derision, or Mexican citizens take a liking to a leftist leader, you may be sure that political culture is a force behind the stories in the news.

Political Ideologies

Political culture also shapes political ideologies that a nation's citizens hold. **Political ideologies** are sets of political values held by individuals regarding the basic goals of government and politics. Examples of political ideologies are:

- **Liberalism** places emphasis on individual political and economic freedom. Do not confuse liberalism as an ideology with its stereotype within the U.S. political system. As a broad ideology, liberalism is part of the political culture of many mod-

ern democracies, including the United States. Liberals seek to maximize freedom for all people, including free speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of association. Liberals also believe that citizens have the right to disagree with state decisions and act to change the decisions of their leaders. For example, in recent years many U.S. citizens openly expressed their disagreements with the Obama administration concerning health care and homeland security issues. The U.S. political culture supports the belief that government leaders should allow and even listen to such criticisms. Public opinion generally has some political impact in liberal democracies, such as the U.S. and Britain.

- **Communism**, in contrast to liberalism, generally values equality over freedom. Whereas liberal democracies value the ideal of equal opportunity, they usually tolerate a great deal of inequality, especially within the economy. Communism rejects the idea that personal freedom will ensure prosperity for the majority. Instead, it holds that an inevitable result of the competition for scarce resources is that a small group will eventually come to control both the government and the economy. For communists, liberal democracies are created by the rich to protect the rights and property of the rich. To eliminate the inequalities and exploitation, communists advocate the takeover of all resources by the state that in turn will insure that true economic equality exists for the community as a whole. As a result, private ownership of property is abolished. Individual liberties must give way to the needs of society as a whole, creating what communists believe to be a true democracy.
- **Socialism** shares the value of equality with communism but is also influenced by the liberal value of freedom. Unlike communists, socialists accept and promote private ownership and free market principles. However, in contrast to liberals, socialists believe that the state has a strong role to play in regulating the economy and providing benefits to the public in order to ensure some measure of equality. Socialism is a much stronger ideology in Europe than it is in the United States, although

both socialism and liberalism have shaped these areas of the world.

- **Fascism** is often confused with communism because they both devalue the idea of individual freedom. However, the similarity between the two ideologies ends there. Fascism also rejects the value of equality, and accepts the idea that people and groups exist in degrees of inferiority and superiority. Fascists believe that the state has the right and the responsibility to mold the society and economy and to eliminate obstacles (including people) that might weaken them. The powerful authoritarian state is the engine that makes superiority possible. The classic example is of course Nazi Germany. No strictly fascist regimes currently exist, but fascism still is an influential ideology in many parts of the world.
- **Religions** have always been an important source of group identity and continue to be in the modern world. Many advanced democracies, such as the United States, have established principles of separation of church and state, but even in those countries, religion often serves as a basis for interest groups and voluntary associations within the civil society. Even though some European countries, such as Great Britain, have an official state religion, these societies are largely secularized, so that religious leaders are usually not the same people as political leaders. However, the British monarch is still formally the head of the Anglican Church, as well as head of state for the country. In our six countries we will see religion playing very different roles in all of them – from China, whose government has recently squelched the Falon Gong religious movement, to Iran, which bases its entire political system on Shia Islam. In Nigeria, religious law (*sharia*) is an important basis of legitimacy in the Muslim north but not in the Christian south.

TOPIC THREE: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

Comparativists are interested not only in the causes and forms of change, but also in the various impacts that it has on the policymaking process. Profound political and economic changes have characterized

the 20th and early 21st centuries, and governments and politics in all of the six core countries of the AP Comparative Government and Politics course illustrate this overall trend toward change. More often than not, political and economic changes occur together and influence one another. If one occurs without the other, tensions are created that have serious consequences. For example, rapid economic changes in China have strongly pressured the government to institute political changes. So far, the authoritarian government has resisted those changes, a situation that leaves us with the question of what adjustments authoritarian governments must make if they are to guide market economies.

Types of Change

Change occurs in many ways, but it may be categorized into three types:

- **Reform** is a type of change that does not advocate the overthrow of basic institutions. Instead, reformers want to change some of the methods that political and economic leaders use to reach goals that the society generally accepts. For example, reformers may want to change business practices in order to preserve real competition in a capitalist country, or they may want the government to become more proactive in preserving the natural environment. In neither case do the reformers advocate the overthrow of basic economic or political institutions.
- **Revolution**, in contrast to reform, implies change at a more basic level, and involves either a major revision or an overthrow of existing institutions. A revolution usually impacts more than one area of life. For example, the Industrial Revolution first altered the economies of Europe from feudalism to capitalism, but eventually changed their political systems, transportation, communication, literature, and social classes. Likewise, the French and American Revolutions were directed at the political systems, but they significantly changed the economies and societal practices of both countries, and spread their influence throughout the globe.

- **Coup d'états** generally represent the most limited of the three types of change. Literally "blows to the state," they replace the leadership of a country with new leaders. Typically coups occur in countries where government institutions are weak and leaders have taken control by force. The leaders are challenged by others who use force to depose them. Often coups are carried out by the military, but the new leaders are always vulnerable to being overthrown by yet another coup.

Attitudes Toward Change

The types of change that take place are usually strongly influenced by the attitudes of those that promote them. Attitudes toward change include:

- **Radicalism** is a belief that rapid, dramatic changes need to be made in the existing society, often including the political system. Radicals usually think that the current system cannot be saved and must be overturned and replaced with something better. For example, radicalism prevailed in Russia in 1917 when the old tsarist regime was replaced by the communist U.S.S.R. Radicals are often the leaders of revolutions.
- **Liberalism** supports reform and gradual change rather than revolution. Do not confuse a liberal attitude toward change with liberalism as a political ideology. The two may or may not accompany one another. Liberals generally do not think that the political and/or economic systems are permanently broken, but they do believe that they need to be repaired or improved. They may support the notion that eventual transformation needs to take place, but they almost always believe that gradual change is best.
- **Conservatism** is much less supportive of change in general than are radicalism and liberalism. Conservatives tend to see change as disruptive, and they emphasize the fact that it sometimes brings unforeseen outcomes. They consider the state and the regime to be very important sources of law and order that might be threatened by making significant changes in the

way that they operate. Legitimacy itself might be undermined, as well as the basic values and beliefs of the society.

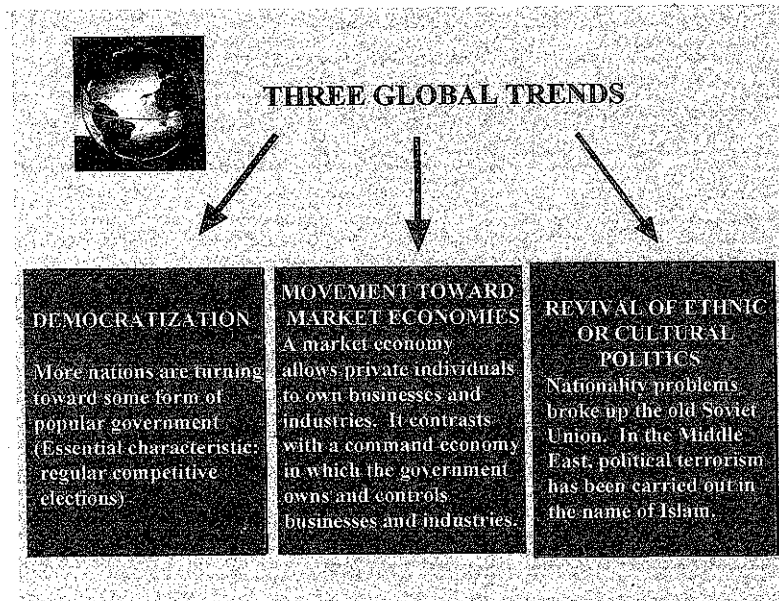
- **Reactionary beliefs** go further to protect against change than do conservative beliefs. Reactionaries are similar to conservatives in that they oppose both revolution and reform, but they differ in that reactionaries also find the status quo unacceptable. Instead, they want to turn back the clock to an earlier era, and reinstate political, social, and economic institutions that once existed. Reactionaries have one thing in common with radicals: both groups are more willing to use violence to reach their goals than are liberals or conservatives.

Three Trends

In comparing political systems, it is important to take notice of overall patterns of development that affect everyone in the contemporary world. Two of these trends – democratization and the move toward market economies – indicate growing commonalities among nations, and the third represents fragmentation – the revival of ethnic or cultural politics.

Democratization

Even though democracy takes many different forms, more and more nations are turning toward some form of popular government. One broad, essential requirement for democracy is the existence of **competitive elections** that are regular, free, and fair. In other words, the election offers a real possibility that the incumbent government may be defeated. By this standard, a number of modern states that call themselves "democracies" fall into a gray area that is neither clearly democratic nor clearly undemocratic. Examples are Russia, Nigeria, and Indonesia. In contrast, **liberal democracies** display other democratic characteristics beyond having competitive elections:



- **Civil liberties**, such as freedom of belief, speech, and assembly
- **Rule of law** that provides for equal treatment of citizens and due process
- **Neutrality of the judiciary** and other checks on the abuse of power
- **Open civil society** that allows citizens to lead private lives and mass media to operate independently from government
- **Civilian control of the military** that restricts the likelihood of the military seizing control of the government

Liberal democracies may also be called **substantive democracies** where citizens have access to multiple sources of information. Whereas no country is a perfect substantive democracies, some have progressed further than others. Countries that have democratic procedures in place but have significant restrictions on them are referred to as **illiberal democracies**, or **procedural democracies**. For example, the rule of law may be in place, but it may not be consistently followed

by those who have political power. Presidents in illiberal systems often hold a disproportionate share of power, and the legislatures are less able to check executive power. Another typical characteristic of illiberal democracies is that political parties and interest groups are restricted so that elections lack true competitiveness. The presence of a procedural democracy is a necessary condition for the development of substantive democracy, but many procedural democracies do not qualify as substantive democracies because they are missing the other necessary characteristics. In fact, theorists G. Bingham Powell, Jr. and Eleanor N. Powell do not consider procedural democracies to be democratic at all, but instead view them as forms of “electoral authoritarianism.”

Huntington's “Three Waves” of Democratization

According to political scientist Samuel Huntington, the modern world is now in a “**third wave**” of **democratization** that began during the 1970s. The “first wave” developed gradually over time; the “second wave” occurred after the Allied victory in World War II, and continued until the early 1960s. This second wave was characterized by de-colonization around the globe. The third wave is characterized by the defeat of dictatorial or totalitarian rulers in South America, Eastern Europe, and some parts of Africa. The recent political turnover in Mexico may be interpreted as part of this “third wave” of democratization.

Why has democratization occurred? According to Huntington, some factors are:

- The **loss of legitimacy** by both right and left wing authoritarian regimes
- The **expansion of an urban middle class** in developing countries
- A new emphasis on “**human rights**” by the United States and the European Union
- The “**snowball**” effect has been important: when one country in a region becomes democratic, it influences others to do

so. An example is Poland's influence on other nations of eastern Europe during the 1980s.

One of the greatest obstacles to democratization is poverty because it blocks citizen participation in government. Huntington gauges democratic stability by this standard: democracy may be declared when a country has had at least two successive peaceful turnovers of power.

Democratic Consolidation

An authoritarian regime may transition to a democracy as a result of a "trigger event," such as an economic crisis or a military defeat. Political discontent is generally fueled if the crisis is preceded by a period of relative improvement in the standard of living, a condition called the "**revolution of rising expectations**." The changes demanded may not necessarily be democratic. Democratization begins when these conditions are accompanied by a willingness on the part of the ruling elite to accept power-sharing arrangements, as well as a readiness on the part of the people to participate in the process and lend it their active support. This process is called **democratic consolidation**, which creates a stable political system that is supported by all parts of the society. In a consolidated democracy, all institutions and many people participate, so that democracy penetrates political parties, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. The military, too, cooperates with political leaders and subordinates its will to the democratically-based government. A state that progresses from procedural democracy to substantive democracy through democratic consolidation is said to experience **political liberalization**, which eventually leads other states to recognize it as a liberal democracy.

Movement toward Economic Liberalism and Market Economies

A second trend of the 20th and early 21st centuries is a movement toward economic liberalism and market economies. Political scientists disagree about the relationship between democratization and marketization. Does one cause the other, or is the relationship between the two spurious? Many countries have experienced both, but two of the country cases for the comparative government course offer contradictory evidence. Mexico has moved steadily toward a market economy since the 1980s, and democratization appeared to have followed, at least

ing in the late 1980s. On the other hand, China has been moving toward capitalism since the late 1970s without any clear sign of democratization.

Political and Economic Liberalism

The ideology of liberalism has its roots in 19th century Europe, where its proponents supported both political and economic freedoms, and so gave rise to the belief that political liberalism goes hand in hand with economic liberalism. Most liberals were **bourgeoisie** – middle-class professionals or businessmen – who wanted their views to be represented in government and their economic goals to be unhampered by government interference. They valued political freedoms – such as freedoms of religion, press, and assembly – and the rule of law, and they also wanted economic freedoms, such as the right to own private property. They advocated free trade with low or no tariffs so as to allow individual economic opportunities to blossom. These values clashed with those of radicals, who emphasized equality more than liberty and generally believed that liberals tolerated too much inequality within their societies.

Command and Market Economies

The 19th century radicals who advocated equality more than liberty included Karl Marx, whose communist theories became the basis for 20th century communist countries, including the U.S.S.R. and China. In order to achieve more equality – at least in theory – these countries relied on a **command economy**, in which the government owned almost all industrial enterprises and retail sales outlets. The economies were managed by a party-dominated state planning committee, which produced detailed blueprints for economic production and distribution, often in the form of five-year plans. Central planning supported economic growth in many cases – especially in the Soviet Union – but by the 1980s, most communist countries found themselves in deep economic trouble. A major problem was that economic growth of major industries had not translated into higher living standards for citizens.

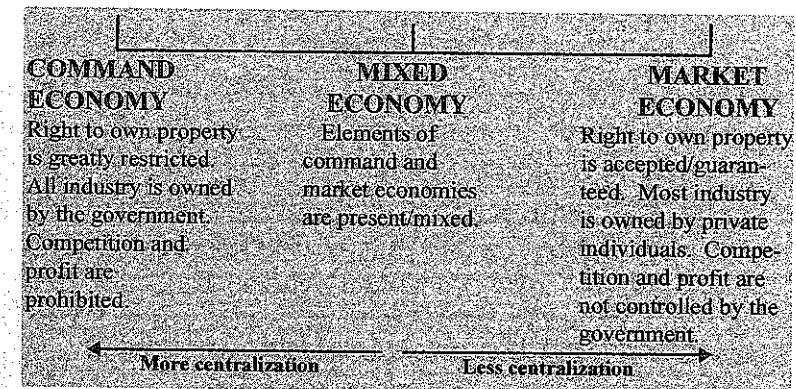
Many political economists today declare that the economic competition between capitalism and socialism that dominated the 20th century is now a part of the past. The old **command economies**, with socialist principles of centralized planning, quota-setting, and state ownership, are fading from existence, except in combination with market economies. It appears as if most societies are drifting toward market economies based on private ownership of property and little inference from government regulation. This process of limiting the power of the state over private property and market forces is commonly referred to as **economic liberalization**. The issue now seems to be what type of **market economy** will be most successful: one that allows for significant control from the central government – a “**mixed economy**” – or one that does not – a pure market economy. For example, modern Germany has a “social market economy” that is team-oriented and emphasizes cooperation between management and organized labor. In contrast, the United States economy tends to be more individualistic and anti-government control.

Two factors that have promoted the movement toward market economies are:

- 1) **Belief that government is too big** – Command economies require an active, centralized government that gets heavily involved in economic issues. Anti-big government movements began in the 1980s in the United States and many western European nations, where economies had experienced serious problems of inefficiency and stagnation. Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States rode to power on waves of public support for reducing the scale of government.
- 2) **Lack of success of command economies** – The collapse of the Soviet Union is the best example of a command economy failure that reverberated around the world. This failure was accompanied by changes among the eastern European satellite states from command to market economies. Meanwhile, another big command economy – China – has been slowly infusing capitalism into its system since its near collapse in the

1970s. Today China is a “socialist market economy” that is fueled by ever-growing doses of capitalism.

Marketization is the term that describes the state’s re-creation of a market in which property, labor, goods, and services can all function in a competitive environment to determine their value. **Privatization** is the transfer of state-owned property to private ownership. One important disadvantage of a free-market economy is that it inevitably goes through cycles of prosperity and scarcity. Recessions, small market downturns, or even depressions – big downturns – happen, but the market corrects itself eventually as supply and demand adjust to correct levels. However, a market downturn may be devastating, as it was during the 1930s when the world went into global depression. This disadvantage of market economies has led many countries to conclude that a “mixed economy” is the best solution, with the government playing a more active role than it does with a market economy, but a less active role than with a command economy.



All economies fall somewhere on the continuum between command and market systems, as illustrated on the graph above. For example, the United States is mostly a market economy, but competition and profit are regulated by the government, so it has some characteristics of a mixed economy. On the other end of the continuum is the former Soviet Union, where the government controlled the economy and allowed virtually no private ownership. Countries may move along the continuum over time. A good example is China, which has moved steadily away from a command economy toward a market economy since 1979.

Revival of Ethnic or Cultural Politics

Until recently, few political scientists predicted that **fragmentation** – divisions based on ethnic or cultural identity – would become increasingly important in world politics. A few years ago **nationalism** – identities based on nationhood – seemed to be declining in favor of increasing globalization. However, nationality questions almost certainly did in Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to resuscitate the Soviet Union, and national identities remain strong in most parts of the world. Perhaps most dramatically, the **politicization of religion** has dominated world politics of the early 21st century. Most Westerners have been caught off guard by this turn of events, especially in the United States, where separation of church and state has been a basic political principle since the founding of the country. In the Middle East, political terrorism has been carried out in the name of Islam, and some people believe that many modern international tensions are caused by conflicts between Muslims and Christians

Samuel Huntington has argued that our most important and dangerous future conflicts will be based on clashes of civilizations, not on socio-economic or even ideological differences. He divides the world into several different cultural areas that may already be poised to threaten world peace: the West, the Orthodox world (Russia), Islamic countries, Latin American, Africa, the Hindu world, the Confucian world, the Buddhist world, and Japan. Some political scientists criticize Huntington by saying that he distorts cultural divisions and that he underestimates the importance of cultural conflicts within nations. In either case – a world divided into cultural regions or a world organized into multicultural nations – the revival of ethnic or cultural politics tends to emphasize differences among nations rather than commonalities.

TOPIC FOUR: CITIZENS, SOCIETY AND THE STATE

Government and politics are only parts of the many facets of a complex society. Religion, ethnic groups, race, social and economic classes all interact with the political system and have a tremendous impact on policymaking. These divisions – theoretically out of the realm of politics – are called **social cleavages**.

SOCIAL CLEAVAGES

Social class – Even though class awareness has declined in industrial and post-industrial societies, it is still an important basis of cleavages. For example, traditionally in Great Britain, middle-class voters have supported the Conservative Party and working-class voters have supported the Labour Party. These differences have declined significantly in recent elections. In less developed countries class tensions may appear between landless peasants and property owners. In India, vestiges of the old caste system (now illegal) have slowed India's movement toward a democratic political system.

Ethnic cleavages – In the early 21st century, ethnic cleavages are clearly the most divisive and explosive social cleavages in countries at all levels of development. Ethnic clashes are the cause of several full-scale civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, some of the former U.S.S.R. republics, and African countries such as Liberia, Rwanda, and Angola. Ethnic cleavages are based on different cultural identities, including religion and language, and are important considerations in evaluating the political systems of all six country cases in the AP Comparative course.

Religious cleavages – Religious differences are often closely intertwined with ethnicity. For example, the conflict in Northern Ireland has a strong religious dimension, with the Irish nationalists being strong Catholics and the loyalists strong Protestants. However, religious differences may also exist among people of similar ethnic backgrounds. For example, some have argued that a basic cleavage exists in the United States between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Christians.

Regional cleavages – In many modern states, differing political values and attitudes characterize people living in different geographic regions. These populations compete for government resources such as money, jobs, and development projects. Regional differences are often linked to varying degrees of economic development. For example, regional conflicts in Nigeria coming in large part from economic inequalities resulted in the secession of Biafra and a tragic civil war.

Coinciding and cross-cutting cleavages – When every dispute aligns the same groups against each other, **coinciding cleavages** are likely to be explosive. **Cross-cutting cleavages** divide society into many potential groups that may conflict on one issue but cooperate on another. These tend to keep social conflict to more moderate levels.

- **Bases of social cleavages** – What mix of social classes, ethnic and racial groups, religions, and languages does a country have? How deep are these cleavages, and to what degree do they separate people from one another (form **social boundaries**)? Which of these cleavages appear to have the most significant impact on the political system?
- **Cleavages and political institutions** – How are cleavages expressed in the political system? For example, is political party membership based on cleavages? Do political elites usually come from one group or another? Do these cleavages block some groups from fully participating in government?

Comparing Citizen/State Relationships

Governments connect to their citizens in a variety of ways, but we may successfully compare government-citizen relationships by categorizing, and in turn noting differences and similarities among categories. For example, citizens within democracies generally relate to their governments differently than do citizens that are governed by authoritarian rulers. Or, different countries may be compared by using the following categories:

- **Attitudes and beliefs of citizens** – Do citizens trust their government? Do they believe that the government cares about what they think? Do citizens feel that government affects their lives in significant ways? One important measure of connections between citizens and their government is **political efficacy**, or a citizen's capacity to understand and influence political events. If citizens have a high level of political efficacy, they believe that the government takes their input seriously and cares about what they have to say. They also believe in their own abilities to understand political issues and to participate in solving problems. If citizens lack political efficacy, they may not believe that it is important to vote, or they may try to ignore the government's efforts to enforce laws.

- **Political socialization** – How do citizens learn about politics in their country? Do electronic and print media shape their learning? Does the government put forth effort to politically educate their citizens? If so, how much of their effort might you call “propaganda”? How do children learn about politics? At any specific time, a person's political beliefs are a combination of many feelings and attitudes, including both general and specific identifications. At the deepest level, people identify with their nation, ethnic or class groups, and religions. At a middle level, people develop attitudes toward politics and the ways that government operates. On a narrower level, people have immediate views of current events, or political topics that the media, family, friends, or schools may call to their attention.
- **Types of political participation** – In authoritarian governments, most citizens contact government through **subject activities** that involve obedience. Such activities are obeying laws, following military orders, and paying taxes. In democracies, citizens may play a more active part in the political process. The most common type of participation is voting, but citizens may also work for political candidates, attend political meetings or rallies, contribute money to campaigns, and join political clubs or parties.
- **Voting behavior** – Do citizens in the country participate in regular elections? If so, are the elections truly competitive? If not, what is the purpose of the elections? What citizens are eligible to vote, and how many actually vote? Do politicians pay attention to elections, and do elections affect policymaking?
- **Factors that influence political beliefs and behaviors** – Consider the important cleavages in the country. Do they make a difference in citizens' political beliefs and behaviors? For example, do the lower classes vote for one political party or the other? Are women's beliefs and behaviors different from those of men? Are younger people as likely to vote as older people are? Do people in rural areas participate in government?

**COMPARATIVE VOTER TURNOUT
SELECTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2012-13**

Country	Date of Election	Voter Turnout
Russia	March 4, 2012	65.27%
France	May 6, 2012	80.35%
Egypt	June 15, 2012	51.85%
Mexico	July 1, 2012	64.73%
Venezuela	October 7, 2012	80.6%
United States	November 6, 2012	57.5%
South Korea	December 19, 2012	75.84%
Kenya	March 4, 2013	85.91%

Comparative Voter Turnout. Voter turnout may be compared across countries, as shown in the chart of recent presidential elections above. The chart does not explain why some voter rates are lower than others, but a little research yields some hypotheses. For example, the Venezuelan election was of high interest after the death of Hugo Chavez, so the voter turnout was much higher than it had been in previous recent presidential elections.

Source: Election Guide, www.electionguide.org.

- **Level of transparency** – A transparent government is one that operates openly by keeping citizens informed about government operations and political issues and by responding to citizens' questions and advice. In a 2009 memo to the heads of executive departments and agencies, U.S. President Barack Obama asserted, "Government should be transparent. Transparency promotes accountability and provides information for

citizens about what their Government is doing...My Administration will take appropriate action, consistent with law and policy, to disclose information rapidly in forms that the public can readily find and use." This ideal does not have to be limited to democracies, but low levels of transparency are often found in authoritarian governments, and corruption also tends to be lower in countries where government activities are relatively transparent.

Social Movements

Social movements refer to organized collective activities that aim to bring about or resist fundamental change in an existing group or society. Social movements try to influence political leaders to make policy decisions that support their goals. Members of social movements often step outside traditional channels for bringing about social change, and they usually take stands on issues that push others in mainstream society to reconsider their positions. For example, early leaders in the women's suffrage movement in Great Britain and the United States were considered to be radicals, but their goals were eventually recognized and accomplished. The modern civil rights movement in the United States consisted of collective action that influenced state, local, and national governments to support racial equality. The African National Congress (ANC), a political organization that sought to overthrow the state-supported system of apartheid in South Africa, eventually pushed the government to lift the decades-old ban and release ANC leader Nelson Mandela from prison. The success of social movements varies from case to case, but even if they fail, they often influence political opinion.

Civil Society

Civil society refers to voluntary organizations outside of the state that help people define and advance their own interests. Civil society is usually strong in liberal democracies where individual freedoms are valued and protected. The organizations that compose it may represent class, religious, or ethnic interests, or they may cross them, creating strong bonds among people that exist outside of government control. Political scientists are interested in civil society since it helps

to define the people's relationship to and role in politics and community affairs. Groups in civil society may be inherently apolitical, but they serve as a cornerstone of liberty by allowing people to articulate and promote what is important to them. In many ways, civil society checks the power of the state and helps to prevent the **tyranny of the majority**, or the tendency in democracies to allow majority rule to neglect the rights and liberties of minorities. Advocacy groups, social networks, and the media all may exist within civil society, and if they are strong enough, they may place considerable pressure on the state to bring about reform.

By the early 21st century, a global civil society has emerged, with human rights and environmental groups providing international pressures that have a significant effect on government-citizen relations. Some argue that a global **cosmopolitanism** – a universal political order that draws its identity and values from everywhere – is emerging. This global civil society may take shape in **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** or more informally through people who find common interests with others that live in far corners of the globe. Nongovernmental organizations are national and international groups, independent of any state, that pursue policy objectives and foster public participation. Examples are Doctors without Borders and Amnesty International. Societal globalization, then, may change the definition of who are “us” and who are “them,” and reshape a world that formerly defined reality in nationalistic terms.

By their very nature, authoritarian states do not encourage civil society, and they often feel that their power is threatened by it. Civil society does not necessarily disappear under authoritarian rule, as is illustrated by the survival of the Russian Orthodox Church and social reform movements in eastern Europe during decades of communist rule. Generally, civil society is weak in most less-developed and newly-industrializing countries. Individuals tend to be divided by ethnic, religious, economic, or social boundaries, and do not identify with groups beyond their immediate surroundings that might help them articulate their interests to the government. One step in the development of civil society is civic education, in which communities learn their democratic rights and how to use those rights to give meaningful input to political institutions. One positive sign in less developed countries

is the growing involvement of women in NGOs that deal with a variety of health, gender, environmental, and poverty issues.

TOPIC FIVE: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

An important part of studying comparative government and politics is developing an understanding of **political institutions**, structures of a political system that carry out the work of governing. Some governments have much more elaborate structures than others, but they often have similarities across cultures. However, just because you see the same type of institution in two different countries, don't assume that they serve the same functions for the political system. For example, a legislature in one country may have a great deal more power than a comparable structure in another country. Only by studying the way that the structures operate and the functions they fill will you be able to compare them accurately. Common structures that exist in most countries are legislatures, executives, judicial systems, bureaucracies, and armies.

Levels of Government

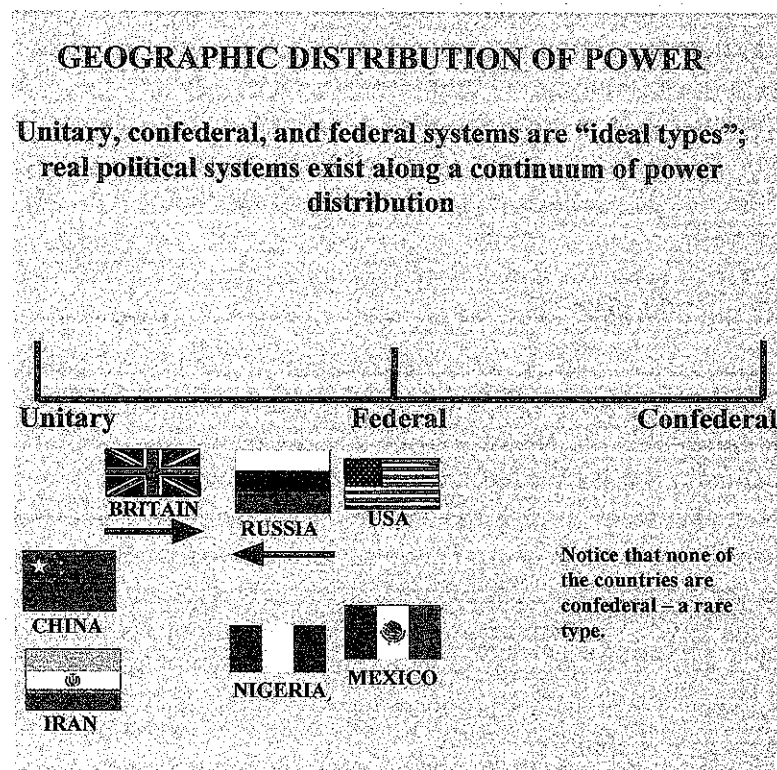
Every state has multiple levels of authority, though the geographic distribution of power varies widely. A **unitary system** is one that concentrates all policymaking powers in one central geographic place, and the central government is responsible for most policy areas. A **confederal system** spreads the power among many sub-units (such as states), and has a weak central government. A **federal system** divides the power between the central government and sub-units, and regional bodies have significant powers, such as taxation, lawmaking, and keeping order. Federalism is sometimes criticized for inefficiency, since power is dispersed among many local authorities whose policies may sometimes conflict.

All political systems fall on a continuum from the most concentrated amount of power to the least. Unitary governments may be placed on the left side, according to the degree of concentration; confederal governments are placed to the right; and federal governments fall in between. Most countries have unitary systems, although of the six core countries, Britain is devolving some power to regional governments and Russia, Mexico, and Nigeria have federal systems.

years, state governments in Mexico have gained some autonomy from the central government so that a real dispersal of power appears to have taken place.

Supranational Organizations and Globalization

All political systems exist within an environment that is affected by other governments, but more and more they are affected by supranational organizations that go beyond national boundaries. Some have more international and/or regional contacts than others, but most countries in the world today must cope with influences from the outside

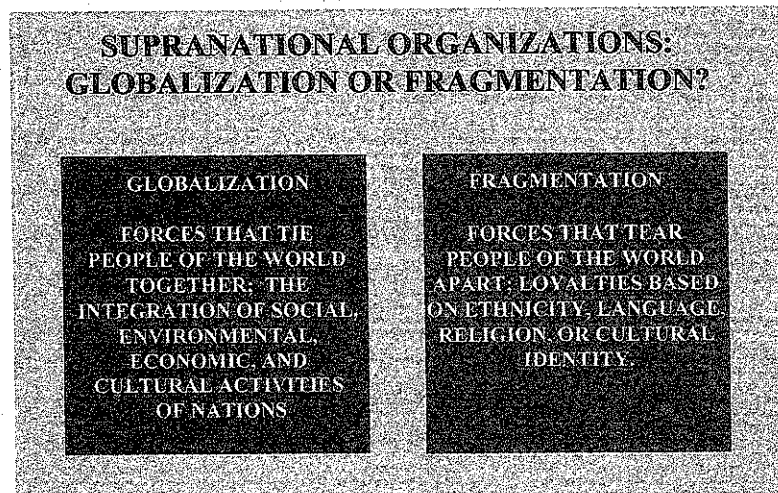


Geographic Distribution of Power in Seven Countries. Above is a representation of the geographic distribution of power in seven countries: the six core countries of AP Comparative Government and Politics and the United States. Just as we might disagree about the actual balance of power between state and national government in the United States, we might also disagree about exactly where to place the other six countries. Nigeria and Russia in particular are difficult to place because although they have federalist structures, a great deal of power in both countries rests in the central executive.

and interactions with others. These organizations reflect a trend toward **integration**, a process that encourages states to pool their sovereignty in order to gain political, economic, and social clout. Integration binds states together with common policies and shared rules. In the 20th century, many national governments established relationships with regional organizations – such as NATO, the European Union, NAFTA, and OPEC – and with international organizations, such as the United Nations.

These supranational organizations reflect the phenomenon of globalization – an integration of social, environmental, economic, and cultural activities of nations that has resulted from increasing international contacts. Political globalization is a countertrend to the organization of political power by states, and it complicates the ability of states to maintain sovereignty since it binds them to international organizations that take responsibility for tasks that national governments normally conduct. Globalization has changed the nature of comparative politics, largely because it breaks down the distinction between international relations and domestic politics, making many aspects of domestic politics subject to global forces. Likewise, it also internationalizes domestic issues and events. Economic globalization intensifies international trade, tying markets, producers, and labor together in increasingly extensive and intensive new ways. Economic globalization also integrates capital and financial markets around the world so that banking, credit, stocks, and **foreign direct investments** (purchase of assets in a country by a foreign firm) are increasingly interrelated.

Because globalization deepens and widens international connections, local events, even small ones, can have ripple effects throughout the world. Perhaps most apparent is the effect of technology and its ability to ignore national boundaries. The internet allows news from every corner of the globe to rapidly spread to other areas, so that what happens in one place affects other parts of the world. On the other hand, many political scientists point out a counter trend – fragmentation – a tendency for people to base their loyalty on ethnicity, language,



Supranational Organizations: Do they contribute to the countertrends of globalization or fragmentation or to both?

religion, or cultural identity. Regional supranational organizations may be seen as evidence of fragmentation because they divide the world into super blocs that often compete with one another. Although globalization and fragmentation appear to be opposite concepts, they both transcend political boundaries between individual countries.

Modern Challenges to the Nation-State Configuration

Nation-states have always had their challenges, both internal and external, but today new supranational forces are at work that have led some to believe that the nation-state political configuration itself may be changing. Is it possible that large regional organizations, such as the European Union, will replace the smaller state units as basic organizational models? Or will international organizations, such as the United Nations, come to have true governing power over nation-states? If so, then the very nature of sovereignty may be changing, especially if nation-states of the future have to abide by the rules of supranational organizations.

Centripetal vs. Centrifugal Forces

A recurring set of forces affects all nation-states: **centripetal forces** that unify them, and **centrifugal forces** that tend to fragment them.

- **Centripetal forces** bind together the people of a state, giving it strength. One of the most powerful centripetal forces is **nationalism**, or identities based on nationhood. It encourages allegiance to a single country, and it promotes loyalty and commitment. Such emotions encourage people to obey the law and accept the country's overall ideologies. States promote nationalism in a number of ways, including the use of symbols, such as flags, rituals, and holidays that remind citizens of what the country stands for. Even when a society is highly heterogeneous, symbols are powerful tools for creating national unity. Institutions, such as schools, the armed forces, and religion, may also serve as centripetal forces. Schools are expected to instill the society's beliefs, values, and behaviors in the young, teach the nation's language, and encourage students to identify with the nation. Fast and efficient transportation and communications systems also tend to unify nations. National broadcasting companies usually take on the point of view of the nation, even if they broadcast internationally. Transportation systems make it easier for people to travel to other parts of the country, and give the government the ability to reach all of its citizens.
- **Centrifugal forces** oppose centripetal forces. They destabilize the government and encourage the country to fall apart. A country that is not well-organized or governed stands to lose the loyalty of its citizens, and weak institutions can fail to provide the cohesive support that the government needs. Strong institutions may also challenge the government for the loyalty of the people. For example, when the U.S.S.R. was created in 1917, its leaders grounded the new country in the

ideology of communism. To strengthen the state, they forbid the practice of the traditional religion, Russian Orthodoxy. Although church membership dropped dramatically, the religious institution never disappeared, and when the U.S.S.R. dissolved, the church reappeared and is regaining strength today. The church was a centrifugal force that discouraged loyalty to the communist state. Nationalism, too, can be a destabilizing force, especially if different ethnic groups within the country have more loyalty to their ethnicity than to the state and its government. These loyalties may lead to **separatist movements** in which nationalities within a country may demand independence. Such movements served as centrifugal forces for the Soviet Union as various nationalities – such as Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Latvians, Georgians, and Armenians – challenged the government for their independence. Other examples are the Basques of Northern Spain, who have different customs (including language) from others in the country, and the Tamils in Sri Lanka, who have waged years of guerrilla warfare to defend what they see as majority threats to their culture, rights, and property. Characteristics that encourage separatist movements are a peripheral location and the existence of social and economic inequality. One reaction states have had to centrifugal force is **devolution**, or the tendency to decentralize decision-making to regional governments. Britain has devolved power to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments in an effort to keep peace with Scotland and Wales. As a result, Britain's unitary government has taken some significant strides toward federalism, although London is still the geographic center of decision-making for the country.

Devolution: Ethnic, Economic, and Spatial Forces

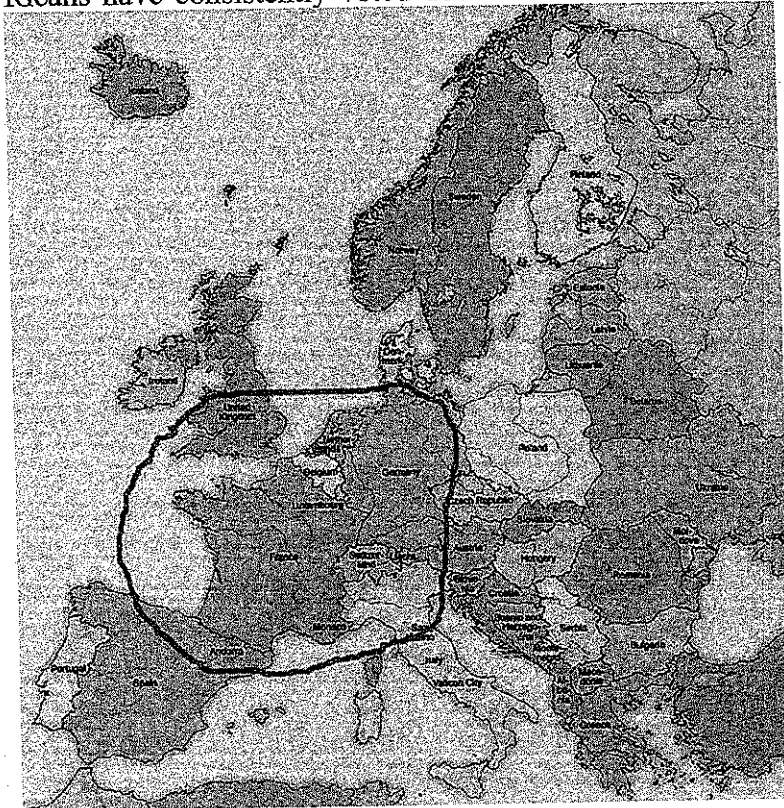
Devolution of government powers to sub-governments is usually a reaction to centrifugal forces – those that divide and destabilize. Devolu-

tionary forces emerge in all kinds of states, old and new, mature and newly created. We may divide these forces into three basic types:

- 1) **Ethnic forces** – An **ethnic group** shares a well-developed sense of belonging to the same culture. That identity is based on a unique mixture of language, religion, and customs. If a state contains strong ethnic groups with identities that differ from those of the majority, it can threaten the territorial integrity of the state itself. **Ethnonationalism**, the tendency for an ethnic group to see itself as a distinct nation with a right to autonomy or independence – is a fundamental centrifugal force promoting devolution. The threat is usually stronger if the group is clustered in particular spaces within the nation-state. For example, most French Canadians live in the province of Quebec, creating a large base for an independence movement. If ethnically French people were scattered evenly over the country, their sense of identity would be diluted, and the devolutionary force would most likely be weaker. Devolutionary forces in Britain – centered in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland – have not been strong enough to destabilize the country, although violence in Northern Ireland has certainly destabilized the region. Ethnic forces broke up the nation-state of Yugoslavia during the 1990s, devolving it into separate states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Serbia-Montenegro.
- 2) **Economic forces** – Economic inequalities may also destabilize a nation-state, particularly if the inequalities are regional. For example, Italy is split between north and south by the “Ancona Line”, an invisible line extending from Rome to the Adriatic coast at Ancona. The north is far more prosperous than the south, with the north clearly part of the European core area, and the south a part of the periphery. The north is industrialized, and the south is rural. These economic differences inspired the formation of the Northern League, which advocated an independent state called Padania that would shed the north of the “economic drag” it considered the south to be. The movement failed, but it did encourage the Italian government to devolve power to regional governments, moving it toward

a more federal system. A similar economic force is at work in Catalonia in northern Spain, with Catalonians only about 17% of Spain's population, but accountable for 40% of all Spanish industrial exports.

- 3) **Spatial forces** – Spatially, devolutionary events most often occur on the margins of the state. Distance, remoteness, and peripheral location promote devolution, especially if water, desert, or mountains separate the areas from the center of power and neighbor nations that may support separatist objectives. For example, the United States claims Puerto Rico as a territory, and has offered it recognition as a state. However, Puerto Ricans have consistently voted down the offer of statehood,



Economic Devolutionary Forces in Italy and Spain. Geographically, southern Italy and most of Spain lie outside the European core, creating economic devolutionary forces within the two nation-states. In Spain, the Catalonians in the north are connected to the core, but the bulk of Spain is not. In Italy the core extends its reach over the northern half of the country, creating centrifugal tensions between north and south.

and a small but vocal pro-independence movement has advocated complete separation from the U.S. The movement is encouraged by spatial forces; Puerto Rico is an island in the Caribbean, close to other islands that have their independence.

Executives

The executive office carries out the laws and policies of a state. In many countries the executive is split into two distinct roles: **the head of state** and **the head of government**. The head of state is a role that symbolizes and represents the people, both nationally and internationally, and may or may not have any real policymaking power. The head of government deals with the everyday tasks of running the state, and usually directs the activities of other members of the executive branch. The distinction is clearly seen in a country such as Britain, where formerly powerful monarchs reigned over their subjects, but left others (such as prime ministers) in charge of actually running the country. Today Britain still has a monarch who is head of state, but the real power rests with the prime minister, who is head of government. Likewise, the Japanese emperor still symbolically represents the nation, but the prime minister runs the government. In the United States, both roles are combined into one position – the president. However, in other countries, such as Italy and Germany, the president is the head of state with weak powers, and the prime minister is the head of government. In still others, such as Russia and France, the president is head of state with strong powers, and the prime minister is the head of government with subordinate powers, although the relationship in Russia has changed, depending on whether Vladimir Putin has been president or prime minister.

Functions of the Chief Executive

Usually the chief executive is the most important person in the policy-making process, initiating new policies and playing an important role in their adoption. In presidential systems, the president usually has the power to veto legislation, while the executive in a parliamentary system usually does not have that authority. The political executive also oversees policy implementation and can hold other officials in

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS: EXECUTIVES



HEAD OF STATE

Role that symbolizes the people

May or may not have real policymaking power



HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

Deals with the everyday tasks of running the state

Usually directs the activities of other members of the executive branch

the executive branch accountable for their performance. The central decisions in a foreign policy crisis are generally made by the chief executive.

The Cabinet

In parliamentary systems, the cabinet is the most important collective decision-making body. Its ministers head all the major departments into which the executive branch is divided, and the cabinet is led by the prime minister, or "first among equals." The ministers are also leaders of the majority party in parliament, or if the country has a multi-party system with no clear majority party, a **cabinet coalition** will form, where several parties join forces and are represented in different cabinet posts. A common problem of cabinet coalitions is that they tend to be unstable, especially if they result from a fragmented legislature. In presidential systems, the president chooses the cabinet members from almost any area of political life, and his appointments may have to be approved by the legislature, as with the U.S. Senate. Because the cabinet members are not necessarily party leaders or members of the legislature, they often have more independence from the president than ministers do from the prime minister. However, the

president usually has the power to remove them from office, so they can't stray too far from the president's wishes.

Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies consist of agencies that generally implement government policy. They usually are a part of the executive branch of government, and their size has generally increased over the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries. This is partly due to government efforts to improve the health, security, and welfare of their populations.

German political philosopher Max Weber created the classic conception of bureaucracy as a well-organized, complex machine that is a "rational" way for a modern society to organize its business. He did not see bureaucracies as necessary evils, but as inevitable organizational responses to a changing society.

According to Weber, a bureaucracy has several basic characteristics:

- **Hierarchical authority structure** – The chain of command is hierarchical; the top bureaucrat has ultimate control, and authority flows from the top down.
- **Task specialization** – A clear division of labor means that every individual has a specialized job.
- **Extensive rules** – All people in the organization follow clearly written, well-established formal rules.
- **Clear goals** – All people in the organization strive toward a clearly defined set of goals.
- **The merit principle** – Merit-based hiring and promotion requires that no jobs be granted to friends or family unless they are the best qualified.
- **Impersonality** – Job performance is judged by productivity, or how much work the individual gets done.

Bureaucracies have acquired great significance in most contemporary societies and often represent an important source of stability for states.

Bureaucracies in Democracies

Max Weber developed these characteristics of bureaucracies with European democracies in mind. He was less than enthusiastic about their growing importance largely because of the alienation that he believed they created among workers. A modern issue has to do with the **discretionary power** given to bureaucrats – the power to make small decisions in implementing legislative and executive decisions. These small decisions arguably add up to significant policymaking influence. Democratic beliefs require decisions to be made by elected officials, not by appointed bureaucrats. Yet the bureaucracy is often an important source of stability in a democracy, since the elected officials may be swept out of office and replaced by new people with little political experience. The bureaucrats stay on through the changes in elected leadership positions, and as a result, they provide continuity in the policymaking process.

Bureaucracies in Authoritarian Regimes

Bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes differ from those in democracies in that the head of government exercises almost complete control over their activities. For example, Joseph Stalin placed his own personal supporters (members of the communist party) in control of bureaucratic agencies, such as the secret police and the network of political commissars who served as watchdogs over the military. These bureaucracies not only managed the economy but directly controlled vast resources, including human labor, and the number of prisoners in labor camps under secret police administration increased dramatically under Stalin's rule. Executive power over the bureaucracy was questioned in the 19th century in the United States, when presidents had a great deal of control over government jobs under the **patronage system**, in which political supporters received jobs in return for their assistance in getting the president elected. However, this system was reformed after President James Garfield was assassinated by a disgruntled supporter, and was replaced by a merit-based system meant to curtail the president's patronage powers. As a result, bureaucratic

appointments came to abide by more democratic, less authoritarian rules.

Other examples of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes developed in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay during the 1960s and 1970s. In these Latin American countries a military regime formed a ruling coalition that included military officers and civilian bureaucrats, or **technocrats**. The coalition seized control of the government and determined which other groups were allowed to participate. The authoritarian leaders were seen as modernizers seeking to improve their countries' economic power in the world economy. They controlled the state partly in the name of efficiency – democratic input into the government was seen as an obstacle in the modernization process, and so the governments in these countries have often been oppressive.

Common Characteristics of Bureaucracies

All bureaucracies, whether they are democratic or authoritarian, tend to have many features in common:

- **Non-elected positions** – Bureaucrats are appointed, usually salaried, and are not elected by the public.
- **Impersonal, efficient structures** – Bureaucracies tend to be impersonal because they are goal oriented and have little concern for personal feelings. Bureaucracies are meant to be efficient in accomplishing their goals.
- **Formal qualifications for jobs** – Although authoritarian leaders may appoint whoever they want to government positions, they must at least factor in formal qualifications (education, experience) in making their appointments. Otherwise, the bureaucracy cannot fulfill its goals of efficiency and competent administration. Most democracies have institutionalized formal qualifications as prerequisites for appointments to the bureaucracy.

COMPARATIVE BUREAUCRACIES

Bureaucracies consist of agencies that implement government policy, but their functions generally depend on whether they exist in a democracy or an authoritarian regime.

Bureaucracies in Democracies

Bureaucrats usually have **discretionary power**, which allows them to make small decisions that influence policy.

Bureaucrats are usually appointed, not elected, so they often serve as a source of stability when elected officials are voted out of office.

Bureaucracies in Authoritarian Regimes

The head of government exercises almost complete control over bureaucratic activities.

Bureaucrats are more likely to receive their jobs through **patronage** (loyalty or favors to the leaders) than merit, although patronage exists in democratic systems as well.

- **Hierarchical organization** – Most bureaucracies are hierarchical, top-down organizations in which higher officials give orders to lower officials. Everyone in the hierarchy has a boss, except for the person at the very top.
- **Red tape/inefficiency** – Despite their common goal of efficiency, large bureaucracies seem to stumble under their own weight. Once the bureaucracy reaches a certain size and complexity, the orderly flow of business appears to break down, so that one hand doesn't appear to know what the other is doing.

Legislatures

The legislature is the branch of government charged with making laws. Formal approval for laws is usually required for major public policies, although in authoritarian states, legislatures are generally dominated by the chief executive. Today more than 80% of the countries belong-

ing to the United Nations have legislatures, suggesting that a government that includes a representative popular component increases its legitimacy.

Bicameralism

Legislatures may be **bicameral**, with two houses, or **unicameral**, with only one. The most usual form is bicameral, and may be traced to Britain's House of Lords and House of Commons. Despite the fact that one house is referred to as "upper" and the other as "lower," the upper house does not necessarily have more power than the lower house. In the United States, it is debatable which house is more powerful than the other, and in Britain and Russia, the upper house has very little power.

Why do most countries have a bicameral legislature? If the country practices federalism, where power is shared between a central and subunit governments, bicameralism allows for one house (usually the upper chamber) to represent regional governments and local interests. Seats in the other chamber are usually determined by population, and so the body (usually the lower house) serves as a direct democratic link to the voters. Bicameralism may also counterbalance disproportionate power in the hands of any region. For example, in the United States, populous states such as California, New York, and Texas have large numbers of representatives in the lower house, so the voices of citizens in those states are stronger than those in more sparsely populated states. However, that large-state advantage is counterbalanced in the Senate, where all states are equally represented by two senators each. Even in a unitary state where all power is centralized in one place, bicameralism may serve to disperse power by requiring both houses to approve legislation. Some scholars view the upper house as a "cooling off" mechanism to slow down impulsive actions of the "hotheaded" lower house that is directly elected by the people.

Memberships in the legislature may be determined in different ways, with many houses being elected directly by voters. However, others are selected by government officials, or their membership may be determined by political parties. The six core countries offer a variety of contrasting methods for determining legislative memberships.

Functions of Legislatures

Assembly members formulate, debate, and vote on political policies. They often control the country's budget in terms of both fund-raising and spending. Some assemblies may appoint important officials in the executive and judicial branches, and some (such as the British House of Lords until 2009) have served as courts of appeal. They may also play a major role in **elite recruitment**, or identifying future leaders of the government, and they may hold hearings regarding behaviors of public officials.

Regarding policymaking, legislatures in different countries hold varying degrees of power. For example, the U.S. Congress plays a very active role in the formulation and enactment of legislation. In contrast, the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China is primarily a rubberstamp organization for policies made by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

Judiciaries

The judiciary's role in the political system varies considerably from one country to another. All states have some form of legal structure, and the role of the judiciary is rarely limited to routinely adjudicating civil and criminal cases. Courts in authoritarian systems generally have little or no independence, and their decisions are controlled by the chief executive. Court systems that decide the guilt or innocence of lawbreakers go back to the days of medieval England, but **constitutional courts** that serve to defend democratic principles of a country against infringement by both private citizens and the government are a much more recent phenomenon. The constitutional court is the highest judicial body that rules on the constitutionality of laws and other government actions.

In some states the judiciary is relatively independent of the political authorities in the executive and legislative branches. It may even have the authority to impose restrictions on what political leaders do. **Judicial review**, the mechanism that allows courts to review laws and executive actions for their constitutionality, was well established in the United States during the 19th century, but it has developed over the past decades in other democracies. The growth of judicial power over

the past century has been spurred in part by the desire to protect human rights. Some have criticized the acceptance of the constitutional court in liberal democracies today, saying that the judges are not directly elected, so they do not represent the direct will of the people. Despite these developments, the judiciary is still a relatively weak branch in most of the six core countries of the Comparative Government and Politics course, but it takes different forms in each of them.

Linkage Institutions

In many countries we may identify groups that connect the government to its citizens, such as political parties, interest groups, and print and electronic media. Appropriately, these groups are called **linkage institutions**. Their size and development depends partly on the size of the population, and partly on the scope of government activity. The larger the population and the more complex the government's policymaking activities, the more likely the country is to have well developed linkage institutions.

Parties

The array of political parties operating in a particular country and the nature of the relationships among them is called a party system. Political parties perform many functions in democracies. First, they help bring different people and ideas together to establish the means by which the majority can rule. Second, they provide labels for candidates that help citizens decide how to vote. Third, they hold politicians accountable to the electorate and other political elites. Most democracies have multi-party systems, with the two-party system in the United States being a more unusual arrangement. Communist states have one-party systems that dominate the governments, but non-communist countries have also had one-party systems. An example is Mexico during most of the 20th century when it was dominated by PRI.

The **two-party system** is a rarity, occurring in only about 15 countries in the world today. The United States has had two major political parties – the Republicans and the Democrats – throughout most of its history. Although minor parties do exist, historically those two parties have had the only reasonable chance to win national elections. The most important single reason for the existence of a two-party system

is the plurality electoral system. Most European countries today have **multi-party systems**. They usually arise in countries with strong parliamentary systems, particularly those that use a proportional representation method for elections.

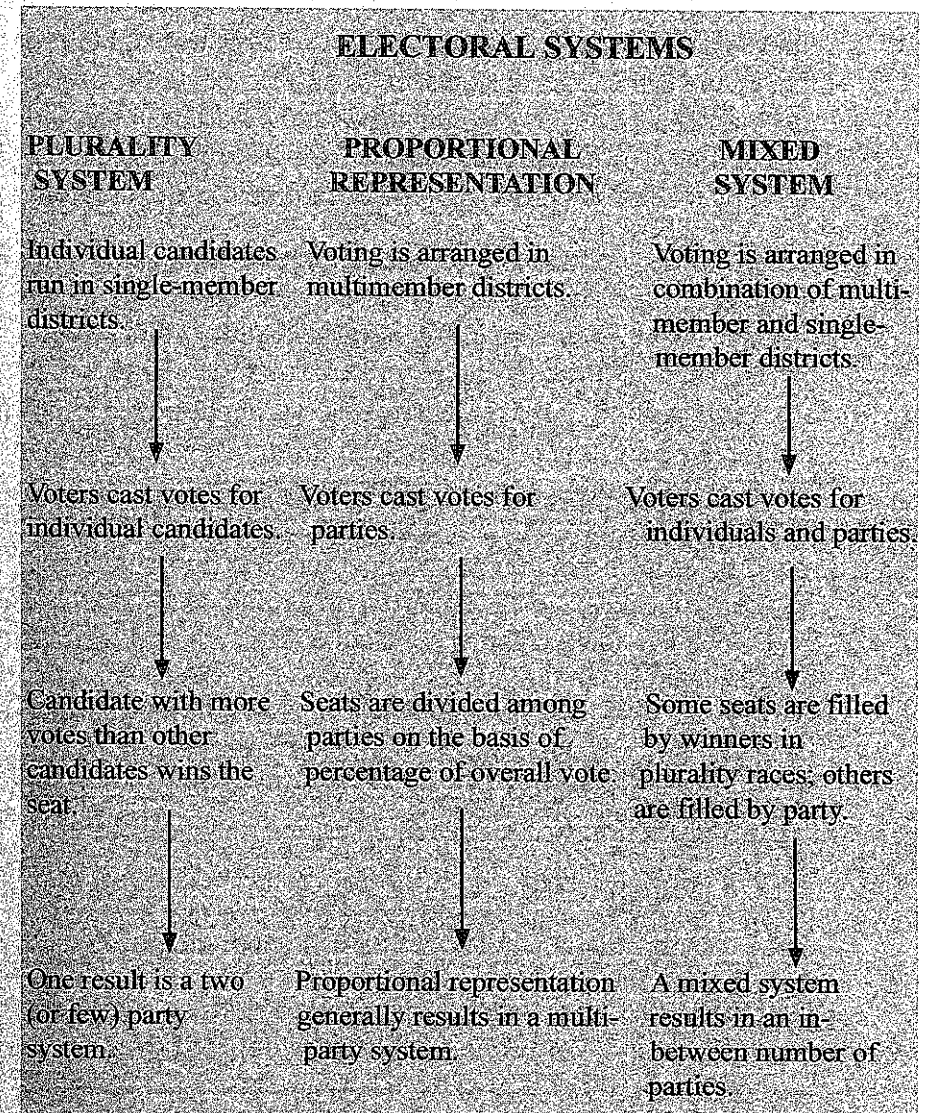
Electoral Systems and Elections

Electoral systems are the rules that decide how votes are cast, counted, and translated into seats in a legislature. All democracies divide their populations by electoral boundaries, but they use many different arrangements. The United States, India, and Great Britain use a system called **first-past-the-post**, in which they divide their constituencies into **single-member districts** in which candidates compete for a single representative's seat. It is also called the **plurality system**, or the **winner-take-all system**, because the winner does not need a majority to win, but simply must get more votes than anyone else. In contrast, many countries use **proportional representation** that creates **multi-member districts** in which more than one legislative seat is contested in each district. Under proportional representation, voters cast their ballots for a party rather than for a candidate, and the percentage of votes a party receives determines how many seats the party will gain in the legislature. South Africa and Italy use a system based solely on proportional representation, and many countries, including Germany, Mexico, and Russia (until 2007), have used a **mixed system** that combines first-past-the-post and proportional representation. For example, in Mexico, 300 of the 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house) are elected through the winner-take-all system from single-member districts, and 200 members are selected by proportional representation.

Plurality systems encourage large, broad-based parties because no matter how many people run in a district, the person with the largest number of votes wins. This encourages parties to become larger, spreading their "umbrellas" to embrace more voters. Parties without big groups of voters supporting them have little hope of winning, and often even have a hard time getting their candidates listed on the ballot. In contrast, the proportional representation electoral system encourages multiple parties because they have a good chance of getting some of their candidates elected. This system allows minor parties

to form coalitions to create a majority vote so that legislation can be passed.

Democracies also vary in the types of elections that they hold. A basic distinction between a presidential and parliamentary system is that the president is directly elected by the people to the position, and the prime minister is elected as a member of the legislature. The prime



minister becomes head of government because he is the leader of his or her party or coalition. In general, these types of elections are found in democracies:

- **Election of public officials** – The number of elected officials varies widely, with thousands of officials elected in the United States, and far fewer in most other democracies. However, even in a unitary state, many local and regional officials are directly elected. Legislators are often directly elected, both on the regional and national levels. Now citizens of many European countries also elect representatives to the European Union's Parliament. Lower houses are more likely to be directly elected than upper houses, with a variety of techniques used for the latter.
- **Referendum** – Besides elections to choose public officials, many countries also have the option of allowing public votes on particular policy issues. A national ballot, called by the government on a policy issue is called a **referendum**, which allows the public to make direct decisions about policy itself. Referenda exist only on the state and local level in the United States and Canada, but many other countries have used them nationally. The French and Russian presidents have the power to call referenda, and they have sometimes had important political consequences. For example, when a referendum proposed by French President Charles De Gaulle failed, he resigned his office in reaction to the snub by the voters. In Russia, the Constitution of 1993 was presented as a referendum for approval by the voters. In Britain, devolution of powers to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments was put before the voters in those regions in the form of referenda. The European Constitution failed because it was voted down in referenda in the Netherlands and France. A variation of a referendum is a **plebiscite**, or a ballot to consult public opinion in a nonbinding way.
- **Initiative** – Whereas referenda are called by the government, an **initiative** is a vote on a policy that is initiated by the people. Although less common than the referendum, the initiative must propose an issue for a nation-wide vote and its organizers

must collect a certain number of supporting signatures from the public. The government is then obliged to schedule a vote.

Interest Groups

Interest groups are organizations of like-minded people whose main political goal is to influence and shape public policy. In liberal democracies, interest groups that are independent from the government are usually an important force in the maintenance of a strong civil society. Groups may be based on almost any type of common interest – occupation, labor, business interests, agriculture, community action, ethnic identities, or advocacy for a cause. Groups may be formally organized on a national level, or they may work almost exclusively on the local level. Interest groups often have nonpolitical goals, too. For example, a business group might organize to promote the growth of its products by directly advertising them to the public. Most interest groups have a political side, too, that focuses on influencing the decisions that governments make.

Differences between Parties and Interest Groups

Parties and interest groups have a great deal in common because they represent political points of view of various people who want to influence policymaking. However, some significant differences still exist. Parties influence government primarily through the electoral process. Although they serve many purposes, parties always run candidates for public office. Interest groups often support candidates, but they do not run their own slate of candidates. Another important difference is that parties generate and support a broad spectrum of policies; interest groups support one or a few related policies. In a multi-party system, however, parties with a narrow base of interests tend to appear. For example, a number of “green parties” have appeared in many European party systems that have a particular interest in environmental issues.

The Strength of Interest Groups

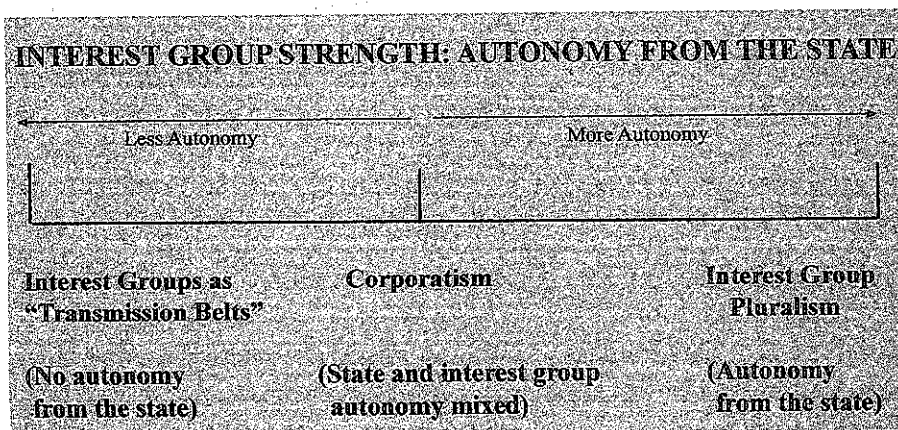
An important factor in assessing how important interest groups are in setting public policy is to determine the degree of autonomy they have from the government. To exercise influence on public policy, groups

need to be able to independently decide what their goals are and what methods they will use to achieve them.

In authoritarian states, groups have almost no independence. For example, in China, only government-endorsed groups may exist. Groups in communist China have often been agents to extend the party's influence beyond its own membership to shape the views of its citizens. The government cracks down on unrecognized groups, such as the religious organization, Falon Gong, so that they are either forced underground or out of existence. Political scientist Frank Wilson refers to interest groups in this type of system as "**transmission belts**" that convey to their members the views of the party elite.

At the other extreme are the interest groups in many western industrial democracies. These groups guard their independence by selecting their own leaders and raising their own funds. These autonomous groups compete with each other and with government for influence over state policies in a pattern called **interest group pluralism**. Working from outside the formal governmental structures, rival groups use a variety of tactics to pressure government to make policies that favor their interests.

In between these two extreme patterns is **corporatism**, where fewer groups compete than under pluralism, with usually one for each interest sector, such as labor, agriculture, and management. The group's monopoly over its sector is officially approved by the state and sometimes protected by the state. There are two forms of corporatism: **state**



corporatism, where the state determines which groups are brought in; and **societal corporatism** (or **neocorporatism**), where interest groups take the lead and dominate the state.

Political Elites and Political Recruitment

All countries have **political elites**, or leaders who have a disproportionate share of policy-making power. In democracies, these people are selected by competitive elections, but they still may be readily identified as political elites. Every country must establish a method of elite **recruitment**, or ways to identify and select people for future leadership positions. Also, countries must be concerned about leadership **succession**, or the process that determines the procedure for replacing leaders when they resign, die, or are no longer effective.

TOPIC SIX: PUBLIC POLICY

All political systems set policy, whether by legislative vote, executive decision, judicial rulings, or a combination of the three. In many countries interest groups and political parties also play large roles in policymaking. Policy is generally directed toward addressing issues and solving problems. Many issues are similar in almost all countries, such as the need to improve or stabilize the economy or to provide for a common defense against internal and external threats. However, governments differ in the approaches they take to various issues, as well as the importance they place on solving particular problems.

Common policy issues include:

- **Economic performance** – Governments are often concerned with economic health/or problems within their borders. Most also participate in international trade, so their economies are deeply affected by their international imports and exports. The six core countries provide a variety of approaches that states may take, as well as an assortment of consequences of both good and poor economic performances. Economic performance may be measured in any number of ways including 1) **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** – all the goods and services produced by a country's economy in a given year, excluding income citizens and groups earn outside the country; 2) **Gross**

THE GINI INDEX FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES

Late 2000s*

Norway	.26
Canada	.33
United Kingdom	.36
New Zealand	.36
Russia	.375
Iran	.383
United States	.41
China	.415
Nigeria	.43
Mexico	.48

*A low Gini coefficient indicates more equal income or wealth distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates unequal income or wealth distribution. "0" corresponds to perfect equality (everyone has the same income), and "1" corresponds to complete inequality (one person has all the income; everyone else has zero income).

Source: UN Human Development Report, 2009

- **National Product (GNP)** – like GDP, but also includes income citizens earned outside the country; 3) **GNP per capita** – divides the GNP by the population of the country; 4) **Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)** – a figure like GNP, except that it takes into consideration what people can buy using their income in the local economy.

- **Social welfare** – Citizens' social welfare needs include health, employment, family assistance, and education. States provide different levels of support in each area, and they display many different attitudes toward government responsibility for social welfare. Some measures of social welfare are literacy rates, distribution of income, life expectancy, and education levels. Two commonly used measures of social welfare are: 1) **The Gini Index**, a mathematical formula that measures the amount of economic inequality in a society; and 2) the **Human Development Index (HDI)** that measures the well-being of a country's people by factoring in adult literacy, life expectancy, and educational enrollment, as well as GDP.
- **Civil liberties, political rights, and political freedoms** – **Political rights** usually refer to the promotion of equality, whereas **civil liberties** refer to promotion of freedom. Although the two concepts overlap, the protection of political rights usually implies that the government should be proactive in promoting them. In addition to differences in how much proactive government support is advisable, liberal democracies also vary in terms of which civil liberties should be preserved. All liberal democracies uphold the rights of free speech and association, but they vary in terms of rights to assemble and/or criticize the government. The constitutions of many liberal democracies guarantee civil liberties and rights, and most communist, post-communist, developing, and less developed countries pay lip service to them. **Freedom House**, an organization that studies democracy around the world, ranks countries on a 1 to 7 freedom scale, with countries given a 1 being the most free and those given a 7 being the least free. A number of post-communist countries have made significant strides in this area in recent years, but many others remain highly authoritarian.
- **Environment** – Many modern democratic states take a big interest in protecting the environment. European countries in particular have had a surge of interest expressed through the formation of "green" parties that focus on the environment. Environmental groups have also promoted the development of a global civil society by operating across national borders. For

example, environmental groups in the western democracies, assist environmental groups in developing nations by providing advice and resources to address the issues facing their countries. National groups meet at international conferences and network via the internet to address environmental issues on a global level.



TABLE OF COMPARATIVE INDEXES

INDEX	CHINA	IRAN	MEXICO	NIGERIA	RUSSIA	BRITAIN
GDP (in billions)	12,380	997.4	1761	450.5	2,504	2,323
GDP per capita	6,076	7,211	8,900	1,631	14,247	38,589
PPP per capita	9,100	13,100	15,300	2,700	17,700	36,700
HDI	69.9	74.2	77.5	47.1	78.8	87.5

Note: GDP, GDP per capita, and PPP per capita are all converted and compared to U.S. dollars

Sources: International Monetary Fund (2012), CIA World Factbook, 2013, Human Development Report, United Nations, 2013

COMPARATIVE INDEXES

A common way countries can be compared is with statistical data. Some of these measures are familiar ones, because they are often cited in news stories, journals, and textbooks. They are often presented as if they are an authoritative description of a country's economy and society. However, these statistics are estimates, compiled by statistical bureaus of each country's government, as well as by international agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Here are some of the statistical indicators most commonly used by those who study comparative government.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an economic indicator that compiles data on all forms of wealth produced within a country, including all goods (agricultural crops, for example, or industrial products such as cars) and services (such as banking, education, and even haircuts). GDP is calculated by each nation, but there are standards of accuracy established by the international organizations that use them.

GDP per capita is an economic measure that takes the total value of a country's GDP and divides it by the country's population. This can reveal more information than straightforward GDP numbers. Two countries with fairly similar GDPs, for example, might lead one to think they have similar standards of living. However, when measured against each other using GDP per capita, the country with a greater population will have a lower GDP than the other.

Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per capita adjusts for relative costs of living in various countries and converts different economies into a single currency, usually the U.S. dollar. GDP can be deceiving, since the same amount of money will buy more in some countries than others. PPP per capita attempts to estimate the buying power of income in each country by comparing costs of basic commodities, such as housing and food, using prices in the U.S. as a benchmark.

Human Development Index (HDI) measures a country's standard of living. First developed by the United Nations in 1991, HDI combines population statistics of years of schooling, adult literacy, life expectancy, and income levels. The index scale is from 0 to 100; countries scoring over 80 are considered to have high levels of human development, those under 50 are low.

(Indexes compiled by Gray Pedersen)

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

advanced democracies
 authoritarian regime
 bicameral, unicameral legislatures
 bureaucratic authoritarian regimes
 bureaucracy
 cabinet coalition
 causation
 checks and balances
 civil liberties
 civil society
 coinciding/crosscutting cleavages
 command economies
 common law/code law
 communism
 competitive elections
 confederal system
 conflictual political culture
 consensual political culture
 conservatism
 constitutional courts
 co-optation
 corporatism
 correlation
 cosmopolitanism
 coup d'état
 democratic consolidation
 democratic corporatism
 Democracy Index
 direct democracy
 economic liberalization
 electoral systems
 elites
 empirical data
 fascism
 federal system
 first-past-the-post (plurality, winner-take-all)
 foreign direct investment

fragmentation
 Freedom House ratings
 Gini Index
 globalization (economic and political)
 GDP, GNP, GNP per capita
 government
 head of government
 head of state
 hypothesis
 illiberal democracies
 independent variable/dependent variable
 indications of democratization
 indirect democracy
 informal politics
 initiative
 institutions, institutionalized
 integration
 interest group pluralism
 judicial review
 legitimacy (traditional, charismatic, rational-legal)
 liberal democracies
 liberalism as a political ideology
 liberalism as an approach to economic and political change
 linkage institutions
 market economies
 marketization
 military rule
 mixed economies
 mixed electoral system
 multi-member districts, single-member districts
 multi-party system
 nation
 nationalism
 normative questions
 parliamentary system
 party system
 patronage
 patron-client system

plebiscite
 pluralism
 political culture
 political efficacy
 political elites
 political frameworks
 political ideologies
 political liberalization
 political rights
 political socialization
 politicization of religion
 presidential system
 privatization
 procedural democracy
 proportional representation
 purchase power parity (PPP)
 radicalism
 reactionary beliefs
 recruitment of elites
 referendum
 reform
 regime
 revolution
 revolution of rising expectations
 rule of law
 Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations"
 semi-presidential system
 separation of powers
 social boundaries
 social capital
 social cleavages
 social movements
 socialism
 societal corporatism (neo-corporatism)
 sovereignty
 state
 state corporatism
 subject activities

substantive democracies
 succession
 technocrats
 "third wave" of democracy
 three-world approach
 totalitarianism
 "transmission belt"
 transparency
 two-party system
 tyranny of the majority
 unitary systems

Multiple-Choice Questions for Introduction

- Which of the following is a normative statement?
 - The presidents of Mexico and Russia are both directly elected by the people.
 - The head of government in Iran is the president.
 - The Chinese judicial system would serve the country better if it were more independent.
 - The European Union expanded rapidly during the first few years of the 21st century.
 - Britain's upper house of the legislature consists of non-elected officials.
- "Nigeria's policy of revenue sharing has not functioned well primarily because the government lacks legitimacy."
 - independent variable
 - correlation
 - causation
 - dependent variable
 - hypothesis
- Which of the following is the most accurate definition of a state?
 - the ability to carry out actions or policies within borders independently from interference
 - an organization that includes institutions and maintains a monopoly of violence over a territory
 - a group of people that are bound together by a common political identity
 - the rules that are set and followed in exerting power
 - a government with three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial