

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 currently 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 the country. However, what exactly is **politics**? Politics is basically all about power. Who has the power to make the decisions? How did they get the power? What challenges do leaders face from others – both inside and outside the country’s borders – in keeping the power? So, as we look at different countries, we are not only concerned about the ins and outs of how the government works. We will also look at how power is gained, managed, challenged, and maintained.

College-level courses in comparative government and politics vary, but they all cover topics that enable meaningful comparisons across countries. These topics are introduced in the pages that follow, and will be 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 economic development of a group of countries, including information about Gross National Product, per capita income, and amounts of imports and exports. The second approach might not reject those statistics, but would 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 such an approach leads to meaningless data collection. Both 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 the scientific method to objectively and logically evaluate data. After reviewing earlier research, the 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 is then led 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) might be 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 all 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. 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 can 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 policy-making.

- **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. After 1991, the world was no longer dominated by two superpowers, and that fact has had consequences that have reverberated in many areas that no one could have predicted. However, what better opportunity to compare the impact of change on 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 have largely evaporated 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. **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 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.

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, which 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 a questionable democracy, 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 had a disproportionate amount of power, but the prime minister's position has become much more important since Vladimir Putin took the position in 2008. 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 that 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. 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

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 Regimes

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 as the 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, the oil wells and refineries were placed under the control of state-run PEMEX, and many private oil businesses were kicked out of the country. Corporatism gives the public a limited influence in the policy-making 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 the 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 a 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 freedoms.

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 destroying the ability of the government to guard the public interest and giving special interests control of policy. 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.

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 should rule 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 challenged. 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.
- **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 says, 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 government 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 relative 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 modern 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 Bush administration concerning the war in Iraq 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, their 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 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 believe that the political and/or economic systems are 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 “de-

mocracies” 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 democracy, some have progressed further than others. Countries that have regular, free, and fair competitive elections, but are missing these other qualities (civil liberties, rule of law, neutrality of the judiciary, open civil society, and civilian control of the military) are referred to as **illiberal democracies**, or **procedural democracies**. 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 appears to have followed, starting in the late 1980s. On the other hand, China has been moving toward capitalism since the late 1970s without any 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.

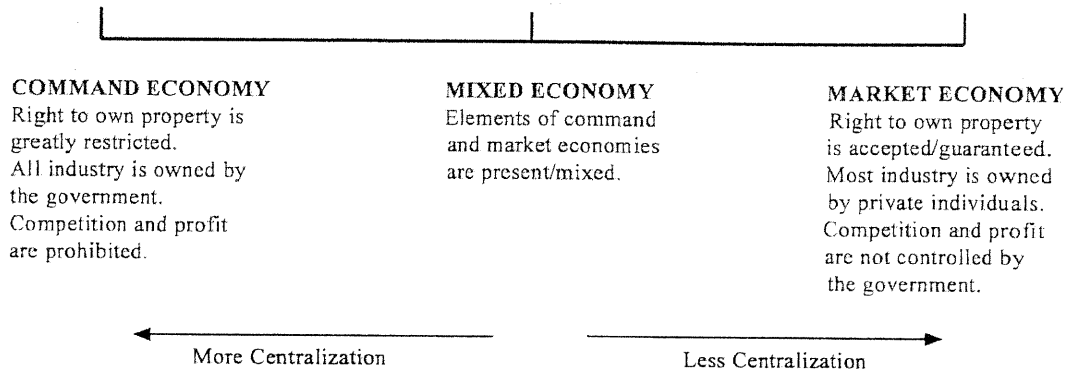
Many political economists today declare that the economic competition between capitalism and socialism that dominated the 20th century is now a part of the past. The old **command economies**, with socialist principles of centralized planning, quota-setting, and state ownership, are fading from existence, 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 its 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 – will happen, but the market will correct 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.



3) 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 have framed modern international tensions as occurring between Islamic and Christian states.

Samuel Huntington has argued that our most important and dangerous future conflicts will be based on clashes of civilizations, not on socioeconomic 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 part 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 policy-making. These divisions – theoretically out of the realm of politics – are called **social cleavages**.

- **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?

BASES OF 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 20th 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.

- **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 categories below:

- **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 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 more superficial level, people have more 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?
- **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.

**COMPARATIVE VOTER TURNOUT
SELECTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2006-9**

Country	Date of Election	Voter Turnout
Nigeria	April 21, 2007	57.5 %*
Uganda	February 23, 2006	69.19%
Yemen	September 20, 2006	65.16%
Colombia	May 28, 2006	45.05%
Haiti	February 7, 2006	59.26%
France	April 27, 2007	83.77%
Portugal	January 22, 2006	61.53%
Georgia	January 5, 2008	56 %
Iran	June 12, 2009	85 %

*Figure is estimate, not official.

Comparative Voter Turnout. Voter turnouts 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 will yield some hypotheses. For example, the French election was of very high interest because an incumbent was not running, so the voter turnout was much higher than it had been in previous recent presidential elections. Nigeria's election results are less reliable than many, partly because of widespread fraud.

Source: Election Guide, www.electionguide.org.

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 controls. Political scientists are interested in civil society as it helps to define the people's relationship to and role in politics and community affairs. Groups in civil society may be inherently unpolitical, 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 the 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** – or a universal political order that draws its identity and values from everywhere – is emerging. This global civil society can take shape in **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** or more informally through people that 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; a **confed-**

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 its strength today. The church was a centrifugal force in creating and maintaining 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 can 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 waged years of guerrilla warfare to defend what they saw as majority threats to their culture, rights, and property. Characteristics that encourage separatist movements are a peripheral location and 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. Devolutionary forces can 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” they 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, 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 that 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



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.

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 has changed in Russia since Vladimir Putin became prime minister.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Usually the chief executive is the most important person in the policymaking 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 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, nor are they usually 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 a rational organizational response to a changing society.

According to Weber, a bureaucracy has several basic characteristics:

- **Hierarchical authority structure** – A chain of command that is hierarchical; the top bureaucrat has ultimate control, and authority flows from the top down.
- **Task specialization** – A clear division of labor in which every individual has a specialized job
- **Extensive rules** – Clearly written, well-established formal rules that all people in the organization follow
- **Clear goals** – A clearly defined set of goals that all people in the organization strive toward
- **The merit principle** – Merit-based hiring and promotion; no granting of jobs to friends or family unless they are the best qualified
- **Impersonality** – Job performance that 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 the above 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. For example, 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 who got 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.
- **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 belonging to the United Nations have legislatures, suggesting that a legitimate government today must formally include a representative popular component.

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, Russia, and France, 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) may serve 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 roles in the political system vary 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 these 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 a variety of 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 policy-making 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, many believe those two parties have 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 the 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 needs to 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), use 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.

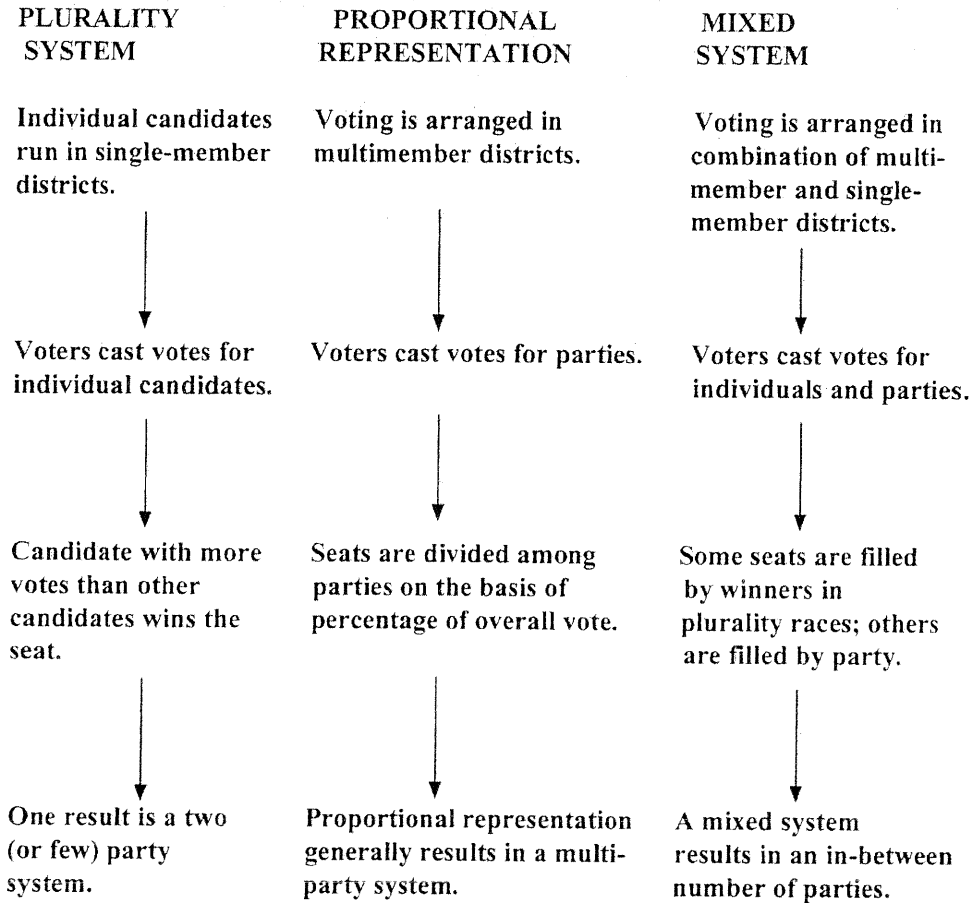
Plurality systems encourage large, broad-based parties because no matter how many people run in a district, the person with the largest number of votes wins. This encourages parties to become larger, spreading their "umbrellas" to embrace more voters. Parties without big groups of voters supporting them 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.

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS



- **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 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, 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.

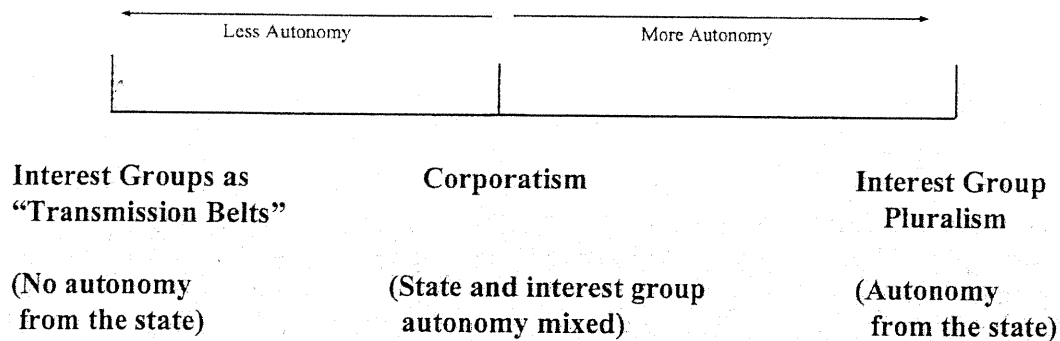
The Strength of Interest Groups

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. 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.

INTEREST GROUP STRENGTH: AUTONOMY FROM THE STATE



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 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 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 the 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 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.

THE GINI INDEX FOR SELECTED COUNTRIES 2008*

Norway	.26
Canada	.33
United Kingdom	.36
New Zealand	.36
Russia	.40
United States	.41
Iran	.43
Nigeria	.44
Mexico	.46
China	.47

*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, 2008 <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/147.html>

- **Civil liberties, rights, and freedoms – Civil rights** usually refer to the promotion of equality, whereas **civil liberties** refer to promotion of freedom. Although the two concepts overlap, the protection of civil 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.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONCEPTS

advanced democracies
 authoritarian regime
 bicameral, unicameral legislatures
 bureaucratic authoritarian regimes
 bureaucracy
 cabinet coalition
 causation
 checks and balances
 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
 direct democracy
 economic liberalization
 electoral systems
 elites
 empirical data
 fascism
 federal system
 first-past-the-post (plurality, winner-take-all)
 fragmentation
 Freedom House ratings
 Gini Index
 Globalization
 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 socialization
politicization of religion
PPP
presidential system
privatization
procedural democracy
proportional representation
radicalism
reactionary belief

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