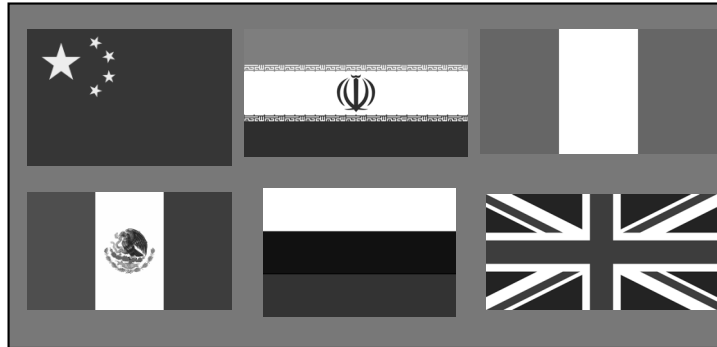


## Comparative Government



## Reasons to Study Comparative Government

- Countries are actors in a continuously unfolding play
- Comparative Government and Politics helps “connect the dots”
- A set of basic understandings helps make sense of world events



Countries are actors in a continuously unfolding play. There is no script, but actions on the world stage occur because of countries’ peoples, institutions, and the processes by which they make decisions. The discipline of Comparative Government and Politics examines and analyzes countries’ political structures, actions, and interactions with others, helping to “connect the dots” and make sense of world events.

To accomplish this, one must begin with some basic tools for grasping different countries’ histories of authority and power, the political structures and philosophies of different states, the ever-transforming environment in which they operate, and the internal and external forces that influence states’ actions.

Comparative Government and Politics can also provide insight into the American political system and the political systems of other governments, making it clearer why governments make certain decisions and take certain actions, and illuminating the potential consequences of these actions as well. Overall, Comparative Government provides a perspective of the world as a sort of laboratory for testing new programs and theories that shape world events and ultimately history.

## Basic Terminology

- Nation
- State
- Nation-state
- Regime
- Government
- Power
- Authority
- Legitimacy
- Cleavage
- Command economy

To get started, let's look at some basic terms:

- A **nation** is a body of people sharing the same cultural, geographic, or linguistic ties.
- A **state** is a politically organized body of people able to make decisions through direct action or political participation.
- A **nation-state** is a territorial unit controlled by a single state and governed by a single government.
- A **regime** is a mode or system of government that rules through authority usually described by a constitution.
- A **government** is the part of a state (people and organizations) with legitimate public authority to operate the state.
- **Power** is the ability to take action or control a situation through coercion, persuasion, or leadership.
- **Authority** is the legal right to exercise power in the name of the state or the people.
- **Legitimacy** is the belief that a government has the authority to exercise power.
- **Cleavage** is the separation of groups within a society. Such separation may be cultural, historic, geographic, ethnic, economic, or racial. Cleavage causes tensions between these groups and can weaken their bonds as a people.
- A **command economy** is a economic system in which the government, rather than market forces, determines the levels of production.

# The Comparative Approach

Comparing governments instills understanding and helps explain past and current events and predict future events

<u>Comparisons at multiple levels</u>
Sovereignty, authority, and power
Political institutions
Citizens, society, and the state
Political and economic change
Public policy

Comparing governments and their policies instills a greater understanding of the world and enables us to explain past or current actions and even predict future ones with a greater level of certainty. One can make comparisons at multiple levels by examining a government's legitimacy through its sources of sovereignty, authority, and power; its political institutions; the social context of politics via the interactions of citizens, society, and the state; the factors which influence political and economic change; and the development and implementation of public policy.

## Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

- A government's legitimacy comes from its sovereignty, authority, and power
- Factors influencing legitimacy include:
  - The state's history of leadership
  - Supranational systems
  - Religious or other social movements
  - Economic considerations



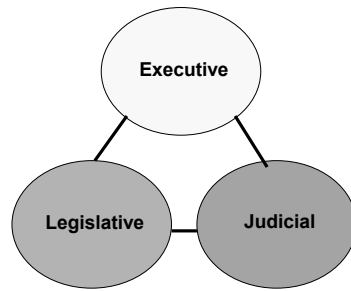
The scepter, a monarchical symbol of sovereignty, authority, and power

Without sufficient sovereignty, authority, and power to lend legitimacy to its government, a state cannot function. A state's history of governance (authoritarian, democratic, etc.) influences perceptions of legitimacy. Political philosophies and practices carried down through generations establish in citizens' minds the relationship between society and the state. In addition, supranational systems (coalitions of other countries for a common purpose, such as United Nations, the European Union, or the World Bank) may affect states' sovereignty and thus their authority, power, and ultimately their legitimacy. For example, the United Nations Security Council may impose sanctions on "rogue states" for illegal, illegitimate, or potentially dangerous actions. Also, the financial assistance of organizations like the World Bank may hinge upon a state's reversal of spending policies contrary to the organization's aims.

Within the state itself, the various political systems can also affect state actions and thus affect its government's legitimacy. Religion may play a role in legitimizing a state's government, as in feudal Europe and in theocracies such as Iran. The country's military or a popular political movement may have a similar effect.

An immediate test of any state's legitimacy involves how it conducts its economic policies. Regardless of the level of authority held or power exercised over society, a government that does not effectively manage the country's economy will soon find its legitimacy in question; if conditions deteriorate severely, forces from inside and outside the state may challenge its ability to rule.

# Political Institutions



- Formal and informal structures of authority and their interactions, such as between:
  - Branches of a single government
  - Governments of different countries
  - Countries and international organizations
- How those in power gain their legitimacy

Political institutions are the formal and informal structures of authority and policymaking systems within and outside a country. These can be examined by looking at the interactions between branches of one government, interactions between different governments, and relationships between governments and supranational organizations.

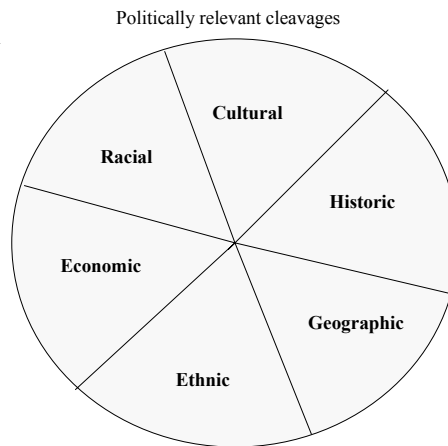
When studying a state, one should analyze the political institutions established by a country's constitution (or other claims to legitimacy) and its operations of authority and policymaking. For example, the U.S. Constitution grants authority to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches—all political institutions of the U.S. government. In China, the Communist Party legitimizes the government and its operations. Comparative government looks at the interactions between countries' political institutions in order to explain these countries' actions and policies.

One may also analyze the relationship between internal and external political institutions, such as one country's relationships with other countries or with international institutions. For example, when one country declares war on another, an international organization will likely react in ways it deems most effective in promoting its goals. How the belligerent country reacts to this response can reveal much about the political institutions of both parties.

Ways in which those in authority attain power can explain much about how the different political institutions operate within a government. Claims to power may come in the form of a constitutional mandate, traditional customs of ascension (as with tribal leaders), or social custom (as in a patronage system, in which people are awarded government positions in exchange for favors or votes).

## Citizens, Society, and the State

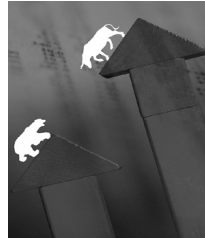
- Consider politically relevant cleavages and their effect on the state
- The media and advocacy groups also influence state operations



When examining a country's government, it is often useful to look at how its citizens and society interact both with one another and with the state itself. Identifying politically relevant cleavages—which may be based on cultural, historic, geographic, ethnic, economic, or racial differences—and their effectiveness in spurring state action assists greatly in understanding a state's political systems. A country's media and various advocacy groups play important roles in maintaining and inspiring political change. Advocacy groups include political parties, social-service groups, and international organizations that assist various segments of the population.

## Political and Economic Change

- Examine the common character of change within a country
- Economic change can bring about political change, and *vice versa*
- Identify and analyze the forces that promote or deter democratization



When comparing the governments of different countries, looking for patterns in the type and manner of political and economic change can prove useful. For instance, transitions between successive governments may be customarily peaceful or revolutionary. New leadership may alter a country's economic policy in order to address specific problems; conversely, sudden or drastic fluctuations in the economy may bring about changes in political leadership or even in a country's economic philosophy.

Citizens who live under democratic regimes tend to view government according to their own views of political legitimacy and tend to use these views to judge the degree to which a state has or has not become more democratic. Therefore, the comparative approach frequently examines forces that either promote or deter democratization and what effect these forces have had on change in the country. Internal forces such as government corruption and illegitimate organizations (as well as advocacy groups) can play a major role in such matters, as can pressure applied by supranational organizations.



# Public Policy

- Developing public policy is like squeezing a long balloon
- Public policy implementation reflects the structure and power flow of the state
- Formal and informal influences affect policy decisions
- Examine policy issues (especially persistent ones) and the impact of decisions made

Formal influences	Informal influences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rival political parties</li><li>• Other branches of government</li><li>• Domestic and international organizations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic changes</li><li>• Grassroots movements</li><li>• Changes in social values/beliefs</li></ul>

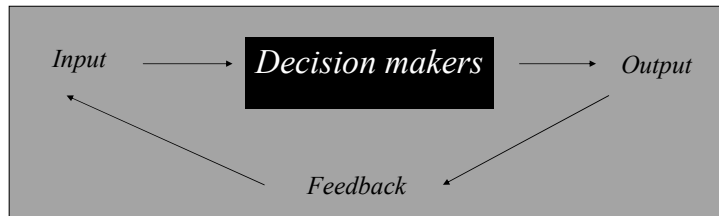
Developing public policy has been likened to squeezing a long balloon: though it relieves pressure at the squeezing point, it creates more pressure in the rest of the balloon. In order to keep pressure from becoming too great at any one point on the political “balloon,” policymakers and political leaders constantly move to address different issues and the desires of various constituencies.

Public policy implementation relates closely to a state’s structure and flow of power. A top-down system like the one in the United Kingdom takes a very different approach than does a system in a country with an active political base, such as Mexico. It’s important to understand how the state confronts policy issues along with the steps involved in implementing them, since these can indicate the extent to which a government can adjust to pressure and change.

When examining a country’s public policy process, consider what influences policy decisions. Formal influences such as rival political parties, other branches of government (legislative or executive action, or judicial decisions), and both domestic and international organizations can play a role. Informal influences (such as changes in economic climate, grassroots movements, or swings in society’s values and beliefs) can also have an effect on public policy. In general, issues can range from minority rights to environmental concerns, to economic measures, to the institution of social programs. However, in most countries a few major issues persist for many years. Its important to identify these issues, their historical background, and the impact of pertinent policy decisions on society, government, and the international community.

## The Black Box Analytical Approach

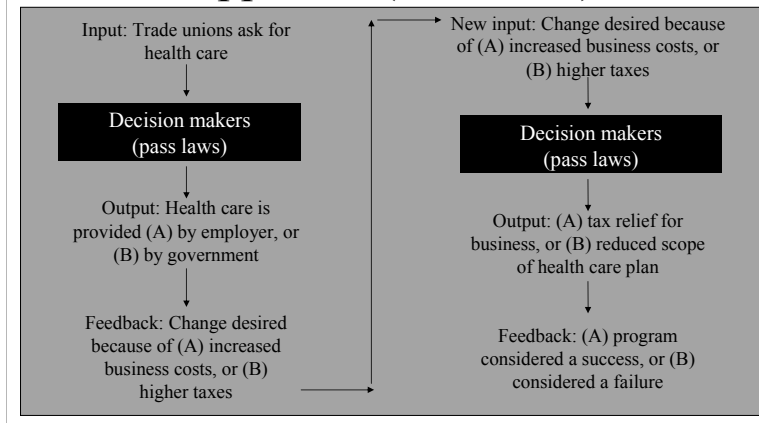
- Illustrates how different segments of society influence a government to make decisions
- Society gives feedback on the government's decision, which becomes input for the next decision



Adapted from "Concepts and Issues in Comparative Politics" by Frank L. Wilson

An alternative method of analyzing policymaking combines multiple aspects of the comparative approach: citizens, society, and the state; political and economic change; and public policy (with a nod to political institutions). The “black box analytical tool” illustrates how segments of society influence governments to take action, then studies society’s feedback to the government to understand the next round of government actions. At the center of the model sit the decision makers—those in government with the power and authority to make policy. (The box is described as “black” owing to the lack of clarity in some countries as to the process of decision making, including who actually makes the decisions.) Input from different segments of society—citizens, businesses, political parties, the media, etc.—goes to the decision makers, who respond with the output: a new policy, law, program, regulation, or court decision. Once the new policy is announced or implemented, the people or parties (depending on the scope of the decision) most affected by that policy provide either positive or negative feedback. The feedback then returns as new input for next round of decision making, putting pressure on the decision makers to either keep the policy, abandon it, or modify it.

## The Black Box Analytical Approach (continued)



The layout in this slide shows a more detailed view of the cycle of input-output-feedback, illustrating two rounds of decision making. This example examines how two countries might experience different levels of success in improving health care for their citizens. In both countries, trade unions put pressure on their governments to provide health care for their citizens.

In country A, the decision makers pass a law mandating that businesses provide health insurance for their employees through private companies. This creates increased costs for businesses and therefore less profit. As a result, businesses insist that something be done to lower their costs. This feedback leads the government to consider tax relief for businesses. If country A can provide tax relief and reduce the pressure on business, the decision to provide business-sponsored health care system may be deemed a success. However, if the government cannot provide the tax relief or accommodate business in some other way, it could affect the economy and result in negative feedback from other segments of society, or businesses might join forces to lobby for new laws.

In country B, the government responds to the trade unions' request by increasing taxes to establish government-operated health care programs. This further burdens the taxpayers, who complain to the government. The feedback leads the government to consider modifying or abandoning the health care program. If the government limits the program's scope in order to decrease taxes but cannot provide adequate health care, the program may be deemed a failure. On the other hand, if the government can reduce taxes and still maintain an adequate level of care, the program may be considered a success.

## Discussion Questions

1. What is Comparative Government, and how does it help us understand international politics?
2. What do the terms “nation-state,” “cleavage,” and “command economy” mean?
3. What five aspects make up the comparative approach to examining different governments?
4. What is the “black box analytical tool” used for, and how does it work?

1. Comparative Government is a discipline for examining and analyzing countries’ political structures, actions, and interactions with others; it also “connects the dots” to help make better sense of world events. Comparative politics can give insight into both the American political system as well as other governments’ political systems. From this, one can better understand why governments make particular decisions and take certain actions; comparative government also helps in predicting the potential consequences of these actions.
2. A **nation-state** is a territorial unit controlled by a single state and governed by a single government. **Cleavage** is the separation of groups within a society along cultural, historic, geographic, ethnic, economic, or racial lines; such separations may cause tensions between these groups and can weaken their bonds. A **command economy** is a political/economic system in which the government, rather than market forces, determines the levels of production.
3. The five aspects are a government’s (1) legitimacy through its sources of sovereignty, authority, and power, (2) its political institutions, (3) the social context of politics via the interactions of citizens, society, and the state, (4) the factors which influence political and economic change, and (5) development and implementation of public policy.
4. The “black box analytical tool” illustrates the process of government policymaking. It examines how certain segments of society influence decision makers (input), the actions the government takes (output), and how the affected parties respond to that action (feedback, which becomes the input for the next decision).

# Systems of Government: Feudalism

- A political and economic system of government
- Government and law established by the lord
- Economy based on farming
- In time, powerful lords became kings and employed knights to lead their armies
- Feudalism declined in Europe as peasants became skilled workers

Feudalism	
Lord provides land and protection	Vassal provides loyalty and service
Feudal hierarchy: King Lord Knight Peasant	

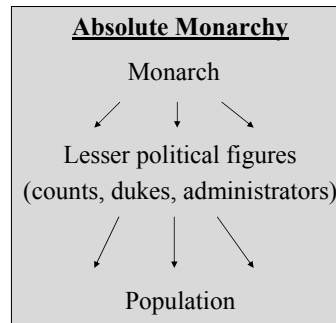
Feudalism was a political and economic system practiced in Europe between the ninth and 15th centuries and in Asia between the 12th and 19th centuries. It consisted of three parts: a lord, a vassal, and a fief (a landholding). The lord, who owned the land, would grant the vassal possession of the land in exchange for a particular service. In most feudal societies, government was based on the law of the individual lord, landholdings were small, and the economy primarily agrarian. The lord controlled the land with the help of his army, composed of his vassals. The lord granted use of the land and provided protection in exchange for military service and a portion of the vassal's production (crops, livestock, or some kind of skill or service such as blacksmithing, weaving, or carpentry). The vassal swore an oath of loyalty to the lord that sealed the bond between them. If a vassal broke that oath, the lord could take back all the privileges granted and, in extreme cases, could even take the vassal's life.

As lords gained more power, they employed the services of knights (trained mounted warriors) to help enforce their laws, defend their landholdings (as well as the vassals), and seize other land nearby, if necessary. In time, knights became lords themselves, and the most powerful lords became kings, controlling vast areas of land. This created a hierarchy with the kings on top and peasants (who physically worked the land) on the bottom. Survival was one of the main goals of the feudal system: kings would build large stone castles to protect themselves, family members, and any vassals who could find refuge in the castle or within the village walls.

The feudal system in Europe eventually broke down as vassals developed sufficient skills and acquired enough property to break their oaths and follow the lord or king who best met their needs. Improvements in technology and a greater sense of political and social stability also contributed to feudalism's demise. In its place, the nation-state emerged; it was characterized by a strong executive (a monarch) and, over time, a legislative body that helped the leadership address the needs of the population.

## Systems of Government: Monarchy

- Oldest form of government
- Term comes from Greek, meaning “one ruler”
- In past, most monarchies held absolute authority



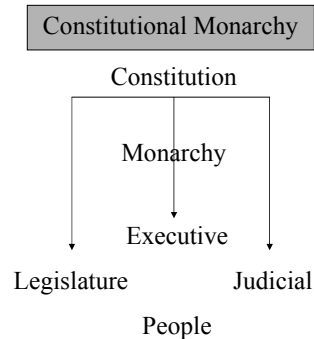
A monarchy is a form of government in which one person (the monarch) holds the power of the state. The term derives from the Greek word *monos*, meaning “one,” and *arkhein*, meaning “to rule.” As one of the oldest forms of government, it most likely evolved from the leadership of tribal chiefs. In most cases, a monarchy serves as a symbol of the state’s continuity. In the past, monarchs have held absolute power and claimed legitimacy through divine right, ruling either by a god’s will or as gods themselves. All power and authority flows from the top and descends downward according to the wishes of the monarch or to the monarch’s immediate family (usually males) and close relatives such as uncles and cousins. Monarchs hold power for life and pass it on to their firstborn or by decree.

Monarchies thrived in the feudal system and gained great power in Europe (after the fall of the Roman Empire), in central and east Asia, and in many parts of Africa. Pre-Colombian North and South American civilizations also had monarchical governments led by a great chief. Many monarchical rulers held absolute power and authority.

Though some countries in the Middle East still have absolute monarchies, most of the monarchies that remain today are constitutional ones in which rulers can exercise only limited power.

## Systems of Government: Constitutional Monarchy

- Government actually established under a constitution
- Power of monarch separate from government; often limited or ceremonial



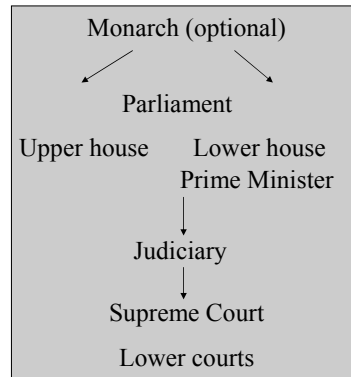
In constitutional monarchies, the power of the monarch remains separate from that of the rest of the government. In some constitutional monarchies, the monarch still serves as head of state; in others, the monarch only has a symbolic role. Most constitutional monarchies operate under a parliamentary form of government in which a legislature represents the people and develops policy to meet its needs. The position of monarch may be hereditary or elected.

Constitutional monarchies are mostly found in western European countries, though Malaysia, Cambodia, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Vatican City also have one. In some constitutional monarchies, the monarchs hold “reserve” or “prerogative” powers to be executed in times of extreme emergency or constitutional crisis. In the case of national emergency, a monarch often serves in an advisory role in cooperation with the elected government; during a constitutional crisis, the monarch tries to stay above partisan political rivalries and takes a more neutral stance regarding internal political issues.

Monarchs in constitutional governments remain in their positions for a number of reasons. Royal families tend to enjoy great popularity in their countries, and can serve as a symbol that unifies the nation. Monarchs also serve well in charity and social functions.

## Systems of Government: Parliamentary Government

- Parliament chooses the head of state, who must answer to the legislature
- Political party in power chooses the prime minister
- Legislature usually bicameral
- Originated in England around 1066
- Limited the power of the monarchy over time



Parliamentary government is a form of representative democracy in which the legislature chooses the head of government (usually known as the prime minister), who then must answer to the legislature. Some parliamentary governments also have a monarch with limited or only ceremonial powers. In most cases, the legislative body is bicameral (made up of two houses), but some parliaments have a unicameral (or one-house) legislature. In bicameral legislatures, most bills originate in the lower house (which usually directly represents the population) and then get approved by the upper house. The leader of the majority party in the lower house almost always serves as prime minister and holds office while that party is in power and while he or she has the legislature's support. When warranted, the legislature can call for a vote of "no confidence" in order to force the prime minister's resignation.

Parliamentary government originated in England and became formalized after the Norman Conquest of 1066. Parliaments arose from what was known as the tenants-in-chief, who were the greatest landholders of the king's army. They often struggled with the monarch and local spiritual leaders for power. In 1215, a group of 39 barons (making up the bulk of the tenants-in-chief) secured from King John the Magna Carta (or "Great Charter"), which established some limits on the power of the monarchy. In later years, this group (with a few additions) evolved into the Parliament, in which the House of Lords represented the royalty and the House of Commons represented everyone else. Over time, this body further limited the power of the monarchy.

Today many different countries in all parts of the world have a parliamentary government (especially in former colonies of European powers).



## Systems of Government: Democracy

- “Rule by the people”
- Works best when it reflects the culture of the people
- Two forms:
  - Direct (for smaller areas)
  - Representative
- Representatives can use their own judgment in making decisions

Direct democracy  
The people vote directly on policy decisions

Representative democracy  
The people vote for government officials who make policy for them

Democracy literally means “rule by the people,” from the Greek words *demos* (or “people”) and *kratos* (or “rule”). Democracy essentially reflects the will of the people and can occur in many different forms. Most importantly, in order for democracy to be successful its institutions and operation must reflect the culture of the people practicing it.

The two basic forms of democracy are direct and representative. In a direct democracy, citizens themselves vote on all major policy decisions. For logistical reasons, this works best in small communities (such as the ancient Greek city-state of Athens) or in small organizations. Some U.S. states allow a limited form of direct democracy through initiatives and referenda, which allow citizens to petition for and place on the ballot policy changes they wish to implement or have referred back to the voters.

Most of the world’s democracies function as representative democracies, in which the people determine who serves as their officials via a majority vote. In most democracies, the voters of a defined district or in particular constituency elect their representatives. While the people in theory choose representatives to act in their interests, these representatives also retain the freedom to exercise their own judgment in making decisions.

## Systems of Government: Totalitarianism

- Nearly all aspects of life are controlled to benefit the state
- Employs secret police, widespread surveillance, and terror to maintain control
- Restricts people's liberties and freedoms
- Established by force
- Employs a cult of personality to represent the regime



“Totalitarian” describes regimes in which the state controls nearly every aspect of the people’s lives. The government regulates the activities of business, labor, religion, and education so that they benefit the state. Totalitarian regimes maintain their power by tightly controlling mass media and using secret police and other surveillance methods to gain knowledge of all potentially subversive actions. These regimes greatly restrict liberties and freedoms and employ mass surveillance and terror tactics to keep the population in line. Usually only one political party may legally participate in elections, which themselves may be optional or suspended.

Though monarchies throughout history that held absolute power could be classified as totalitarian, the term itself refers to governments developed since the 20th century. Loose and sometimes contentious coalitions of military, political, and business leaders would often constitute these regimes. Examples include Germany under Hitler, Italy under Mussolini (although a special case), and communist regimes in the USSR, China, and North Korea.

Totalitarian regimes often are established by force—either political or military, or a combination of both. They often develop a “cult of personality” around a central figure or leader who embodies the ideology of the regime. This tactic creates an almost godlike public figure for the citizenry to respect and even worship. In turn, the regime often takes on human characteristics, demonstrating compassion, anger, and revenge in order to convince the people that they owe their very existence to the will and mercy of the regime.

## Systems of Government: Fascism



Roman *fasces*



*Fasces* in U.S. House of Representatives chamber



Italian dictator Benito Mussolini with German Führer Adolf Hitler

- Similar to totalitarianism
- Seeks to improve society through nationalism and rejection of liberal values
- Comes from Italian word for “union” and from the Roman *fasces*
- Movement led by Benito Mussolini in Italy (1922–1943)
- The term today carries a negative connotation

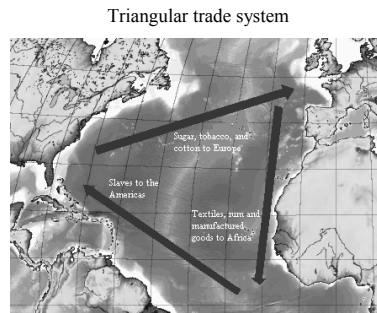
Some scholars use the terms “fascism” and “totalitarianism” interchangeably. Both operate in similar ways, maintaining total control of all aspects of society, denying basic rights, and intimidating opponents. Fascism seeks to improve social, economic, and cultural life through a heightened sense of national or ethnic identity. However, these improvements focus on benefiting the state itself and not the individual.

The term “fascism” comes directly from the Italian word *fascio* (or “union”) and also from the ancient Roman symbol of state power, the *fasces*. This symbol, comprised of a bundle of sticks with an axe in the center, represents civic unity and the authority of the state to punish criminals. Owing to its classical connotations, several U.S. government buildings and monuments display the *fasces*. The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini initiated fascism with the political movement he led from 1922 to 1943, which emerged in response to widespread social and political unrest following World War I.

Scholars view fascism differently, with some confining the use of the term to Italy under Mussolini, while others use the term more broadly to describe any movement that pushes for social renewal based on national or ethnic unity and rejects liberal or democratic institutions. In most cases, the term negatively describes an oppressive and reactionary regime.

# Mercantilism

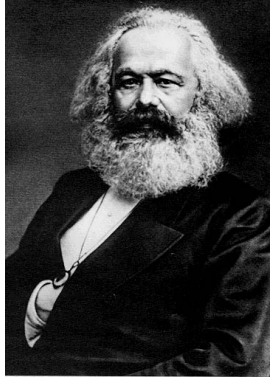
- Practiced by European powers from 16th to 18th centuries
- Government control of industry and trade
- Nation's wealth measured in holdings of gold and silver
- Closed trading system between colonies and parent country
- Required military power to protect interests, resulting in large-scale wars



Mercantilism as an economic policy was predominantly practiced in Europe from the 16th through 18th centuries. This system seeks an abundance of exports over imports, measures a nation's wealth by its accumulated supply of gold and silver, and justifies government regulation of the economy in order to reach these goals.

Mercantilism evolved during the 1500s as Europe's kingdoms began to emerge as strong nation-states. They established trading systems closed to the other major players, relying on the extraction of raw materials from their respective colonies for the production of goods back in the home country to meet the needs of the empire's population. Countries prohibited the shipment of indigenous colonial products on foreign vessels or to foreign ports, thus establishing monopolies in various industries. Governments induced national industries to assist in the expansion of colonial trade and pay taxes to support large armies and navies that would help maintain the country's economic empire. As a result, large-scale "world wars" like the Seven Years' War between France and Britain broke out as countries sought to acquire territory and achieve dominance in world trade. Global conflict and principles of the Enlightenment later created anti-mercantilist movements. At the same time, it became apparent to many European industries that they could operate without mercantile protection and would in fact benefit by trading more openly with other countries. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, countries began to institute freer trade policies as economists counseled nations to allow individuals the freedom to pursue their economic interests with less interference or regulation.

# Communism



Karl Marx

- Modern communism developed by Karl Marx
- Theoretically, communism creates a classless society
- Proletariat (working class) controls all means of production
- Marx thought communism would replace capitalism
- In practice, most communist states were authoritarian and repressive

Communism is an ideology as well as a form of government. Though some earlier forms of communism date back to classical times, German philosopher Karl Marx articulated modern communism in the *Communist Manifesto*, first published in 1848.

Theoretically, communism aims to create a classless society in which people enjoy equal status and where the proletariat (the working class) owns all means of production. Marx saw communism as the inevitable outcome of capitalism, and envisioned that capitalist societies would be the first to transition to communism after social and political revolution. He believed that capitalism would ultimately fail because it exploited the working class and created a wide socioeconomic gap between property owners and workers. The people would rise up against a capitalist regime, overthrow it, and then establish a “dictatorship” (meaning it would be given absolute powers) to run the government and economy; however, members of the dictatorship would come from the working classes. The motto, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” became the communist creed, explaining that people would receive compensation for their labor based on their needs, not on what they produced. Under the system Marx envisioned, a society run by laborers would produce enough goods and services everyone to satisfy the needs of all.

In practice, no communist state ever evolved out of a capitalist society. Most communist states replaced monarchies or took control of countries in chaos and became totalitarian dictatorships with little concern for the working class; leaders focused mainly on preserving their power. Communist states usually had only one political party and allowed no real dissent or political disagreement; to have any political voice, one had to belong to the party.

## Communism (continued)

- Russia (later the USSR) became the first communist country in 1917
- After World War II, communism spread to eastern Europe, China, southeast Asia, and Cuba
- Soviet communism collapsed in 1990
- China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam only practicing communist countries today



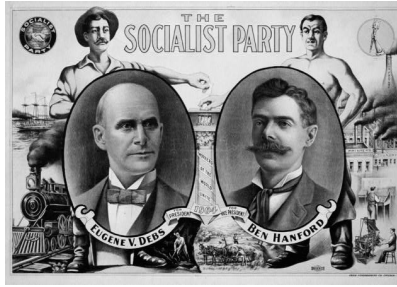
Marx's theories inspired social reformers across Europe concerned about the growing disparity in wealth and political power between rich and poor. Most sought to reform rather than overthrow capitalism. However, in czarist Russia a political party known as the Bolsheviks succeeded in controlling the country following the 1917 Russian Revolution, and by 1922 they had established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). During the post-World War I recession and the subsequent worldwide depression of the 1930s, many Bolsheviks attempted to spread communism to nearby countries. Capitalist countries warily watched the rise of the Soviets, hoping that the USSR would not be able to export communism elsewhere. In the turbulent period before World War II, governments in Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United States all in their own way took actions to resist the spread of communism.

After World War II, the USSR consolidated its power in the countries of eastern Europe by establishing "satellite states" that followed the Soviets' lead. In 1949, the long-running Chinese civil war ended with the establishment of the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong's own brand of communism. China and Russia attempted to establish communist regimes in countries in Asia (North Korea and Vietnam) and Africa (the Congo and Angola).

Communist societies (especially the USSR and those in eastern Europe) underwent tremendous social and economic change during the late 1980s and finally collapsed in the early 1990s. Today only China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam remain communist.

# Socialism

- Property, major industries, natural resources, banking, public utilities largely controlled by state
- Socialism has roots in classical, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thought
- Many different forms



Campaign poster for Eugene Debs, an American socialist who ran for president several times during the early 20th century

Socialism is a doctrine whereby society or government controls much of the country's property and the means of production in order to ensure a more equal distribution of wealth. The government also controls the country's natural resources and nationalizes (i.e., places under the control of the state) major industries, banking facilities, and public utilities.

The essence of socialism as an economic/political concept can be found in classical literature (Plato's *Republic*), the early Renaissance (Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*), and during the Enlightenment (in the work of the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau). Modern socialism has its roots primarily in working-class movements of the late 19th century, which criticized the excesses of capitalism and private property. During the Industrial Revolution in Europe and later in the United States, private entrepreneurs managed to amass huge individual fortunes, creating a huge gap between rich and poor. Government corruption, too few rights for the working class, and poor living conditions prompted reformers and philosophers (including Karl Marx) to look beyond capitalism.

In practice, socialism can take many different forms, depending on the amount of centralized control. For example the Labour Party in Britain advocates state ownership of major industries and utilities with less-vital enterprises held by private owners; others believe that socialism should allow no private ownership of business and have all enterprises operated by the state. In addition, some non-socialist countries (including the United States) incorporate socialism in selected parts of the economy, such as education, some forms of insurance, and public services.

# Structures of Government:

## Federalism

- Political system with two levels of government
- Each level has exclusive powers in some areas and overlapping powers in others
- Uncommon form of government
- Disputes occur, which are usually settled by the courts or through negotiation

### Federal Powers

- Establish military
- Print money
- Make treaties

### State Powers

- Regulate local trade
- Establish local governments
- Provide for public health and safety

### Shared Powers

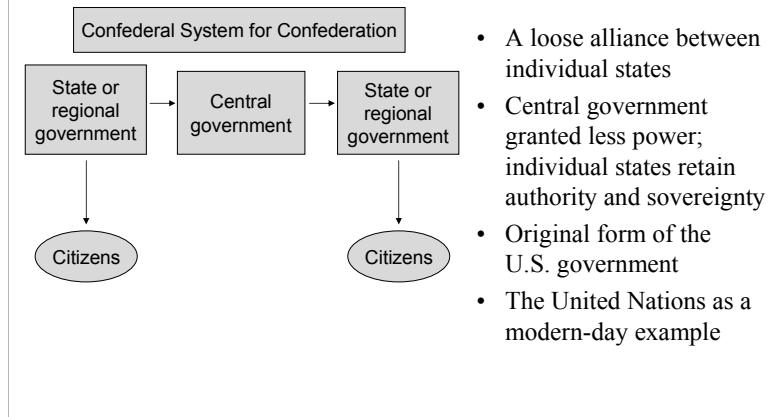
- Establishing courts
- Making and enforcing laws
- Borrowing money
- Taxation
- Building roads

Federalism refers to a political system that has two levels of government: a central government that controls and is responsible for issues concerning the whole country, and smaller political units (usually called states, provinces, or territories) concerned with local matters. The smaller political units give up some of their political power to the central government for the common good (such as national defense). In the United States, federalism has three parts: (1) a central government with exclusive responsibilities, such as printing money, making international treaties, and providing for a national military; (2) the states, which have the power to regulate trade within their borders, establish local governments, and provide for public health and safety; (3) shared authority (known as concurrent powers) that both political units have, allowing them to establish their own courts, make and enforce laws, borrow money and tax, and build roads. Federalism is not a common form of government around the world: instead, most countries have unitary systems with power concentrated primarily in a central government. In addition to the United States, Australia, Brazil, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, and Switzerland have federalist systems.

Conflict often occurs in federalist governments, sometimes with cataclysmic effects (for example, when the American Civil War broke out in part because of the issue of “states’ rights”). Most often, conflict blossoms from smaller debates over issues of who has the authority to regulate or establish particular functions of government. While the courts usually settle such debates, negotiations between the different levels of government can also lead to compromise.



## Structures of Government: Confederation



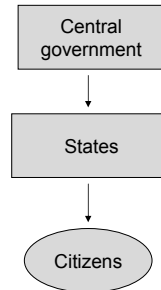
A confederation is a loose union of states that have come together for a common cause. In a confederation, the central government holds little power. Instead, the smaller units establish alliances, with each retaining much of its sovereignty and authority. Political units often form confederations around a set of common interests, such as trade or maintaining peace. A constitution or charter establishing a confederation provides maximum authority to the individual units over their own citizens and territory. The central government only presides over issues that affect all members of the confederation.

A confederation carries with it certain advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, member states retain their sovereignty and can make decisions and take independent action; on the other hand, they may be restricted from making certain decisions and actions that involve other confederation members. Also, a confederation is only as strong and effective as its members allow: political and philosophical disagreements among participants can render confederations impotent and ineffective, since many decisions require unanimous or supermajority approval.

The United States first adopted this form of government soon after declaring its independence from Britain; during the Revolution and for some years afterward, America's government operated under a document known as the Articles of Confederation. Eleven Southern states later formed the Confederate States of America when they seceded from the Union right before the Civil War. On an international level, the victorious nations of World War II formed the United Nations as a confederation with the purpose of promoting world peace.

## Structures of Government: Unitary

- Greatest authority held by central government
- Central government can grant and retract power from local political units
- Unitary governments come in different forms: dictatorships, monarchies, parliamentary systems, or democracies



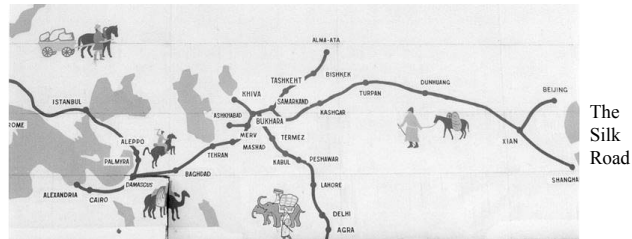
Most countries operate under a unitary form of government, with virtually all authority vested in the central government. The central government may grant provinces, states, or cities the authority to handle certain local matters, but it retains most of the power and can take back any it has granted. Unitary governments may take different forms, including dictatorships, monarchies, parliamentary systems, or even democracies. Countries that have unitary systems include Cameroon, France, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, South Korea, Sweden, and Uruguay.

The central government may hold varying degrees of authority. Sometimes the country's military establishes the central leadership; civilian political leaders take care of day-to-day concerns, but the military ultimately retains power. Other times, the unitary government may have elements of checks and balances, such as multiple political parties that can help ensure the government doesn't become totalitarian. With no single party able to establish a majority, the parties tend to form short- and long-term coalitions in order to conduct government business.

Unitary governments tend to operate very efficiently, since fewer checks and balances exist to slow the decision-making process, and the bureaucracy is closely tied to the central government. However, the centralized nature of a unitary government can lead to the unchecked consolidation of power and neglect of minority factions. Democratic unitary governments can counterbalance this with multiple political parties and public pressure; Autocratic governments don't usually allow for such conditions.

# Globalization and Interdependence

- Basic definition
- Historical examples:
  - The Silk Road and others
  - Mercantilism as an early form of globalization



The concept of globalization has received much notoriety in recent years. Today, globalization is characterized by increased interdependence throughout many parts of the world driven by advancements in technology, trade and cultural dispersal. Though the term is new, its concepts are not, and in fact people have engaged in globalization for thousands of years. The Silk Road, camel caravans, the Ambassador's Road, and the Appian Way linked the regions of the Middle East, Africa, China, India, and eventually Europe to each other from the time of the ancient Romans to the Middle Ages. Mercantilism, discussed earlier, was also a form of globalization in which major countries traded exclusively with colonies and declared war on each other in order to obtain territory and natural resources.

## Globalization and Interdependence (continued)

Contemporary concepts:

- “Farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper”
- More-open trade policies
  - Freer markets
  - International agreements
- Impact of technology
  - Transportation
  - Information technology



Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and crumbling of the Soviet Union, the old power-politics model of East versus West/free world versus communism has given way to a new wave of globalization described by author Thomas Friedman as “farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.” Today, not only the states of the world but also international organizations, businesses, and even individuals are shaping the current wave of globalization. Many governments have adopted free-market economic systems, vastly increasing their own productive potential and creating myriad new opportunities for international trade and investment. Governments also have negotiated dramatic reductions in barriers to commerce and have established international agreements for promoting trade in goods, services, and investments. Taking advantage of new economic opportunities, corporations have built factories and established production and marketing arrangements with foreign partners.

New technology has played an important role in making the world “smaller,” as jet travel has made any point on the globe accessible within 24 hours. Information technology has given states, businesses, and even individuals the tools for identifying and pursuing economic opportunities, analyzing trends more quickly, easily transferring assets, and collaborating with virtually any person in any part of the world.

# Globalization and Interdependence (continued)

Supporters claim that globalization:

- Gives consumers more choices
- Lowers prices
- Can raise the standard of living in less developed countries

Critics argue that globalization:

- Favors large corporations over local producers
- Homogenizes cultures
- Puts economic development ahead of national sovereignty and environmental concerns

Globalization, however, has provoked its share of controversy. Few people oppose every form of globalization, so often the debate concerns the rules that should govern a global economy but still allow it to reach its full potential and solve problems along the way. Supporters of globalization emphasize how removing trade barriers can provide consumers with more choices and opportunities. With more choices comes more competition, benefiting the consumer and stimulating innovation. Goods and services can move more easily from wealthy countries to less developed ones, resulting in less expensive products and a greater chance of raising standards of living. Proponents of globalization argue that it allows people all over the world to exchange and adopt knowledge, technology, investments, and resources.

Opponents argue that globalization has given multinational industrial and agricultural corporations unbridled access to the world's markets at the expense of local businesses and farmers. They fear that cultures will become homogenized as larger, more productive states bombard them with goods and services. Critics also assert that the policies of rapid growth adopted by less developed countries will put the environment at risk; some say the open access to trade enables the rapid spread of diseases, illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism. They also claim that international trade agreements can put too much emphasis on keeping the global machine moving and therefore undermine local or national regulations and laws. Many feel this threatens national sovereignty, leaving countries unable to enforce their own environmental laws because they might restrict the flow of trade, thereby violating global trade agreements.

States, international organizations, businesses, and individuals will need to find ways to work through these issues in the 21st century. Finding the right balance between social and cultural values and economic growth—as well as determining how much autonomy countries should have when their decisions might have global repercussions—will be ongoing, difficult tasks.

## International Organizations

- Definition and purpose
- Examples:
  - European Union (EU)
  - United Nations (UN)



The EU flag



The UN flag

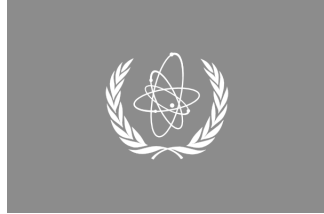
International organizations (also known as intergovernmental organizations) are established by treaty among their members to achieve a specific purpose. Subject to international law, international organizations can enter into agreements with other organizations and states. Membership might be open to all states or to only a select few, depending on the organization's function and scope. Such organizations address a wide range of issues, such as protecting human rights or the environment, or promoting economic development, education, or health care.

The European Union originated during Europe's recovery from the devastation of World War II. The countries of western Europe sought to cooperate in order to rebuild Europe and to prevent another such ruinous war from ever breaking out again. In 1952, six European nations formed the European Coal and Steel Community, which evolved into the European Community and later became the European Union. As the 21st century began, several formerly communist states (including Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania) also joined. The EU aims to establish the rights of European citizenship; ensure freedom, security and justice; promote trade and economic growth and stability; and assert Europe's role in the world. The EU operates as a democracy with a European Parliament and Council of Ministers as its legislative branch, a European Commission that acts as its executive branch, and a European Court of Justice. Various committees and organizations help run the EU's daily operations.

After World War II, 50 nations formed the United Nations in order to maintain international peace and security; develop friendly relations among nations; solve international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UN operates through six principal organizations: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat.

## International Organizations (continued)

- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- World Bank



The IAEA flag



The World Bank logo

The United Nations established the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1957 as the “Atoms for Peace” program. The IAEA works with member states and other international partners to promote safe and peaceful nuclear technologies. To accomplish these goals, the IAEA pursues three main functions: inspections of existing nuclear facilities, dissemination of information and standards to ensure the stable operation of nuclear facilities, and the pursuit of peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

Established in 1944, the World Bank provides financing and advice to countries for the purposes of economic development and eliminating poverty. Much of its efforts focus on Third World countries in the areas of human development, agriculture and rural development, environmental protection, infrastructure, and governance. The bank gets its funds by issuing bonds and through contributions from member states. It then loans out that money to countries for educational, economic, and industrial projects; it also provides experts who advise the borrowers on how to successfully complete these projects. The release of funds is often contingent upon compliance with the World Bank’s advice and reform measures. While the World Bank wants to ensure its loans get put to good use, critics accuse it of imposing reform policies that place economic development above human needs and of undermining local labor unions and health systems.

## International Organizations (continued)

- International Monetary Fund (IMF)



Map of IMF member states

The United Nations set up the International Monetary Fund in 1945 as one of its specialized agencies to help restore order to the world economy. The IMF operates as a lender of last resort, regularly loaning money to governments in times of economic crisis. Member states deep in debt and unable to make payments on even the loans' interest, or states that have experienced steep financial downturns may receive loans from the IMF. In return, the IMF requires borrowing countries to launch economic reforms (sometimes called “structural adjustment programs”) intended to ensure that the loans prevent financial crises rather than perpetuate financial irresponsibility.

As with the World Bank, the IMF has also faced criticism for certain policies and actions. In the past, some have accused the IMF of supporting capitalist military dictatorships friendly to Western business interests. Also, some of its policies have allegedly put economic considerations far ahead of social concerns. Some have also criticized the managers of both the World Bank and the IMF for imposing reform policies that benefit developed countries at the expense of developing countries. These critics argue that developing nations are forced to reduce services to citizens in order to balance their budgets, further increasing poverty and dependence on developed nations to make up the difference. The wealthy countries that provide much of the funding for loans control both the World Bank and the IMF, and voting power in both organizations depends on the amount of funding a nation contributes, not on its population. Therefore, the nations who contribute the most funds have the most say and often work to protect their interests.



## International Organizations (continued)

- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

The  
OPEC  
flag

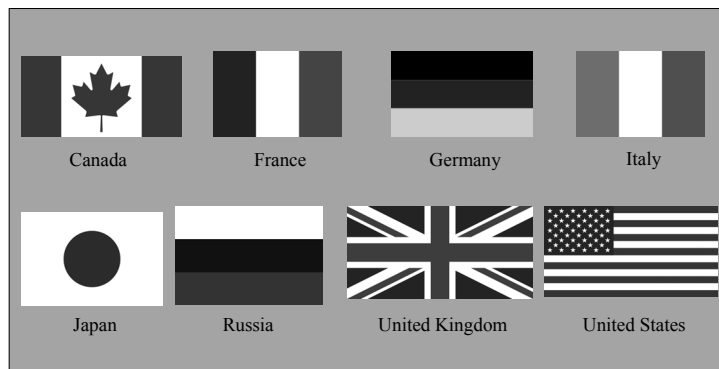


Map showing  
current  
(dark green)  
and former  
(light green)  
OPEC nations

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was formed in 1960 in order to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among its member countries. It aims to secure fair and stable prices for producers, ensure an ample supply for consumers, and yield a good return on investment in the industry. OPEC nations account for about two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves and about 40% of the world's oil production, giving them considerable control over the global market and sizable influence in world affairs. In the 1970s, as the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict erupted into another war (the Yom Kippur War) and Western governments gave support to Israel, the Arab members imposed an oil embargo against the United States and western Europe. This influence had a tremendous short-term impact, resulting in massive oil and gasoline shortages and near hyperinflation in many Western nations. However, the influence was short-lived, as many of these Western nations developed closer ties with non-OPEC nations and increased offshore drilling in the North Sea and Gulf of Mexico. This expanded exploration of oil reserves, internal dissension between OPEC member states, and continued conflict in the Middle East has caused a slight decline in OPEC's ability to control oil prices and influence world politics as it once did.

## International Organizations (continued)

- Group of Eight (G8)



The Group of Eight (popularly known as the “G8”) is an organization of the eight leading industrialized democracies that meets annually to address major economic and political issues facing their respective countries and the international community. The organization was founded in 1975 as the Group of Six to discuss large-scale management, international trade, and relations with developing countries. The original members included France, the U.S., the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, and Italy; Canada joined in 1976 and Russia in 1998. In addition, the European Union has had representatives at the meetings since 1977. Owing to the economic power of its members, the G8 is often the target of criticism and protest. Critics insist it bears responsibility for international issues ranging from poverty in Africa to global warming to the AIDS crisis. The G8 no longer represents the concentration of economic power it did when it conceived, since India and China (two of the world’s economic powerhouses) aren’t members. This lack of Eastern countries has led many critics to label the G8 an institution that perpetuates Western economic domination. The G8’s continuing issues involve Eastern and Western economic relations, energy policy, and terrorism. More recently, the G8 has discussed employment in member and non-member nations, as well as the Internet, global environmental concerns, international crime and drug trafficking, human rights, and arms control.

## Discussion Questions

1. What is globalization, and why it is not considered a new concept?
2. What are some arguments that supporters of globalization make? What are some of globalization's negative effects, according to its critics?

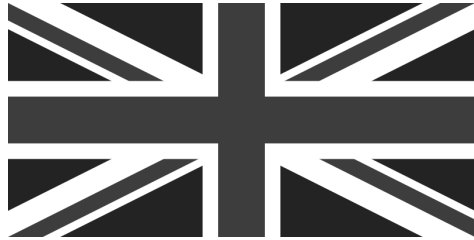
1. Globalization is characterized by increased interdependence throughout many parts of the world driven by advancements in technology, trade and cultural dispersal. The Silk Road, camel caravans, the Ambassador's Road, and the Appian Way linked the regions of the Middle East, Africa, China, India, and eventually Europe to each other from the time of the ancient Romans to the Middle Ages. Mercantilism, discussed earlier, was also a form of globalization in which major countries traded exclusively with colonies and declared war on each other in order to obtain territory and natural resources.
2. Supporters of globalization claim that it can provide consumers with more choices and opportunities, stimulate innovation, and allow goods and services to move more easily from wealthy countries to less developed ones, resulting in less expensive products and a greater chance of raising standards of living. Opponents argue that globalization has given multinational industrial and agricultural corporations unbridled access to the world's markets at the expense of local businesses and farmers. They fear that cultures will become homogenized, that the policies of rapid growth adopted by less developed countries will put the environment at risk, and that globalization can undermine local or national regulations and laws.

## Discussion Questions

3. Name several major international organizations and describe the purpose of each.

- The European Union (EU) seeks to bring about cooperation in rebuilding Europe and avoid another war. The EU aims to establish the rights of European citizenship; ensure freedom, security, and justice; promote trade and economic growth and stability; and assert Europe's role in the world.
- The United Nations (UN) was formed after World War II by 50 nations with the goals of maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; solving international economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established in 1957 as the “Atoms for Peace” program of the United Nations. It works with member states and other international partners to promote the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology.
- The World Bank was established in 1944 to provide financing and advice to countries for the purposes of economic development and eliminating poverty.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was established in 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations. The IMF operates as a lender of last resort, regularly loaning money to governments in times of economic crisis. The IMF requires the countries launch economic reforms intended to prevent future financial crises.
- The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed in 1960 in order to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among member countries, secure fair and stable prices for producers, ensure an ample supply for consumers, and yield a good return for those who invest in the industry.
- The Group of Eight (better known as the G8) is an organization of the eight leading industrialized democracies that meets annually to address major economic and political issues facing their respective countries and the international community.

# United Kingdom



## United Kingdom: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

The Magna Carta



- No written constitution
- Historical events helped legitimize sovereignty, authority, and power
- Established rule of law and a limited and representative government
- The British people believe strongly in the country's political institutions

The territory of the United Kingdom includes Great Britain (comprising England, Scotland, and Wales), Northern Ireland, and territorial possessions flung all across the world. Within these geographical divisions are the national configurations of English, Welsh, Scots, and the Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland.

Though the UK does not have a written constitution, it has a long and rich political history that has influenced many other countries for centuries. The UK's political evolution has been marked by a sequence of events that laid the foundation for its sovereignty, authority, and power. The Magna Carta of 1215 (based on unwritten common law) established the rule of law and limited government, and the Glorious Revolution in 1689 firmly entrenched Parliament as the center of government. In the 19th century, the UK led the world in abolishing slavery and promoting women's suffrage. In between these events, the UK also dealt with conflicts between church and state, the Industrial Revolution, and several wars. The British strongly believe that their political institutions can effectively deal with problems and conflict. This, coupled with the belief that the government is accountable to the people, gives the UK's political system a strong sense of legitimacy.

## United Kingdom: Political Institutions

- Political institutions
  - Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy
  - Executive (prime minister) elected by majority party in the House of Commons
  - Strong party discipline: votes fall along party lines
    - Labour Party
    - Conservative Party
    - Liberal Democrats



While considered a constitutional monarchy, the United Kingdom technically has no written constitution, but instead relies on several key historical documents and many centuries of pragmatic governance. While the monarchy serves a mostly ceremonial function, it also acts to unify the people and give them a single figure that represents the state. The royal family enjoys great popularity, and the British follow the lives of its members with avid interest. The British government functions as a parliamentary democracy, with the executive forming part of a bicameral legislature. Members of the upper house, the House of Lords, are drawn from the aristocracy and hold seats passed down hereditarily. The people vote for members of the lower house, the House of Commons; each member represents a particular district. The party holding the majority in the House of Commons chooses the prime minister, who then selects other ministers (collectively known as the Cabinet) to hold responsibilities in areas such as foreign policy, education, finance, commerce and industry, and others. As long as the prime minister's party holds the majority in the House of Commons, the prime minister stays in power. Elections come at least every five years, but may occur sooner if the prime minister and his government lose support in the House of Commons.

Parties enforce strong discipline, with nearly all votes falling along party lines. The UK's two major parties are the Labour and Conservative parties. A third party, the Liberal Democrats, have considerable support, but hold a clear minority in Parliament. Support for the Conservatives comes from the upper and upper-middle classes and the more traditional segments of society. The Labour Party generally has the support of the middle and working classes and progressives. All three parties also seek support from the center of the political spectrum.

## United Kingdom: Political Institutions (continued)

- Lobbyists focus on party leadership and on garnering public support
- Government has a long tradition of economic influence



Headquarters  
of the Trades  
Union  
Congress  
in London

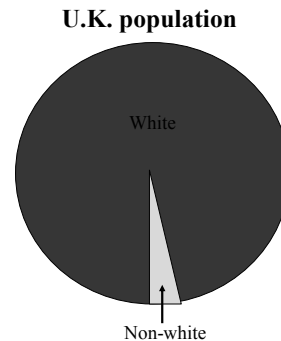
Members of the opposition party can influence the government by promoting alternative policies. They can confront the prime minister and members of the cabinet or the public directly. Political pressure groups operate differently in the UK than in the United States: owing to the strong sense of party loyalty, lobbyists focus their efforts on party leaders rather than on individual members of Parliament. Most lobbying groups concentrate on single national or economic issues. Such groups include the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Confederation of British Industry, the National Farmers' Union, and the Trades Union Congress.

The British government has long played a role in the economy. After World War II, the British took on the huge task of rebuilding its economy and infrastructure in a time of shrinking overseas holdings and a declining economy. Government spending became an integral part of the economy, establishing or funding improvements in social security, public housing, and national health care. The government also played a major role in helping to prevent the recurrence of an economic depression.



## United Kingdom: Citizens, Society, and the State

- UK mostly an ethnically homogeneous society
- Historic tension in Northern Ireland and recently with new immigrants
- Prominent social class cleavages and class consciousness
- Social mobility, social safety nets, and upper-class social responsibility keep tensions in check



Whites make up the vast majority (91%) of the population, while blacks, Indians, and Pakistanis collectively make up a little more than five percent. Religious differences have been most prominent in Northern Ireland, with attendant economic disparities and historic discrimination, though the violence that has accompanied it has dramatically subsided in recent years; this type of conflict has not been a major factor in the rest of the country. Recently, racial tensions have flared between newly arrived Muslim immigrants and the indigenous population, but not to the degree that has been experienced in continental Europe. Traditionally, Britons have had prominent social-class cleavages and class consciousness. However, avenues exist for social mobility and for the different classes to receive political representation in government. Other factors that keep class cleavages in check include social-service safety nets that ward off extreme poverty, and a strong sense of upper-class social responsibility. Recognizing the importance of the middle class and its role in society, the government supports it with a broad range of educational opportunities and by accepting its members in the higher levels of society and government.

## United Kingdom: Political and Economic Change

- Relatively peaceful throughout its history, since events occurred sequentially, not simultaneously
- Post-WWII era saw substantial, rapid change
- The weak economy in the 1970s brought on change in the 1980s, with government privatization of industries, housing, and public services
- Most political movements are locally inspired and operated, though some rise to national and international prominence
- New challenges face the UK: participation in the EU, the government economic role, and the global economy

Political and economic change has occurred relatively peacefully throughout much of Britain's history, due in part to that fact that political developments took place gradually and not all at once. Government and society generally dealt with internal policy issues at different times than major political and social events. However, the period following World War II simultaneously presented the challenges of reconstruction, loss of empire, and a shift to a post-industrial and global economy. Postwar policies that improved education and social services helped cushion some of the difficulties of transition. By the 1970s, however, the UK found itself with a weakened economy, high taxation, and few answers within the existing system for addressing new problems. In the 1980s, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher instituted a less-involved government that relied on market forces to run the economy, resulting in greater privatization of industries, housing, and public services. Prime Minister Tony Blair came into office in 1997 with a government that blended both of these views, allowing privatization to continue but having the government contribute where it could. The UK currently has one of the strongest economies in Europe, low inflation, and unemployment rates around three percent.

Though as a nation, the UK has historically participated in large-scale political movements (the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, and nuclear disarmament), most of this political participation has been conducted by a vocal minority, with much of the citizenry remaining somewhat politically disengaged. Issues are more likely to get addressed on a local level but may reach national or even international prominence as events unfold. Thus, much of the UK's grassroots political activism has been reactive, rather than proactive.

Britain faces some challenging issues in the coming years in deciding on its level of involvement in the European Union, determining its government's economic role, and transitioning to a global economy.

## United Kingdom: Public Policy

- Directed from the top down
- Lobbyists pressure party leaders and public
- Environmental issues addressed at local, national, and international levels
- UK's historic involvement in international affairs obligates it to address these issues in the future



Parliament and Big Ben, London

Public policy is directed from the top down in the UK: high-level civil servants and party leaders develop most initiatives. While lobbyists and pressure groups may focus on these officials or appeal to public sentiment in order to influence policy decisions, the bureaucracy creates policy and the members of Parliament decide whether to implement it. The public has no direct participation in the decision making process.

Britain faces environmental issues it needs to address on the local, national, and international levels. The UK continues to reduce greenhouse gases (having met its Kyoto Protocol target), has cut down the amount of industrial and commercial waste it creates, and recycles nearly 30% of household waste. It has signed a number of international environmental agreements that will continue to keep the UK in a leading role, but that also necessitate improvements at home (which local governments will largely deal with).

The UK continues to play its historically prominent role in international affairs. It is a charter member of a number of international organizations in which it holds great influence. The British government has taken on a number of international issues, from global warming, to aid for Africa, to addressing the threats of terrorism.

## Discussion Questions

1. Without a written constitution, from where does the United Kingdom draw its sovereignty, authority, and power?
2. What are the major institutions of British government? How do the roles of its monarch and its prime minister differ?
3. While strong social-class divisions exist in the UK, what factors help reduce conflicts among the different classes?

1. The UK has a long political history. It began with Magna Carta, which established rule of law and limited government. The Glorious Revolution established representative government and the supremacy of Parliament. The British people strongly believe that their political institutions can effectively deal with problems and conflict.
2. The legislative branch is made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The majority party in the House of Commons selects the executive: the prime minister, who (along with his cabinet ministers) actually runs the UK's government. The monarch is the head of state, but in reality only has a ceremonial function.
3. Avenues exist for social mobility and political representation. Social service safety nets keep people out of extreme poverty. A strong sense of social responsibility among the upper class and strong support by the government for the middle class through educational opportunities and social acceptance of its members also helps reduce conflicts.

## Discussion Questions

4. Why has political and economic change been relatively peaceful throughout much of Britain's history? Why did the situation change after World War II?
5. How is public policy developed in the United Kingdom?

4. Political and economic change has been relatively peaceful in the past because political developments came in sequence and not all at once. Government and society dealt with internal policy issues generally at different times than major political and social events. However, the period post-WWII simultaneously presented the challenges of reconstruction, loss of empire, and a shift to a post-industrial and global economy.
5. Public policy is developed by top-level civil servants and government leaders. Lobbyists and pressure groups appeal to these people or gather public sentiment in order to influence policy decisions. Since policy is created by the bureaucracy and decisions are made by the members of Parliament, the public has no direct participation in the decision making process.



Russia

## Russia: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

- Largest country in the world
- Abundant in natural resources, though difficult to acquire
- Government policy has been to assimilate different ethnic groups into Russian culture
- Historically, Russians have believed in the supremacy of their culture as the last best hope for Christian civilization
- Western culture's influence has created a tug-of-war between modernists and traditionalists

Russia, the largest country in the world, spans 11 time zones. Most of the country lies in a cold and rugged climate above the 49th parallel, the same latitude line that defines the border between Canada and the U.S. This vast area contains an abundance of natural resources, but mostly in inhospitable regions. Though many different ethnic groups inhabit the country, longstanding Russian government policy has been to encourage its people to move eastward and to assimilate the different groups into the Russian culture.

Russia is as much an old state as a new one. The country has existed in some form for nearly a thousand years—its capital, Moscow, was founded in 1147. For centuries, most Russians believed their civilization was the cultural epicenter of the world and would protect them from outside evils. Having withstood the Mongol invasions, rejected the humanist influences of the European Renaissance, and repelled conquest by the Muslim empire, Russians have looked upon themselves as the last best hope for civilization and Christianity (hence the strong and enduring presence of the Russian Orthodox Church). They have also looked to their government to protect them from these evils.

Russian culture from the tsars through the communist era has generally rejected Western society. However, Western ideas have had a significant influence on Russia. Today, Western influences create an internal tug-of-war between those who feel Russia needs to modernize and those who cling to traditional Russian culture.

## Russia: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power (continued)

- 1990 collapse of Soviet economy plunged the country into political and economic chaos.
- Russia struggles with tsarist and communist legacies
- A sense of the unknown surrounds Russia's immediate future



Mikhail Gorbachev



Boris Yeltsin

Russian history has been marked by tumultuous events rather than smooth transitions. Today, as Russia struggles to find its new identity it wrestles with several internal forces vying for control.

In 1991, the Soviet regime was in chaos: The “satellite states” in eastern Europe had gone into rebellion and Soviet leadership refused to crack down as it had so many times in the past. Soon, the Soviet economy collapsed and with it, the government and its control over the Soviet republics. Privatization of the economy occurred soon thereafter, as former state-run companies fell into the hands of private entrepreneurs, members of the vast bureaucracy, and organized crime—all of whom now struggled for control. Leaders (including Mikhail Gorbachev, and later Boris Yeltsin) tried to introduce democratic principles, but creating a new political culture so different from that of the past proved difficult. The Russian people had virtually no experience with civil liberties, the rule of law, true representative government, or tolerance for minority political groups or dissent.

Today, Russia's sense of authority and power remains in a state of flux. As in the past, current leadership have attempted to consolidate power as much for the sake of stopping a potential free-fall into chaos as for preserving its power base and control. More questions exist than can be answered right now: what political/economic system will emerge in Russia as more of the world moves to a global, free-market economy? Will it remain a democracy? What role will internal and external forces play in shaping government policy?



## Russia: Political Institutions

- Old Soviet system of loyalty and patronage still in operation
- Three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial
- Executive branch controls security forces, foreign affairs, defense, and the economy

### Executive powers

- Appoint prime minister and cabinet
- Issue decrees
- Veto acts passed by the legislature
- Dissolve the legislature and call for new elections
- Control most ministries

Political patronage has long been a tradition in Russia. To get anywhere in the government, the economy, or society, one had to show loyalty and have friends in high places. In societies where the government places a premium on controlling the masses (as it was in both tsarist and communist Russia), keeping accurate records of people's abilities and loyalties becomes essential. The Politburo (the chief policymaking and governing body during the Soviet era) kept records on people's work performance and political, social, and even private activities, forming lists of those "appropriate" for advancement. People who formed relationships with those in power gained useful patrons. Most of those running the Russian government and bureaucracy today rose through this patronage system, which valued obedience and loyalty to the people above.

The 1993 constitution, written after a failed coup attempt, created a government with an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. The president serves as head of state, elected to a four-year term with a two-term limit. The president appoints a prime minister and cabinet with approval from the lower house, known as the State Duma. The president can issue decrees with the force of law, veto acts passed by the legislature, and dissolve the Duma and call for new elections. The president controls most of the ministries, such as interior (which runs the police force), foreign affairs, defense, and state security. The prime minister oversees the other ministries, operated by unelected bureaucrats who gained their positions during the Soviet era and run their departments accordingly. The president holds the most power; though limited, he can almost always achieve his policy goals.

## Russia: Political Institutions (continued)



Emblem commemorating 100  
years of the State Duma in Russia

- Legislative branch composed of Federal Council and State Duma
- Communist Party and United Russia Party only major national parties
- Emerging judiciary system finally adopting principles of “innocent until proven guilty” and constitutional precedent

The legislature, known as the Federal Assembly, comprises an upper house called the Federal Council and a lower house known as the State Duma. The Federal Council is made up of officials representing mostly local interests; it has little power, except to delay legislation and consent to appointments to the judiciary.

In the 450-member Duma, district representatives hold about half the seats, with the rest awarded proportionally to members of various parties. Until recently, only the Communist Party had sufficient organization to elect representatives on a nationwide basis and therefore could win a majority of the seats. The United Russia Party emerged to contest the Communist Party and has strengthened the power of the legislative branch in order to fulfill some of its constitutional duties to pass and implement laws. However, the Duma requires more party discipline among its members to be able to fully exercise the constitutional powers it holds.

A new judiciary has emerged in Russia that more closely resembles those of industrialized democracies. The old Soviet system, though no longer in use, established a judicial mindset that assumed the guilt of anyone who came before the court; making this fact public and imposing sentences therefore became the court's only job. The criminal courts today work toward an open system that runs according to the rule of law and must prove the guilt of the accused—not merely assume it. The 1993 constitution set up the Supreme Court, the Arbitration Court (for resolving business disputes), and the Constitutional Court, which rules on the constitutionality of legislative and executive acts (though it has shown reluctance to exercise such power).

## Russia: Political Institutions (continued)

- Local leaders, as members of the Federal Assembly, tend to bend national policy toward local desires and needs.
- In 2000, the president consolidated control of local leaders through district governors
- Except for the Communist Party, most parties don't have strong ideology to drive policy
- Oligarchs control much of the economy and the political power behind it; government efforts to curb their power has been controversial

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, a patchwork of competing interests and smaller governments made up local government in the Russian Federation. Some local officials had inherited positions passed down from feudal times; others gained their posts because of ethnic divisions. Since no definitive understanding of federal supremacy over local government existed, many localities became the personal kingdoms of their leaders, who doled out patronage privileges to the loyal and obedient. These leaders tended to rule their regions in an autocratic (if not criminal) manner, and as members of the Federal Council their political activities on a national level tended to benefit their local concerns. New laws passed in 2000 created seven federal districts, with governors appointed by the president to supervise the local governments of each district. The laws attempted to curb the powers of local officials, aiming to reduce the abuse of patronage and draw a greater emphasis on national issues, as in the Duma. If these governors don't follow federal law, the president can remove them and appoint new ones, who must then be approved by the Duma.

Until recently, the Communist Party was the only nationally organized political party capable of projecting any kind of a uniform ideology. Most parties only reflect the ideas of the leaders who started them. Unlike in the U.S., few people actually join political parties, largely because parties center around a handful of ambitious politicians rather than a broad-based set of ideals. However, signs have emerged that national political parties can create their own identities and political philosophies.

The "oligarchs," people of tremendous power who control much of the private wealth and media power of Russia, constitute another political institution. They act as patrons to aspiring politicians, granting them money and access to contacts. Only the United Russia Party has been somewhat successful in curbing their power, either through aggressive criminal prosecutions or increased state control of the media and major resource industries. However, these actions have led pro-democracy supporters in the West to criticize President Vladimir Putin for limiting civil liberties.

## Russia: Citizens, Society, and the State

- Social cleavages fall along longstanding geographic, cultural, and linguistic lines
- Though making economic progress, underlying problems of poverty and unemployment still exist
- There distinct classes: oligarchs, middle class, and lower sectors
- Some political groups have formed, though decentralized and more focused on local issues

Although Russians make up 80% of the population, 14 other major ethnic groups live within the country, mostly in the east. Social cleavages run along geographic, cultural, and linguistic lines, a throwback to longstanding government policies which placed groups of minorities in specific locations.

Russian society remains in a state of flux and uncertainty. To some extent, the old relationship between Russia's citizens and its government persists, but not completely. Some Russians expect the state to take care of them and provide for their basic needs; others feel the elite will run the country to their own benefit at the expense of the individual—as they always have. Still others look to the future optimistically, seeing possibilities for social and economic advancement. Although new expensive shopping centers and other indicators of increased wealth have appeared, Russia still experiences high rates of homelessness (especially among older people) and unemployment. Clearly, Russia's future is still a work in progress.

Economically, three distinct classes exist: the oligarchs, who make up about 2% of the population and control about 35% of the country's wealth; the middle class, who have advanced educations and have been able to land jobs in private companies; and the majority of the population, suffers from high unemployment and has few prospects.

Since the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991, people have begun to form social and political groups outside of official channels. Pressure groups' scope and impact tend to be small because they concentrate on local concerns and interests; this helps explain the large number of political parties in the Federal Assembly and lack of national party organization besides the Communist and United Russia Parties.

## Russia: Political and Economic Change

- Gorbachev's reforms to stabilize Soviet society released forces for democracy and change
- Change has been dramatic and unpredictable:
  - Russia has adopted democracy and a free-market economy
  - Corruption and growing consolidation of government power could offset progress
- Small-business community making increased contributions, but pales in comparison to vast energy industry

The Soviet economy stagnated in its last two decades due to pressures from an arms race with the U.S. and a disastrous war in Afghanistan. Then, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev initiated *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) in order to revitalize the sagging economy. These actions inadvertently released political forces that splintered the USSR into Russia and 14 other independent republics. Since then, Russia has struggled to build a democratic political system and market economy.

Political and economic change in Russia since the Soviet collapse has been dramatic and unpredictable, and has included open national elections, coups, and a brief civil war. The rule of law has become an important and necessary component of Russia's adaptation to democracy and a free market. However, old habits are hard to break: corruption and organized crime in the private sector and growing government power could offset the progress made in promoting human rights and developing a more open economy. Economic change will continue but with uncertain progress. Small businesses produce only a minimal percent of the total GDP, and most of Russia's wealth depends heavily on the oil and gas industry, which is vulnerable to world economic trends and fluctuations.

## Russia: Public Policy

- Government controls much of the economy with little input for different ideas
- Duma largely composed of politicians more concerned about local issues rather than national ones
- Russians now enjoy greater civil liberties, but media still under government control
- Russia faces environmental devastation from overuse and past abuses

Continued political and economic reform are essential to Russia's success on its new path. The government still has great control over the largest means of economic development, controlling corporate, fiscal, and monetary policies. Moreover, little currently counterbalances government's influence on policy: most members of the Duma focus on local issues, so national decision making tends to lie with the president.

Russians enjoy greater civil liberties than while under communist rule, but the government has recently increased its control of the media in an attempt to curb the power of the oligarchs. Also, the threat of terrorism from outside as well as inside threatens to bring a halt to any expansion of freedoms and will likely be a determining factor in future policy decisions. How Russia makes these decisions will also affect its relations with Western powers.

Russia also faces some tough environmental policy decisions. Decades of Soviet industrial excess and neglect—not to mention scattered areas of radioactive contamination—have left many ecosystems dead. Russia suffers from heavy air pollution caused by industry, power plants, and cities. Pollution has also extensively damaged inland waterways and seacoasts.. Political activism has not yet matured enough to influence the government to change, although change is needed. Russia has great potential, but struggles with a lack of experience in operating a democracy which puts individuals first and creates policies that meet their needs.

## Discussion Questions

1. How have the Russian people historically viewed their civilization as compared with those of the rest of the world? How does this impression still prevail in the people's relationship with their government and in Russia's relationship with the West?
2. What challenges to its power and authority has Russia faced in transitioning from the old methods of the tsars and the Communist Party to a more democratic society with a free-market economy?
3. Describe Russia's past system of patronage and how that system still prevailed in local government after the breakup of the USSR. How did new laws passed in 2000 attempt to change this balance of power, and what were the intended results?

1. For centuries, most Russians have believed their civilization vastly superior to the rest of the world's and that it would protect them from outside evils. (Answers may vary on second part, but students should mention that those who still hold this view remain suspicious of the West and fear that Russian civilization will fall to outside evils. As a result, many people look to their government to protect them. Others feel that Russia must modernize in order to improve the lives of its citizens and remain a major player in international affairs.)
2. Challenges include no experience with civil liberties for its people, the rule of law, representative government, or tolerance for minority political groups and dissent. (Students might also mention how the firmly entrenched bureaucracy, "oligarchs," and organized crime vie for control.)
3. For centuries, Russian political institutions operated on a system of political patronage which rewarded obedience to authority and loyalty to higher-ups. After the fall of the Soviet Union, local leaders essentially created their own fiefdoms and continued the practice. As a result, members of the Federal Council (made up of local politicians from around the country) focus more on local concerns than on national issues. The laws passed in 2000 created seven federal districts under the control of the president in an attempt to curb the powers of local officials and draw greater attention to national issues.

## Discussion Questions

4. What social cleavages exist in Russia today, and how did the government encourage them? What economic cleavages exist?
5. Though Russia has made great progress in adopting democratic principles and a free-market economy, how might corruption and growing consolidation of government power offset this progress?

4. The social cleavages fall along geographic, cultural, and linguistic lines, the results of longstanding government policies which relocated large minorities in specific areas. Economic cleavages split the population into three distinct classes: oligarchs, who constitute smallest group but control a large percentage of the wealth; the middle class, composed of people with advanced educations; and the lower economic sectors (i.e., the majority of the country), who suffer from high unemployment and have few prospects.
5. Corruption may discourage investment from within and outside the country, drying up much-needed cash that could be used to modernize industry and revitalize the economy. Growing consolidation of government power may increase the chances of losing support from the West and undermine advancements in democracy and civil liberties made thus far.





# China



## China: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

- Slightly larger than the United States but with four times the population
- Closed its doors to outside trade for centuries, until Europeans forced it to open in the 19th century
- Communist takeover in 1949 improved food production at first, but created cultural chaos



Foreign armies march through Beijing, 1900

The People's Republic of China covers slightly more area than the United States but has a population about four times larger. China has always considered itself the center of the world and for centuries after the Mongol invasions (late 13th century) kept its doors closed to world trade and influence—not out of fear, for it believed in its cultural and military superiority, but because leaders believed that China needed nothing from the rest of the world. In the early 15th century, several expeditions to the Middle East and Africa determined that these areas had nothing useful to offer. As late as the 17th century, China allowed only the British to buy Chinese goods but banned the sale of British goods in China. This philosophy backfired in the 19th century, as European and American technological advances far surpassed those of the Chinese; having lost control of many its coastal areas (and the income those areas produced) through trading concessions likely contributed to revolution, civil war, and invasion in the 20th century.

When the communists took over in 1949, they set out to correct the evils of the past. They succeeded in feeding the ever-increasing masses of people with major agricultural programs and slowly moved to a market-based economy; however, they experienced failures too. The communists followed Chinese tradition by demanding obedience from the population, but also promised better living conditions and advocated an egalitarian society based on communist principles.

## China: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power



Shanghai, one of the main centers of  
private enterprise and foreign investment  
in China

- China has long operated as a command economy
- The communist government relaxed some controls on private enterprise and foreign investment
- An adherence to a commercial rule of law
- Government legitimacy depends on continued economic growth and raising the standard of living

China has operated as a command economy for centuries, and the communists continued this policy. After restoring food production in 1949, the government's next action was to industrialize the nation and work to expand the economy. To achieve this, the communists had to make certain concessions, such as relaxing economic strictures and encouraging private enterprise and foreign investment. However, the government maintained control over banking, the funding of new development, and any market manipulation deemed necessary.

China has also made efforts to establish the rule of law, if only in the commercial sphere. Though their efforts have not been as fast and comprehensive as Western states and business would like, China has adhered to requirements from the World Trade Organization (WTO) to be more vigilant in enforcing contract law.

Although protecting citizens' rights and holding the government more accountable for its actions under the rule of law may still be far off, economic rights have expanded. Chinese leaders have for the most part abandoned the egalitarian ideals of communism. While still operating as a command economy (by controlling banking and investment interests), China has also allowed private enterprises and foreign investment to flourish. To maintain its legitimacy, the state must deliver on its promise to foster economic growth and raise the standard of living for all Chinese.

## China: Political Institutions

- Government functions in parallel with—and under the control of—the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
- CCP members cultivate political and economic connections
- Three new principles that the CCP represents:
  - Advancing production methods in order to compete economically in the world market
  - Keeping all developments in line with Chinese culture
  - Protecting the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people

The Chinese government functions in parallel with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP): the government acts as the machine and the CCP acts as the operator who monitors every component part. In many ministries, the government official and the CCP overseer are the same person. This system of one-party rule has its costs: with the party solidly in control, any and all new ideas must get official approval, which tends to limit innovation and original approaches to problem solving.

Many people join the CCP not necessarily for ideological reasons, but to develop solid patron-client relationships. In this capacity, the CCP acts as a sort of business club for making connections and getting one's name on lists of preferred party members. For example, having one's name on the preferred list and knowing the right people can make it easier to obtain business permits, bank loans, and contracts with foreign investors.

As in many countries, the government in China presents the “official truth.” The newest Chinese version of official truth has come in the form of three principles (the “Three Represents”) that the CCP aims to stand for in the 21st century: (1) the development of advanced technology and production methods in order to raise the standard of living and compete economically with the rest of the world, (2) the orientation of social, political, and economic change with Chinese culture, and (3) the protection of the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people. These principles mark a shift from the CCP's original goal of protecting the interests of the proletariat and promoting equality for all Chinese to now representing the “overwhelming majority” of the people.

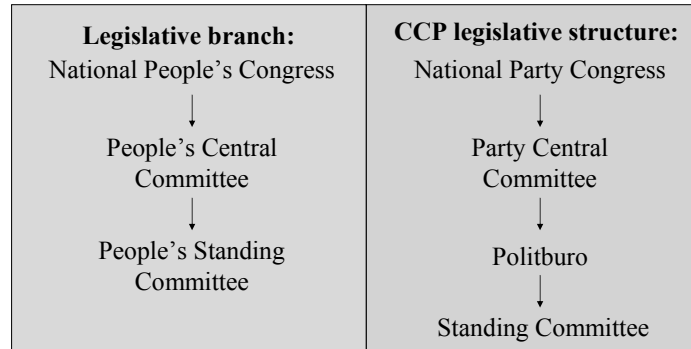
## China: Political Institutions (continued)

<b>Executive branch:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• President—head of state and sometimes general secretary of Communist Party</li><li>• Premier—head of cabinet; in charge of various ministries</li><li>• Both serve on the Central Military Commission, which oversees the armed forces</li></ul>	<b>CCP executive structure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General Secretary—heads party bureaucracy</li><li>• Secretariat—highest level of party bureaucracy</li></ul>
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Chinese government is structured as a dual system, with the CCP operating the machinery of government. The president functions as head of state, and the premier (or prime minister) heads the State Council, or cabinet. Although constitutionally the president holds little power, in recent years this office has been held by the general secretary of the CCP, who can exercise a great deal of power. The premier, as head of the State Council, is in charge of the various departments of the government bureaucracy. The president, premier, and other powerful officials serve on the Central Military Commission, which oversees the armed forces, the People's Liberation Army. The CCP nominates candidates for the executive branch, and the National People's Congress (the government's top legislative body) elects these officers to five-year terms.

The CCP's general secretary heads the party bureaucracy. The highest level of the party bureaucracy, the Secretariat, makes personnel decisions for both the party and the state. Advancement depends upon knowing important people in this group and having one's name placed on their preferred lists.

## China: Political Institutions (continued)



China's legislative structure resembles two series of nested boxes. The National People's Congress comprises nearly 3000 members chosen by the various people's congresses from China's provinces. This group serves as the supreme legislature for the entire country. Its sheer size necessitates a smaller working group known as the Central Committee, which is composed of a few hundred people who meet every few months to conduct National People's Congress business. Within the Central Committee, the even-smaller Standing Committee manages day-to-day operations when the Central Committee is not in session. The Central Committee generates policy (administered by the Standing Committee) and passes it on to the National People's Congress for approval.

In the CCP legislative structure, the National Party Congress represents party members, not the population in general. Members are chosen by the party congresses throughout the provinces. Its 2000 delegates meet every year to attend to party business. Like the National People's Congress, the National Party Congress has a Central Committee of about 200 people. This Central Committee has a Politburo (political bureau) of a few dozen people who run the party's day-to-day operations and also head local party committees or serve in the the Secretariat. Therefore, the Politburo chooses its own Standing Committee, whose half-dozen members operate under the direction of the party's general secretary. The president and the premier number are members of the Standing Committee. The Politburo formulates party policy and and sends it to the National Party Congress for approval.

Since the president also holds the office of general secretary of the Communist Party, who in turn heads the Politburo's Standing Committee, the party's executive and legislative branches merge with the government's executive branch.

## China: Political Institutions (continued)

- The Supreme People's Court heads the judiciary
- Government is defining commercial and property law, but mediators settle most civil disputes
- The Supreme People's Procuratorate oversees the court system

As in the United States, the Supreme Court sits atop China's judiciary system. Also as in the U.S., the Supreme Court and other higher courts are appellate courts, with lower courts having original jurisdiction.

With the recent economic reforms and expansion of foreign investment, the government has developed more responsive commercial and property laws. Keeping within Chinese and communist tradition, mediation committees settle most civil disputes, but recently some lawsuits have come before the national courts.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate (which has local and provincial branches) works closely with police forces to investigate and prosecute cases of suspected illegal activity. Led by the procurator general, this ministry oversees the court system in order to ensure that cases are properly prosecuted and to defend the rights of the accused.

## China: Political Institutions (continued)

Local government:

- Structured like the national government, with people's congresses at provincial, city, and township levels
- Like national government, Communist Party counterparts exist at all levels
- Main function of local institutions is to promote economic development

The structure of local governments resembles the national government's, with people's congresses at provincial, city, and township levels. Each is responsible for implementing national policies and selecting delegates to the congresses one level up. Just like the national government, a Communist Party counterpart exists at every level.

Local government's main function is to promote economic development. Support from the national government comes to these local agencies in proportion to their success in carrying out the government's (and the party's) initiatives and reforms.

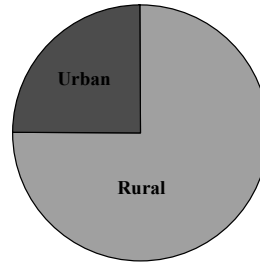


## China: Citizens, Society, and the State

Social cleavages:

- Language (dialects)
- Disparities between urban and rural population
  - Education
  - Income

**Chinese population**



Chinese culture emphasizes unity and balance in all things. China, as a fairly homogeneous society, makes this possible in many areas. Social cleavages do exist in language (mostly differences in dialect), urban vs. rural populations, and “generation gaps.” Approximately 75% of the population lives in rural areas, and this figure has declined as more people have left farming to find work in the cities. Cleavages between urban and rural Chinese run deep over differences in education, levels of familiarity with technology, and negative perceptions groups have about each other. Historically, the Chinese government has addressed these issues by paying special attention to rural communities. Reforms in the 1950s and 1960s redistributed farmland among the peasants. During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the government sent urban intellectuals and students to farm labor camps for “retraining,” in hopes of helping the two groups better understand one another.

As more poor rural farmers move to the cities and more city dwellers find success in the economic boom, social-class distinctions in China become more pronounced. Trying to escape poverty, farmers and low-skilled workers make their way to the cities, only to find unemployment or underemployment; in the same cities, young, educated urbanites reap the benefits of the expanding economy. Above them all, high-level bureaucrats enjoy the riches that come with successful business ventures.

## China: Citizens, Society, and the State (continued)

Social cleavages:

- Gaps between three distinct generations with different experiences under governmental control

Generation influenced by Mao	Generation influenced by the Cultural Revolution	Generation influenced by modern society
Party loyalty as a means to success	Lost local patron-client connections when sent to farm camps	Less likely to view party loyalty as means to success; focus on economic advancement

Three distinct generational classes exist in China: The generation who grew up heavily influenced by the leadership of Mao Zedong composes much of China's leadership. The next generation consists of the "victims" of the Cultural Revolution who were sent to the farm camps, hampering their education and forcing them to lose their local patron-client connections; their children and grandchildren will likely make up the next generation of the power elite as the older leaders fade away. The young and educated who live in the urban areas are less inclined to see loyalty to the party as a way to success. Influenced by more modern ways of thinking and fewer restrictions on economic advancement, a question arises as to whether this generation will seek more political freedom as well. If so, they may expect the rural poor to assume more responsibility for their own well-being and put fewer resources into subsidizing them, as the government has in the past.

## China: Citizens, Society, and the State (continued)

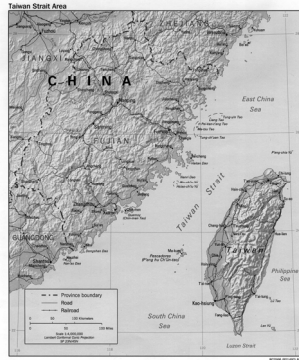
- Traditional values vs. economic and political change
  - Collective responsibility
  - Struggle and harmony
  - Deference to moral authority



Chinese society has always had a strong component of tradition, and recent changes have clashed with these long-held beliefs. The political values of the past that carry over into today include collective responsibility, struggle and harmony, and deference to moral authority. Confucian principles state that the people owe allegiance to those above them and have a responsibility to those beneath them; therefore, individuals are as bound to deference to those in power as they are to taking care of the livelihood of the less powerful. Family and village relationships have historically been very tight units in which generations looked after one another. Communism reinforced this with its egalitarian philosophy and policy of meeting citizens' basic needs.

The Chinese have sought a balance in life between the forces of nature and the individual will to survive, and between the occasional brutality of the state and its acknowledged responsibility for its citizenry. Achieving harmony was preferred over revolution. Traditionally, the government has tolerated and even encouraged spontaneous social movements, provided they advanced the will of the emperor or party politics and didn't directly challenge the government or the party's position of leadership. However, today's loosening of economic strictures leads many to ask whether the Chinese people will demand a more open approach to politics as well. While the government exercises tight control of the media, it has found the new information technology almost impossible to control completely, in spite of its best efforts. Violators have been arrested, prosecuted, and punished harshly for trying to circumvent this censorship, yet some still manage to find outside information and communicate it to others within the country. This struggle for a better balance will certainly be an important issue as the next generation of potential leaders develops.

## China: Political and Economic Change



- Chinese government and Communist Party have acted deliberately in pursuing economic change
- Economic change has brought more autonomy and self-responsibility to the individual
- Government maintains control of banking, but not willing to share with private citizens or foreign investors

The Chinese government and Communist Party have acted deliberately in their quest for economic change. Political and economic change has come slowly but gone relatively smoothly under one-party rule; when upheaval has occurred, the government has understood the need to address the problems. In adhering to the tradition of collective responsibility for its citizenry, the government has provided help in order to maintain social stability. While economic change has brought more autonomy to the individual, it has also meant that individuals have more responsibility for finding jobs with adequate wages in the market economy. The government maintains control of the banking sector, which in turn exercises its power to grant or deny loans and thus direct other sectors of the economy. So far, the government has been reluctant to share this power with private citizens or foreign investors. Whether these policies will result in long-term success remains to be seen. The interconnectedness of the global economy demands transparency in financial dealings—presently a foreign concept to the Chinese government. Another area for potential change is the political relationship between China and Taiwan. Though operating on the policy of “two Chinas, one nation,” some Taiwanese officials occasionally make provocative acts or statements in support of an independent Taiwan. PRC officials often respond with measured but unambiguous statements or actions of disapproval.

## China: Public Policy

Major issues:

- Sustaining long-term economic growth in order to reach superpower status
- Finding balance in the educational system between the urban elite and the rural peasantry
- Addressing severe environmental degradation while still achieving economic goals

China faces several important public policy issues in the 21st century:

- The country aims to achieve superpower status, both economically and politically, via long-term, sustained growth. How will China pay for this growth, and what will it cost its people?
- Though one of the world's best, China's educational system operates primarily for the children of the elite members of the government and the Communist Party. Questions exist as to how the government will respond to the educational needs of the rural community, and whether its efforts will suffice.
- Like Russia, China suffers from severe environmental neglect. In the rush to further its economic expansion, China has not addressed the harm caused to air, water, and land by 20 years of intense economic growth. Public protests have recently targeted this neglect and government inaction; however, these do not yet pose a direct threat to China's leadership. How the government will balance its desire for continued economic growth with its responsibility to provide for the Chinese people remains unclear.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did China's "closed door" economic policy eventually cause it to lag behind European powers? How did this affect the Chinese belief in their own cultural superiority?
2. Describe China's dual system of government. How does this structure help ensure that both sides work in unison to execute government policy and achieve unified goals?
3. How might the social cleavages between urban and rural communities and between generations pose future problems for the government and the Communist Party?

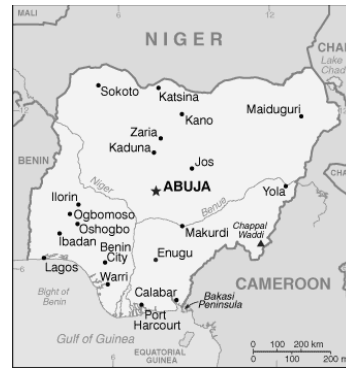
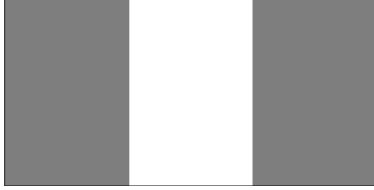
1. For centuries, Chinese leaders believed that the rest of the world had little to offer China. Beginning in the late 13th century, it outlawed trade with countries outside its immediate area. Even as late as the 17th century, China only allowed one-way trade with Britain. By the 19th century, European and American technology had so far surpassed China's that the government was forced to give trading concessions, which resulted in European control of key Chinese coastal areas. The quasi-colonization of these areas resulted in a loss of income and prestige for the government. The Chinese sense of cultural superiority was devastated and a period of decline resulted; this and other forces eventually led the country to revolution, civil war, and invasion.
2. Metaphorically speaking, the government is the machine and the Chinese Communist Party acts as its operator. The government and the CCP are practically identical in structure and organization; as such, nearly every position in government has a direct counterpart in the CCP to oversee its actions. The president functions as both head of state and leader of the CCP. Along with the premier, they control the government bureaucracy as well as the party's decision-making branch.
3. Disparities in education, understanding of technology, and income are driving urban and rural populations further apart, resulting in negative perceptions of one another. Though communism's egalitarian policies addressed the needs of the rural poor, recent strides toward economic autonomy and self-sufficiency may induce future leaders to allocate fewer resources toward the people's well-being.

## Discussion Questions

4. What are the three political values to which China has traditionally adhered? What might threaten these values in the near future?
5. What are three vital policy issues that the Chinese government faces today?

4. The values are collective responsibility, struggle and harmony, and deference to moral authority. The recent government policy of allowing more autonomy in economic endeavors could lead to popular demand for more political autonomy as well. Though the government maintains tight control over the media, new technology (such as cell phones, computers, and the Internet) better enables the dissemination of information from outside influences.
5. Three vital policy issues facing the Chinese government today:
  - a. Attain superpower status both economically and politically via sustained, long-term growth
  - b. Close the gap in education between the urban elite and the rural peasantry
  - c. Address severe environmental degradation while still achieving economic goals

# Nigeria





## Nigeria: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power



Land of paradoxes:

- Vast resources, yet widespread poverty
- Fertile land, yet imports much of its food
- Many respected universities, yet about a third of a population is illiterate
- Began as a model of democracy but has since been mostly under military rule

Nigeria is a land of paradoxes. A postcolonial country in West Africa, Nigeria possesses tremendous natural resources, yet its population suffers from severe poverty. It contains some of the most fertile land in Africa (with subsistence farming the primary occupation), yet must import much of its food. Nigeria also has advanced universities that provide a well-educated workforce for government jobs, but about a third of the country's population cannot read. Nigeria gained its independence in 1960 and initially looked as if it might be a model for future African democracies. For about three-quarters of its short history, it has suffered a series of military coups and been governed without a legislature by military dictatorships or by ineffective civilian leaders.

## Nigeria: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power (continued)

- Precolonial Nigeria was loosely divided into three ethnic groups with many autonomous subgroups in each
- Slave trade hit the region in the late 15th century
- Legacy of 19th-century British colonization:
  - No sense of democratic rule or self-government
  - One set of rules for the government and another set for the governed
  - Mercantile economy based on export of raw materials; no industrial base

Before colonial times, the area that constitutes Nigeria was divided along three distinct ethnic lines that remain very evident today and have played a major role in the area's politics. In the north, Islamic trade routes helped to establish a series of loosely organized civilizations. In the southwest, several tribal kingdoms existed before and even into the colonial period. In the rich delta region of the Niger River, hundreds of autonomous communities flourished with no formal political leadership.

The slave trade came to this part of Africa in the late 15th century. Europeans found several tribes willing to sell their enemies into slavery in exchange for rum, guns, and other trappings of Western civilization. By the 19th century, British trading companies had imported their style of colonial government and bureaucracy to the region and left an authoritarian model for future Nigerian regimes to follow. Unfortunately, the colonial experience did not impress upon Nigerians any concept of democracy or self-government. The domineering colonial rule deepened ethnic divisions between the three regions, intensifying a sense of "us vs. them," and set firmly in the people's minds that those in power lived by one set of rules and everyone else by another. In addition, the British mercantile model established an economy centered on the export of raw materials and cash crops in exchange for finished (and therefore more expensive) imported goods; Nigeria did not develop an industrial base.

## Nigeria: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power (continued)

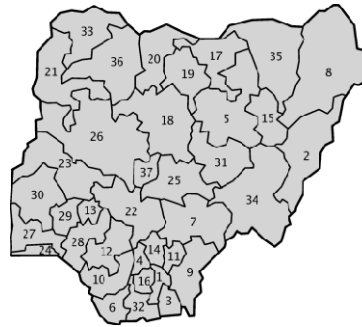
- 1960: First republic established (constitutional monarchy)
- 1966–1968: Civil war breaks out along ethnic lines; results in military dictatorship
- 1979: Second republic established (presidential system) after a series of coups
- 1983: Fraudulent election leads to another military takeover
- 1999: Democratic government reinstated

Independence came in 1960 after a long period of generally peaceful negotiations and preparation. The first government was a constitutional monarchy in the British style, with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state, an elected bicameral legislature, a prime minister, and a supreme court running a three-state federal system. Three years later, the government declared itself a republic, replaced the queen as head of state with an elected president, and created a fourth state in the middle of the country. However, ethnic divisions that had solidified during the colonial era made operating as a unified nation difficult. In 1966, riots broke out in the north and south between the different cultural groups. The government asked the army to step in and restore order. Generals from one region staged a coup; soon thereafter, generals from the central state conducted a counter coup. Leaders in the southeastern sector tried to secede from Nigeria to form a new country called Biafra. After a two-year civil war that killed nearly one million Nigerians (primarily through state-coordinated starvation), Biafra failed to achieve independence, and a military dictatorship came into power to reunite the country.

A series of coups and countercoups occurred through the 1970s, ending in 1979 with the establishment of the second republic. To ease ethnic tensions, the government created more states in order to dilute the power of the ethnic elite. Oil production rapidly increased to feed the energy-starved West, which engendered widespread corruption. Following a fraudulent election in 1983, the military again seized power. This regime brought little political progress to the country, but greatly enriched the ruling generals. From 1993 through 1999, the brutal and corrupt dictatorship of General Sani Abacha maintained power in Nigeria via systematic persecutions and politically motivated killings. General Abacha died in 1999, and his successor soon relinquished power to the winner of the presidential election, former general Olusegun Obasanjo, who was reelected in 2003. In 2007, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was voted president in a controversial and disputed election.

## Nigeria: Political Institutions

- Nigeria has periodically increased the number of states it has in order to defuse ethnic tension
- Process expensive because each state requires its own administration
- Increased numbers of states creates competition for resources
- Long history of dominant executive branch



Map of Nigerian states

To deal with the constant internal conflict, Nigeria instituted an evolving system of federalism in which seceding administrations divided the country into ever smaller states. Beginning with three states at independence, a fourth was added when the country declared itself a republic. After the 1968 civil war, 12 states were established; today there are 36. By increasing the number of states, the government hoped to ease ethnic tensions and give minority groups a chance to compete politically as well. This system of ever-smaller governmental units also occurs at the local level.

This process of dividing the country into smaller and smaller federal units has proven expensive, since each unit has to have its own administration. Also, these units have very little experience in running a government, and because most of the state's income goes back to the federal government this system creates intense competition among the different states for resources.

On paper, the structure of the government looks like most democracies, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and a bureaucracy to run the government. However, nearly 30 years of military dictatorship have made the executive the most powerful and most essential branch. Whether as part of military or civilian rule, maintaining order has been the top priority of nearly all Nigerian administrations.

## Nigeria: Political Institutions (continued)



The Nigerian Parliament House

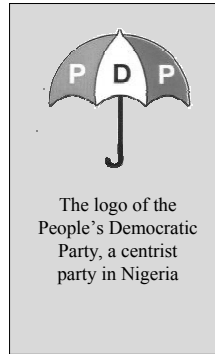
- Nigeria's legislative branch resembles the U.S. Congress
- Little experience with the legislative process
- Nigeria's judicial branch often bypassed and neglected by previous military leaders
- Northern Nigeria heavily influenced by Islamic Sharia law

Like the U.S., Nigeria has a bicameral legislature called "Congress." Each state elects three senators, and 360 members currently serve in the House of Representatives. Congress has the constitutional power to approve high-level presidential appointments and can initiate legislation. As a result of so many years under military rule, Nigeria has very little experience with a functioning or effective legislature. Most of the time, the party of the executive also controls both houses of the legislature, meaning that the legislature has little incentive to come up with its own legislation.

Nigeria's judicial branch also resembles the U.S. model, with a supreme court, lower appellate courts, state courts, and a constitutional court with the power of judicial review. Many years of military rule have eroded the judiciary's power as well: leaders have diverted cases to military courts, decreased its funding, or ignored its decisions outright. In addition, Islamic law (known as Sharia) heavily influences the legal system, especially in the north. Some northern leaders have pushed for eliminating all secular courts and replacing them with Islamic courts operating under Sharia law. Other non-Muslim ethnic groups see such proposals as direct threats.

## Nigeria: Political Institutions (continued)

- Nigeria's bureaucracy marginalized by military rule
- Creation of new states has increased the number of bureaucratic employees who advance through patron-client arrangements
- Political parties created along ethnic and geographic divisions; mostly serve as campaign committees
- Interest groups often stage protests in support of causes



Other political institutions also play major roles in Nigerian politics. Many of these end up contributing to the problems facing Nigeria rather than providing solutions. At the time of its independence, Nigeria had a well-educated bureaucracy built on the British model. However, the rise and dominance of military rule drew many young people away from a life of civil service in favor of joining the military. The local government bureaucracy has also grown exponentially with each increase in the number of states. Today the government employs nearly 50% of the non-farm workforce. A patron-client system has evolved in Nigeria, leading to *quid pro quo* arrangements for favors and advancement.

Due to the country's long history of military rule, civilian political parties have had little opportunity to evolve and develop a following. Early on, most were arranged along major ethnic and geographical divisions; in more recent times, candidates have founded multiple political parties in order to give the impression of broad-based support. In most cases, these parties serve only as campaign committees for their candidate and don't engage in any policy development.

The political turmoil has resulted in a large number of interest groups in Nigeria who stage protests when their causes come under fire. Labor organizations have staged demonstrations protesting perceived unfair oil-revenue distribution; women's market associations have actively helped women to start their own businesses; and paramilitary groups have played crucial roles in installing and removing military leaders. However, very few groups have focused their efforts on addressing issues at the national level.

## Nigeria: Citizens, Society, and the State

- Nigeria's ethnic/cultural cleavages outweigh all others
- North: one-third of the population; mostly Muslim; farming and livestock; less educated; suspicious of outside influences
- Southwest: 20% of the population, equal numbers of Muslim and Christian Yorubas; better educated; more diversified economy
- Southeast: 17% of the population; predominantly Christian Igbo peoples; well educated; mostly farmers
- "Middle belt": no dominant ethnic or religious groups; most national leaders from here; farming is the main activity

Nigeria contains deep ethnic and cultural cleavages that outweigh all others—even those between the military and civilian population. Most Nigerians identify themselves as part of an ethnic group first and as Nigerian second. Since these cleavages have also religious, geographic, and economic aspects, the divisions prove so strong that they negate any sense of Nigerian nationalism:

- The northern region contains about a third of the population. Composed mainly of Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri tribes, they are predominantly Muslim and engage in farming or raising livestock. They tend to be less educated, conservative, and suspicious of anything non-Muslim.
- The southwestern region makes up about 20% of the population, split almost equally between Muslim and Christian Yoruba groups. The southwest is the prime agricultural region, growing most of the country's cash crops. People here tend to be better educated than those in the north. More diversity in the economy provides greater opportunities in the cities.
- The southeast region is home to the Igbo people, which makes up about 17% of Nigerians. Christianity is the dominant religion here. Many of the people are well educated. Most are farmers who work the rich Niger River delta. Also, this region contains most of the country's petroleum reserves.
- The middle belt has no dominant ethnic or religious group. Most of Nigeria's national leaders (both civilian and military) have come from this region. As with the other regions, agriculture constitutes the main economic activity.

## Nigeria: Citizens, Society, and the State

- Political culture as complex as the ethnic/religious culture
- Cleavage exists between educated urban-dwelling elite and rural masses
- Elite work toward an effective democracy; masses want results
- A patron-client relationship exists between the two that fosters corruption

Nigeria's political culture reflects the same complexity and heterogeneity of its ethnic and religious cultures. A political cleavage exists between Nigeria's elite—well educated, city dwelling, and English speaking—and its rural masses, many of whom are illiterate and suspicious of outside influences. The elites strive for an honest, representative government that ensures civil liberties, while the masses want to see improvement in their living conditions and a government more responsive to their needs. In reality, relations between these two groups have resulted in a patron-client system in which those at the higher levels expect loyalty and payment in exchange for granting favors and enabling advancement. Such a climate makes possible the rampant corruption in Nigeria.



## Nigeria: Political and Economic Change

- Frequent military coups have made civilian leadership uneasy about implementing change
- Nigeria's main source of income comes from raw petroleum revenues; Nigeria imports nearly all of its petroleum-based products
  - This has led to an enormous, unpayable debt
  - Instability in leadership compounds the problem, with few foreign countries willing to invest in Nigeria

For almost 50 years, political change in Nigeria has come via military coups—at least seven since the country gained its independence. Most coups have not installed excessively oppressive regimes, and many generals have stated they want to keep the military out of politics. However, the frequent and seemingly predictable occurrence of military takeover keeps the elected civilian leadership reluctant to implement change for fear of inciting another coup.

Nigeria depends heavily upon its oil revenues for income. Nearly 40% of its GDP comes from petroleum, most of which it exports in its raw form. The country imports most of its refined oil and gasoline. Fluctuations in the worldwide price of oil have forced Nigeria to divert nearly 25% of its oil revenues solely toward paying the interest on its foreign debt. For the most part, Nigerian leaders have refused to adhere to the International Monetary Fund's demands for fiscal restructuring and the elimination of subsidies in order to gain assistance in relieving its debt. The international community has agreed to forgive \$20 billion of Nigeria's foreign debt, but Nigeria's history of revolving-door leadership makes foreign investors wary of putting money in the country. Therefore, Nigeria faces a "catch-22" in which it needs economic stability to establish stable government, but stable government will only come once it works out many of its economic problems.

## Nigeria: Public Policy

Factors that make the implementation of public policy difficult:

- Lack of a sense of nationalism
- Leadership tends to help themselves before helping the country
- Poverty
- Corruption
- History of seeking stability in government at the expense of democracy and rights

Generating effective public policy in Nigeria will prove crucial to its future success. Implementing public policy in Nigeria will take talented and creative management on the part of its leaders at all levels of government. Deep ethnic/religious cleavages (exacerbated by economic, geographic, and educational factors) practically cancel out any sense of nationalism, compounding the problem and leaving the country in a quandary of where and how to start. There is no shortage of those who want to generate public policy, but history and experience tends to show that these groups look to satisfy their own interests before those of the nation. Factors that further impede successful implementation of public policy include the unfathomable poverty amidst its incredible oil wealth; a crippling and corrupt patron-client system of societal and political advancement; and a history of choosing stability and order over democracy and expanded human rights.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did its colonial past leave Nigeria ill-prepared for independence?
2. Why have various governments chosen to increase the number of states in Nigeria's federal system? What side effect of this policy has contributed to Nigeria's enormous debt?
3. What major ethnic and cultural cleavages exist in each of Nigeria's main geographic regions? What effect do these cleavages have on Nigerian national unity?

1. Colonialism gave Nigeria no experience with democracy or self-government; the mercantile economy was based on the export of raw materials, with no industrial development; and the dual set of rules for the government and the governed established a culture of unfairness and inequality.
2. Creating more political states within Nigeria was intended to dilute the power and influence of the geographically arranged ethnic/religious groups who each put their interests above the nation's. Dividing a group into multiple political units means more competition with each other to obtain resources from the national government and also gives minorities within the region a greater voice in governmental affairs. Expanding the number of these political units has required more money to run the individual governments, each of which needs its own administration, staffs, facilities, etc.
3. The north is composed mainly of Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri tribes who are more religious, less educated, and suspicious of outside influences. The southwest, with its generally higher level of education and more diversified economy, has balanced numbers of Muslim and Christian Yorubas. The southeast is predominantly Christian, well-educated and of Igbo descent, with strong potential for economic prosperity, since most of the country's petroleum reserves lie there. The central region has no dominant ethnic or religious group. Most Nigerians identify themselves by ethnicity first and as Nigerians second. As a result, these diverse and entrenched cleavages negate any sense of nationalism.

## Discussion Questions

4. What is the “catch-22” quandary facing the Nigerian government in trying to attain economic and political stability?
5. What factors make implementing sound public policy difficult in Nigeria? Which do you think is the hardest to overcome? The easiest?

4. Nigeria needs economic stability in order to establish a stable government, but a stable government will only come once the country works out many of its economic problems.
5. Deep ethnic/religious cleavages (exacerbated by economic, geographic, and educational factors) practically cancel out any sense of nationalism, compounding the problem and leaving the country in a quandary of where and how to start. There is no shortage of those who want to generate public policy, but historically these groups have looked to satisfy their own interests before those of the nation. Factors that further impede successful implementation of public policy include the unfathomable poverty amidst incredible oil wealth; a crippling and corrupt patron-client system of societal and political advancement; and a history of choosing stability and order over democracy and expanded human rights. (Answers to the opinion questions will vary.)

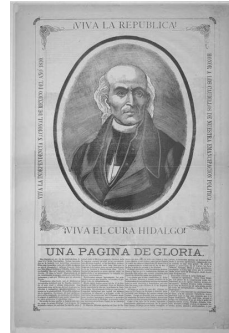


# Mexico



## Mexico: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

- Rich in cultural heritage and resources, yet 40% live under poverty line
- Gained independence from Spain in 1821
- Populist movements emerged during period of nation building, bringing wide political perspectives
- PRI created monopoly on political power and ruled for nearly 80 years



Miguel Hidalgo, leader of Mexico's war of independence against Spain

Mexico has a population of slightly more than 108 million people who share a rich cultural heritage from the Olmec, Maya, and Aztec civilizations, which date back more than 3000 years. Mexico also possesses rich natural resources, yet 40% of its population lives below the poverty line. It has enjoyed a relatively peaceful history with most of its neighbors, though it has a checkered and sometimes turbulent history with the United States.

Spain conquered and colonized the native populations of the area in the early 16th century. For nearly 300 years, Spain ruled through a strong centralized government, ingrained its culture into the indigenous population, and extracted a wealth of gold, silver, slaves, and foodstuffs. From 1810 to 1821, Mexico fought a bloody war for independence with Spain. Following the war, a long period of nation building ensued; the leadership of several visionaries and villains provided for a rich mix of political perspectives. Populist movements emerged that promised to cure the ills of the less-fortunate people via land redistribution, strengthening national unity, and breaking down old power structures. During this time, Mexico lost half its territory to the United States and went through periods of near-dictatorship.

By 1921, a single political party arose as the dominant force in politics, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). A populist movement promoting a sovereign Mexico, the PRI pushed for land reform, reduced the power of the Catholic Church, and created an activist, centralized government. The organization also laid the groundwork for a monopoly on Mexican politics lasting nearly 80 years. In 2000, Vicente Fox and his *Partido de Accion Nacional* (PAN) campaigned on a promise of reform and improved economic conditions; his election broke the PRI juggernaut.

## Mexico: Political Institutions

- On paper, Mexico's government resembles the U.S.
- Executive branch:
  - President is head of state
  - Responsible for foreign affairs, creating government agencies, and issuing legislation
  - President builds administration through appointees, who in turn make their own appointments

Though Mexico's government structure resembles the United States (with three branches, a system of checks and balances, and guarantees of civil and social rights), its actual operation reflects its cultural heritage and history of a strong central government.

As head of government, the president serves one six-year term. Up until the 2000 election, the president chose a candidate to succeed him, virtually guaranteeing the candidate's election. The president is responsible for foreign policy, can create government agencies and legislation, and issue directives and regulations with the force of law. The president builds his administration by appointing hundreds to posts within the government; many of these appointees also have the power to staff their own agencies. This creates a vast system of patronage, with the president at the top. Due to the office's one-term limit, the executive branch experiences large turnover, since new presidents tend to staff it with their own people.

## Mexico: Political Institutions (continued)

- Legislative Branch
  - National Congress:  
bicameral with members  
limited to one six-year term
  - Political monopoly of the  
PRI made the legislature a  
virtual “rubber stamp” until  
the 2000 election
  - Genuine coalition  
government formed during  
President Fox’s term  
in office



The Chamber of Deputies, part of  
Mexico’s legislature

Mexico’s *Congreso de la Union* (National Congress) is a bicameral legislature with a House and Senate. Legislators have the same term limit as the president (six years). The long-standing dominance of the PRI left Mexico’s legislative branch as little more than a “rubber stamp” for the party’s policies. Coalition politics began to become important in the mid-1990s, and after the 2000 election the legislative branch began to assert more formal authority. During President Vicente Fox’s term, the PRI and third party *Partido de la Revolucion Democratica* (PRD) joined forces to block a number of President Fox’s reforms. This gave the legislature the ability to truly check and balance the executive as never before.



## Mexico: Political Institutions (continued)

- Judicial branch:
  - Structured much like the judiciary in the U.S.
  - Justices and judges appointed by the president with consent from the Senate
- The bureaucracy:
  - Built on a system of patronage starting at the executive branch
  - Most civil servants loyal to their patron, not their job

Mexico's judicial branch looks much like the U.S., with a series of federal and state courts. The upper courts serve primarily as appellate courts, and the Supreme Court (the *Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nacion*) can declare laws and government actions unconstitutional. Justices to the Supreme Court and other federal courts are appointed by the president, with consent from the Senate. In the past, the courts have seldom ruled against the president.

The patronage system emanating from the executive branch has created a massive bureaucracy of government workers. In addition, over two million federal employees work in schools and state industries. More than a half million people serve in state and local governments. In this system of patronage, most civil servants give allegiance to their boss (and not their job), so when a government official gets a new position his staff tends to follow him or her.

## Mexico: Political Institutions (continued)



Mexican soldiers patrolling for drug runners

- Military has mostly concerned itself with enforcement and defense
- Local governments constitutionally and financially subordinate to national government
- Patronage system deeply ingrained in local politics

Over the years, the Mexican military has been a non-political entity, working instead to defend the country, occasionally maintain domestic order, and enforce drug laws. However, cases of corruption have occurred in the military—especially in the area of drug trafficking.

Local governments are subordinate to the national government both constitutionally and in reality. Nearly all state funding comes from the national government.

The patronage system is so deeply ingrained in Mexican politics that most local government personnel gain their positions through patrons. Elites rise up from the ranks through connections made in school, through family relations, or because of geographic location. Most of the highest elite—well-educated, with backgrounds in economics or political science—come from Mexico City. PAN political leaders are likely to have business degrees and backgrounds as well. A sizable cadre of “professional politicians” have achieved their power through political experience.

## Mexico: Citizens, Society, and the State

Several significant cleavages:

- Racial
- Geographic
- Economic
- Social classes (in ascending order):
  - Rural farmers and Amerindians
  - Urban poor and unskilled workers
  - Working class
  - Middle class
  - Upper-middle class
  - Rich landowners



Mexican society has several significant cleavages. Racially, *mestizos* (people of mixed European and indigenous ancestry) make up 60% of the population, with 30% Amerindian or mixed Amerindian. Geographic cleavages exist between urban and rural, with nearly 75% of Mexicans living in cities. Mexico City has one of the largest urban populations in the Western Hemisphere—18 million people. The northern area of the country has seen more prosperity than the southern or central regions (with the exception of Mexico City).

Cleavages have resulted in six distinct classes of people: poor rural farmers and Amerindians; the urban poor and the unskilled workers; the working class (which has expanded since the late 1990s due to improved economic conditions); an established middle class that arose after WWII; an upper-middle class, which holds great political power due to its involvement in banking, manufacturing, and investing; and a small, extremely wealthy landholding class that also holds (though not often shares) political power with the upper-middle class.

## Mexico: Citizens, Society, and the State (continued)



Logo of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI)

### Interest groups and influence:

- Prior to 2000 election, the PRI could counter the effects of opposition groups
- Part of the patron-client system
- Most influence done within the party and/or at the local level
- National government selects schools' curricula
- Voting mandatory and many Mexicans politically active
- Mexico's political culture has been marked by violence

Interest groups have formed part of Mexico's politics for many years, although the PRI greatly limited their effectiveness. Usually, this exclusion from participation came peacefully, in the form of bribes, influence peddling, or simple force of argument; sometimes when the group or individual was getting too much attention, the PRI employed more aggressive means. The PRI's defeat in the 2000 election weakened this system of coercion and has given more autonomy and power to Mexico's interest groups.

In the past, most groups influenced public officials in the PRI by either joining the party or seeking patron-client relationships. This tended to keep issues small and local, where level access to officials and the ability to effectively address issues came more easily. The long-running monopoly on political power tended to diminish the effectiveness (as well as the size) of extra-party interest groups; the PRI rejected ideas that did not advance the interests of the party, even though they might have benefited the population as a whole. However, the increasing strength of the two other parties (the PAN and PRD) could change this situation.

The national government controls formal socialization through the educational system by prescribing all schools' curricula and touting the achievements of Mexican revolutionaries and of the country itself.

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the PRI's political monopoly, nearly all Mexicans have political experience in some form: Mexico requires its citizens to vote. People participate in politics by supporting a certain party or candidate, seeking to exert influence on matters that directly affect them. Mexico's political culture has exhibited an undercurrent of violence at all levels, where assassinations, kidnappings, and violent protests have served as outlets for political frustration.

## Mexico: Political and Economic Change

- Mexico has enjoyed a long run of stable political leadership due to:
  - Revolutionary pride
  - Presidential term limits
  - Pragmatic approach to politics and solving disputes
- PRI lost in 2000 and 2006 for several reasons:
  - Growth of the middle class
  - Economic crisis of the 1990s
  - Privatization of key industries
  - Advances in communications technology

Mexico has enjoyed a long run of stable political leadership because of a number of factors: Mexicans are proud of their successful revolution for independence, presidential term limits have had a positive effect in bringing in new people and ideas, and Mexicans value a pragmatic approach to politics and to resolving disputes.

The PRI's decades-long rule had provided for smoother transitions between leaders, as well as for a more consistent implementation of government policy. However, the PRI experienced defeat first in 2000 (with Fox's election) and then again in 2006 (with the election of PAN candidate Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa). Several factors led to the PRI's downfall: the growth of the middle class, the economic crises in the 1990s, and the privatization of several key Mexican industries. In addition, technological advances in communications have increased the flow of information to a greater portion of the population, undermining the PRI monopoly on mass media and allowing alternative points of view to receive a wider dissemination.

## Mexico: Public Policy

- Issues that make public policy difficult to implement:
  - PRI's legacy still evident in Mexican politics
  - Rise in influence of other political parties
  - Legislative coalitions of opposition parties
- Important issues to address:
  - Expanded economic growth
  - Global competition
  - U.S. immigration policy
  - Drug trade

The legacy of the PRI's monopoly on government still deeply affects Mexican politics and probably will for some time. The patron-client system has placed many PRI loyalists in the government, and in spite of recent "house cleanings" in the bureaucratic ministries, they still exercise influence at all levels.

Today, the PRI is not the only opposition party: There is also the PRD, whose presidential candidate, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, ran a close campaign against the PAN's Felipe Calderon, resulting in an extremely narrow margin of victory for Calderon (0.58%). The lack of a mandate from the people made Calderon's position of authority all the more tenuous. Legislative coalitions have formed between the PDR and PRI to stop the reforms of President Fox (of the PAN), which have slowed further policy change.

As Mexican politicians adjust to the power vacuum created by the fall of the PRI, they will have to see past the exhilaration of newly found political freedom and effectively deal with important issues such as economic growth (with the widening gap between rich and poor), global competition, U.S. immigration policy, and the drug trade that continues to plague the nation.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did Mexico's period of nation building influence political movements like the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI)?
2. How do the powers of the presidency reflect Mexico's history as a colony of the Spanish Empire? How does the president maintain control of his administration?
3. How did the PRI's political monopoly from 1921 to 2000 shape relations between the executive and legislative branches? How has its fall from power changed the ways in which the legislature operates?

1. During the nation-building period, many populist movements agitated for popular reforms, such as land redistribution and breaking down old power structures. The PRI swept into power by promoting similar ideals, including Mexican sovereignty, land reform, and a reduction of the power of the Catholic Church.
2. For about 300 years, Spain ruled Mexico as a colony through a powerful central government. This tradition extended through Mexico's independence and nation-building period as it incorporated the concept of a strong leader. Culturally (if not constitutionally), Mexico's government centers around the power of the president. The president builds his administration through the power of appointment and patronage, creating a vast bureaucracy whose members remain loyal to the people above them.
3. The PRI controlled Mexican politics for nearly 80 years, during which time it controlled all aspects of Mexican politics. Consequently, the legislature functioned as little more than a "rubber stamp" for PRI policies. The courts as well rarely challenged PRI actions. After the 2000 elections, the legislature began to exercise powers it had only seldom used before. Coalitions formed among non-ruling political parties, and these in turn blocked many reforms instituted by President Vicente Fox—something that almost never occurred while the PRI was in power.

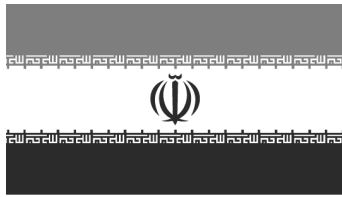
## Discussion Questions

4. What are some reasons why it's been difficult to implement public-policy changes in Mexico?
5. What are some pressing issues facing Mexico's government today?

4. The legacy of the PRI's monopoly still deeply affects in Mexican politics. The patron-client system has placed many PRI loyalists in the government, and in spite of "house cleanings" in the bureaucratic ministries, they still exercise influence at all levels. In addition to the PAN (whose candidate Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000), the PRI's fall from power has also strengthened another political party, the PRD. Felipe Calderon of the PRD won in 2006 by only the narrowest of margins (0.58%) against PAN candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador; the lack of a popular mandate made Calderon's position of authority all the more tenuous. Legislative coalitions have formed between the PDR and PRI to stop the reforms of President Fox; his seeming ineffectiveness in changing policy consequently led to a drop in his popularity.
5. Issues include the continuing expansion of the economy (along with the widening gap between rich and poor), competition in a global marketplace, U.S.-Mexican immigration policy, and the drug trade.



# Iran



## Iran: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power

- Iran differs from most Middle Eastern Muslim states:
  - Iran's culture is Persian, not Arab
  - Iranians speak Farsi, not Arabic
  - Vast majority is Shi'a, not Sunni
- Leadership highly centralized, but other groups hold power and authority:
  - *Bonyads*—religious charitable organizations
  - The military
  - *Baazaris*—the merchant class

Today, to describe Iran's politics as paradoxical seems an understatement to Western observers. Beginning with the description of its form of government—a constitutional theocratic republic—Iran appears a bundle of contradictions.

Iran possesses a magnificent history going back thousands of years. It is one of the only nation-states in the Middle East that wasn't created by colonial powers, though it was under colonial influence for a time. Iran differs from its Middle Eastern neighbors in other important ways: its culture is Persian, not Arab; its citizens speak Farsi, not Arabic; and its people practice Shi'a Islam (the minority sect in all other Muslim countries but Iraq), not Sunni Islam. Aspects of Iran's past also strongly influence the present, including thousands of years of successful Persian authoritarianism as well as the Iranian Shi'a's view of themselves as a persecuted minority.

The Iranian regime, like its Persian predecessor, is tightly controlled by the highest-ranking authority (in modern Iran, this is the Supreme Leader and Guardian Council). However, many other institutions hold measures of power and authority, including the *bonyads*, religious charitable organizations that operate vast financial enterprises and employ nearly a half-million people to provide services to millions of the poor. Tax exempt, they keep most of their internal operations and finances out of public view. The military, originally considered a potential enemy of the Ayatollah Khomeini (the first Supreme Leader), operates separately from and parallel to the Revolutionary Guards and played a central role in defending Iran during its war with Iraq. Nonetheless, agents of the Supreme Leader closely monitor the military's actions. The merchant class, or *bazaaris*, partner with state-run industries and the *bonyads* (when needed) to protect their economic power; some deal profitably on the black market as well.

## Iran: Sovereignty, Authority, and Power (continued)

- Other influential groups:
  - Educated middle class—small, but potentially powerful
  - Urban and rural poor—conservative and religious; majority of the population
- Political authority comes from Islamic doctrine and law, religious leaders, and institutional representation
- Power comes from the government, *bonyads*, and violence



Tehran, the capital of Iran

Educated middle-class Iranians—currently the wild card in Iranian sociopolitical affairs—make up another group with great potential to affect the power structure. While they possess the resources to exercise important influence, they have recently begun to withdraw from political activity, as indicated by declining voting rates in the past two elections.

The power of the urban and rural poor (the vast majority of the population) stems from their sheer numbers and their support of religious leaders. They proved instrumental to the election of conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, who seemed to meet their call for a leader who adhered to religious values and would bring about true economic reform. This group, which the *bonyads* heavily supported with welfare and jobs, also helps fill the Revolutionary Guards and the paramilitary group known as the *basijis*.

Political authority emanates from a number of sources: Islamic doctrine and law (the Sharia), religious leaders, and representation by the different institutions. Power lies in the government, the *bonyads*, and in the threat or use of violence, as demonstrated by the military purges of the 1980s, assassinations of highly placed religious figures, and the constant monitoring and occasional harassment of the general population. Ultimately, however, all authority and power lie under the control of the Supreme Leader and his Guardian Council, who have extraordinary say over the workings of Iran's government.

# Iran: Political Institutions

On the surface Iran's governmental structure looks familiar:

## **Legislative branch (*Majlis*):**

- Unicameral house
- Considers budgets
- Passes laws (with Guardian Council's approval)

## **Executive branch:**

- President (head of state)
- Cabinet
- Local officials
- Heads of state businesses

## **Judicial branch:**

- Supreme Court
- Lower courts
- All judges are clerics

At first glance, Iran's governmental structure seems to fit into compartments, much like any other country's. However, a theocracy overlays a secular government, with much crossover, dual responsibility, and what sometimes looks like arbitrary exercises of power throughout the system.

The executive branch comprises the president, and a cabinet, and (to a lesser degree) local officials and heads of government-owned businesses. The president publicly represents the state and implements government policies and programs throughout the country. Presidential elections occur every four years by popular vote, and a president can serve no more than two consecutive terms.

The *Majlis* (the Iranian parliament) is a unicameral legislature whose members are elected every four years by majorities in their districts. Its responsibilities include considering budgets and appropriations proposed by the president, passing laws, and casting votes of no confidence against cabinet members. The Guardian Council must approve all bills passed by the *Majlis* before they become law.

The judicial branch includes the Supreme Court and the four-member High Council of the Judiciary. They have overlapping responsibilities, and together they supervise the enforcement of all laws. The lower courts include the Special Clerical Court (which tries crimes allegedly committed by clerics) and the Islamic Revolutionary Court (which handles cases of treason and other high crimes). Religious clerics make up the majority of judges, and most courts have an appeals process.

## Iran: Political Institutions (continued)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Supreme Leader:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commander-in-chief</li> <li>• Power to dismiss president</li> <li>• Nominates and approves judges and prosecutors</li> <li>• Appoints half of Guardian Council</li> <li>• Chooses heads of all media outlets</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Guardian Council:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half appointed by Supreme Leader</li> <li>• Approves or vetoes <i>Majlis</i> legislation</li> <li>• Approves all candidates for election</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Expediency Council:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent members appointed by Supreme Leader</li> <li>• Resolves disputes between <i>Majlis</i> and Guardian Council</li> <li>• Meets in secret</li> <li>• Initiates legislation</li> </ul>

The Iranian government also contains a theocratic component composed of the Supreme Leader, the Guardian Council, and the Expediency Council; this component practices a blend of Islamic and secular law.

The Supreme Leader, appointed for life by a body of Islamic scholars, embodies the country's highest political and religious authority. His powers extend deeply into the secular government: he serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, has the power to dismiss the president, and nominates and approves judges and prosecutors. Clearly, the Supreme Leader has extensive executive powers, but his powers of appointment also give him broad influence over policy. He can appoint half of the Guardian Council, the imams at principle mosques, the Minister of Justice, and the heads of all the media outlets. This amount of executive power, without any "advise and consent" legislative power to balance it, allows the Supreme Leader to shape policy through the appointment process.

The 12-member Guardian Council consists of six clerics chosen by the Supreme Leader and six jurists selected by the *Majlis*; council members serve six-year terms. The council approves or vetoes *Majlis* legislation and approves candidates for all elective offices.

The Expediency Council consists of over 40 members who represent all the government factions and include the heads of the three branches of government and clerical members of the Guardian Council. The council resolves conflicts between the *Majlis* and the Guardian Council. It meets in secret and can also initiate legislation.

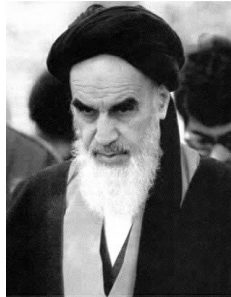
## Iran: Political Institutions (continued)

- Elections:
  - *Majlis* and president elected every four years
  - Guardian Council must approve all candidates
- Political parties:
  - Most are small and limited to local issues
  - National organizations for political figures only outwardly resemble parties

Elections are held every four years for members of the *Majlis*. Presidential elections are also held every four years (one year after *Majlis* elections). Though many try to run for president, only those few candidates acceptable to the Guardian Council may appear on the ballot. In considering qualifications such as the candidates' loyalty to the central philosophy of the Iranian Republic and their ability to win, the Guardian Council usually disqualifies over one-third of potential office-seekers.

The Iranian government only legalized political parties in 1998. Most are very small and represent local interests and popular local leaders. Most national political parties coalesce around the personality of a national leader rather than around a political philosophy (as in the West). Major leaders get their support from official organizations that outwardly appear to represent labor, concerns for civic virtue, and religious organizations, but in reality represent the candidate.

## Iran: Citizens, Society, and the State



Ayatollah Khomeini, who  
established the “Guardianship  
of the Jurist”

- “Guardianship of the Jurist” states that Islamic clergy should be involved in governing the country
- The state controls political expression and strongly discourages dissent
- Government control of media (including Internet access) and educational system

The premise of the Republic of Iran is embedded in the philosophical decree established by the Ayatollah Khomeini at the start of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The “Guardianship of the Jurist” states that “Islamic jurists should be the real rulers, while sultans act as their subordinates.” This decree established Iran as a theocracy; all aspects of society and the state fall under theocratic control.

Iran’s constitution mandates regularly scheduled elections and requires all citizens to vote, although participation has declined since 2000. Much of the population stays politically involved, but the government tightly controls political expression and strongly discourages dissent. In addition to purging any political candidate who doesn’t meet their standards, the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council swiftly address any deviance from proper political behavior. During elections, members of the Revolutionary Guard and the *basijis* (roving paramilitary gangs of young men) enforce the will of the of the Supreme Leader as well as moral codes of dress and propriety (demonstrating, as mentioned earlier, violence or the threat of violence as a source of power in Iran).

Government control extends to the media as well: it issues permits and licenses to all media outlets and can revoke these anytime it considers news reporting to be below state standards. Prior to the 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, blogging and Internet sources offered some unfiltered information, but most Iranian ISPs deny access to any political sites, foreign or domestic. In addition, after 1979 Islamic Revolution the government purged and revamped the educational system and essentially outlawed or severely curtailed the activities of most social and professional organizations.

## Iran: Citizens, Society, and the State (continued)

- Cleavages exist on a number of levels:
  - Political: some high-ranking clerics disagree with religious control of government
  - Religious: 90% Shi'a and 10% Sunni
  - Ethnic: Kurds and Azeris seek independence
  - Social: rich vs. poor



Iran has a number of political cleavages in some surprising places, starting at the top. Not all high-ranking clerics agree with Khomeini's philosophy of the "Guardianship of the Jurist," and many advocate keeping religion out of politics and governance. Those in power, however, do agree with Khomeini's decree. Though philosophically opposed, both of these groups unite when confronted by any secular threat.

The philosophical disagreement between the high-level clerics has been effectively contained and for the most part kept out of sight. However, a more apparent and historical cleavage exists between the Shi'a (nearly 90% of the population) and the Sunni (almost 10%). The Sunnis have no representation in any of the official channels and cannot operate mosques in Tehran, the capital city.

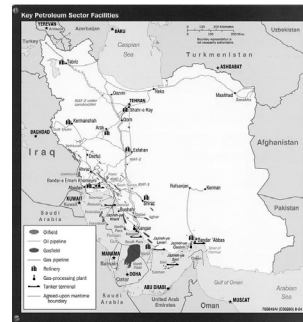
Ethnic cleavages also exist, most notably along the country's borders. The Kurds (mostly Sunni) constitute Iran's third-largest ethnic group. Their native homeland covers much of northwestern Iran. These Kurds, along with those in Iraq and Turkey, have pushed for years to form their own state from territory within Iran's borders. The Azeris, another minority ethnic group, have sought independence from Iran in order to unite with Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic.

By far the biggest and most volatile cleavages occur between social classes. Tehran itself serves as a microcosm of the problem: In the northern foothills of the city live the upper class, members of the clergy, directors of the *bonyads*, and ministers of the various bureaucratic departments. In the flat, dry, southern part of the city live the urban poor and recent migrants from the countryside who have come seeking work. The middle- and upper-class urbanites tend to be better educated and more secular. The poor tend to be more conservative, less educated, and more religiously devout. Sheer proximity to one another could cause the cleavages to deepen as the gap between their economic conditions widens.



## Iran: Political and Economic Change

- Though also a democracy, Iran's theocrats hold the power
- Political change has occurred historically through conquest and force, but more recently via coups and international pressures
- Discovery of oil in 1908 brought about huge economic changes and gave Iran political influence
- Thus far, globalization and international sanctions have not effected much economic change



Petroleum reserves and production in Iran

As mentioned at the beginning of this unit, Iran's government functions along two tracks: one theocratic, the other democratic. In reality, however, all the power lies in its theocratic elements. Reasonably fair and open popular elections occur on a regular basis, but because all candidates must meet the approval of the ruling elite elections haven't brought about much policy change.

During the Persian dynastic period, change occurred in Iran through conquest and force. In modern times, change has come via coups and pressure from larger, more powerful international players—notably the British, Russians, and Americans. The election of Ahmadinejad took many by surprise; they believed that the Iranian populace wanted to continue the reforms they'd approved in the 1997 election. Instead, the more reform-minded (the middle class in particular) stayed away from the polls in 2005, giving the election to the candidate who appealed most to the urban poor.

Economic change has proven more fluid and frequent, but still unpredictable due to many political factors. In the 20th century, global forces brought about economic change: the discovery of oil in 1908 set the country on a far more politically influential course for the rest of the century and into the next. Further economic change may come in a different form or not at all. The pressures of globalization can be felt everywhere, but thus far Iran has resisted the reforms and adjustments that globalization requires. Economic sanctions have not effected much policy change, and may provide no incentive at all for change if the government becomes more intransigent regarding Western demands and dependent on its own means of production. Moreover, powerful clerics and the directors of the *bonyads* would rather not compete financially with more efficient global enterprises; neither would they yield much political power if the middle class continues its trend of less participation in the political process.

## Iran: Public Policy

- Most political discussion focuses on the poor relationship between Iran and the U.S.
- Policy initiatives can come from a variety of sources
- Issues under consideration:
  - Attracting more foreign investment
  - Decentralizing control over economic activity and development
  - Further economic reform
  - Pressure by young people to loosen theocratic rule
  - The potential discontent of the urban poor

Most of the discussion about Iran in the United States gets couched in terms of the two countries' ideological differences. Iran gets portrayed as a monolithic force out to squash individualism and spread its brand of religion. Both sides have made grandstanding and name-calling the norm in place of any political analysis. Though Iran clearly does want to promote a Shi'ite Islamic revolution throughout the Middle East and to develop its nuclear technology, to truly understand the country one must look deeply into the internal workings of policymaking, the issues under consideration, and how they affect (and get affected by) external forces.

While the government structure of Iran appears like pure top-down management, policy initiatives can arise from many sources. The unelected clerical elite, the president, the members of the *Majlis*, and the popular leaders of the poor can all propose policies. Still in its early stages, Iran's theocratic government—though giving the impression of inflexibility—may not be able to ward off the forces of change. It will have to confront several pressing issues, including:

- Attracting more foreign investment
- Decentralization of state control over economic activity in order to allow market forces a greater role
- Further economic reform for the discontented poor
- Growing pressure from the small but significant number of young people who've absorbed Western influences to loosen theocratic rule
- Discontent among the young urban poor, who have abandoned religious devotion and conservatism in favor of other means of achieving their goals

## Discussion Questions

1. Though all power and authority appear to flow from the Supreme Leader, what other groups also have power and authority in Iran?
2. What are the general responsibilities of each of the three branches of the Iranian government? How does theocratic dominance minimize the exercise of any real political power by any of the branches?

### 1. Groups that hold power:

- The *bonyads*: religious charitable organizations that operate vast financial enterprises and employ nearly 500,000 people to provide services to millions of the poor.
- The military, which played a central role in defending Iran in the war with Iraq and has since been integrated with the Revolutionary Guard.
- The *bazaaris*, or merchant class, who partner with state-run industries and the *bonyads* and also deal in black-market enterprises.
- The educated middle class, which has the resources to be influential but has recently begun to withdrawn from political activity.
- The urban and rural poor, whose power comes from their sheer numbers and their support of religious leaders.

2. The executive branch comprises the president, cabinet, local leaders, and the heads of state-owned industries; as its head, the president publicly represents the country and implements policies and programs. The legislative branch (the *Majlis*) is a unicameral legislature responsible for budgets and appropriations proposed by the president. The *Majlis* also passes bills (with approval of the Guardian Council). The judicial branch is composed of the Supreme Court and lower courts, most of whose decisions can be appealed. The Supreme Leader (or his associates) appoints most government positions. He also heads (and appoints half of) a committee through which all legislation must pass. Clerics hold almost every judgeship, and the Supreme Leader names all high-court justices.

## Discussion Questions

3. Though the Iranian population is very politically active, how does the government control political expression and discourage political dissent?
4. What political, religious, and ethnic cleavages exist in Iran?

3. Much of the population stays politically involved, but the government tightly controls political expression and strongly discourages dissent. In addition to purging any political candidate who doesn't meet their standards, the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council swiftly address any deviance from proper political behavior. During elections, members of the Revolutionary Guard and the *basijis* (roving paramilitary gangs of young men) enforce the will of the of the Supreme Leader and moral codes of dress and propriety (using violence if necessary). Moreover, the government maintains strict control of the media: it issues permits and licenses to all media outlets and can revoke these anytime it considers news reporting to be below state standards. Prior to 2005, Internet sources offered some unfiltered information, but most Iranian ISPs deny access to any political sites, foreign or domestic.
4. Cleavages exist in Iran between:
  - High-ranking clerics over the role that religion should play in politics
  - Members of the Shi'a (90% of the population) and Sunni (about 10%) sects of Islam
  - The Iranian government and the ethnic minorities of Kurds and Azeris who seek autonomy and independence

## Discussion Questions: Comparing Governments

1. How have the the political histories of the United Kingdom and Nigeria shaped their citizens' belief in the legitimacy of their respective governments?

1. The United Kingdom's political history has evolved over many centuries, during which major political and social developments tended to unfold sequentially rather than all at once. The British people played a major part in the development of their democracy through participation at local and national levels. The increasing power and importance of the House of Commons brought British citizens in closer contact with their government. As Britain prospered, citizens started to trust their political institutions' ability to effectively deal with problems and conflict. Coupled with a firm belief in government's accountability to the people, the British have lent their political system a strong sense of legitimacy. In contrast, the peoples of Nigeria, as subjects of the British from the late 19th century until 1960, never acquired any experience with democracy or self-government. In addition, the British mercantile model based Nigerian economic policy on exporting raw materials and cash crops and importing finished (and therefore more expensive) goods, leaving no industrial base. Domineering colonial rule only solidified ethnic cleavages in the three regions, forging a sense of "us vs. them" and establishing that those in power lived under a different set of rules than the rest of the population. Nigerians, therefore, had no experience, opportunities, or time to develop an effective government of their own. Rule via military coups and authoritarian regimes filled the vacuum as legitimate substitutes for impotent and ineffective government.

## Discussion Questions: Comparing Governments

2. China has a system of one-party rule, and for most of the 20th century Mexico effectively did as well. What were some costs to these countries of having only one party in power for such a long time?
3. How do the social cleavages in China and Nigeria differ? What are some of the historical reasons for these differences?

2. Generally, in a one-party state the government buries new ideas before they can develop, and the leadership tends to focus first on its own needs rather than on those of the citizenry. Discussing diverse political views helps to generate solutions to issues and problems. For Mexico as well as China, a greater range of ideas coming from diverse segments of the population might have prevented some of the excesses and mistakes made during one-party rule. It also would have forced the parties to spend their energies addressing issues instead of devising ways to remain in power.
3. China's society is more culturally and ethnically homogeneous than Nigeria's, owing to its relative isolation from other cultures between the 13th and 19th centuries. This, along with an attendant sense of cultural superiority, has led most Chinese to have strong nationalist feelings. (Major exceptions include the region of Tibet, in which serious cultural and religious differences do exist.) China's social cleavages on the whole revolve around language differences (mostly based on dialect), urban vs. rural populations, and generational experiences under communist rule. As a whole, Nigeria has a much younger population than does China. Prior to the colonial era, each major ethnic group in the region had a distinct language, set of customs, culture, history, etc. These ethnic groups didn't come together to form a country through natural means, but instead were arbitrarily thrown together by the British colonial government.

## Discussion Questions: Comparing Governments

4. Compare and contrast the dual governmental structures of China and Iran.
5. What are some similarities and differences between the political patronage systems of Mexico and Russia?

4. China and Iran both ostensibly exist as democratic republics. The parallel structure of China's government insures that the Chinese Communist Party maintains tight supervision and control of its actions. Each of the government's constituent parts has a CCP counterpart, and quite often the same person heads both the government and CCP bodies (for instance, the president also serves as leader of the CCP). This arrangement makes clear that the CCP is firmly in control. Iran's Islamic theocracy, as personified by the Supreme Leader and the Guardian Council, exerts its influence over the democratic political structure and its various parts: the Supreme Leader can remove the president and appoint the directors of the state-run media, the *bonyads*, and half of the Guardian Council, which itself decides whether to approve legislation passed by the *Majlis*, as well as all presidential candidates. The Supreme Leader also determines the "interests of Islam," which under the "Guardianship of the Jurist" gives him near-total authority based on Islamic law.
5. Both countries have deeply ingrained patronage systems in which success (i.e., holding and advancing through positions of influence) depends heavily on loyalty and obedience to one's patron. In Mexico, the president sits atop the patronage pyramid: he staffs his administration with hundreds of his own appointees to whom he functions as the patron, and these appointees in turn fill their own agencies with people loyal to them. During the Soviet era, Russia's system worked similarly in that the government's highest policymaking body kept lists of candidates suitable for political appointment. However, patronage has become much more decentralized since the fall of the Soviet Union: the lack of a definitive understanding of federal supremacy has allowed local politicians to essentially set up their own private autocratic "fiefdoms." As members of the federal legislature, these politicians nonetheless tend to concentrate more on local (rather than national) concerns. The federal government passed laws in 2000 designed to reduce the power of local patronage and give more control to the president's political appointees.