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Theories and methods

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CHAPTER 1

The relevance of comparative politics

Bo Rothstein

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

The issue of the relevance of political science in general, and then of course also the sub-discipline of comparative politics, has recently received increased attention both in the public debate as well as within the discipline itself. This chapter considers what comparative politics could be relevant for, such as informing the public debate and giving policy advice. A central argument is that comparative politics has a huge but sometimes underdeveloped potential for being relevant for various aspects of human well-being. Empirical research shows that the manner in which a country's political institutions are designed and the quality of the operations of these institutions have a strong impact on measures of population health as well as subjective well-being (aka 'happiness') and general social trust. One result is that democratization without increased state capacity and control of corruption is not likely to deliver increased human well-being.

Introduction: What should comparative politics be relevant for?

The issue of the relevance of political science in general, and then of course also the sub-discipline of comparative politics, has recently received increased attention both in the public debate as well as within the discipline itself (Stoker *et al.* 2015). To answer a question like 'is comparative politics relevant?' certainly demands that a more basic issue is solved, namely for what, whom, or when should this knowledge be relevant? Many different answers could be given to this question.

First, comparative politics could be relevant for informing the elite: giving advice to parties on how to win election campaigns, how politicians should best act so as to get enough support for their policies in legislative assemblies, how they should interact with strong interest groups such as business organizations and labour unions and how to best handle factions within their party, to name a few. In this approach to the issue of relevance, comparative political scientists act as consultants, advisors, or even so-called 'grey eminences' to politicians. This is also where many of those with a degree in political science end up, for example as ministerial advisors or policy consultants, professions which have increased considerably in almost all OECD countries (OECD 2011). Plato already ventured into this area some 2,300 years ago with his three famous journeys to Sicily, where he was asked to educate the new King of Syracuse in the noble art of governing. The historical record shows that Plato came to deeply regret his role as teacher to the king. His advice fell on deaf ears and the king became a ruthless tyrant, ruining his country (Lilla 2001).

A well-known formulation in relation to public policy issues is that the researcher's task is to 'speak truth to power' (Wildavsky 1987). The problem is of course that 'power' may not be that interested, especially if what is spoken comes into conflict with deeply held ideological convictions or specific interests. The extent to which comparative politics is relevant in this respect also depends, of course, on how useful the knowledge is for the policy in question. One problem is that most public policies are connected to a specific ideological and/or political orientation, and many argue that science should be about finding out what is the truth and not about supporting any specific ideology or group interest.

A second idea for making comparative political science more relevant is based not on informing the political elite, but the general public. This is the comparative political scientist as the public intellectual writing op-ed articles, giving public lectures, and commenting upon current political affairs in the media. The number of political events that deserve comments are in principle endless. Why does country X have higher economic growth? Why is gender equality better in some countries than others? Why does nation Z have such a huge welfare state? Here, the level of relevance would be determined by the question 'can political scientists offer something more, deeper, or qualitatively different than what we get from the astute political journalist or pundit and that is also intelligible for the general public?' One argument for this approach is that everything else being equal, it cannot be a disadvantage to the quality of debate about public policies in a democracy if people with more knowledge chose to participate. An often heard argument against the 'public intellectual' approach is that the opinions and comments may not always have a good foundation in verified research results.

Politics is a partisan game and that is likely to be one reason why many researchers in comparative politics choose to stay away both from 'speaking truth to power' and from acting as 'public intellectuals'. A fear of being seen as 'normative' seems to hinder many from being engaged in issues that many citizens care deeply about (see Box 1.1., Gerring 2015; Stoker *et al.* 2015). Another problem is, of course, what is known as 'paternalism'. Should the choice of policies in a democracy not be left to the citizens? What rights have the academic elite to tell ordinary people what is best for them? If the experts know which policies are 'best', we could do away with the democratic process. And should we not suspect that behind a shield of objective scientific jargon rests the special interests of the elite?

A way out of this paternalism problem has been suggested by the economist-philosopher and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen. His theory of justice, known as the 'capability theory of justice' or 'capability approach', rests on the idea that a just society provides people with

BOX 1.1. ZOOM-IN Normative theory and empirical research in comparative politics

Institutionally, political philosophy (aka 'political theory') is usually kept apart from empirical research in political science. From a policy and relevance perspective this is unfortunate, since without a foundation in normative theory, results from empirical research may be used in ways that stand in sharp conflict with respect for human rights. A strand of literature has pointed to the problem with 'illiberal democracy', implying that majorities may launch policies that are detrimental to civil liberties (Zakaria 2003; King 1999). It is also the case that political philosophers sometime suggest policies for increased social justice which empirical research have shown are impossible to implement (Rothstein 2017).

'effective opportunities to undertake actions and activities that they have reason to value, and be the person that they have reason to want to be' (Robeyns 2011, 2.2; Sen 2010). The terminology implies that the problem of justice is not to equalize economic resources or social status as such, but to ensure all individuals a set of *basic resources* that will equalize their chances to reach their full potential as humans. For this, economic measures like gross national income per capita will not work because (a) economic resources can be very unevenly divided, and (b) economic resources does not always translate into actual capabilities. For example, according to the most recent statistics from the UNDP, in economic terms South Africa is 60 per cent richer than the Philippines but has a life expectancy ten years lower.

Standards for what should be seen as basic resources that increase capabilities include access to high quality health care and education, basic food and shelter, equality in civil and political rights, equal protection under the law, basic social services and social insurance systems that support people who for various reasons cannot generate enough resources from their own work, support for persons with disabilities, etc. The set of such capabilities enhancing goods and services can of course vary, but it is important to realize that equality, as a politically viable concept, has to be about specified things. There is simply no way we, by political means, can equalize the ability to be a skilled musician, to be creative, to be loved, to be an outstanding researcher, a good parent, or a first rate ballet dancer. What it *is* possible to do by political means is to increase the possibility for those who happen to have ambitions in these (and many other) fields to realize their talents even if they have not entered this world with the necessary economic endowments to do this. This can be done by giving people access to a certain bundle of goods and services that are likely to enhance their capabilities of reaching their full potential as human beings. In practice, the capabilities approach to justice has been translated to various measures of human well-being, of which many (but not all) are measures of population health. Simply put, a person that dies as an infant due, for example, to lack of access to sanitation and safe water has no possibility of fulfilling whatever potential he or she had. The same goes for a person that dies prematurely due to lack of health care, or who never learned to read and write due to lack of education, or who as a child did not develop her cognitive capacities due to malnutrition. In addition to the 'hard' objective measures from population health, there is now an abundance of interesting, so-called subjective measures. These include perceptions of the level of corruption in one's country, perceptions of social trust, and if people report satisfaction with their lives (aka 'happiness'). Various research and policy institutions have also produced measures for ranking countries, concerning things like: respect for human and civil rights, the rule of law, gender equality, innovativeness, and competitiveness, to name a few. One answer to the question 'for what is comparative politics relevant?' can thus be *its potential for increasing human well-being.*

KEY POINTS

- A discussion of the potential relevance of a discipline such as comparative politics has to start by asking the question 'relevant for what?'.
- Comparative politics can be relevant for informing the public debate and also for giving advice to politicians and government agencies about public policies.
- Comparative politics also has a potential for serving more general goals like increased social justice and improved human well-being.

Political institutions and human well-being

It was long taken for granted that the well-being of the population in a country rested on non-political factors such as natural resources, technological and medical inventions, the structural situation of the social classes, or deeply held cultural norms, including religion. The political institutions were seen merely as a superficial reflection or as the 'superstructure' of underlying structural forces and thus had no or very little impact on the overall prosperity or well-being of a country. This changed in economics, sociology, and political science during the 1990s with what has been termed 'the institutional turn'. The economic historian (and Nobel Laureate) Douglass C. North (1990) was amongst the first to point at the importance of institutions, understood as 'the rules of the game' for explaining why some countries were much more prosperous than others. This became known as 'the new institutionalism' (March and Olsen 1989) and, in comparative politics, as 'historical institutionalism' (Steinmo *et al.* 1992). Comparing societies with almost identical structural conditions revealed that they could be dramatically different in their ability to produce human well-being and the scholars in the various institutional approaches could empirically show that what explained the differences was the variation in political, legal, and administrative institutions.

The institutional turn and comparative politics

The implication of this 'institutional turn' for the relevance of comparative politics can hardly be overstated. An example is the issue of access to safe water.

The magnitude of the problem can be illustrated by reports from the World Health Organisation (WHO), which in 2006 estimated that 1.2 billion people lacked access to enough clean water and that 2.6 billion people lacked adequate sanitation. Figures further reveal that 80 per cent of all diseases in developing countries are waterborne, and that contaminated water causes the death of 2.8 million children every year. A careful estimate by the WHO is that 12,000 people, two thirds of them children, die every day from water and sanitation related diseases (UNDP 2006; Transparency International 2008).

What makes this enormous problem relevant from a comparative politics perspective is that a growing number of experts in the area argue that the problem is not, as was previously assumed, an issue of lack of technical solutions. The acute lack of clean water that affects a large amount of people in developing countries is not due to a lack of technical solutions, such as pumps, reservoirs, or sewers; nor is the problem caused by limited access to natural clean water. Instead, the main problem seems to lie within the judicial and administrative institutions—in other words, in a dysfunctional state apparatus. Developing countries more often than not possess the technical devices needed to provide the population with clean water; the problem is that these technical installations rarely fulfil their functions due to lack of supervision, incompetence, and corruption in the public sector. In many cases, the corruption in the procurement process results in extremely low-quality infrastructure being put in place (Rothstein 2011, ch. 1).

The implication is that for comparative politics to be policy relevant, it is not necessary to side with a specific political ideology or special interest group. The capability approach to social justice is, of course, a normative theory, but based on the generally held idea that most people would prefer to live in a country where few newborns die, most children survive their fifth birthday, almost all ten year olds can read, people have access to safe water, people live a long and reasonably healthy life, child deprivation is low, few women die when giving birth, the percentage of people living in severe poverty is low, and many report reasonable satisfaction with their lives. More than anything else, an abundance of empirical research shows that the ability to become a 'successful society' in this sense is decided by the quality of the political institutions (including the administrative and legal institutions which are inherently political). Simply put, some societies are more successful than others in achieving broad-based human well-being for their populations (Hall and Lamont 2009), and empirically this turns out to, for the most part, be caused by what can be termed their quality of government (Rothstein 2011). The implication is that the question of whether comparative political science can be relevant becomes different from the consultant/advisor and the public intellectual approaches mentioned above. Instead, it becomes a question of the extent to which the discipline can contribute to increased human well-being by (a) specifying which political institutions are most likely to increase human well-being and (b) how such institutions can come about.

Institutions rule—but which?

Not least in research into developing countries there is now almost a consensus about the importance of institutions and the quality of government in terms of impact on development and human well-being (Rodrik *et al.* 2004; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). However, there is little consensus on which particular political institutions matter, how they matter, how they can be created where they are now absent, or how they can be improved if dysfunctional (Andrews 2013; Fukuyama 2014). In addition, as North kept reminding us, the importance of the informal institutions in society should not be overlooked and the importance of formal institutions has often been exaggerated (North 2010). A case in point is Uganda, which, after numerous interventions by the World Bank and many bi-lateral donors, has established an institutional framework that according to one leading donor organization was 'largely satisfactory in terms of anti-corruption measures' (SIDA 2006). In fact, Uganda's formal institutions of anti-corruption regulation score 99 out of a 100 points in the think tank Global Integrity's index. Thus, while the formal institutions are almost perfect, the informal underbelly is a very different matter. After almost a decade of impressive legislation and a government that rhetorically assured non-tolerance towards corruption, the problem of corruption remains rampant. Uganda ranks as 142 out of 175 countries on Transparency Internationals' Corruption Perceptions Index. One example of an important informal institution that has been shown to have a strong impact on human well-being is the degree of social trust. If people in a society perceive that 'most other people can be trusted', this has a positive impact on overall prosperity and most measures of human well-being (Uslaner 2002). If we knew how to increase the informal institution of social trust within in a society, much would be gained. The issue of which institutions is not confined to the division between formal and informal. There is also a large discussion about whether the institutions that regulate the *access* to power are more important than the institutions that regulate the *exercise* of power. In a democracy, the former are, for example, party and electoral systems and the latter are the rule of law and the capacity of the public administration in general (Holmberg and Rothstein 2012; Fukuyama 2014). These issues will be addressed below.

KEY POINTS

- The 'institutional turn' in the social sciences implies a shift away from a focus on structural variables for explaining why some societies are more successful than others in providing human well-being.
- This 'institutional turn' implies an increased relevance for comparative politics since the creation, design, and operations of political institutions are among the central objects of study.
- Institutions, broadly understood as 'the rules of the game', can be both formal and informal. Moreover, they can be located at the 'input side' or at the 'output side' of the political system. This variation opens up an interesting analysis of which institutions are most important for increasing human well-being.

Table 1.1 Examples of basic institutional variation among representative democracies

Type of institution	*Institutional variations*
Electoral system	Proportional vs majoritarian
Legislative assembly	Unicameral vs bicameral
Government structure	Unitarian vs federalist
Central executive	Parliamentarism vs presidentialism
Judicial review	Strong vs weak judicial review
Local governments	Weak vs strong local autonomy
Civil service	Spoils recruitment vs merit-recruitment
Protection of minorities	Strong vs weak protection
Referendums	Regularly used vs not used
Consultation of experts	Routine vs ad hoc

The many faces of democracy

Almost all scholars in comparative politics take for granted that in producing 'the good society', democratic political institutions are to be preferred. Research in democratization has been very high on the comparative politics agenda (Lindberg 2009; Teorell 2010). From a capability theory, one problem is that far from all democracies produce high levels of human well-being. This is not only the case if we compare the OECD countries with democracies in the developing world since there are also huge differences within these groups of countries for most measures of human well-being. One problem is that we tend to speak about democracy as a single political institution, when in fact it is a system that is built on multiple separate institutions. This problem can be illustrated with the following thought experiment: Every representative democracy has to solve a number of issues for which different institutions have been created (or have evolved). For example, the electoral system, the degree of decentralization, the formation of the organizations that are to implement laws and policies, the way expert knowledge is infused into the decision-making process, and so on. Democratic theory does not provide precise answers to how these institutions should be constructed. There is, to take an obvious example, not a clear answer in democratic theory that tells us if a proportional electoral system (giving rise to a multi-party system) is to be preferred or if a first-past-the-post system that usually produces a two-party system would be a better choice. As shown in Table 1.1, at least ten such institutional dimensions can be identified in every representative democracy.

According to the main works in democratic theory, none of the various choices that can be made for the ten institutional dimensions are mutually exclusive. In theory, everything can be combined (even though some combinations are less likely than others). Thus, the result from this thought experiment shows that there are at least 1,024 ways of constructing a representative democracy ($2^{10} = 1{,}024$). Since many of these dimensions are not dichotomous, but to varying extents gradual (more or less strong judicial review, more or less spoils recruitment to the civil service, more or less decentralization to local governments, etc.), the possible variation is in fact much larger than '1,024', if not endless. To be concrete, the Swiss, Danish, Brazilian, South African, and British democracies, to just take five examples, are institutionally configured in very different ways. And while it is true that there is some 'clustering' in these dimensions, there are also surprising differences. For example, the relation between the central civil service and the cabinet in Finland and Sweden are very different from how this relation is institutionalized in neighbouring Denmark and Norway. Australia is the only former British colony that has compulsory voting. Another important dimension is how expert knowledge is handled in the decision-making process. Some democracies have developed established routines in the decision-making process to ensure that expert knowledge is used in both the preparation and implementation of public policies. In other democracies, the use of expert knowledge is more ad hoc. In many policy fields, the demand is not only that decisions about policies are taken in a democratically correct manner, but that especially in areas such as population health, and environmental issues, we also want them to be 'true' or at least in line with the 'best available knowledge'.

Another important institutional variation is the extent of so-called veto points in a democratic system.

The argument is that some combinations in the figure above give rise to many such veto points that can make it difficult for governments to act in a determined and responsible way. If there are many un-coordinated actors (the executive, the courts, the legislative assemblies, the sub-national governments, organized interest groups), the democratic machinery may be unable to produce coherent and effective policies (Tsebelis 2002; Fukuyama 2014).

From the institutionalist-capabilities perspective presented above, we would like to know which institutional configuration of a representative democracy is most likely to produce a high level of human well-being. However, since the number of democratic countries is approximately one hundred, finding a solution to this '1,024' problem is empirically difficult. Moreover, even if there are some interesting results from this research, changing long-established political institutions may still be a Herculean task.

KEY POINTS

- We often think of democracy in terms of an either/or dimension—a country is either a democracy or (more or less) authoritarian. In reality, democracies turn out to have quite dramatic variation in their institutional configurations.
- The manner in which a democratic political system is organized is often linked to its capability for producing 'valued outcomes' such as economic prosperity, political legitimacy, and social justice.
- Knowledge about the link between the design of political institutions and 'valued outcomes' is therefore essential for the relevance of comparative politics.

Democracy and state capacity

As mentioned above, it has generally been taken for granted, both in comparative politics and in the general public debate, that when it comes to human well-being, the nature of institutions that make up the liberal electoral democracy is the most important factor. Research about democratization has been a huge enterprise in the discipline, with numerous studies of how, when, and why countries shift from various forms of authoritarian rule to electoral representative democracies. There has also been a lot to study since the waves of democracy that have swept over the globe have brought representative democracy to places where it seemed inconceivable fifty, thirty, or even ten years ago. Even though the 'Arab Spring' has not delivered much democratization and there are some recent important set-backs in some parts of the world, the fact is that more countries than ever are now, by the most sophisticated measures used, classified as being democratic, and more people than ever live in democracies (Teorell 2010). While there are many reasons to celebrate this democratic success, if judged from the perspective of capability theory, there are also reasons to be disappointed. One example is South Africa, which miraculously managed to end apartheid in 1994 without falling into a full-scale civil war. As Nelson Mandela said in one of his speeches, the introduction of democracy would not only liberate people, but would also greatly improve their social and economic situation (Mandela 1994: 414). Available statistics give a surprisingly bleak picture for this promise. Since 1994, the country has not managed to improve the average time-frame over which children attend school by a single month, economic inequality remains at a world record level, life expectancy is down by almost six years, and the number of women that die in childbirth has more than doubled.[1] Simply put, for many central measures of human well-being, the South African democracy has not delivered many positive results.

Another example has been provided by Amartya Sen, in an article comparing 'quality of life' in China and India. His disappointing conclusion is that on almost all standard measures of human well-being, the communist and autocratic Peoples' Republic of China now clearly outperforms liberal and democratically governed India (Sen 2011). Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the lack of positive effects of democracy on human well-being comes from a recent study on child deprivation by Hallerød *et al.* (2013). They use data measuring seven aspects of child poverty (access to safe water, food, sanitation, shelter, education, health care, and information) from 68 low- and middle-income countries for no less than 2,120,734 cases (children). The results of this large study show that there is no positive effect of democracy on the level of child deprivation for any of the seven indicators. One argument against this is that it is unrealistic to expect high capacity of new democracies. We should only find a positive effect if we take into account the 'stock' of democracy (Gerring *et al.* 2012). This argument turns out to be valid in large-n analysis, but there are numbers of cases where democratic rule has been established for several decades but still score surprisingly low on measures of human well-being. India became a democracy in 1948, as did the southern regions in Italy. Jamaica has been a democracy since the late 1950s, Ghana has been democratic since 1993, and South Africa since 1994. In sum, the picture is this: representative democracy is not a safe cure against severe poverty, child deprivation, high levels of economic inequality, illiteracy, being unhappy or not satisfied with one's life, high infant mortality, short life expectancy, high maternal mortality, lack of access to safe water or sanitation, low school attendance for girls, or low interpersonal trust.

The spectre that is haunting democracy

Why has democratization not resulted in more human well-being? One explanation was given by the noted democratization scholar Larry Diamond in a presentation at *National Endowment for Democracy* in the United States when the organization celebrated its first twenty-five years of operations:

> There is a specter haunting democracy in the world today. It is bad governance—governance that serves only the interests of a narrow ruling elite. Governance that is drenched in corruption, patronage, favoritism, and abuse of power. Governance that is not responding to the massive and long-deferred social agenda of reducing inequality and unemployment and fighting against dehumanizing poverty. Governance that is not delivering broad improvement in people's lives because it is stealing, squandering, or skewing the available resources (Diamond 2007, 19).

The implication of Diamond's argument is that representative democracy is not enough for creating human well-being. Without control of corruption and increased administrative capacity, the life situation of citizens will not improve (see Box 1.2).

BOX 1.2. DEFINITION The conceptual 'scale' problem in comparative politics

Research in corruption has until recently not been very prominent in comparative politics. The exception is what is labelled 'clientelism', which is largely about various forms of vote buying. Most corruption, however, occurs in the implementation of public policies and varies a lot in scale and scope, from a minor sum paid to a police officer to avoid a speeding ticket to gigantic sums paid for arms deals. This variation in scale creates a conceptual problem since we tend to use the same term for these hugely different types of corruption. However, social science is not alone in having this conceptual 'scale' problem. Biologists, for example, use the same term (bird) both for humming birds and condors. The reason is that although there is a huge difference in 'scale', each phenomenon has important things in common.

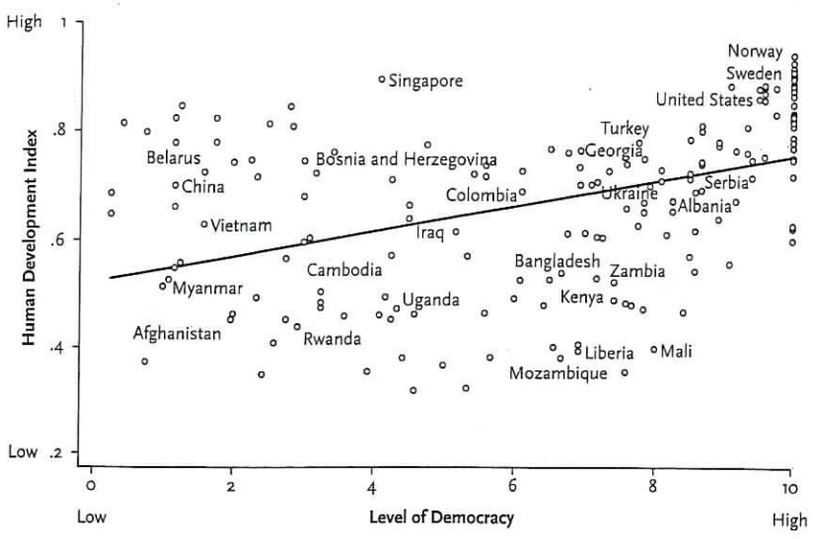
State capacity, quality of government, and human well-being

If we follow Diamond's idea about the importance of what could be termed 'quality of government' and, instead of having degree of democracy as an explanatory variable, turn to measures of a state's administrative capacity, control of corruption, or other measures of 'good governance', the picture of what public institutions can do for human well-being changes dramatically. For example, the study on child deprivation mentioned above finds strong effects of measures of the state capacity and administrative effectiveness when it comes to implementation of policies on four out of seven indicators on child deprivation (lack of safe water, malnutrition, lack of access to health care, and lack of access to information), and also when controlling for GDP per capita and a number of basic individual-level variables (Hallerød *et al.* 2013). A study of how corruption impacts five different measures of population health finds similar strong effects, also when controlling for economic prosperity and democracy (Holmberg and Rothstein 2011). Other studies largely confirm that various measures of state's administrative capacity, quality of government, levels of corruption, and other measures of 'good governance' have strong effects on almost all standard measures of human well-being, including subjective measures of life satisfaction (aka 'happiness') and social trust (Ott 2010; Norris 2012). Recent studies also find that absence of violence in the form of interstate and civil wars is strongly affected by measures of quality of government, more so than by the level of democracy (Fjelde and De Soysa 2009; Norris 2012; Lapuente and Rothstein 2014). As shown in Figures 1.1. and 1.2, there is a huge difference in the correlations between one often-used measure of democracy[2] and a measure of 'bad governance' for the Human Development Index produced by the United Nations Development Program.

As can be seen, the correlation between human well-being and the level of democracy is quite low, while the correlation with 'government effectiveness' is substantial. This result is shown to be repeated for a large set of other measures of human well-being and what should generally count as 'successful societies' (Holmberg and Rothstein 2014; Rothstein and Holmberg 2014).

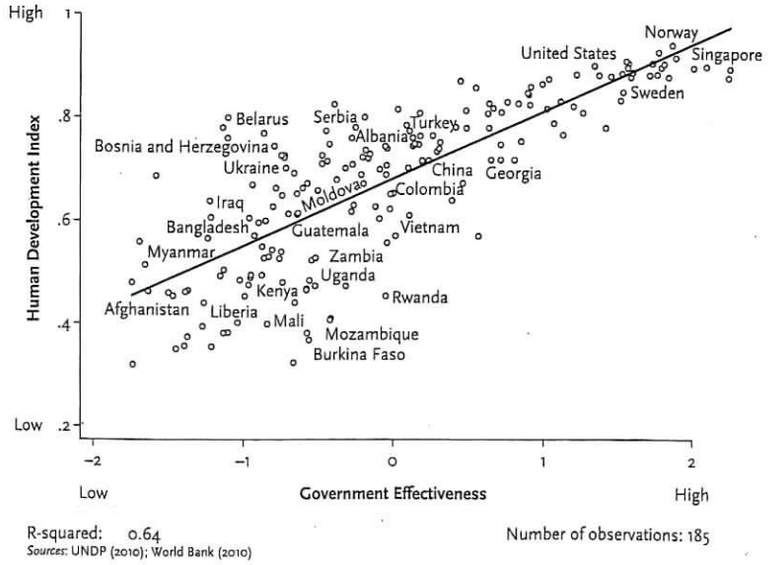
KEY POINTS

- Empirical research indicates that the administrative capacity of the political system in a country is essential for bringing about human well-being.
- Democracy alone seems not to generate human well-being.
- Corruption in the public sector and other forms of low quality of government has a strong negative effect on human well-being.



R-squared: 0.19 Number of observations: 185
Sources: UNDP (2010); Freedom House (2010); Polity (2010)

Figure 1.1 Democracy and human development



R-squared: 0.64 Number of observations: 185
Sources: UNDP (2010); World Bank (2010)

Figure 1.2 Government effectiveness and human development

BOX 1.3. DEFINITION Measuring corruption

A large debate exists about the possibility to operationalize and measure corruption. Since the practice is usually secret, getting accurate information is problematic. Most measures are based on assessments by country experts, but recently a number of surveys of representative samples of the population has been carried out. These measures correlate on a surprisingly high level, implying that 'ordinary people' and 'experts' judge the situation in the countries they assess in a very similar way. Moreover, a number of related indexes have been constructed, for example measuring the rule of law, government effectiveness, and the impartiality of the civil service. These measures also correlate on a high level with measures trying to capture corruption. Thus, while far from perfect, the measures of corruption that have been launched are now widely used in comparative politics. For an overview, see Charron 2016.

Does democracy generate political legitimacy?

One counterargument to the lack of 'valued outcomes' from democratization is that the normative reasons for representative democracy should not be performance measures like the ones mentioned above, but political legitimacy. If people have the right to change their government through 'free and fair elections', they will find their system of rule legitimate. In regard to this, empirical research shows even more surprising results, namely that democratic rights or the feeling of being adequately represented by elected officials does not seem to be the most important cause behind people's perception of political legitimacy. Based on comparative survey data, several recent studies show that 'performance' or 'output' measures, such as control of corruption, government effectiveness, and the rule of law, trump democratic rights in explaining political legitimacy (Gilley 2006, 2009). As stated by Bruce Gilley, 'this clashes with standard liberal treatments of legitimacy that give overall priority to democratic rights' (2006: 58). Using a different comparative survey data set, Dahlberg and Holmberg (2014: 515) conclude in a similar vein that 'government effectiveness is of greater importance for citizens' satisfaction with the way democracy functions, compared to factors such as ideological congruence on the input side. Impartial and effective bureaucracies matter more than representational devices'. Thus, if the relevance of political science is about understanding the causes of political legitimacy, most researchers in this discipline have studied the parts of the political system that are not the most relevant.

One way to theorize about this counter-intuitive result may be the following. On average, a third of the electorate in democratic elections does not bother to vote. Even fewer use their other democratic rights, such as taking part in political demonstrations, signing petitions, or writing 'letters to the editor'. When a citizen does not make much use of her democratic rights, usually nothing happens. However, if her children cannot get medical care because she cannot afford the bribes demanded by the doctors, if the police will not protect her because she belongs to a minority, if the water is polluted because of the incompetence of the local water managers, if she is denied a job she has the best qualifications for because she does not belong to the 'right' political party, or if the fire brigade won't come when she calls because she lives in the 'wrong' part of the city, these are things that can cause real distress in her life.

It should be underlined that this analysis is not an argument against liberal representative democracy or that people in autocratic regimes should not demand democracy and civil rights. On the contrary, from this author's point of view, liberal democracy has intrinsic values that are irreplaceable and indispensable. The argument is that if a liberal democracy system is going to produce increased human well-being around the world, quality of government factors like administrative capacity, the rule of law, and control of corruption must be taken into account.

Does democracy cure corruption?

As special problem that so far has not found a persuasive explanation is that in many (but far from all) democracies, the electorate is not punishing corrupt politicians (Chang and Golden 2007). Instead, as shown in Figure 1.3, they are often re-elected, implying that the accountability mechanism in representative democracy does not work as it is supposed to. Some have argued that democracies allow for more political corruption through vote buying and illegal party financing (Della Porta and Vannucci 2007). However, this is not a general law. A recent study has shown that political parties in countries in Central and Eastern Europe that mobilize on a 'clean government' agenda have been remarkably successful in elections (Bågenholm and Charron 2015). One may interpret this as a tendency that 'clean governments' in some countries are becoming a separate political dimension. All in all, as the figure below indicates, the 'curve' between democracy and corruption is U- or J-shaped, and one important and very relevant issue for comparative politics is to understand why this is so.

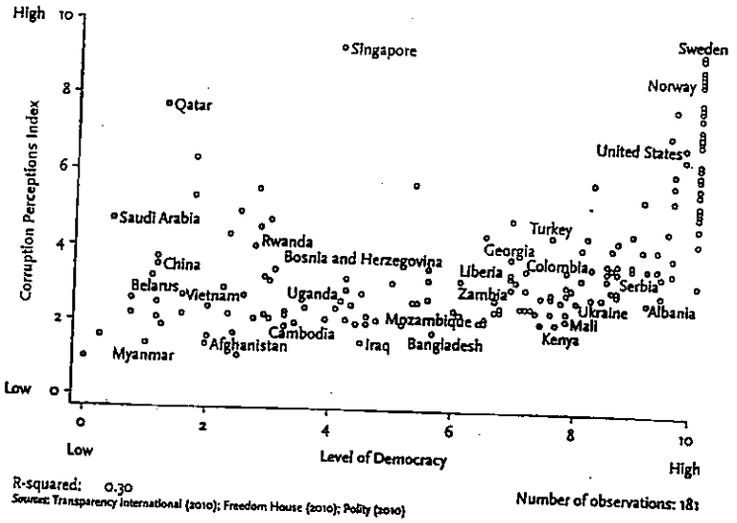


Figure 1.3 Democracy and corruption

KEY POINTS

- Democracy is important for broad-based political legitimacy, but less so than factors related to the quality of government institutions that implement public policies.
- Democracy is not a 'safe cure' against corruption and other forms of low quality of government.
- In many elections, voters are not punishing corrupt politicians. This implies that the accountability mechanisms in representative democracy are not working as intended.

What should be explained?

So far, the argument is that comparative political science, by focusing on institutions that make up the political system, has a huge potential for addressing issues about human well-being, economic prosperity, and social justice that most people care deeply about. In addition, it has been shown that the political institutions that seem to be most important for countries to achieve a high level of human development are those that exist at the 'output' side of the political system. This has two implications for the discussion on how to make comparative politics relevant in relation to the capability theory of justice that underlies this line of reasoning. Firstly, human well-being ought to be the main dependent variable (that we should strive to explain), and the political institutions that operate on the output side of the political system (the quality of the legal system and the public administration) should be central. Secondly, this approach to relevance to some extent implies a change for the discipline. Instead of just explaining 'politics', more focus needs to be placed on what politics implies for the actual human well-being of the citizens. Questions like 'why do different countries have different party systems?', 'under what conditions do countries democratize?', and 'why is the relation between business, labour, and state different in different countries?' all need to be complemented by research questions that try to answer *why* there is such a stark variation between countries in the quality of their government institutions and how this can be improved. In general, comparative political science has so far paid relatively little attention to issues about state capacity, control of corruption, and institutional quality (Rothstein 2015).

Statistical significances versus real-life significance

If research and scholarship in an academic discipline is going to be relevant in the sense mentioned above, it is not only necessary to try to explain things that are important for the lives people will have. There is also a normative perspective for the choice of which explanatory variables should be central. I will illustrate this with an example of explanation of the degree of corruption in countries. With the access to large amounts of contemporary and historical data, researches have shown that Lutheran nations, with a large amount of settlers from the colonizing country, and nations that are relatively small and ethnically homogeneous, tend to have lower degrees of corruption. Lately, some have added that countries that are islands do well on this account. Most of these explanations are correct and were carried out with scientifically established methods. However, from a relevance perspective, they are of little or no use. To advise a country plagued by systemic corruption to change its history, religion, population, size, and geographical location is meaningless since these are factors that cannot be changed. Just as a cancer patient is not helped by the advice that he or she should have had other parents, the government in, for example, Nepal benefits little from knowing that being landlocked and not being Lutheran have had a negative impact on the country's prospects of development. It is certainly the case that knowledge about such structural factors is of value, but not from a relevance perspective. Variables that have the strongest effects in statistical analysis, for example, may be of little relevance for the improvement of human well-being since they cannot be changed. As stated by Gerring (2015: 36), researchers 'sometimes confuse the notion of statistical significance with real-life significance.' One conclusion is that there is an argument for focusing the analysis on the types of political institutions mentioned above even if they do not show the strongest effects in the empirical analysis. For example: the way civil servants are recruited, paid and trained; the manner in which the educational system is accessible for various strata of the population; the possibility to hold people working in the public sector accountable; laws about the right to access public documents; and, of course, the ten institutional dimensions for creating a working democracy pointed out above (see Table 1.1) are all examples of what can be termed 'institutional devices' that are possible to change. Changing institutions may certainly be difficult to achieve, but such changes do occur. To sum up, the degree to which comparative politics is relevant is not only decided by the choice of the dependent variables, but also by the choice of the independent variables.

Quality of government, social trust, and human well-being

As mentioned in the Introduction, it is not only formal/legal institutions that have been put in focus by the 'institutional turn', but also informal ones. One such institution is the degree to which people in a society perceive that 'most other people' can be trusted. This varies dramatically from Denmark, where more than 65 per cent say 'yes' to this survey question, to Romania, where only about 8 per cent answer in the affirmative. What makes this issue important in the discussion of relevance is that social trust tends to be systematically and positively correlated with many measures of human well-being (Rothstein 2013). There are many ways to interpret this question as an informal institution. One is that people are making an evaluation of the moral standard of their society based on their notions of others' trustworthiness (Uslaner 2002). The central question is then what generates high levels of social trust in a society? The most widespread idea has been that social trust is generated 'from below', by people being active in voluntary associations (Putnam 2000). In this approach, the capacity of a society to produce social trust depends on citizens' willingness to become active in broad-based, non-exclusionary voluntary organizations. However, the evidence that associational membership of adults *creates* social trust has not survived empirical testing (Delhey and Newton 2005).

The role of formal and informal institutions

As a response to the failure of the society-centred approach to produce good empirical indicators for its claims about how the causal mechanisms generating social trust operate, the *institution-centred* approach claims that for social trust to flourish it needs to be embedded in and linked to the political context, as well as to formal political and legal institutions. According to this approach, it is trustworthy, uncorrupt, honest, impartial government institutions that exercise public power and implement policies in a fair manner that create social trust and social capital (Rothstein 2013). For example, one large-n study concluded that countries in which corruption is low '[seem] to create an institutional structure in which individuals are able to act in a trustworthy manner and can reasonably expect that others will do the same' (Delhey and Newton 2005: 323). Using survey data from twenty-nine European countries, Bjornskov (2004) concluded that a high level of social trust is strongly correlated with a low level of corruption. Another study, also based on comparative survey data, concludes that 'the central contention ... is that political institutions that support norms of fairness, universality, and the division of power, contribute to the formation of inter-personal trust' (Freitag and Buhlmann 2005).

Using scenario experiments in low trust/high corruption Romania and in high trust/low corruption Sweden, Rothstein and Eek (2009) found that persons in both these countries who experience corruption among public health care workers or the local police when travelling in an 'unknown city in and unfamiliar country' not only

lose trust in these authorities, but also in other people in general in that 'unknown' society.

In sum, what comes out of this research is that the major source of variations in social trust is to be found at the output side of the state machinery, namely in the quality of the legal and administrative branches of the state that are responsible for the implementation of public policies. Thus, the theory that high levels of states' administrative capacity and quality of government generate social trust—which makes it easier to create large sets of public goods in a society, and which explains why such societies are more successful than their opposites in fostering human well-being—is currently supported by an extensive amount of empirical research. One conclusion from this is that an important informal institution like social trust can be influenced by the design and quality of the formal and legal institutions.

KEY POINTS

- If the capability approach is to be used as the central metric for relevance of research in comparative politics, a shift of focus in what should be explained (the 'dependent variable') is necessary. The traditional and dominant ambition to explain 'politics' should be complemented by a striving to explain variations in human well-being, broadly defined.
- A focus on what politics can do for increasing human well-being, prosperity, and social justice in the world is also related to the choice of 'independent' variables—that is, factors that can explain the variation in human well-being, etc. Variables that have the strongest statistical significance may be less interesting if they are not able to be changed by political means.
- Much research in comparative politics is focused on formal institutions, leaving informal institutions out. One such institution that seems to have a huge impact on human well-being is general social trust. Recent research shows that there is a causal link between how people perceive the quality of formal institutions and their propensity to believe that other people in general can be trusted.

Conclusion

In October 2009, a Senator in the United States Congress from the Republican Party, Tom A. Colburn, proposed an amendment to cut off funding from the US National Science Foundation (NSF) to research in political science. His argument was that research produced by political scientist was a waste of tax-payers' money because it is irrelevant to human well-being. Instead, Colburn argued, NSF should redirect its funding towards research in the natural sciences and engineering that would, for example, produce new biofuels or help people with severe disabilities. While not initially successful, Colburn's attack on funding for political science was approved by the US Congress in 2013 and again in 2015. The argument presented here is that while there may be many reasons to criticize the political science discipline, the argument that it does not have the ability to 'save lives' is patently wrong. Understanding how political institutions operate is the ultimate goal of comparative politics, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that if we today would summarize human misery in the world, most of it can be explained by the fact that a majority of the world's population live under dysfunctional political institutions. For the most part, it is not a lack of natural resources, financial capital, medical techniques, or knowledge that is the main cause of widespread human misery. Instead, the main culprit is the low quality of the political institutions in many countries. In 2013, the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, stated that 'in the developing world, corruption is public enemy No. 1'[3] While corruption certainly has legal, economic, and sociological connotations, it is predominantly an issue about the construction, the quality, and the ethical standards of the public institutions in a country which is an issue that should be at the heart of comparative political science.

In addition to the political consultant and public intellectual approaches to the issue of relevance, the argument here has been that comparative politics has a great potential for being relevant for things that most people care about—namely, the level of human well-being of their societies. This is based on connecting the empirical research carried out in the discipline with the normative theory of justice known as the capability approach. This should lead to three consequences that are important for the relevance of the discipline. Firstly, a shift of focus on what should be explained from 'mere politics' to questions that impact on human well-being. The internal operations of the political machine are less interesting than what the machine can, and should, do for people. Secondly, more focus on variables that both have an explanatory power and that are also possible to change. Thirdly, while not undervaluing the institutions for representative democracy, more focus ought to be given to the institutions that are related to issues like state capacity. A central issue for increasing the relevance of comparative politics would be to focus on the relation between the '1,024' problem mentioned above and the state's capacity to deliver human well-being. Are some ways of configuring a democratic system more likely to have a positive effect on human well-being than others?

One sometimes hears the argument that research of this type is of lower value because it is seen as 'applied', in contrast to research that is deemed as 'basic'. This distinction may be applicable to the natural sciences, but it is more doubtful if it is relevant for the social sciences. It should be remembered that the three Nobel Laureates

that can be said to be closest to comparative politics—John Nash, Douglass C. North, and Elinor Ostrom—all started out from applied research questions. Nash tried to understand how the superpowers should avoid a devastating nuclear war. North asked the question of why some countries are so much richer than others. Ostrom asked why some local groups managed to handle their common natural resources in a sustainable way while others failed. If starting from applied 'real world' questions like these can lead to theoretical breakthroughs that deserve a Nobel prize, the distinction in value between 'basic' and 'applied' research cannot apply.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. What does the 'capability approach to social science' state?
2. Why is the design of political institutions relevant for societies?
3. In what ways can democracy reduce corruption?
4. How is corruption related to political legitimacy?
5. What can explain the variations in social trust between countries?

Critical thinking

1. Should comparative politics experts advise politicians?
2. Should comparative politics experts engage in public debates?
3. Is democracy helpful or even necessary for societies' well-being?
4. In what ways can knowledge in comparative politics 'save lives'?
5. What would be the optimal way to design institutions in a democracy?

Further reading

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Fukuyama, F. (2014) *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

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Stoker, G., Peters, B. G., and Pierre, J. (eds.) (2015) *The Relevance of Political Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

Web links

http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp
World Value Survey

https://www.v-dem.net/en/
Varieties of Democracy Project

http://www.qog.pol.gu.se
The Quality of Government Institute

http://www.themonkeycage.org/
The Monkey Cage

https://www.sites.google.com/site/electoralintegrityproject4/home
The Electoral Integrity Project

http://www.worldjusticeproject.org/rule-law-around-world
The World Justice Project

https://www.transparency.org/
Transparency International

online resource centre For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/

Endnotes

[1] Data from the Quality of Government Data Bank, www.qog.pol.gu.se.

[2] The graded measure of democracy is a combination of the average scores of political rights and civil liberties, reported by Freedom House, and the combined autocracy and democracy scores, derived from the Polity IV data set. It has been constructed by Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell and, as they show, this index goes from 0–10 and performs better, both in terms of validity and reliability, than its constituents parts. Hadenius, A., and J. Teorell (2005) 'Cultural and economic prerequisites of democracy: Reassessing recent evidence', *Studies in Comparative International Development* 39(4): 87–106.

[3] Reuters World Edition, 19 December 2013 at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-worldbank-corruption-idUSBRE9BI11P20131219.

CHAPTER 2

Approaches in comparative politics

B. Guy Peters

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

Theories and approaches are crucial in guiding research and the awareness of what specific perspectives imply is important to make sense of scientific results. The chapter discusses five main approaches in comparative politics that represent important contributions (the five 'I's): old and new institutional analysis, interests and actors' strategies to pursue them through political action, ideas (political culture and social capital), individuals, and the influence of the international environment. The role of 'interaction' is also stressed. The chapter concludes by discussing the importance of looking at political processes as well as of defining what the 'dependent variables' are.

Introduction

The political world is complex, involving a range of institutions, actors, and ideas that interact continuously to provide governance for society. The complexity of politics and government is compounded when we attempt to understand several different political systems, and to compare how these systems function. As comparative politics has moved beyond simple descriptions of individual countries or a few institutions, scholars have required substantial guidance to sort through the huge amount of evidence available, and to focus on the most relevant information. Thus, we need alternative approaches to politics, and particularly to develop approaches that are useful across a range of political systems.

Political theories are the source of these approaches to comparison. At the broadest level, there is the difference between positivist and constructivist approaches to politics (see Box 2.1). At less general levels a number of different theories enable comparative political scientists to impose some analytical meanings on the political phenomena being observed, and to relate that evidence to more comprehensive understandings of politics. This chapter will first discuss some general questions about using theory in comparative political analysis, and then discuss alternative approaches to politics. Each approach discussed provides some important information about politics, but few (if any) are sufficient to capture the underlying complexity. Therefore the chapter will also discuss using multiple approaches and assess the ways in which the approaches mentioned interact for more complex explanations.

KEY POINTS

- Given the high complexity of political systems and the wide range of variation between them across the world, it is important to develop approaches that are useful across them all and not simply in single countries.
- Political theories are the main source of such approaches—the division between positivism and constructivism being the more general distinction.

Uses of theory in comparison

Although there is an important interaction between theory and empirical research in all areas of the discipline, that interaction is especially important in comparative politics. Even with an increasing amount of statistical research in political science, a still significant amount of case research, and a limited amount of experimental research, comparison remains the fundamental laboratory for political science.[1] Without the capacity to compare across political systems, it is almost impossible to understand the scientific importance of findings made in a single country (see Lee 2007), even one as large as the US.[2]

Without empirical political theory, effective research might be impossible, or it certainly would be less interesting. Some questions that are almost purely empirical can and should be researched. It is interesting to know variations in cabinet sizes in European countries, for example, but if the scientific study of politics is to progress, research needs to be related to theory. The information on the size of cabinets can, for example, be related to the capacity of those cabinets to make decisions through understanding the number of 'veto players' in the system (Tsebelis 2002).

Therefore, comparative political theory is the source of questions and puzzles for researchers. For example, once we understand the concept of consociationalism, why is it that some societies have been able to implement this form of conflict resolution and others have not, even with relatively similar social divisions (see Lijphart 1996; Bogaards 2000)? And why have some countries in Africa been successful in implementing elite pacts after civil conflicts (a strategy like consociationalism, involving agreements among elites to govern even in the face of significant ethnic divisions) while other have not (LeVan 2011)? Likewise, political systems that appear relatively similar along a number of dimensions may have very different experiences maintaining effective coalition governments (Müller and Strøm 2000). Why? We may have theories that help explain how cabinets are formed in parliamentary systems and why they persist, but the anomalies in and exceptions to these theories are crucial for elaborating the models and enhancing our understanding of parliamentary democracy as an institution.

One crucial function of theory in comparative politics is to link micro- and macro-behaviour. Much of contemporary political theory functions at the micro-level, attempting to understand individual choice. The most obvious example is rational choice, which assumes utility maximization by individuals and uses that assumption about individuals to interpret and explain political phenomena.[3] Likewise, cognitive political psychology is central in contemporary political science (Winter 2013). However, in both cases the individual behaviours are channelled through institutions. Further, there is some reciprocal influence as institutions shape the behaviour of individuals and individuals shape institutions. For example, the institution of the presidency in the US was different after the personal indiscretions of Bill Clinton, and different again after the rather passive style of President Obama.

The link between the micro and the macro is crucial for comparative politics, given that one primary concern is explaining the behaviour of political systems and institutions rather than individuals. Variations in individual behaviour and the influence of cultural and social factors on that behaviour are important, but the logic of comparison is primarily about larger structures, and thinking about how individuals interact within parliaments, parties, or bureaucracies. Indeed, one could argue that if a researcher went too far down the individualist route, comparison would become irrelevant and all the researcher would care about would be the individual's behaviour. This problem is perhaps especially relevant for rational choice approaches that tend to posit relatively common motivations for individuals (but see Bates *et al.* 2002).

Theory is at once the best friend and the worst enemy of the comparative researcher. On the one hand, theory is necessary for interpreting findings, as well as providing questions that motivate new research. Without political theory, research would simply be a collection of useful information and, although the information would be interesting, it would not advance the analytical understanding of politics. Further, theory provides scholars with the puzzles to be solved, or at least addressed, through comparative research. Theory predicts certain behaviours, and if individuals or organizations do not behave in that manner we need to probe more deeply. We should never underestimate the role that simple empirical observation can play in setting puzzles, but theory is a powerful source for ideas that add to the comparative storehouse of knowledge.

As important as theory is for interpreting findings and structuring initial research questions, theory is also a set of blinders for the researcher. After choosing our theoretical approach and developing a research design based on that theory, most people find it all too easy to find support for that approach. This tendency to find support for a theory is not necessarily the result of dishonesty or poor scholarship, but generally reflects a sincere commitment by the researcher to the approach and a consequent difficulty in identifying any disconfirming evidence. Most research published in political science tends to find support for the theory or model being investigated, although in many ways negative findings would be more useful.[4]

The difficulties in disconfirming theories is in part a function of the probabilistic methods most commonly used in political science research. More deterministic methods, including case-based methods such as process-tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2015), tend to dismiss possible causes for variation in the presumed dependent variable, while probabilistic methods tend to demonstrate varying degrees of contribution to explanation. The use of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA, see Rihoux and Ragin 2009) also can dismiss certain combinations of variables as viable explanations for the outcomes in which we are interested, thus enabling us to reduce the wide range of viable explanations.

Given the tendency to find support for theories, comparative research could be improved by greater use of triangulation.[5] If we explore the same data with several alternative theories, or go into the field with alternative approaches in mind, we become more open to findings that do not confirm one or another approach. Likewise, if we could collect several forms of data—substantiating the findings of quantitative research with those from qualitative methods—then we could have a better idea whether the findings were valid.[6] This type of research can be expensive, involves a range of skills that many researchers may not possess, and may result in findings that are inconclusive and perhaps confusing.

BOX 2.1 FOR AND AGAINST Positivism and constructivism

Most of contemporary political science, and comparative politics, is founded on positivist assumptions. The most basic assumption of positivism is a fact value distinction, implying that there are real facts that are observable and verifiable in the same way by different individuals. Further, it is assumed that social phenomena can be studied in much the same way as phenomena in the natural sciences, through quantitative measurement, hypothesis testing, and theory formation. For example, the study of political attitudes across political cultures (beginning with work such as *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963) and extending to contemporary work such as Shore 2013) has assumed that there are dimensions of individual political thought that can be measured and understood through surveys and rigorous statistical analysis.

Constructivism, on the other hand, does not assume such a wide gulf between facts and values, and considers facts to be socially embedded and socially *constructed* (see Finnemore and Sikkink 2001). Thus, the individual researcher cannot stand outside political phenomena as an objective observer, but rather to some extent imposes his/her own social and cultural understandings on the observed phenomena. While most positivist research assumes that the individual is the source of social action (methodological individualism), constructivism asserts the importance of collective understandings and values, so that phenomena may not be understood readily in the absence of context. Rather than relying on variables to define the objects of research, constructive approaches focus more on dimensions such as scripts or discourses to promote understanding.

Each of these approaches to comparative politics can make major contributions to understanding. The use of the variable-oriented research associated with positivism has added greatly to the comparative understanding of individual-level behaviour, as well as to the understanding of political parties and other mass-based organizations. On the other hand, much of the analysis of formal political institutions and processes of governing still relies on methods that, if not explicitly constructivist, do share many of the assumptions concerning collective understandings and the importance of ideas (see Bevir and Rhodes 2010).

BOX 2.2 DEFINITION Major approaches to comparative politics

Structural functionalism

The purpose of this approach was to identify the necessary activities (functions) of all political systems and then to compare the manner in which these functions were performed. As it was elaborated, it had developmental assumptions about the manner in which governing could best be performed that were closely related to the Western democratic model.

Systems theory

This approach considered the structures of the public sector as an open system that had extensive input (supports and demands) and output (policies) interaction with its environment.

Marxism

Class conflict is an interest-based explanation of differences among political systems. While offering some empirical predictions about those differences, Marxist analysis also posits a developmental pattern that would lead through revolution to a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

Corporatism

This approach stresses the central role of state and society interactions in governing, and especially the legitimate role of social interests in influencing policy. Even in societies such as Japan or the US which have not met the criteria of being corporate states, the identification of the criteria provides a means of understanding politics.

Institutionalism

Although there are several approaches to institutionalism, they all focus on the central role of structures in shaping politics and also in shaping individual behaviour. As well as formal institutional patterns, institutions may be defined in terms of their rules and their routines, and thus emphasize their normative structure.

Governance

As an approach to comparative politics governance has some similarities to structural functional analysis. It argues that certain tasks must be performed in order to govern a society and then posits that these tasks can be accomplished in a number of ways. In particular, scholars of governance are interested in the variety of roles that social actors may play in the process of making and implementing decisions.

Comparative political economy

Comparative political economy is the analysis of how political factors affect economic policy choices. The primary focus has been on how institutions of representation influence policy choices, but political executives and bureaucracies also exert some influences.

When we discuss comparative political theory, we have to differentiate between *grand theories* and *middle-range theories*, or even analytical perspectives. At one stage of the development of comparative politics the emphasis was on all-encompassing theories such as structural functionalism (Almond and Powell 1966) and systems theory (Easton 1965*b*) (see Box 2.2). These theories became popular as comparative politics had to confront newly independent countries in Africa and Asia, and find ways of including these countries in the same models as industrialized democracies. Those grand theories fulfilled their purpose of expanding the geographical concerns, as well as including less formal actors in the political process, but it became evident that by explaining everything they actually explained nothing. The functions of the political system and their internal dynamics discussed were so general that they could not produce meaningful predictions. Since that time there has been a tendency to rely more on mid-range theories and analysis, although contemporary governance theories have some of the generality of functional theories. The principal exception to that generalization is the development of governance as an approach to comparative politics (Peters and Pierre 2016), emphasizing the need to perform certain key functions to be able to govern any society.

Finally, as we attempt to develop theory using multiple approaches, we need to be cognizant of their linkages with methodologies, and the possibilities for both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Comparative politics is both an area of inquiry and a method that emphasizes case selection as much as statistical controls to attempt to test its theories. Each approach discussed below has been linked with particular ways of collecting data, and we must be careful about what evidence is used to support an approach, and what evidence is being excluded from the analysis.

KEY POINTS

- Theory is necessary to guide empirical research in comparative politics. It is also necessary to interpret the findings. It provides the puzzles and the questions that motivate new research.
- Without theory, comparative politics would be a mere collection of information. There would be no analytical perspective attempting to answer important questions. However, theories and approaches should never become blinders for the researcher. Ideally, we should investigate the same question from different angles.
- An important distinction concerns grand theories and middle-range theories. With the behavioural revolution there was a great emphasis on all-encompassing theories. At present, there is a tendency to develop 'grounded theories' or middle-range theories that apply to more specific geographical, political, and historical contexts.

Alternative perspectives: the five 'I's

Institutions

The roots of comparative political analysis are in institutional analysis. As far back as Aristotle, scholars interested in understanding government performance, and seeking to improve that performance, concentrated on constitutional structures and the institutions created by those constitutions. Scholars documented differences in constitutions, laws, and formal structures of government, and assumed that if those structures were understood, the actual performance of governments could be predicted. Somewhat later, scholars in political sociology also began to examine political parties as organizations, or institutions, and to understand them in those terms (Michels 1915).

The behavioural revolution in political science, followed by the increasing interest in rational choice, shifted the paradigm in a more individualistic direction. The governing assumption, often referred to as *methodological individualism*, became that individual choices, rather than institutional constraints, produced observed differences in governments. It was difficult to avoid the obvious existence of institutions such as legislatures, but the rules of those organizations were less important, it was argued, than the nature of the individual legislators. Further, it was argued that decisions emerging from institutions were to a great extent the product of members' preferences, and those preferences were exogenous to the institutions.

While other areas of political science became almost totally absorbed with individual behaviour, comparative politics remained more true to its institutional roots. Even though some conceptualizations of behaviour within institutions were shaped by individualistic assumptions, understanding structures is still crucial for comparative politics. With the return to greater concern with institutions in political science, the central role of institutions in comparative politics has at once been strengthened and made more analytical.

The 'new institutionalism' in political science (Peters 2011) now provides an alternative paradigm for comparative politics. In fact, contemporary institutional theory provides at least four alternative conceptions of institutions, all having relevance for comparative analysis. *Normative* institutionalism, associated with James March and Johan P. Olsen, conceptualizes institutions as composed of norms and rules that shape individual behaviour. Rational choice institutionalism, on the other hand, sees institutions as aggregations of incentives and disincentives that influence individual choice. Individuals would pursue their own self-interest utilizing the incentives provided by the institution. *Historical institutionalism* focuses on the role of ideas and the persistence of institutional choices over long periods of time, even in the face of potential dysfunctionality. Each approach to institutions provides a view of how individuals and structures interact in producing collective choices for society. And some *empirical institutionalism*, to some extent continuing older versions of institutionalism, asks the fundamental question of whether differences in institutions make any difference (Weaver and Rockman 1993; Przeworski 2004).

Thus, merely saying that institutional analysis is crucial for comparative politics is insufficient. We need to specify how institutions are conceptualized, and what sort of analytical role they play. At one level the concept of institutions appears formal, and not so different from some traditional thinking. That said, however, contemporary work on formal structures does examine their impact more empirically and conceptually than the traditional work did. Also, the range of institutions covered has expanded to include elements such as electoral laws and their effects on party systems and electoral outcomes (Taagapera and Shugart 1989).

Take, for example, studies of the difference between presidential and parliamentary institutions. This difference is as old as the formation of the first truly democratic political systems, but has taken on new life. First, the conceptualization of the terms has been strengthened for both parliamentary and presidential (Elgie 1999) systems, and the concept of divided government provides a general means of understanding how executives and legislatures interact in governing.[7] Further, scholars have become more interested in understanding the effects of constitutional choice on presidential or parliamentary institutions. Some scholars (Linz 1990*a*; Colomer and Negretto 2005) have been concerned with the effects of presidential institutions on political stability, especially in less-developed political systems. Others (Weaver and Rockman 1993) have been concerned with the effects of presidential and parliamentary institutions on policy choices and public sector performance.

The distinction between presidential and parliamentary regimes is one of the most important institutional variables in comparative politics, but other institutional variables are also useful for comparison, such as the distinction between federal and unitary states (and among types of federalism (Schain and Menon 2007)). Further,

we can conceptualize the mechanisms by which social actors such as interest groups interact with the public sector in institutional terms (Peters 2011: Chapter 5). The extensive literature on corporatism (see Molina 2007) has demonstrated the consequences of the structure of those interactions. Likewise, the more recent literature on networks in governance also demonstrates the structural interactions of public and private sector actors (Sørenson and Torfing 2007).

The preceding discussion concentrated on rather familiar institutional forms and their influence on government performance, but the development of institutional theory in political science has also focused greater attention on the centrality of institutions. Of the forms of institutional theory in political science, historical institutionalism has had perhaps the greatest influence in comparative politics. The basic argument of historical institutionalism is that initial choices shape policies and institutional attributes of structures in the public sector (Steinmo *et al.* 1992). For example, differences made in the initial choices about welfare state policies have persisted for decades and continue to resist change (Pierson 2001*b*). In addition to the observation about the persistence of programmes—usually referred to as path dependence—historical institutionalism has begun to develop theory about the political logic of that persistence (see Peters *et al.* 2005).

Institutional theory has been important for comparative politics, and for political science generally, but tends to be better at explaining persistence than explaining change (but see Mahoney and Thelen 2010). For some aspects of comparative politics we may be content with understanding static differences among systems, but dynamic elements are also important. As political systems change, especially democratizing and transitional regimes, political theory needs to provide an understanding of this as well as predicting change. While some efforts are being made to add more dynamic elements to institutional analysis—for example, the 'actor-centered institutionalism' of Fritz Scharpf (1997*c*)—institutional explanations remain somewhat constrained by the dominance of stability in the approach.

Historical institutionalism also can be related to important ideas about political change such as 'critical junctures' (Collier and Collier 1991; Capoccia and Keleman 2007), and the need to understand significant punctuations in the equilibrium that characterizes most institutionalist perspectives on governing (see also True *et al.* 2007). In this approach change occurs through significant interruptions of the existing order, rather than through more incremental transformations. Much the same has been true of most models of transformation in democratization and transition, albeit with a strong concern about consolidation of the transformations (Berg-Schlosser 2008). This view contrasts with the familiar idea of incremental change that has tended to dominate much of political science.

Interests

A second approach to explaining politics in comparative perspective is to consider the interests that actors pursue through political action. Some years ago Harold Lasswell (1936) argued that politics is about 'who gets what' and that central concern with the capacity of politics to distribute and redistribute benefits remains. In political theory, interest-based explanations have become more prominent, with the domination of rational choice explanations in much of the discipline (Lustick 1997; for a critique see Green and Shapiro 1994). At its most basic, rational choice theory assumes that individuals are self-interested utility maximizers and engage in political action to receive benefits (usually material benefits) or to avoid costs (see Box 2.3). Thus, individual behaviour is assumed to be motivated by self-interest, and collective behaviour is the *aggregation of the individual behaviours* through bargaining, formal institutions, or conflict.

Rational choice theory provides a set of strong assumptions about behaviour, but less deterministic uses of the idea of interests can produce more useful comparative results. In particular, the ways in which societal interests are represented to the public sector and affect policy choices are crucial components of comparative analysis. The concept of corporatism was central to comparative analysis in the 1970s and 1980s (Schmitter 1974, 1989). The close linkage between social interests and the state that existed in many European and Latin American corporatist societies provided an important comparison for the pluralist systems of the Anglo-American countries, and produced a huge literature on the consequences of patterns of interest intermediation for policy choices and political legitimacy.

The argument of corporatism was that many political systems legitimated the role of interest groups and provided those groups with direct access to public decision-making. In particular, labour and management were given the right to participate in making economic policy, but in return had to be reliable partners, with their membership accepting the agreements (e.g. not striking). These institutionalized arrangements enabled many European and some Latin American countries to manage their economies with less conflict than in pluralist systems such as the United Kingdom.

The interest in corporatism also spawned a number of alternative means of conceptualizing both corporatism itself and the role of interests. For example, Stein Rokkan (1966) described the Scandinavian countries, especially Norway, as being 'corporate pluralist', with the tightly defined participation of most corporatist arrangements extended to a wide range of actors. Other scholars have discussed 'meso-corporatism' and 'micro-corporatism', and have attempted to apply the concept of corporatism to countries where it is perhaps inappropriate (Siaroff 1999).

BOX 2.3 ZOOM-IN Rational choice and comparative politics

Rational choice models have made significant contributions to the study of politics and government. By employing a set of simplifying assumptions, such as utility maximization and full information, rational choice models have enabled scholars to construct explanatory and predictive models with greater precision than would be possible without those assumptions. For example, if we assume that individuals act rationally to enhance their own self-interest, then we can understand how they will act when they have the position of a 'veto player' in a political process (Tsebelis 2002). Likewise, if we assume that voters engage in utility maximization, then their choice of candidates becomes more predictable than in other models that depend more on a mixture of sociological and psychological factors (e.g. partisan identification).

By positing these common motivations for behaviour, however, rational choice adds less to comparative politics than to other parts of the discipline of political science. Comparative politics tends to be more concerned with differences among political systems and their members than with similarities. Comparative politics, as a method of inquiry (Lijphart 1971) rather than a subject matter, relies on selecting cases based on their characteristics and then determining the impact of a small number of differences on observed behaviours. However, if everyone is behaving in the same way, important factors in comparative politics such as political culture, individual leadership, and ideologies become irrelevant. Differences in institutions remain important, or perhaps even more important, in comparison because their structures can be analysed through veto points or formal rules that create incentives and disincentives for behaviours.

The institutionalized pattern of linkage between social interests and the state implied in corporatism has been eroding and is being replaced by more loosely defined relationships such as networks (Sørenson and Torfing 2007). The shift in thinking about interest intermediation to some degree reflects a real shift in these patterns, and also represents changes in academic theorizing. As the limits of the corporatist model became apparent, the concept of networks has had significant appeal to scholars. This idea is that surrounding almost all policy areas there is a constellation of groups and actors seeking to influence that policy, who are increasingly connected formally to one another and to policy-making institutions. The tendency of this approach has been to modify the self-interested assumption somewhat in favour of a mixture of individual (group) and collective (network or society) interests.

Network theory has been developed with different levels of claims about the importance of the networks in contemporary governance. At one end, some scholars have argued that governments are no longer capable of effective governance and that self-organizing networks now provide governance (Rhodes 1997; for a less extreme view see Kooiman 2003). For other scholars, networks are forms of interest involvement in governing, with formal institutions retaining the capacity to make effective decisions about governance. Further, the extent of democratic claims about networks varies among authors, with some arguing that these are fundamental extensions of democratic opportunities, and others concerned that their openness is exaggerated and that networks may become simply another form of exclusion for the less well-organized elements in society.

Although we tend to think of interests almost entirely in material terms, there are other important interests as well. Increasingly, individuals and social groups define their interests in terms of identity and ethnicity, and seek to have those interests accommodated within the political system along with their material demands.[8] This concern with the accommodation of socially defined interests can be seen in the literature on consociationalism (Lijphart 1968*a*). Consociationalism is a mode of governing in which political elites representing different communities coalesce around the need to govern, even in the face of intense social divisions. For example, this concept was devised originally to explain how religious groups in the Netherlands were able to coalesce and govern despite deep historical divisions.

Like corporatism, consociationalism has been extended to apply to a wide range of political systems, including Belgium, Canada, Malaysia, Colombia, and India, but has largely been rejected as a solution for the problems of Northern Ireland and Iraq. The concept is interesting for comparative political analysis, but, like corporatism, may reflect only one variation of a more common issue. Almost all societies have some forms of internal cleavage (Posner 2004) and find different means of coping with those cleavages. In addition to strictly consociational solutions, elite pacts (Higley and Gunther 1992; Collins 2006) have become another means of coping with difference and with the need to govern. The capacity to form these pacts has been crucial in resolving conflicts in some African countries, and presents hoped-for solutions for some conflicts in the Middle East (Hinnebusch 2006).

Comparative political economy represents another approach to comparative politics that relies largely on interest-based explanations. Governments are major economic actors and their policies influence the economic success of business, labour, and other groups in society. The dynamics of the political economy have gained

special importance after the economic crisis beginning in 2008 and the increases in economic inequality that have followed. Therefore, there are significant political pressures to choose policies that favour those various groups in the economy (Przeworski 2004; Hall 1997). Much of this literature focuses on the role of representation and representative institutions, but the public bureaucracy also plays a significant role in shaping those policies.

Approaches to comparative politics built on the basis of interest tend to assume that those interests are a basis for conflict, and that institutions must be devised to manage that conflict. Politics is inherently conflictual, as different interests vie for a larger share of the resources available to government, but conflict can go only so far if the political system is to remain viable. Thus, while interests may provide some of the driving force for change, institutions are required to focus that political energy in mechanisms for making and implementing policy. And, further, ideas can also be used to generate greater unity among populations that may be divided along ethnic or economic dimensions.

Ideas

Although ideas are amorphous and seemingly not closely connected to the choices made by government, they can have some independent effect on outcomes. That said, the mechanisms through which ideas exert that influence must be specified and their independent effect on choices must be identified (Beland and Cox 2011). In particular, we need to understand the consequences of mass culture, political ideologies, and specific ideas about policy. All these versions of ideas are significant, but each functions differently within the political process.

At the most general possible level, political culture influences politics, but that influence is often extremely vague. Political culture can be the residual explanation in comparative politics—when everything else fails to explain observed behaviours, then it must be political culture (Elkins and Simeon 1979). Therefore the real issue in comparative analysis is to identify means of specifying those influences from culture, and other ideas, with greater accuracy. As comparative politics, along with political science in general, has moved away from behavioural explanations and interpretative understandings of politics, there has been less analytical emphasis on understanding political culture and this important element of political analysis has been devalued.[9]

How can we measure political culture and link this somewhat amorphous concept to other aspects of governing? The most common means of measuring the concept has been surveys asking the mass public how they think about politics. For example, in a classic of political science research, *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963; Saretti 2013), the public in five countries were asked about their attitudes towards politics, and particularly their attitudes to political participation. More recent examples of this approach to measurement include Ronald Inglehart's (1997) numerous studies using the World Values Survey, as well as studies that explore values in public and private organizations (Hofstede 2001).

Of course, before surveys for measuring political culture can be devised, scholars must have some ideas about the dimensions that should be measured. Therefore conceptual development must go along with, or precede, measurement. Lucien Pye (1968) provided one interesting attempt at defining the dimensions of comparative political culture. He discussed culture as the tension between opposite values such as *hierarchy and equality, liberty and coercion, loyalty and commitment,* and *trust and distrust.* Although these dimensions of culture are expressed as dichotomies, political systems tend to have complex mixtures of these attributes that need to be understood to grasp how politics is interpreted within that society.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas (1978) (see also Table 2.1) provided another set of dimensions for understanding political culture that continues to be used extensively (Hood 2000). She has discussed culture in terms of the concepts of *grid* and *group*, both of which describe how individuals are constrained by their society and its culture. Grid is analogous to the dimension of hierarchy in Pye's framework, while group reflects constraints derived from membership in social groups. As shown in Table 2.1, bringing together these two dimensions creates four cultural patterns that are argued to influence government performance and the lives of individuals. These patterns are perhaps rather vague, but they do provide means of approaching the complexities of political culture.

The trust and distrust dimension mentioned by Pye can be related to the explosion of the literature on social capital and the impact of trust on politics. The concept of social capital was initially developed in sociology (Coleman 1990), but gained greater prominence with Robert Putnam's research on Italy and the US (Putnam 1993, 2000). This concept was measured through surveys as well as through less obtrusive measures. What is perhaps most significant in the social capital literature is that the cultural elements are linked directly with political behaviour, of both individuals and systems (Hetherington and Husser 2014).

As well as the general ideas contained in political culture, political ideas also are important in the form of

Table 2.1 Patterns of political culture

Grid	Group	
	High	Low
High	Fatalist	Hierarchical
Low	Egalitarian	Individualist

Source: Douglas (1978).

ideologies. In the twentieth century, politics in a number of countries was shaped by ideologies such as communism and fascism. Towards the end of the last century and into the current one, an ideology of neoliberalism came to dominate economic policy in the industrialized democracies and was diffused through less-developed systems by donor organizations such as the World Bank. Within the developing world, ideologies about development, such as Pancasila in Indonesia, reflect the important role of ideas in government, and a number of developing countries continue to use socialist ideologies to justify interventionist states.

Although ideologies have been important in comparative politics, there has been a continuing discussion of the decline, or end, of ideology in political life. First, with the acceptance of the mixed economy welfare state in most industrialized democracies, the argument was that the debate over the role of the state was over (Bell 1965). More recently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a similar argument was made concerning the exhaustion of political ideas and the end of political conflicts based on ideas (Fukuyama 1992). However, this presumed end of the role of ideas could be contrasted with the increased importance of conservative ideologies and the increased significance of religion as a source of political conflicts.

A final way in which ideas influence outcomes in comparative politics is through specific policy ideas. For example, while at one time economic performance was considered largely uncontrollable, after the intellectual revolution in the 1930s governments had tools for that control (Hall 1989). Keynesian economic management dominated for almost half a century, but then was supplanted by monetarism and, to a lesser extent, by supply-side economics. Likewise, different versions of the welfare state, for example the Bismarckian model of continental Europe and the Beveridge model in the United Kingdom (see Esping-Andersen 1990), have been supported by a number of ideas about the appropriate ways in which to provide social support.

In summary, ideas do matter in politics, even though their effects may be subtle. This subtlety is especially evident for political culture, but tracing the impact of ideas is in general difficult. Even for policy ideas that appear closely related to policy choices, it may be difficult to trace how the ideas are adopted and implemented (Braun and Busch 1999). Further, policy-learning (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) and the social construction of agendas and political frames can shape behaviour (see Baumgartner and Jones 2015).

Individuals

I have already discussed the methodological individualism that has become central to political theory. Although I was arguing that an excessive concern with individual behaviour, especially when based on an assumption that individual motivations are largely similar, may make understanding differences among political systems more difficult, it is still impossible to discount the importance of individuals when understanding how politics and government work. The importance of political biography and political diaries as sources of understanding is but one of many indications of how important individual-level explanations can be in understanding governing.

Many individual-level explanations are naturally focused on political elites and their role in the political process. One of the more interesting, and perhaps most suspect, ways of understanding elite behaviour is through personality. There have been a number of psychological studies, usually done from secondary sources, of major political figures (Freud and Bullitt 1967; Berman 2006). Most of these studies have focused on pathological elements of personality, and have tended to be less than flattering to the elites. Less psychological studies of leaders, e.g. James David Barber's typology of presidential styles (Barber 1992; see also Simonton 1993), have also helped to illuminate the role of individual leaders (see Table 2.2). Barber classifies political leaders in terms of their positive or negative orientations towards politics and their levels of activity, and uses the emerging types to understand how these individuals have behaved in office.

A more sociological approach to political leaders has stressed the importance of background and recruitment, with the assumption that the social roots of leaders will explain their behaviour. Putnam (1976) remarked several decades ago that this hypothesis was plausible, but unproven, and that assessment remains largely true. Despite the absence of strong links there is an extensive body of research using this approach. The largest is the research on 'representative bureaucracy' and the question of whether public bureaucracies are characteristic of the societies they administer, and whether this makes any difference (Meier and Bohte 2001; Peters *et al.* 2015). While the representativeness of the bureaucracy is usually discussed at the higher, 'decision-making' levels, it may actually be more crucial where 'street level bureaucrats' meet citizens.

The ordinary citizen should not be excluded when considering individuals in comparative politics. The

Table 2.2 Styles of political leaders

Orientation to politics	Activity	
	Active	Passive
Positive	Bill Clinton	George H. W. Bush
	Tony Blair	Jim Callaghan
Negative	Richard Nixon	Calvin Coolidge
	Margaret Thatcher	John Major

Source: Based on Barber (1992). The role of political elites can also be seen in studies of political leadership (Helms 2013).

citizen as voter, participant in interest groups, or merely as the consumer of political media plays a significant role in democratic politics, and less obviously in non-democratic systems. The huge body of literature on cross-national voting behaviour has generated insights about comparative political behaviour. Further, the survey-based evidence on political culture already mentioned uses individual-level data to make some (tentative) statements about the system level.

In those portions of political science that deal with government activities the role of the individual has become more apparent. Citizens are consumers of public services, and the New Public Management has placed individual citizens at the centre of public sector activity (see Chapter 8). This central role is true for the style of management now being pursued in the public sector. It is also true for a range of instruments that have been developed to involve the public in the programmes that serve them, and also for a range of instruments designed to hold public programmes accountable.

International environment

Much of the discussion of comparative politics is based on analysing individual countries, or components of countries. This approach remains valuable and important. That said, it is increasingly evident that individual countries are functioning in a globalized environment and it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand any one system in isolation. To some extent the shifts in national patterns are mimetic, with one system copying patterns in another that appear effective and efficient (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991; see also Chapter 24). In other cases the shifts may be coercive, as when the European Union has established political as well as economic criteria for membership.

International influences on individual countries, although ubiquitous, also vary across countries. Some, such as the US or Japan, have sufficient economic resources and lack direct attachments to strong supra-national political organizations, and hence maintain much of their exceptionalism. Poorer countries lack economic autonomy and their economic dependence may produce political dependence as well, so their political systems may be influenced by other nations and by international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations.

The countries of the European Union present a particularly interesting challenge for comparative politics. While most of these countries have long histories as independent states, and have distinct political systems and political styles, their membership of the Union has created substantial convergence and homogenization. The growing literature on Europeanization (Knill 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; see also Chapter 23) has attempted to understand these changing patterns of national politics in Europe and the increasingly common patterns of governance. This is not to say that British parliamentary democracy and the presidentialism of Poland will merge entirely, but there is reciprocal influence and some difficulties in sorting out sources of change.

The case of the European Union also points out the extent to which interactions among all levels of government are important for shaping behaviours in any one level. The concept of 'multilevel governance' has been popular for analysing policy-making in the European Union (Hooghe and Marks 2001; Bache and Flinders 2004). For individuals coming from federal regimes this interaction is a rather familiar feature of governing, and in many cases the sub-national governments have been the principal policy and political innovators. For many European countries, however, multilevel governance is a more distinctive phenomenon that links both internationalization and the increasing political power of sub-national governments to the national government.

The interaction among countries, and across levels of government, raises an analytical question. When we observe a particular political pattern in a country, is that pattern a product of indigenous forces and national patterns, or is it a product of diffusion? The so-called 'Galton problem' has been present for as long as there have been comparative studies, but its importance has increased as interactions have increased, and as the power of international organizations has increased (Seeliger 1996). Unfortunately, we may never really be able to differentiate all the various influences on any set of observed patterns in the public sector, despite the numerous solutions that have been proposed to the problem (Braun and Gilardi 2006).

While diffusion among countries can be conceived as an analytical problem for social sciences, it can be a boon for governments and citizens. If we conceptualize the international environment as a laboratory of innovations in both political action and policy, then learning from innovations in other settings becomes a valuable source for improving governing. A number of governments have attempted to institutionalize these practices through evidence-based policy-making.

Add a sixth 'I': interactions

Up to this point I have been dealing with five possible types of explanation independently. That strategy is useful as a beginning and for clarifying our thoughts about the issue in question, but it vastly understates the complexity of the real world of politics. In reality these five sources of explanation interact with one another, so that to understand decisions made in the political process we need to have a broader and more comprehensive understanding. Given that much of contemporary political science is phrased in terms of testing hypotheses derived from specific theories, this search for complexity may not be welcomed by some scholars, but it does reflect political realities.

Let me provide some examples. Institutions are a powerful source of explanations and are generally our first choice for those explanations. However, institutions do not act—the individuals within them act, and so we need to understand how institutions and individuals interact in making decisions. Some individuals who may be very successful in some political settings would not be in others. Margaret Thatcher was a successful prime minister in the majoritarian British system, but her directive leadership style might have been totally unsuccessful in consensual Scandinavian countries, or even perhaps Westminster systems such as Canada that also have a consensual style of policy-making. And these interactions can also vary across time, with a bargainer such as Lyndon Johnson being likely to have been unsuccessful in the more partisan Congresses of the early twenty-first century.

These interactions between individual political leaders and their institutions raise a more theoretical concern for contemporary comparative politics. Although there is still a significant institutional emphasis in comparative politics, much of contemporary political theory is based on the behaviour of individuals. Therefore, a major challenge for building better theory for comparison is linking the micro-level behaviour of individuals with the macro-level behaviour of institutions. The tendency to attribute relatively common motivations for individuals to some extent simplifies this issue, but in so doing may oversimplify the complexity of the interactions (Anderson 2009).

Another example of interaction among possible explanations can occur between the international environment and institutions. Many of the states in Asia and Latin America have adopted a 'developmental state' model to cope with their relatively weak position in the international marketplace and to use the power of the state for fundamental economic change (Evans 1995; Minns 2006). On the other hand, the more affluent states of Europe and North America have opted for a more liberal approach to economic growth—a model that better fits their position in the international political economy.

The literature on social movements provides a clear case for the interaction of multiple streams of explanation (see Chapter 16). On the one hand, social movements can be conceptualized as institutions, albeit ones with relatively low levels of institutionalization. These organizations can also be understood as reflecting an ideological basis, and as public manifestations of ideas such as environmentalism and women's rights. Finally, some social movements reflect underlying social and economic interests, although again in somewhat different ways than would conventional interest groups. Again, by using all these approaches to triangulate these organizations, the researcher gains a more complete understanding of the phenomenon.

Multiple streams of explanation and their interaction help to emphasize the point made at the outset of this chapter. The quality of research in comparative politics can be enhanced by the use of multiple theories and multiple methodologies when examining the same 'dependent variable'. Any single analytical approach provides a partial picture of the phenomenon in question, but only through a more extensive array of theory and evidence can researchers gain an accurate picture of the complex phenomena with which comparative politics is concerned. This research strategy is expensive, and may yield contradictory results, but it may be one means of coping with complexity.

Much of contemporary political science does not, in fact, cope well with the increasing complexity of their surrounding economies and societies, or indeed of politics itself (see Jervis 1997). Increasing levels of participation and the increasing 'wickedness' of policy problems demands that we develop the means to understand a non-linear world better and have tools to assist in that understanding. Somewhat paradoxically, that may demand the use of (seemingly) relatively simplistic tools such as case studies to begin to understand the dynamics inherent in political processes and their relationships with their environments.

KEY POINTS

- Comparative politics has institutional roots: more than other fields of political science, it stresses the role of institutions in shaping and constraining the behaviour of individuals. However, it is weak in explaining change.
- Rational choice analysis assumes that individuals are self-interested utility maximizers and engage in political action to receive benefits (and avoid costs). As an approach it is less relevant in comparative politics than in other fields.
- Although cultural explanations are often vague and 'residual', ideas matter and a great deal of research investigates the impact of cultural traits on political life (e.g. on democratic stability). Recent research stresses factors such as social capital and trust.
- As the last part of this volume stresses, single political systems are increasingly facing international influences because of integration and globalization.

What more is needed?

The preceding discussion gives an idea of major approaches to comparative political analysis. These five broad approaches provide the means of understanding almost any political issue (whether within a single country or comparatively), yet they do not address the full

range of political issues as well as they might. Indeed, there are at least two comparative questions that have not been explored as completely as they might have been. We can gain some information about these issues utilizing the five 'I's already advanced, but it would be useful to explore the two questions more fully.

Process

Perhaps the most glaring omission in comparative analysis is an understanding of the political process. If we look back over the five 'I's, much of their contribution to understanding is premised on rather static conceptions of politics and governing, and thus issues of process are ignored. This emphasis on static elements in politics is unfortunate, given that politics and governing are inherently dynamic and it would be very useful to understand better how the underlying processes function. For example, while we know a great deal about legislatures as institutions, as well as about individual legislators, comparative politics has tended to abandon concern about the legislative process.

Institutions provide the most useful avenue for approaching issues of process. If we adopt the common-sense idea about institutions, then each major formal institution in the political system has a particular set of processes that can be more or less readily comparable across systems. Further, various aspects of process may come together and might constitute a policy process that, at a relatively high analytical level, has common features. Even if we do have good understanding of the processes within each institution, as yet we do not have an adequate comparative understanding of the process taken more generally.

Outcomes

Having all these explanations for political behaviour, we should also attempt to specify what these explanations actually explain—the dependent variable for comparative politics? For behavioural approaches to politics the dependent variables will be individual-level behaviour, such as voting or decisions made by legislators. For institutionalist perspectives the dependent variable is the behaviour of individuals within institutions, with the behaviour shaped by either institutional values or the rule and incentives provided by those institutions. Institutionalists tend to be more concerned about the impact of structures on public sector decisions, while behavioural models focus on the individual decision-maker and attributes that might affect his/her choices.

As implied earlier in this chapter, one of the most important things that scholars need to understand in comparative politics is what governments actually do. If, as Harold Lasswell argued, politics is about 'who gets what, then public policy is the essence of political action and we need to focus more on public policy. As Chapter 1 shows, this was indeed the case. However, policy outcomes are not just the product of politics and government action, but rather reflect the impact of economic and social conditions. Therefore, understanding comparative policy requires linking political decisions with other social, economic, and cultural factors. Unfortunately, after having been a central feature of comparative politics for some time, comparative policy studies appear to be out of fashion. True, some of those concerns appear as comparative political economy, or perhaps as studies of the welfare state (Myles and Pierson 2001), but the more general concern with comparing policies and performance has disappeared in the contemporary literature in comparative politics.

If we look even more broadly at comparative politics, then the *ultimate dependent variable is governance*, or the capacity of governments to provide direction to their societies. Governance involves *establishing goals for society, finding the means for reaching those goals, and then learning from the successes or failures of their decisions* (Pierre and Peters 2000). All other activities in the public sector can be put together within this general concept of governance. The very generality of the concept of governance poses problems for comparison, as did the structural-functionalist and systems theories (Almond and Powell 1966) popular earlier in comparative politics. Still, by linking a range of government activities and demonstrating their cumulative effects, an interest in governance helps counteract attempts to overly compartmentalize comparative analysis. To some extent, it returns to examining whole systems and how the constituent parts fit together, rather than focusing on each individual institution or actor.

Governance comes as close to the grand functionalist theories of the 1960s and 1970s as almost anything else in recent developments in comparative political analysis (see Box 2.2). Like those earlier approaches to comparative politics, governance is essentially functionalist, positing that there are certain crucial functions that any system of governance must perform, and then attempting to determine which actors perform those tasks, regardless of the formal assignment of tasks by law. While some governance scholars have emphasized the role of social actors rather than government actors in delivering governance, this remains an empirical question that needs to be investigated rather than merely inferred from the theoretical presumptions of the author.

Governance also goes somewhat beyond the comparative study of public policy to examine not only the outputs of the system but also its capacity to adapt. One of the more important elements of studying contemporary governance is the role of accountability and feedback, and the role of monitoring previous actions of the public sector. This emphasis is similar to feedback in systems theory (see Figure I.1 in the Introduction to this volume), but does not have the equilibrium assumptions of the earlier approach. Rather, governance models tend to assume some continuing development of policy capacity as well as institutional development to meet the developing needs.

KEY POINTS

- One weak point of comparative politics is its focus on the static elements of the political system and a neglect of dynamic political processes. The field of comparative politics with greater attention to processes is comparative public policy analysis.
- The dependent variable in comparative politics varies according to approaches; but, perhaps, the ultimate dependent variable is 'governance', i.e. establishing goals for society, finding means to reach those goals, and then learning from the successes or failures of their decisions.

Conclusion

Understanding politics in a comparative perspective is far from easy, but having some form of theoretical or analytical guidance is crucial to that understanding. The discussion in this chapter devotes little time to grand theory; rather, it has focused on analytical perspectives that provide researchers with a set of variables that can be used to approach comparative research questions. These five 'I's were phrased in rather ordinary language, but underneath each is a strong theoretical core. For example, if we take the role of individuals in politics, we can draw from political psychology, elite theory, and role theory for explanations.

Comparative politics should be at the centre of theory-building in political science, but that central position is threatened by the emphasis on individual-level behaviour. Further, the domination of American political scientists in the marketplace of ideas has tended to produce a somewhat unbalanced conception of the relevance of comparative research in contemporary political science. I would still argue that the world provides a natural laboratory for understanding political phenomena. We cannot, as experimenters, manipulate the elements in that environment, but we can use the evidence available from natural experiments to test and to build theory.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. What is the purpose of theory in comparative politics?
2. What is a functionalist theory?
3. What is meant by triangulation in social research?
4. What forms of institutional theory are used in comparative politics, and what contributions do they make?
5. Do institutions make a difference?

Critical thinking

1. Both behavioural and rational choice approaches focus on the individual. Where do they differ?
2. Does political culture help to understand political behaviour in different countries?
3. Do people always act out of self-interest in politics?
4. Will globalization make comparative politics obsolete?
5. Are the policy choices made by political systems a better way of understanding them than factors such as formal institutions or voting behaviour?

Further reading

Basic discussions

Bates, R., Greif, A., Levi, M., Rosenthal, J.-L., and Weingast, B. (2002) *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Braun, D., and M. Magetti (2015) *Comparative Politics: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar).

Geddes, B. (2002) *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press).

Peters, B. G. (2013) *Strategies for Comparative Political Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Institutional theories

March, J. G., and Olsen, J. P. (1989) *Rediscovering Institutions* (New York: Free Press).

Steinmo, S., Thelen, K. A., and Longstreth, F. (1992) *Structuring Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Interest-based theories

Sørenson, E., and Torfing, J. (2007) *Theories of Democratic Network Governance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Tsebelis, G. (2002) *Veto Players* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

The role of ideas

Hall, P. A. (1989) *The Political Power of Economic Ideas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Putnam, R. D. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Individual theories

Greenstein, F. I. (1987) *Personality and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Helms, L. (2013) *Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

The role of the international environment

Cowles, M. G., and Caporaso, J. A. (2002) *Europeanization and Domestic Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

Keohane, R. O., and Milner, H. (1997) *Internationalization and Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Governance

Peters, B. G., and J. Pierre (2016) *Governance and Comparative Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Pierre, J. (2003) *Debating Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Web links

http://www.community.apsanet.org/comparativepolitics/ComparativePolitics/Home/
Website of the Comparative Politics Section, American Political Science Association.

http://www.asu.edu/clas/polisci/cqrm
Website of the Arizona State University Institute for Qualitative Methods.

http://www.upslinks.net
Ultimate Political Science Links Page.

http://www.politicalresources.net
Political Resources on the Net.

online resource centre

For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at: www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/

Endnotes

[1] This classification of research types comes from Arend Lijphart's seminal article (Lijphart 1971).

[2] A great deal of political science theory has been developed in reference to the US, given the size and importance of the political science profession there. However, a good deal of that theory does not appear relevant beyond the boundaries of the US (in some cases not within those boundaries either).

[3] This is something of an oversimplification of the assumptions of rational choice approaches, but the central point here is not the subtlety of some approaches but rather the reliance on individual-level explanations. For a more extensive critique of the assumptions see Box 13.5 in Chapter 13.

[4] That is, if we could reject more theories and models then we could focus on the more useful ones. As it is, we are overstocked with positive findings and theories that have credible support.

[5] The classic example of a study that uses triangulation explicitly is Allison (1971). However, this book uses multiple theories but it does not verify the results through multiple research methods.

[6] See, for example, Adcock and Collier (2001), who stress the need for common standards of validity for all varieties of measurement, as well as the interaction of those forms of measurement.

[7] Lijphart (1999) has provided a slightly different conceptualization by distinguishing between majoritarian and consensual political systems (see Chapter 5 on 'Democracies'). Some parliamentary systems, such as the Westminster system, are majoritarian, designed to produce strong majority governments that alternate in office. Others, such as in the Scandinavian countries, may have alternation in office, but the need to create coalitions and an underlying consensus on many policy issues results in less alternation in policy.

[8] These shifts are to some extent a function of changes in political culture, especially the movement towards 'post-industrial politics' (Inglehart 1990).

[9] This is more true for American than for European political science. Discourse theory and the use of rhetorical forms of analysis have been of much greater relevance in Europe than they have in North America, and qualitative methodologies remain more at the centre of European political analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Comparative research methods

Hans Keman and Paul Pennings

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

In this chapter the 'art of comparing' is explored by demonstrating how to relate a theoretically guided research question to a properly founded research answer by developing an adequate research design. First, the role of variables in comparative research will be highlighted. Second, the meaning of 'cases' and their selection will be discussed. These are important steps in any comparative research design. Third, the focus will turn to the 'core' of the comparative method: the use of the logic of comparative inquiry to analyse the relationships between variables—representing theory—and the information contained in the cases—the data. Finally, some problems common to the use of comparative methods will be discussed.

Introduction

As the Introduction to this volume stresses, both its substance and its method characterize comparative politics. The method is the 'toolkit' of what, when, and how to compare political systems. In this chapter the focus is on research methods used in comparative political science: what rules and standards should we adopt to develop a comparative research design?[1] A research design is a crucial step for developing and testing theories and for the verification of rival theories. Hence, as Peters emphasizes, '[t]he only thing that should be universal in studying comparative politics ... is a conscious attention to explanation and research design' (Peters 1998: 26). Theory development and research design are closely interlinked in comparative politics.

Contrary to everyday practice, where most people are often *implicitly* comparing situations, in comparative politics the issue of what and how to observe reality is *explicitly* part of the comparative method. Dogan and Pelassy (1990: 3), for example, remark '[t]o compare is a common way of thinking. Nothing is more natural than to consider people, ideas, or institutions in relation to other people, ideas and institutions. We gain knowledge through reference.' Yet, the evolution of comparative politics has moved on from implicit comparisons in pre-modern times to explicit ways of comparing political systems and related processes. The major modern development in comparative political science is on linking theory to evidence by means of comparative methods. The particular method to be used depends on the research question (RQ) asked and the research answer (RA) to be given (see also Box 3.1). The actual method chosen is what we label research design (RD), and this is what this chapter is about.

A theory, in its simplest form, is a meaningful statement about the relationship between two real-world phenomena: X, the independent variable, and Y, the dependent variable. According to theory, it is expected that change in one variable will be related to change in the other. The conceptual and explanatory understanding of such a relationship is the point of departure for conducting research by comparing empirical evidence across systems (see also Brady and Collier 2004: 309; Burnham *et al.* 2004: 57). In more formal terms a theory posits the *dependent variable* in the analysis—what is to be explained? Additionally, the researcher wishes to know: what are the most likely 'causes' of the phenomenon under investigation? Again, in formal terms: which *independent variables*, or explanatory factors, can account for the variation of the dependent variable across different systems (e.g. countries) or features of political systems (e.g. parties)? The answer to this question rests heavily on the development of a 'correct' research design. Comparative methods can be considered, therefore, as a 'bridge' between the research question asked and the research answer proposed. This is what we label the 'triad' RQ → RD → RA.

BOX 3.1 ZOOM-IN The triad RQ → RD → RA

The point of departure is that all research questions are theory guided. The *theoretical* guidance is expressed in relating research questions (RQs) to research answers (RAs) in the shape of *logical* relationships between a dependent variable (Y: what is to be explained) and the independent variables (X: the most likely causes, i.e. factors serving as an explanation). The 'bridge' between RQ and RA is called a research design (RD). Therefore, the comparative method is a *means to an end:* to make choices as to which of the potentially vast mass of relevant empirical data (the evidence) and possible causes (X) explaining variations in Y are valid and reliable in arriving at a research answer.

Developing a research design in comparative politics requires careful elaboration. First, the research design should enable the researcher to *answer the question* under examination. Second, the given answer(s) ought to meet the *'standards' set in the social sciences:* are the results valid (authoritative), reliable (irrefutable), and generalizable (postulated) knowledge (Sartori 1994)? Third, are the research design and the methods used indeed *suitable for the research goals* set? This chapter will elaborate these issues and attempt to guide the student towards linking research questions to research answers.

KEY POINTS

- The proper use and correct application of methods is essential in comparative politics.
- A correct application implies that the comparative method meets the 'standards' set in terms of validity, reliability, and its use in a wider sense, i.e. generalizability.
- The relationship between variables and cases in comparative research is crucial in order to reach empirically founded conclusions that will further knowledge in political science.

The role of variables in linking theory to evidence

Since the 1960s the comparative approach in political science has been considered highly relevant to theory development (see also the Introduction to this volume). Therefore, a research question should always either be guided by theory or itself constitute a potential answer to an existing theoretical argument. The comparative method is about observing and comparing carefully selected information (across space or time, or both) on the basis of a meaningful, if not causal, relationship between variables. A variable is a concept that can be systematically observed (and measured) in various situations (such as in countries or over time). It allows us to understand the similarities and differences between observed phenomena. For example, we can make a difference between democracies and non-democracies or between different types of democracies (e.g. presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary). The extent to which the similarities and differences across systems are more or less systematic can tell us more about the plausibility of a theoretical relationship under review. For example, Linz and Stepan (1996), discussing the pros and cons of presidentialism, argued that parliamentary democracies are more enduring than presidential ones. They found that the independent variable, parliamentary vs presidential systems (a dichotomy), differed considerably in terms of political stability measured in years.

Typologies are often used as a first step in examining the theoretical association between two variables without explicitly arguing a causal relationship. The first step towards a typology is to decide what is to be classified on the basis of a research question. Take, as an example, research on the link between federalism and electoral laws. Different electoral systems (for example, proportional and majoritarian) are distinguished and their significance for territorial structures within a nation (for example, federal and unitary) is assessed. The major problem of this type of analysis is that miscomparing can lead to misclassification and therefore to wrongly informed conclusions. However, this can be avoided by checking that all (in this case, four) cells validly include at least a case (inclusiveness), and, further, that one case cannot be placed in more than one cell (exclusiveness). This is called an 'in-between' or hybrid case (see also Braun 2015).

In sum, the comparative method allows us to investigate hypothesized relationships among variables systematically and empirically. In contrast with the methodology of the 'exact sciences', however, the conclusions are drawn from comparisons *not* experiments. Therefore, the real world of comparative politics provides a *quasi-experimental* workplace for political scientists to examine how the complex world of politics 'turns' by demonstrating in a systematic and rigorous fashion *theoretical relationships among variables.*

An example of how the triad (recall Box 3.1) works and helps to answer a contested issue is the debate 'does politics matter?' (see Chapter 21). The dependent variable or the outcome (Y) in this example is welfare state development, i.e. what the researcher seeks to explain. It is called dependent because we expect that the variation in welfare state provisions across systems also depends on one or more independent variables.[2] As a tentative *answer*, the researcher comes up with a *hypothesis.* In this example the variation in welfare state development (Y) is dependent on the relative strength of left-wing parties and trade unions in a country (X). This research answer, or hypothesis, is a conjecture about the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable and is supposed to explain the outcome, i.e. the development of the welfare state. In a comparative research design a theoretical relationship is elaborated to account for the differences and similarities in welfare state development (Figure 3.1).

Obviously, any type of 'X–Y' relationship in social science is an abstraction from the complexities of the real world. This is deliberate. By means of hypotheses or explanations (X) those factors are included that can account for the variation in Y. This procedure allows us to establish whether or not a meaningful relationship indeed exists, and whether or not this relationship can be qualified as 'causal' or not (i.e. it is noted as X → Y).

Causality is a fraught concept in the social sciences and in strict terms is hard to establish. Yet, it is now accepted that if the variation in the dependent variable (Y—here: more or less expansion of the welfare state) is evidently and systematically related to the variation in (one of) the independent variable(s) and a theory as to why this is the case (X_1—socio-economic; and X_2—political indicators), then we can assume causality—at least for the cases included in the analysis. This refers to the idea of 'internal validity' (see Box 3.2).

Our ability to establish causal relationships by means of comparative research design is considered a major advantage. As we have already stated, comparative analysis is often labelled 'quasi-experimental', meaning that,

BOX 3.2 DEFINITION Internal and external validity in comparative methods

Internal validity refers to the degree to which descriptive or causal inferences from a given set of cases are indeed correct for most, if not all, the cases under inspection. *External* validity concerns the extent to which the results of the comparative research can be considered to be valid for other more or less similar cases but were not included in the research.

Both types of validity are equally important, but it should be noted that there is a trade-off (Peters 1998: 48; Pennings 2016). The more the cases included in the analysis can be considered as representative, the more 'robust' the overall result will be (*external validity*). Conversely, however, the analysis of fewer cases may well be conducive to a more coherent and solid conclusion for the set of cases that is included (*internal validity*). It should be noted that the concepts of internal and external validity are *ideal-typical* in nature: in a perfect world with complete information the standards of both internal and external validity may well be met, but in practice this is hard to achieve.

to a certain extent, we can manipulate reality, enabling the researcher to conduct *descriptive inference* (King *et al.* 1994: 34ff). This implies that the empirically founded relationship between the independent and dependent variables, based on a number of observations, allows generalization over and beyond the cases under review. Hence, the results of the analysis are considered to be relevant for all political systems where a welfare state is present or emerging (for instance, in Southern and Eastern Europe since the 1990s). In these circumstances the researcher claims that his/her results are 'externally valid' (see Box 3.2). It is obvious that this 'leap' from the empirical evidence to a more general explanation (the 'theory') is open to criticism (like the occurrence of multi-causality and conjunctural causality; see below) and drives contesting theories—in this example, politics does *not* matter but socio-economic developments do—that are developed to disprove or to enhance the theory.

Hence, socio-economic development (represented as X_1 in Figure 3.1) is considered as an important 'cause' explaining the variation in the development and level of welfare statism across OECD countries (e.g. Wilensky 1975). Political variables, such as differences between left- and right-wing parties with respect to how much welfare state is sufficient or the relative strength of these parties in government and the strength of trade unions (X_2 in Figure 3.1), were considered as less relevant (or merely coincidental) to explaining the growth of a welfare state. In other words, the research conducted appeared to prove that 'politics did *not* matter'.

Yet, a major objection concerned the finding that the *non*-political variables (X_1 in Figure 3.1) were insufficiently capable of explaining *why* cross-system differences in welfare statism *differed*, although in many instances the non-political variables X_1 were quite *similar*. The descriptive inference was not homogeneous (i.e. the assumption that a given set of variables always produces the same outcome). This criticism was supported by empirical observations. It appeared that levels of welfare statism tended to become more *divergent* (i.e. more different), whereas the explanatory variables (X_1) would predict otherwise: a *convergent* (i.e. more similar) development would be expected to occur. Another criticism concerned the operationalization of the dependent variable. By examining the various policy components of 'welfare statism' (like expenditure on social security, education, and health care), it could be demonstrated that the *design* of the welfare state showed a large cross-system variation in the distribution of what was spent on education, health care, and social security within the different countries. Table 22.2 (Chapter 22) shows that change in social expenditures differed considerably between 1980 and 2003. In short, the dependent variable 'welfare statism' could neither exclusively nor causally be linked to non-political factors alone, and nor could political factors be ignored. The comparative analysis conducted demonstrated that political variables appeared to have a considerable (and statistically significant) impact as well. Hence, the 'new' research answer became: 'yes, politics does matter'!

Note that the research design not only concerns establishing the $X_2 \rightarrow Y$ relationship, proving that political variables played their role, but is also controlling for the relative impact of 'politics' by including the original explanatory relationship $X_1 \rightarrow Y$ as a rival explanation. The message conveyed here is that research in comparative politics requires a precise and detailed elaboration of a research design—in terms of relationships examined by means of variables and developing corroborating evidence across the cases under review—connecting research questions to research answers that are conducive to causal interpretation by means of descriptive inferences.[3] In the next section we turn to selecting the cases suited for comparison. This will direct the 'logic' of comparison implied in the research design to be used.

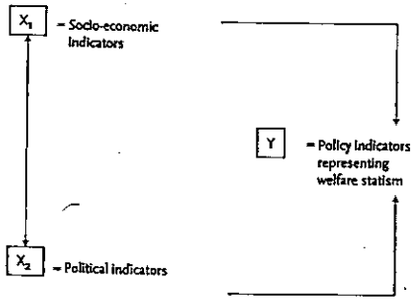


Figure 3.1 Investigating 'does politics matter?'
Source: Adapted from Pennings *et al.* (2006: 34).

KEY POINTS

- Theory comes *before* method and is expressed in its simplest form as the relationship between dependent (Y) and independent (X) variables. The research method follows the research question in order to find the proper research answer.
- Research answers are (tentative) hypotheses that are interpreted by means of descriptive inference on the basis of *comparative* evidence, possibly allowing for causal interpretation.
- The research design is the toolkit to systematically *link* empirical evidence to theoretical relationships by means of comparative methods, *enhancing* the internal and external validity of the results.

Comparing cases and case selection

Recall that linking theory to evidence always entails the reduction of real-world complexities so as to analyse the (logical) relationship between the X and Y variables. Hence, researchers must make decisions about *what* to compare, i.e. select the cases (the carriers of relevant information), and about *how* this information can be transformed into variables. The key to the development of a proper comparative research design is to decide *which* cases are useful for comparing and *how many* can be selected (see Figure 3.2). The answers to these questions have led to many views and debates (see Brady and Collier 2004; Braun and Maggetti 2015). The thrust of this concerns the apparent trade-off between selecting many cases, but with few relevant variables available for analysis, or a few crucial (or contrasting) cases, but with many variables for use. We shall first clarify what a 'case' is.

Cross-case and within-case

The term 'case' has a general meaning in social science methodology, but in comparative methods it is used in a specific manner and is to some extent confusing (Pennings *et al.* 2006: 34ff). In comparative politics, cases denote the units of observation to be compared. Often it concerns countries, but one can also compare subsystems (like regions) or organized entities (like governments or bureaucracies). Yet the level of measurement may be different. Take, for instance, individual voters in several countries: the country is the case compared and determines the level of *analysis*, whereas the voter is the unit of observation (within the case). Conversely, if one compares party governments within a country, both the case and the unit of observation—governments—are at the same level of observation. For clarity, we propose to reserve the term 'case' in comparative methods for any type of *system* included in the analysis (recall Note 1). In addition we refer to *observations* as the values (or scores) of a variable under investigation. For example, if one compares party behaviour of regional parties, then the 'case' is the regional party *within* a system. Conversely, if the welfare state is the focus of comparison, then this concerns the systems to be compared. Public expenditures on social security are the empirical value for each system (see, for instance, Table 22.4). In Box 3.3 cases and variables are discussed in terms of a data matrix (i.e. the organization of the empirical observations by case and by variable). It is important to be precise in this matter because the *number* of observations—large- or small-N—determines what type of (quantitative or qualitative) analysis is feasible in terms of descriptive inference, given the available variation across the systems, or cases, under review (Pennings *et al.* 2006: 11).

The relationship between the cases selected and the variables employed to analyse the research question is a crucial concern. As can be seen from Figure 3.2, the process of case selection is structured as a kind of scale: from one case (often including many variables) to maximizing the number of cases (often with few(er) variables). In addition, it is sometimes suggested that this choice between few or many cases is related to the type of data—quantitative or qualitative—used. This is debatable (see also Brady and Collier 2004: 246–7). For example, the study of welfare states often combines qualitative elements with statistical data (e.g. Kumlin *et al.* 2016). Or take the study on 'social capital' by Putnam (1993), who combines survey data (reporting attitudes across the population) with a historical analysis of the development of politics and society in Italy since medieval times. Hence, comparative historical analysis can be usefully combined with a cross-sectional quantitative approach.

There is on ongoing discussion on how to combine different types of data. This is called triangulation, methodological pluralism, or multi-method research. In its purest form it involves cross-case causal inference and within-case causal mechanism analysis and inference (Goertz 2016), but other combinations of methods are also possible. Collier and Elman (2008) distinguish between three types of multi-method research. The first type combines conventional qualitative approaches, such as case study methodologies and interviews. The second type combines quantitative and qualitative methods, for example statistical analysis and process tracing. The third type combines conventional qualitative methods with either constructivist or interpretivist approaches (for more detailed overviews, see: Giraud and Maggetti 2015; Berg-Schlosser 2012; Goertz 2016). The strength of methodological pluralism is that it helps to overcome the limitations of a single design, for example doing either interviews or statistical analysis. Multi-methods enable the researcher to both explain (using cross-case data) and interpret (using within-case data). It also allows the researcher to address a question or theoretical perspective at different levels, for example both at the individual level and at the country level. This can be useful when unexpected results arise from a prior study. In addition, multi-methods may help to generalize, to a degree, qualitative data. There are also a number of potential weaknesses or risks involved. The results may sometimes be puzzling because different types of data and designs may generate unequal evidence. As Braun and Maggetti (2015) note, there is no 'yardstick' available to judge the extent to which the different methods indeed reinforce the results of the analysis. Hence, before one decides to adopt a multi-method approach these risks should be carefully considered (Creswell 2015).

These complexities may motivate researchers to stick to one method and keep on improving it instead of combining it with other approaches. One example of

an innovative method that is used as a single method is process tracing (see Trampusch and Palier 2016). This is a qualitative method used to evaluate complex causal processes by means of historical narratives and/or within-case analysis (also Beach and Pedersen 2016). The main goal of process tracing is to make unit-level causal inferences (i.e. how a given cause affects a single unit like an international organization or a country). It focuses on a causal mechanism by examining how 'X' produces a series of conditions that come together to produce 'Y'. Process tracing is a useful tool for testing hypotheses provided that the causal mechanism under study is well theorized and not a black-box. It is particularly suited for small-n studies, for example to study why deviant cases diverge from expected trends. For example, Gheciu (2005) uses process tracing by combining interviews, participant-observation, and discourse analysis in order to demonstrate how NATO operated after the Cold War as an agent of socialization by introducing liberal-democratic norms into Central and Eastern Europe. The results refute the rationalist assumption that NATO is a military alliance which is irrelevant to processes of constructing domestic norms and institutions. The approach helps to explain how and why the national elites switched from an authoritarian to a liberal-democratic view and conduct.

Comparative historical analysis has returned to the comparative method of late. 'Comparative historical analysis aims at the explanation of substantively important outcomes by describing processes over time using systematic and contextualized comparisons' (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003: 6). Thus, this type of historical analysis is meant to be explanatory and its mode of analysis is to use time (i.e. change) as the major operationalization of a variable. Processes are studied within the context of historical developments, not in isolation, and historical sequences can be employed to explain the meaning of change. For example, some students employ so-called 'critical junctures' (e.g. the World Wars or the End of the Cold War) that have transformed the relationship between state and society. Finally, there is the notion of 'path dependence', meaning that certain political choices made in the past can explain certain policy outcomes at present (see Chapter 22). The explanation rests, then, on the idea that alternative options for choice were not open any more, or, given the time a policy exists, the 'point of no return' has been definitively passed (Pierson 2000). In short, comparative historical analysis has a lot to offer to the comparative student, either in combination with other approaches or on its own (Keman 2013).

In sum, the selection of cases and variables depends on a deliberate *choice* in relation to the research question and on consideration of the type of approach chosen in view of the explanatory goals set (see also Ragin 2008). Further, the set of cases and variables in use also affects the so-called *ceteris paribus* condition (all other things are considered to be constant for all cases). Therefore, case selection is a crucial step.

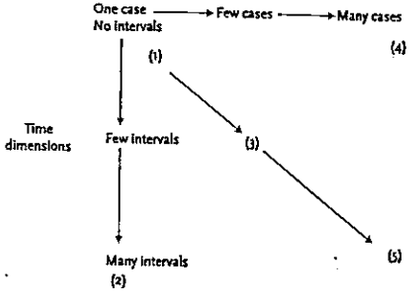
BOX 3.3 DEFINITION Cases and variables in a comparative data set

In comparative research the term 'case' is reserved for *units of observation* that are comparable at a certain *level of measurement*, be it micro (e.g. individual attitudes), meso (e.g. regional parties), or macro (e.g. national government). The information in a data set is a two-dimensional rectangular matrix: *variables* in columns (vertical) and *cases* in rows (horizontal). Each cell contains values for each variable, i.e. observations (e.g. levels of GDP, types of governments, or votes for parties), for each case (e.g. countries, regions, or parties). Likewise, variables may represent information *over time* (e.g. points in time, such as years, and are then cases; see Tables 22.1 and 22.2).

Case selection

Cases are the building blocks for the theoretical argument underlying the research design. The number of cases selected in the research design directs the type and format of comparison. This is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 shows that there are different options for selection depending on how many cases and how many variables are involved. *Intensive strategies* are those with many variables and few cases. An example is the analysis of the few consociational democracies that exist. These democracies are Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. They are characterized by major internal divisions along religious and/or linguistic lines that divide the population into more or less equally sized minorities. Despite this societal segmentation, which is often regarded as a source of conflict and instability, these countries managed to remain stable due to cooperation between the elites of the segments. *Extensive strategies* are those with few variables and many cases. An example is the analysis of welfare states, as discussed in Chapters 21 and 22. Here, many cases, if not all (e.g. all established democracies), are selected, whereas only a few variables are included. If N (number of cases included) is less than ten to fifteen, the strategy is intense. In addition, whether or not 'time' is a relevant factor needs to be taken into account (Pennings *et al.* 2006: 40–1). This is often the case, in particular when change (or a process development) is a crucial element of the research question (e.g. explaining welfare state developments). This is called *longitudinal* analysis if it is quantitatively organized or *historical* analysis if it is based on qualitative sources. Finally, if statistical analysis is used, as many cases as feasible are required to allow for tests of significance (King *et al.* 1994: 24; Burnham *et al.* 2004: 74). Five options for case selection are presented in Figure 3.2.



(1) Case study (at one time point);
(2) Time series (one case over time);
(3) Closed universe (relevant cases in relevant periods);
(4) Cross-section (all cases at one time point);
(5) Pooled analysis (maximizing cases across time and space).

Figure 3.2 Types of research design
Source: Adapted from Pennings *et al.* (2006: 21).

The single-case study

A single-case study may be part of a comparative research design. But as it stands alone it is at best implicitly comparative and its external validity is low or absent (see Landman 2003: 34–5). However, it can be used for post hoc validation to inspect whether or not the general findings hold up in a more detailed analysis or to study a *deviant* case (i.e. a case that appears to be an 'exception to the rule'), and can also be used as a *critical* or *crucial* case study (Seha and Müller-Rommel 2016). Another use of a single-case study is as a pilot for generating hypotheses, or confirming or invalidating extant theories (Lijphart 1971: 691).

Time series

Time series or longitudinal analysis can be useful in two ways: first, to compare a specific configuration within a few cases in order to inspect comparative change (which was discussed earlier in association with comparative historical analysis). An example is the analysis of new parties that were electorally more successful after the 1990s than before (see Table 12.2). Second, to analyse which factors are (or have become) relevant over time as causes. An example is the comparison of the different waves of democratization over time from the nineteenth century up to the present (see Chapter 12). Another use is to replicate a cross-sectional study by time-series analysis to observe differences in the outcomes (King *et al.* 1994: 223).

Closed universe

The third option in Figure 3.2 concerns the 'few' cases for comparison at different points of time, taking into account change by defining periodic intervals based on external events (or 'critical junctures'), for instance after a discrete event like war or an economic crisis. A good example is the developments during the inter-war period when in some European countries democracy gave way to dictatorship, whereas in other countries democracy was maintained (see Berg-Schlosser and de Meur 1996). A few(er) cases research design is often called a 'focused comparison' derived from the research question under review.

Cross-section

The fourth option in Figure 3.2 implies that several cases are compared simultaneously. This research design is frequently used. It is based on a selection of those cases that resemble each other more than they differ and thereby reduce variance caused by other (unmeasured) variables. It implies that the 'circumstances' of the cases under review are assumed to be constant, whereas the included variables vary. This enhances the internal validity of the analytical results. For example, if the focus is on formation of coalition governments, then it follows that we only take into account those democracies where multiparty systems exist.

Pooled analysis

The final option is disputed among comparativists. Although the number of cases can be maximized by pooling cases across time and systems (e.g. 20 rows and 20 columns taken together implies that the N of cases is 400 instead of 20), whereas in a time series data set the years (or other points in time, e.g. periods) are exclusively the cases and in a cross-sectional data set the cases are exclusively the political systems to be compared, the pitfall of pooling is that the impact of time is held constant across all cases (or, at least, changes across cases do not vary (Kittel 1999)). A possible fallacy is that comparative analysis suffers from the fact that the cases are 'too much' alike and therefore there are no meaningful differences from which to draw conclusions (see King *et al.* 1994: 202–3). To avoid this, one can include control cases (e.g. analysing EU members in conjunction with non-member states). Another remedy would be to include a 'rival' explanatory variable (as we showed in Figure 3.1: politics vs economics). Pooled analysis is mainly used in sophisticated quantitative approaches and it requires skills in statistical methods at a more advanced level.

All in all, the message is that the range of choice with regard to case selection is larger than is often thought. First, the options available (in Figure 3.2, options 3 and 5 are often used in combination). Second, the options in

developing a research design can be used sequentially. For instance, one could follow up a cross-sectional analysis (option 4) with a critical or a crucial case study (option 1) as an in-depth elaboration of the comparative findings. However, it should be noted that the options for choice as depicted in Figure 3.2 are not completely free. For instance, if industrialization is seen as a *process*, it must be investigated *over time* in order to answer the research question of whether or not this results in a change towards welfare statism.

The main point of this section is not only that case selection is important for how many cases can or should be included in the analysis, but also that the choice is neither (completely) free nor (completely) determined. First, the choice of cases depends on the theoretical relationship under review (X–Y), which defines what type of political system can be selected. Obviously, if one researches the working of democracies, non-democratic systems cannot be included. Second, the type of empirical data available can limit the choice of cases. Third, one should bear in mind that the relationship between cases and variables also determines what type of technique can be used: statistical analysis can only be used if the N is sufficient for tests of significance, whereas a small-N allows for including contextual information or multi-causal analysis (e.g. by means of Fuzzy-Set logic; see Section: The use of Methods of Agreement and Difference in comparative analysis). Finally, if the research question involves a specific phenomenon—like Federalism or Semi-Presidentialism—the N of cases is obviously limited by definition.

Relating the cases and associated information (i.e. data) is the next step in performing comparative analysis. This stage of the research design concerns establishing and assessing the relationship between the evidence (data) collected across the selected cases for the independent and dependent variables in search of a (causal) relationship.

KEY POINTS

- In comparative research case selection is a central concern for the research design. It is important to keep in mind that the level of inquiry as derived from the research question is related to the type of system under investigation. The comparative variation across systems is empirically observed by means of indicators representing the variables that are in use.
- The balance between (many or fewer) cases and variables is an important option for case selection and the organization of the data set (see Box 3.3).
- Figure 3.2 shows the options for case selection. The selection of cases depends on the research question and the hypotheses that direct the research design. The choice of cases can be limited due to lack of data and therefore can impair the chosen research design.

The logic of comparison: relating cases to variables

In comparative methods there are two well-known research designs that employ a different type of logic: the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) and the Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD). These designs relate directly to the type and number of cases under review and to the selection of variables by the researcher in view of the research question and the related (hypothetical) answers. Both have been developed following John Stuart Mill's dictum: ***maximize experimental variance—minimize error variance—control extraneous variance*** (Peters 1998: 30). In fact, they are 'ideal types'—something to strive for.

Experimental variance

This points to the observed differences or changes in the dependent variable (Y) of the research question, which is supposed to be a function of the independent variable (X). Figure 3.1 is an example of the basic structure of modelling the relationship between a research question and a research answer. The question at stake was whether or not 'politics matters'. A crucial requirement for answering this question and attempting to settle this debate is that the dependent variable (Y = 'welfare statism') indeed varies across cases or over time (or both). Where there is *no* experimental variance we cannot tell whether or not the independent variables make a difference or not. Hence, the research design would lead to insignificant results because we cannot tell whether the effect-producing variables (X) account for the observed outcomes (in Y).

Error variance

This is the occurrence of random effects of unmeasured variables. These effects are almost impossible to avoid in the social sciences, given its quasi-experimental nature which always implies a reduction of 'real-life' circumstances. Even in a single-case study or comparing a few cases, a 'thick' descriptive analysis cannot provide full information. However, error variance should be minimized as much as is feasible (in statistical terms, the error term in the equation is then constant or close to zero). One way to minimize error variance would be to increase the number of cases. However, this is not always feasible, as mentioned earlier in the discussion on case selection (see also 'Conceptual stretching').

Extraneous variance

The final requirement in Mill's dictum is controlling for extraneous variance. If there is no control for other possible influences, the hypothetical relation X–Y may in part be produced by another (unknown) cause. One example of an unknown cause, also called a confounding variable, is the favourable impact of consensus democracy on performance, which could also be caused by economic growth. If the latter is excluded, the analysis may suffer from underspecification, which leads to erroneous results. This is often due to omitted variables and can lead to a *spurious relationship* (a third variable affects both the independent and dependent variables under investigation). There is no 'best' remedy to prevent extraneous variance exercising an influence other than by having formulated a fully specified theory or statistical significance tests and control variables.[4] One approach is to apply the principles of the Methods of Agreement and Difference. Using these methods we are in a position to draw causal conclusions by means of logically ordering the *differences* and *similarities* between the dependent and independent variables, based on the empirical evidence available.

The use of Methods of Agreement and Difference in comparative analysis

The logic of comparative enquiry is obviously meant to assess the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable in light of the number of cases (many, few, or one) selected for comparison. As we have already seen, case selection has implications for the use of the logics of comparison. Two logics are distinguished:

- Method of Difference;
- Method of Agreement.

The Methods of Difference and Agreement originate from John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843). The basic idea is that comparing cases is used to interpret commonalities and differences between cases and variables. Hence, these 'logics' refer to the type of descriptive inference used to examine whether or not there is indeed a causal relationship between X and Y. This assessment is inferred from the empirical evidence (data) collected.

The Method of Difference focuses on comparing cases that *differ* with respect to either the dependent variable (Y) or the independent variable (X) but do *not* differ across comparable cases with respect to other variables (the *ceteris paribus* clause). Hence, covariation between the dependent and independent variables is considered crucial under the assumption that the context remains constant. This is the MSSD: locating variables, in particular the dependent variable, that differ across similar systems and accounting for the observed outcomes. An example is the debate on the role of 'politics' as regards the welfare state. We look at the political differences between systems that are similar in terms of their institutional design and examine the extent to which party differences (X) match differences in welfare state provisions (Y). The stronger the match between, for instance, the strength of the left in parliament and government and the 'generosity' of welfare entitlements on the one hand, and its absence in cases where parties of the right are dominant, the more likely it appears that 'politics matters'. Alternatively, the Method of Agreement consists of comparing cases (systems) in order to detect those relationships between X and Y that remain *similar* notwithstanding the differences in other features of the cases compared. Hence, other variables may be different across the cases except for those relationships that are considered to be causal (or effect-productive). This is the so-called MDSD. An example is Luebbert's analysis investigating the possible causes of regime types during the inter-war period (1919–39). He distinguishes three regime types: liberalism, social democracy, and fascism (Luebbert 1991). The explanatory variable (X) is 'class cooperation' (between the middle class, farmers, and the working class) and regime type is the dependent variable (Y). Luebbert finds that only specific patterns of class cooperation consistently match the same regime type across twelve European countries. Most other variables considered (as possible causes) in the comparative analysis do not match the outcome (regime type) in the same way.

When applying the (quasi-)experimental method to causal problems one should keep in mind that in social science the degree of control of the independent variables is always limited (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013: 70–88). We cannot control exposure to them because we cannot 'assign' a country a type of regime or a level of social expenditures. In addition, whereas the internal validity of experiments is often high, the external validity (i.e. generalizability) is low. Due to these drawbacks, genuine experiments are rare in comparative politics. Instead, many comparative studies are observational by taking reality as it is without randomly assigning units of analysis to treatment groups. The major disadvantage of this strategy is that, since we do not control for all possible causes of Y, there is always a chance that some third (confounding) variable is causing Y. This potential problem weakens the internal validity of observational studies. The only way to cope with this problem is to try to identify alternative causes of Y and to present any causal claim in a tentative way. The MSSD- and MDSD-designs are in between the experimental and observational methods and run the risk that they combine the weaknesses of both methods. As a consequence, if one adopts a MSSD- or MDSD-design one should be alert on both the internal and the external validity.

Recently, an alternative approach—*Qualitative Comparative Analysis* (QCA)—has been developed which attempts to cater for 'multiple causalities' (one of the limits of Mill's logic of comparison). This type of analysis allows for the handling of many variables in

combination with a relatively high number of cases simultaneously (recall option 3 in Figure 3.2). Ragin (2008) claims that this type of research design is a way of circumventing the trade-off between many cases/few variables vs few cases/many variables. The logic of comparison employed is based on Boolean algebra in which qualitative and quantitative information is ordered in terms of *necessary and sufficient* conditions as regards the relationship under investigation. This approach also appears to be well suited to focusing on the variation of comparative variables within cases. Instead of aiming at detecting one (at best) effect-producing circumstance (X) by means of a variable-oriented approach, the *homogeneity* of comparable cases directs the process of descriptive inference. An example is the search for the conditions under which economic development is more or less promoted by public policy (Vis *et al.* 2007). Instead of searching for the strongest or a single relationship, the researcher attempts to find out which *combination* of factors is connected with cases in view of their economic development. This procedure and concomitant logic of comparison has been developed into a 'fuzzy-set logic'.

The many applications and cross-validations of QCA have led to much support, but more recently also to criticisms. Most critics agree that QCA is useful if the goal is to test deterministic hypotheses under the assumption of error-free measures of the employed variables. However, critics argue that most theories are not sufficiently advanced to allow for deterministic hypotheses because causality is a complex phenomenon. In addition, the assumption of error-free measures is an illusion because often scientists have to use proxies or indicators that do not fully represent the original meaning (Hug 2013). Furthermore, as QCA is often used to analyse a relatively small number of cases, it has a problematic ratio of cases-to-variables which may negatively affect the stability of findings (Krogslund and Michel 2014). Several researchers have found that the results are susceptible to minor model specification changes. They argue that the identification of sufficient causal conditions by QCA strongly depends on the values of the key parameters selected by the researcher. They also show that QCA results are subject to confirmation bias because they tend towards finding complex connections between variables even if they are randomly generated. Others have argued that there is no way to assess the probability that the causal patterns are the result of chance because QCA methods are not designed as statistical techniques. The implication is that even very strong QCA results may plausibly be the result of chance (Braumoeller 2015). If we overlook these criticisms, we can conclude that the main critique of QCA is that it is not robust and often yields erroneous causal connections. On the one hand, these critiques should be taken seriously because they highlight weak spots that should not be overlooked by any researcher that uses QCA. On the other hand, doing causal analysis on a small number of cases by means of QCA should be regarded as a qualitative approach in which interpretation is more important than quantification. If it is purely used as a statistical technique it may well lead to misleading outcomes because the researcher fully relies on the software to generate causal connections. Applicants of QCA should never do that and instead account for all the relevant steps taken during the research and cross-validate the results with alternative sources and interpretations.

KEY POINTS

- The point of departure is a hypothesis concerning the relationship between two or more variables (X–Y) whose empirical validity is to be verified by means of real-world data across a number of cases.
- The Method of Agreement uses MDSD to allow descriptive causal inference. Conversely, the Method of Difference derives its explanatory capacity from MSSD. The shared goal is to eliminate those variables that exemplify no systematic association between X and Y across the cases selected.
- An alternative logic of comparison has recently been developed: QCA/fuzzy-set logic. This approach allows scrutiny of multiple causality across various cases and variables.

Constraints and limitations of the comparative method

Although the comparative approach in political science is considered to be advantageous in linking theory to evidence, enhancing it as a 'scientific' discipline, there are a number of constraints that limit its possibilities and can impair its usefulness. In this section we discuss some of these and offer possible solutions. While it is important to be aware of them, it is often difficult for students to find appropriate solutions. Hence, it is wise to seek advice from an experienced researcher or lecturer.

One major concern is that we often have too many different theories that fit the same data. This means that collecting *valid and reliable* data for the cases we have selected to test theoretical relations can turn out to be a daunting task. If this problem is insufficiently solved, it will undermine the quality of the results. More often than not we are forced to stretch our *concepts* so that they can *travel* to other contexts and increase the number of observations across more cases. However, this may create too large a distance between the stretched concept and the original theoretical concept (Sartori 1970, 1994). If this problem occurs (and it often does), it may well affect the internal *and* external validity of the results (see Box 3.2). In conjunction with this hazard, it has been noted

that reliability problems may arise as a result of including (functional) *equivalents* that are used to widen the case selection (and thus increase the number of cases). An example is the concept of the 'federal state'. What defines a federation, and how can such a concept be transformed into measurable entities? Thus, the problem is to what extent a concept transformed into an empirical indicator has the same meaning across different settings or cultures (Van Deth 1998). Finally, some caveats need to be taken into account when interpreting the comparative data available: (1) Galton's problem, (2) individual and ecological fallacies, and (3) over-determination.

Conceptual stretching

Conceptual stretching is the distortion that occurs when a concept developed for one set of cases is extended to additional cases to which the features of the concept do not apply in the same manner. Sartori (1970) illustrated this problem by means of the 'ladder of generality'. Enhancing a wider use of a theoretical concept by *extension* (of its initial meaning, i.e. moving from A to B in Figure 3.3) involves a loss of intension (where the observations reflect the original features of the concept, i.e. remain close to B). *Intension* will obviously reduce the applicability of a concept in comparative research across more cases, but it enhances the internal validity of the cases compared. Extension will have the opposite effect, and the question is then whether or not the wider use (i.e. in a higher number of cases to be compared) impairs the claim for external validity of the analytical results. In Figure 3.3 this choice is visualized: the more the meaning of a concept moves due to the process of operationalization from position A to B, the less equivalent the information collected for each case may be and therefore the validity of the results is negatively affected.

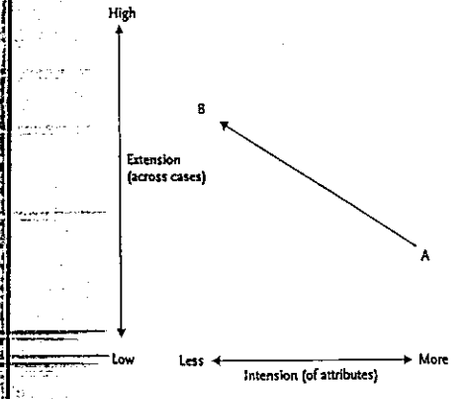


Figure 3.3 Sartori's ladder of generality
Source: Pennings *et al.* (2006: 49).

The choice to be made and the matter of dispute among comparativists is how broadly or extensively (i.e. from A to B) we can define and measure variables without a serious loss of meaning. There are different opinions on the degree of flexibility that is allowed when 'stretching' concepts to make variables 'travel' across (more) cases. Sartori remarks that *over*stretching is dangerous, and not all concepts can travel all over the world and through all time, like a political party, whereas constitutional design may (Sartori 1994). However, attempts have been made to develop methods to cope with the problem of overstretching and travelling (Braun and Maggetti 2015).

Family resemblance

Some comparativists have suggested another solution by means of 'family resemblance' (Collier and Mahon 1993: 846–8). In its simplest fashion this method extends the initial concept by adding features which share some of the attributes of the original concept. How far this type of extension can go depends on what the research question is. For example, if we are investigating the behaviour of political parties and define these as any actor that is vote-seeking (= A), office-seeking (= B), and policy-seeking (= C), then the concept of a party can be used in a wider sense. Instead of requiring that all three characteristics are present *simultaneously*, we allow the inclusion of parties that have fewer in common. Examples are electoral democracies, where people can vote (= A), but parties are not allowed to govern (= B), let alone to make policy decisions (= C). This latter type of party often occurs in emerging democracies (see Merkel 2014).

Radial categories

The second option of going up the 'ladder of generality' is the use of *radial* categories. Here the underlying idea is that each step of extension, thus including new comparable cases, is defined by a *hierarchy* of attributes belonging to the initial concept. In Figure 3.4 this is made visible by defining A as the essential attribute, whereas B and C are considered as secondary. Figure 3.4 demonstrates these two strategies for extension through which the number of cases is to be increased. Family resemblance requires a degree of commonality and this produces three cases in comparison, instead of one under the initial categorization, by sharing two out of the three defining features (AC, AB, BC). The radial method requires that the primary attribute (A) is always included. In Figure 3.4, this means two cases instead of the original single case (A + B and A + C). It is advisable to develop a *typology* first to see empirically how this transformation of a concept may work out.

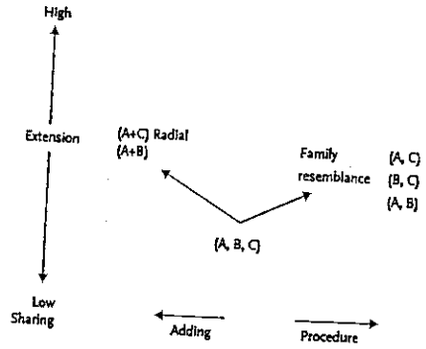


Figure 3.4 Radial categorization and family resemblance

Source: Pennings *et al.* (2006: 50).

Equivalence

A related problem of transforming concepts into empirically based indicators concerns the question of whether or not the meaning of a concept stays constant across time and space. Landman (2003: 43–6) argues that this problem is less a matter of whether or not a concept is measured with *identical* results (which is a matter of reliability regarding the measurement). Whatever solution is chosen, at the end of the day it is up to the researcher to convince us whether or not the degree of equivalence between measured phenomena is acceptable.

Interpreting results

Galton's problem, ecological and individual fallacies, and over-determination are all hazards that are related to the *interpretation* of the results of the comparative analysis.

Galton's problem

Galton's problem refers to the situation where the observed differences and similarities may well be caused by exogenous factors that are common to all the cases selected for comparison, such as comparing fiscal policy-making across states in Europe after the introduction of the EMU requirements, or the choice for a Westminster-style of parliamentary governance in former British colonies (Burnham *et al.* 2004: 74). Another example is the process of 'globalization' (see Kübler 2016). Obviously, diffusion will affect the process of descriptive inference because the explanation is corrupted by a common cause that is of similar influence in each case, but is difficult to single out (Lijphart 1975: 17). A possible way to detect such a common cause is either by triangulation or by applying comparative historical analysis.

Individual and ecological fallacies

These fallacies are likewise problematic vis-à-vis the causal interpretation of evidence. An ecological fallacy occurs when data measured on an aggregated level (e.g. at the country level) are used to make inferences about individual- or group-level behaviour. Conversely, individual fallacy is the result of interpreting data measured at the individual or group level as if they represent the 'whole' (e.g. using electoral surveys for party behaviour or national attitudes; see also the Introduction to this volume). This type of fallacy occurs regularly in comparative politics and shows the need for developing a proper level of measurement.

Over-determination and selection biases

Over-determination and selection biases are risks that emanate from case selection. In particular, when MSSD is used, the chances are high that the dependent variable is over-determined by another difference that is not actually catered for in the research design (Przeworski and Teune 1970: 34). Conversely, if the cases included in the analysis are fairly homogeneous there is a chance that a selection bias will go unnoticed. As King *et al.* (1994: 141–2) note, if the similarities among the cases affect the degree of comparative variation of the independent and dependent variables we cannot draw valid conclusions.

In addition to these constraints and limitations, comparative methods have been criticized for being a-theoretical, empiricist, and solely country-oriented (Newton and van Deth 2016). We may argue that the comparative methods do not offer solutions to all and sundry types of research problems, but help to formulate them and find ways to arrive at plausible answers. Comparison is required to make research insightful and scientifically relevant. The alternative is a single case. However, the comparative approach is developing and learning from these criticisms (Seha and Müller-Rommel 2016). Several new approaches that are related to the 'spatial turn' in comparative politics can help to advance new insights.

One example is multi-level governance (MLG) that criticizes methodological nationalism and other forms of centrism (like Europe or democracies) that often characterize comparative politics. The MLG-approach analyses how decision-making competences are shared by policy-relevant actors at different levels of government (i.e. supranational, national, and subnational levels) (Kübler 2015: 63–80). It focuses on the dynamics of cross-level interactions between these actors in one or more policy areas. These interactions often involve forms of soft power such as information exchange and persuasion. A second example examines interdependencies, policy diffusion, and policy transfer (Obinger *et al.* 2013; Jahn and Stephan 2015). This type of research argues that not only developments within nation-states matter, but also

relations between nation-states and inter- and supra-national forms of cooperation and bargaining. Such a relational approach means that policy outcomes are accounted for by multiple interdependencies in conjunction with domestic factors. Policy diffusion and transfer are explained by causal mechanisms such as learning and competition. A related approach is Social Network Analysis (SNA). A network consists of nodes (the agents) and edges (the links or relations between the nodes). The relationships between them represent ways in which actors influence and control each other. Network analysis seeks to describe these (evolving) relationships in order to learn how power structures constrain behaviour and change (for a recent example, see Paterson *et al.* 2014).

Although these new developments are promising, we have to take into account an important caveat. The existing applications are often rather descriptive and lack explanatory power and generalizability. Hence, they should be regarded as helpful additions to conventional methodologies and not as replacements.

To conclude this section, the constraints and limitations of the comparative method need permanent attention. However, it would be wrong to conclude that—given the complexities and criticisms discussed in this chapter—the comparative approach to politics is therefore misdirected or fallacious. If we accept the fact that most political science is comparative, even if not explicitly so, then it is one of the *strengths* of the comparative method that both the advantages and disadvantages are recognized and discussed in terms of its methodology.

KEY POINTS

- There are many hazards and pitfalls in comparative methods that ought to be taken into account to link theory and evidence in a plausible fashion.
- Conceptual travelling is a sensitive instrument to widen the case selection as long as overstretching is avoided.
- The use of 'Radial categories' and 'Family resemblance' to extend the number of cases can remedy this.
- Interpretation problems are often due to biases like Galton's problem and over-determination, as well as to individual and ecological fallacies. Avoiding these problems as far as possible reduces the probability of drawing invalid conclusions.

Conclusion

Some time ago, Gabriel Almond lamented the lack of progress in political science at large (Almond 1990). His main complaint concerned the lack of constructive collaboration among the practitioners. However, he made an exception as regards the field of comparative politics:

> Mainstream comparative studies, rather than being in a crisis, are richly and variedly productive ... In the four decades after World War II, the level of rigor has been significantly increased in quantitative, analytical, and historical-sociological work. (Almond 1990: 253)

Much of the credit should go to those involved in the further development of the methodology of comparative politics by means of debates on difficult issues in the comparative method. However, new developments, like QCA, process tracing, and the re-emergence of comparative historical analysis, take place and are welcome. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate this. Throughout we have maintained that comparative politics is a (sub) discipline of political science where theory development is explicitly linked to empirical evidence by means of a rigorous application of the comparative method. Even if not all the problems—and they do exist—can be solved at this stage, we hold the view that the comparative method is the best way to go forward to further comparative politics within political science at large.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. Why is the 'art of comparing' not only useful for *explicit* comparison, but also an *implicit* part of the toolkit of any political scientist?
2. Can you explain why the comparative method is often called '*quasi*-experimental'? Can you argue *why* this would justify the use of statistics in comparative politics?
3. What exactly is the difference between internal and external validity? Why is this distinction important? Can you give an example of each type of validity?
4. If you examine the debate on 'does politics matter?' can you describe the research design used? Are you able to develop an alternative one—in terms of variables and cases—to test the same issue of this debate?

5. What is a comparative variable and what is the relation between a concept and an indicator?

Critical thinking

1. What is a case? Can you elaborate what the case is in terms of unit of observation and level of measurement if it concerns a comparative investigation of party government?
2. There are different options as regards the type and number of cases needed to develop a research design. Can you think of a research question that would justify the choice of a single-case study where 'time' is relevant *and* 'inter'-system references are necessary?
3. Globalization is considered not only to grow but also to produce biased results due to diffusion. Can you discuss this problem in relation to the relationship between national policy formation of membership states and the EU?
4. Describe the basic differences between the Methods of Agreement and Difference. Give an example of each, demonstrating this difference.
5. A constraint of the comparative method is 'conceptual stretching' and the solution may lie in extending the number of cases by means of 'family resemblance' or 'radial categories'. Can you think of an example of each to extend the number of valid cases?

Further reading

General literature on methods in political science

Brady, H. D., and Collier, D. (2010) *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (2nd edn) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield). This edited volume discusses a wide variety of methodological concerns that are relevant for comparative methods.

King, G., Keohane, R. D., and Verba, S. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). This is a contemporary classic in social science methods, written by three political scientists. It is an introduction and uses much material taken from comparative politics.

Kellstedt, P. M., and Whitten, G. D. (2013) *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). This book presents an accessible approach to research design and empirical analyses in which researchers can develop and test causal theories.

Keman, H., and Woldendorp, J. (2016) *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Political Science* (Cheltenham: Edger Elgar Publishing). Representing an up-to-date state of affairs for approaches and methodologies in use, including much hands-on information, discussing different approaches and applying methods in political science.

Landman, T. (2008) *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (3rd edn) (London: Routledge). This introductory text discusses various fields within comparative politics, focusing on different research designs by means of one, few, and many cases.

Specific literature on comparative methods

Beach, D., and Pedersen, R. B. (2016) *Causal Case Studies: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching and Tracing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press). This book delineates the ontological and epistemological differences among causal case study methods, offers suggestions for determining the appropriate methods for a given research project, and explains the step-by-step application of selected methods.

Braun, D., and Maggetti, M. (eds) (2015) *Comparative Politics: Theoretical and Methodological Challenges* (Edward Elgar Publishing). A profound and thorough discussion of the contemporary challenges for comparative politics regarding multi-level analysis, concept formation, multiple causation, and complexities of descriptive inference.

Mahoney, J., and Rueschemeyer, D. (eds) (2003) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). This reader contains many different views on developing qualitative types of comparative research with an emphasis on history and the use of case studies.

Pennings, P., Keman, H., and Kleinnijenhuis, J. (2006) *Doing Research in Political Science: An Introduction to Comparative Methods and Statistics* (2nd edn) (London: Sage). This is a course book intended for students. It is an introduction to the use of statistics in comparative research and contains many examples of published research.

Ragin, C. (2008) *Redesigning Social Inquiry. Fuzzy Sets and Beyond* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press). The book centres on the 'fuzzy-set' approach as an alternative to other comparative methods as discussed in this chapter (see also Box 3.3) and discusses the advantages of this approach in comparison with extant practices.

Web links

http://www.politicalresources.net
Political Resources on the Net: provides links to a number of useful data sets for use in comparative politics.

http://www.sourceoecd.org
OECD statistics on the economy, infrastructure, and social expenditures of most developed nation-states and Central and Eastern Europe.

http://www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/
Eurostat: aggregated statistical and individual level survey data on EU and member states.

http://www.compasss.org
Website devoted to qualitative comparative analysis and Boolean analysis as used in Box 3.3 with access to literature and various software, as well as links to all relevant websites in the field.

online resource centre

For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at:
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Endnotes

[1] In comparative politics the term 'cross- national research' is often used to depict the cases for comparative analysis (e.g. Landman 2003). Here I use the term 'cross-system analysis' to avoid the idea that only 'nations' are cases in a comparative politics (Lijphart 1975: 166).

[2] There are many names in use for independent variables: exogenous, effect-producing, antecedent variables, etc. They all have in common that a change in X affects Y. In this chapter we use the term dependent (Y) and independent (X) variables.

[3] Another way of developing a causal argument is counterfactual analysis, asking what happens if a variable is omitted from the equation. In this example: what if 'politics' does not play a role?

[4] Figure 3.1 is a way to handle spuriousness: by controlling for social and economic factor X_1, one could estimate the relative influence of politics X_2 in terms of a direct relationship.

SECTION 2

The historical context

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CHAPTER 4

The nation-state

Gianfranco Poggi

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

The most significant political units of the modern world are generally referred to as 'states' or 'nation-states'. It is within and between states that contemporary political business is carried out. This chapter explains how this particular kind of political unit came into being and how it became dominant. It provides the conceptual and historical background for the study of many themes of comparative politics. We suggest that this chapter is read in combination with Chapter 24 on 'Globalization and the nation-state', which discusses some recent challenges to the dominance of this political unit.

Introduction

The comparative analysis of the arrangements under which political activity is carried out considers chiefly a multiplicity of interdependent but separate, more or less autonomous, units—let us call them polities. Polities differ among themselves in numerous significant respects, and entertain with one another relations—friendly or antagonistic—which reflect those differences. These exist against the background of considerable similarities. The most important of these qualify the polities making up the modern political environment for being called 'states'.

The expression 'state' has been applied by scholars to polities which have existed in pre-modern contexts—say, to ancient Egypt, or Imperial China. Here we suggest that 'state' is more appropriately used to designate the polities characteristic of the *modern political environment*, which came into being in Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, roughly between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

First, this chapter offers a general and streamlined portrait of the state—a concept that sociologists inspired by Max Weber might call an ideal type. It comprised a set of traits embodied in most states to a greater or lesser extent. Some significant contemporary developments within the modern political environment have brought into being polities to which some features of the portraits—for instance, sovereignty (see Chapter 24)—apply poorly, if at all. On this account, particularly in certain parts of the world some polities are designated, both in scholarly and in public discourse, as *failed states*.

As against these, the conceptual portrait that follows privileges what *proper states* are like. But even these embody to a different extent the portrait's features, having acquired them through diverse historical processes.

KEY POINTS

- Most contemporary political units (polities) share features which justify calling them 'states'.
- To that extent, they all constitute present-day embodiments of a kind of polity which first developed in the modern West. But such embodiments are realized in them to different extents and in different manners.
- Comparative politics considers both the constitutive features of the 'state' and the major steps in its development.

A portrait of the state

Monopoly of legitimate violence

States are in the first place polities where a single centre of rule has established (to a variable extent and manner) its exclusive entitlement to control and employ the ultimate medium of political activity—organized violence—over a definite territory. Individuals and bodies operating within that territory may occasionally exercise violence, but if they do so without mandate or permission from the centre of rule, the latter considers that exercise illegitimate and compels them to 'cease and desist'.[1]

Territoriality

To qualify as a state the polity must not only effectively 'police' a given portion of the earth by overwhelming any internal challenges to its own monopoly of legitimate violence. It must also claim that portion, against all comers, as exclusively its own: must be able and disposed to defend it, patrol its boundaries, confront and push back any encroachment by other states upon its territory's integrity, and prevent any unauthorized exploitation of its resources. Once more, the ultimate medium of such activities is organized violence.

The territory is not simply a locale of the state's activities (violent or other), or its cherished possession. Rather, it represents the physical aspect of the state's own identity, the very *ground* (this expression is itself a significant metaphor) of its existence and of its historical continuity. The state does not so much *have* a territory; rather, it *is* a territory (Romano 1947: 56).

Sovereignty

With reference to its territory, furthermore, the state establishes and practices its sovereignty—that is, holds within it (and thus over its population) ultimate authority. Each state recognizes no power superior to itself. It engages in political activity on nobody's mandate but its own, commits to it resources of its own, operates under its own steam, at its own risk. It is the sole judge of its own interests and bears the sole responsibility for defining and pursuing those interests, beginning with its own security. Sovereignty also means that each state accepts no interference from others in its own domestic affairs.

Plurality

Thus, the modern political environment presents a plurality of territorially discrete, self-empowering, self-activating, self-securing states. Each of these presupposes the existence of all others, and each is in principle their equal, for it shares with them its own characteristics—sovereignty in particular. Since there does not exist a higher layer of authority over the states—an overarching political unit endowed with its own resources for violence, entitled to oversee and control the states themselves—these necessarily tend to regard each other as potentially hostile, as constituting possible threats to their own security, and enter into relations with one another aimed in the first instance to neutralize those threats.

Relation to the population

States exercise rule over people and pursue policies binding on people. But states, though they sometimes project themselves as self-standing personified entities, are themselves *made of* people and operate exclusively within and through the activities of individuals. Thus, the existence itself of states involves a form of social inequality, a more or less stable and pronounced asymmetry between people exercising rule (a minority) and people subject to it (the great majority).

Such asymmetry is to an extent bounded and justified by the sense in which both parts to it belong together, and collectively constitute a distinctive entity—a *political community*. For this community the activities of rule represent a medium for coming into being, for achieving and maintaining a shared identity, for pursuing putatively common interests. As is the case for the territory, the relationship between the state and its population is not purely factual; the population is not perceived as a mere demographic entity, but as a people (or, as we shall see, as a nation). As such, it entertains a constitutive relation with the state itself.

All this, of course, lends itself to much ideological mystification. For instance, it induced Marx to speak of the nation as an 'illusory' community and to reject the view of the people or the nation as the source and/or carrier of the state's sovereignty. But how illusory can you call a commonality in the name of which feats of great magnitude and significance have been accomplished (for good or for evil) throughout modern history?

KEY POINTS

- Internally, states possess a single centre of power that reserves for itself the faculty of exercising or threatening legitimate violence.
- A state does not respond to any other power for the uses to which it puts that faculty and others.
- The state uses organized violence to protect one portion of the earth which it considers its own territory. It claims exclusive jurisdiction over the population inhabiting that territory and considers itself as solely entitled to define and to pursue its interests.
- Externally, each state exists side by side with other states, all endowed with the same characteristics, and considers them as potential contenders, allies, or neutral parties.

A more expansive concept

A definition of the state in Weber's *Economy and Society* stresses what I have said so far and introduces the points to be made in this section.

> *The primary formal characteristics of the modern state are as follows: It possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organised activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by regulations, are oriented. This system of order claims authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction. It is thus a compulsory organisation with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is permitted by the state or prescribed by it.* (Weber 1978: 56)

This definition points to additional features of states active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—though of course individual states display them to a different extent and in different ways. This *diversity* is the main theme of the study of comparative politics.

The role of law

We begin by noting that *law*, understood as a set of general enforceable commands and prohibitions, has played a significant role in the construction and management of states. In all societies, law so understood has chiefly performed two functions: first, to repress antisocial behaviour; second, to allocate between groups or individuals access to and disposition over material resources. In the West, however, law has been put to further uses: *establishing polities, deliberating and pursuing policies, instituting public agencies and offices, and activating and controlling their operations.*

These uses of law developed first in the Greek *polis*, then in the Roman Republic and Empire. Subsequently, European polities maintained a connection with the realm of law: rulers were expected to serve justice, observe it in their own conduct, and enforce it in adjudicating disputes and punishing crimes. But for a long time the commandments in question were understood to express folkways and the moral values of religion. Local judges and juries were said to *find* the law, and were not meant to *make* it. Much less did the rulers do so. Instead, they mostly enforced the verdicts of judges and juries.

This arrangement subsequently changed. Rulers undertook to play a more active legal role. Increasingly assisted by trained officials, they began to codify local vernacular sets of customs and usages and to enforce them uniformly over the territory. Above all, they

asserted themselves as the source of a new kind of law—*public* law. This regulated the relations on the one hand between the organs and offices of the state itself, and on the other between the state and various categories of individuals and groups, generally asserting the supremacy of the former's interests over those of the latter.

Two later developments counterbalanced one another. On the one hand, it was increasingly asserted that ***all law was such only in so far as it was produced by the state***, through special organs and procedures. Law had become, so to speak, the exclusive speech of the state. On the other hand, ***the state declared itself bound by its own laws***. The activities of its organs and the commands of state officials were considered valid only if their content or, more often, the ways in which they were produced, conformed with some express legal principles, such as those contained in constitutions.

To an extent that varied in time and from region to region, the state—without ceasing to assert its own grounding in sheer might—became involved in producing and implementing (and, by the same token, complying with) arrangements expressed in legal instruments of diverse kinds: constitutions, statutes, decrees, judgements, ordinances, and by-laws.

Centralized organization

These instruments make up a more or less explicit and binding hierarchy of legal sources. Typically, the constitution lies at the top, by-laws stand lower than statutes, and so on. This is so in three closely related senses.

1. Higher sources authorize and place boundaries upon lower ones.
2. The products of lower sources can change without altering the content of higher ones, but can articulate and specify them in different and variable ways.
3. The verified contrast between the content of a higher source and that of a lower one invalidates the lower one. Special judicial organs are empowered to issue judgements of different scope or gravity. Higher ones may review and nullify or revise the judgements of lower ones.

Other aspects of the state reveal a preoccupation with unity and coherence, and express it through hierarchy. For instance, the monopoly in the exercise of violence has a legal aspect (Max Weber speaks of 'legitimate force'). But much more significant are its organizational components, summarized in the contemporary expression 'command, communication, and control', without which that monopoly cannot be secured.

Those components have sometimes a very loose relationship (if any) to legal constraints. The organizational blueprint of the state mostly reveals a ***managerial rather than a legal*** rationality. It is chiefly intended to make the operations of all state agencies as responsive as possible to the directives of the political centre, and to render them uniform, prompt, predictable, and economical.

The distinction between state and society

The distinction between 'state' and '(civil) society', theorized by Hegel among others, is more or less expressly reflected in the constitution of several Western states. The state, in principle, is an ensemble of arrangements and practices which address ***all and only*** the political aspects of the management of a territorially bounded society. It represents and justifies itself as a realm of expressly political activities (legislation, jurisdiction, police, military action, public policy) complementary to a different realm—society—comprising diverse social activities not considered political in nature, which the state organs do not expressly promote and control. Individuals undertake those activities in their private capacities, pursue values and interests of their own, and establish among themselves relations which are not the concern of public policy.

Religion and the market

At the centre of society stand two sets of concerns which for a long time the state had considered very much as its own, but subsequently released from its control.

First, the state becomes increasingly secular. That is, it progressively dismisses any concern with the spiritual welfare of individuals, which previously it had fostered, mostly by privileging (and professing) one religion and associating itself with one church. (A critical reason for this development was the breakdown of the religious unity of the West caused by the Reformation.) Second, the state progressively entrusts to the two central institutions of private law—*property* and *contract*—the legal discipline of the activities which relate to the production and distribution of wealth, and which increasingly take place via the *market*.

However, one meaning of sovereignty is that the state's specific concern with external security and public order may override those of private individuals, especially in confronting emergencies. Furthermore, private activities are carried out within frameworks of public rules which the state is responsible for enacting and enforcing.

However, it is the state's prerogative to fund its own activities by extracting resources from the economy. Typically, the modern state is a 'taxation state': it extracts resources from the society's economic system chiefly by regularly levying moneys from stocks and flows of private wealth. Such levies, authorized by law and carried out by public officials, are compatible with the security of private property and with the autonomous operations of the market. The name itself of another subsidiary form of extraction, the *public debt*, again suggests that compatibility: private individuals become creditors of the state. The significance of these phenomena, which are often the subject of controversy, has been argued by Stasavage (2011).

Various aspects of the *interaction* between the state's economic interests and the society's political interests are a constant component of modern social dynamics, often characterized by such expressions as ***politics and the market***. What is characteristic of many ***failed states*** is the frequency and the extent to which the occupants of significant positions in the political system misappropriate, and put to their own advantage, enormous amounts of economic resources officially destined for public use. Sometimes its critics label this phenomenon—particularly evident in some parts of Africa—*kleptocracy*: that is, rule by thieves. But the phenomenon is present in other parts of the world. For example, in 2015, at the end of Cristina Kirchner's tenure of the Presidency of the Argentinian Republic, it was calculated that over its twelve-year duration her family's patrimony had increased eight-fold.

In the modernization of different societies, the distinction between state and society is accompanied by further processes of differentiation taking place within both realms. For instance, within the civil society there emerges a domain—science—which attends expressly and exclusively to the production and distribution of secular knowledge about nature, autonomously from religious authorities. Within the state itself, the so-called 'separation of powers' between the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive constitutes the outcome of a process of differentiation. The process also produces its effects in the context of the executive, with the development of bureaucratic systems of administration (see also Chapter 8). As a result, the state increasingly presents itself as a complex of purposely differentiated and coordinated parts, each designed to perform a specific task.

The public sphere

Behind these aspects of political modernization lies a further phenomenon—the formation of the 'public sphere' as a kind of hinge between state and society. As if to balance and complement the extent to which the state monitors and assists the processes of the civil society, the subjects active in it acquire a capacity first to observe the activities of the state, then to communicate with one another about them, to criticize them, and finally to make significant inputs into them. This is only possible, at first, for the narrow portion of the population possessing the leisure and the necessary material and cultural resources.

But over time this portion grows, availing itself of such arrangements as the freedom of speech, of the press, of petition, of assembly, of association; of rules that require some state organs to conduct their activities in public, exposing them to legitimate debate and criticism; above all, of the institutions of 'representative' government. Due to these in particular, the selection of the small minorities who directly and continuously operate some state organs comes to depend on registering the preferences periodically expressed by the much larger numbers of people making up the electorate.

At first, only a narrow minority within the population can form and express such preferences. Even as that minority grows, with the progress of liberalism, for a long time its rights remain limited by two qualifications: (1) material possessions (*census voting*) and (2) cultural attainments (*capacity voting*) (see also Chapter 5). We can characterize the progress of *democracy* as the progressive lowering and then elimination of these barriers. In the long run, the great majority of the adult population (mostly, until relatively recently, excluding women) acquires, through suffrage, an equal (though minimal) capacity to express political preferences and to impinge on the selection of governing elites and, via these, the formation and execution of public policy.

The new 'entrants into politics' are mobilized by expressly formed organizations—political parties (see Chapter 12)—which compete in order to determine directly who at a given time has the decisive say in legislative and executive organs, and indirectly the content of their activities. In this manner, public policy is increasingly the product of 'adversary politics', of a periodic, legitimate contest between parties for electoral support. The party which has failed in a given contest can publicly criticize the policies of the successful party, elaborate alternative policies, and seek success in the next contest.

The burden of conflict

Although we generally think of political participation chiefly as entailing a *vertical* flow of influence from the society at large towards its political summit, we should not forget the etymological meaning of 'participation'—*taking sides*—that points instead to a *horizontal* split, a division within the society itself. Put otherwise: through the public sphere the contrasts of opinion on political matters formed within the society map themselves onto the state, affecting the operations of its legislative organs and of those charged with the formation and implementation of policy.

Political alignments such as parties often derive their conflicting policy orientations from deep and long-standing *social cleavages* within the population (see Chapter 13). Some cleavages do not just represent different orientations of opinion concerning single issues, but also reflect serious cultural differences (say, between religious or linguistic groups), tensions between a country's centre and its periphery, ethnic differences, or sharp

class antagonisms. In the modern political vocabulary, the significance of such a threat is evident in such negative expressions as 'sectionalism', 'factionalism', 'partisanship', or 'interest', and in the contrasting emphasis on the necessity of protecting the state's 'unity' from such phenomena, appealing instead to the generality's 'loyalty', 'discipline', and 'spirit of sacrifice'.

Citizenship and nation

In most modern states, this threat is countered by two different and to an extent complementary strategies: citizenship and the nation.

Citizenship

The first strategy consists in the institution of citizenship, which finds its primordial expression in the dictum *all citizens are equal before the law.* Eventually, the principle came to signify the progressive inclusion of all individuals making up the people into a formally equal relationship to the state itself. Individuals placed under the same obligations and enjoying the same entitlements vis-à-vis the state were made to feel more equal to one another. Furthermore, their activities relating to the public sphere were put at the service of a new principle of equality, associated with the progress of democracy, and originally phrased as *one man, one vote.*

Under this principle, as we have seen, broader and broader masses of individuals entered the political process and made inputs into the state's activities via the electoral competition between parties. Those supported chiefly by economically disadvantaged strata promoted public policies that added to citizenship new entitlements towards the state. These, to an extent, reduced, or compensated for, economic inequalities generated among individuals by market processes and the resultant class cleavage.

However, this happened by mobilizing class contrasts, by making the processes of creation and distribution of wealth an object of public contention and of policy, no longer shielded from the state by the separateness of the economic realm and the autonomy of the market. The state acknowledged the significance of socio-economic cleavages and expressly worked to reduce it via the increasing operations of the welfare state. To this end it extracted from the economy greater and greater resources, and entrusted them to expressly created public organs, charged with both redistributing some of those resources and assisting the economy in producing further ones. This process, however, also produced negative effects, at any rate from the standpoint of the elites privileged by the workings of the economy—although often also elites, these variously benefitted from the growing involvement of the state in economic affairs.

Nationhood

The second strategy seeks to generate in the whole society, across the classes, a shared sense of solidarity grounded on nationhood. The political community typical of modern states understands itself as a *nation.* Most of the polities with which this book deals define themselves as nation-states; the relations of states with one another make up international politics; the pursuit of the national interest by each state is supposed to be the key rationale of those relations. Finally, nationalism is widely seen (for better or for worse) as a most significant determinant of political activity.

For all this, the concept of nation is notoriously hard to define. The etymology of the expression hints at a nation's origins in a shared biological heritage, for it has the same root as 'nature' and *nasci* (Latin for 'to be born'). And indeed some contemporary accounts of the concept, sometimes labelled 'ethnic', emphasize similarity (and continuity) of blood, attributing to the phenomenon of nationhood a primordial, biological origin. Although this emphasis is echoed in the ideologies of many political movements, it does not accord well with the fact that the reference to nationhood as a political value and the corresponding 'consciousness of kind' are by and large modern phenomena.

Reflecting this, most contemporary scholarly understandings of nationhood treat it as a response to, or a component of, other modern phenomena, such as industrialization, the diffusion of literacy, the emergence of media of communication addressing broader and broader publics, and indeed the state's need to generate at large a sense of identification with itself and of commitment to its interests. This view found exemplary expression in a statement the Italian statesman Massimo D'Azeglio made in 1861: 'We have made Italy, now we must make the Italians.' On this account, nations have recently been characterized as *imagined and socially constructed* communities (Anderson 1983) (see Box 4.1).

In this view, most nations have been brought into being by protracted, intense, diffuse communication processes, mostly activated by the state itself and carried out on its behalf, funded from the public purse, and carried out by modern intellectuals (historians, journalists, poets, musicians, teachers, political leaders). Their products are diffused by public education systems (whose audiences are to a various extent recruited through compulsion), and by symbolic practices promoted by the state (such as monuments, street names, public festivities, commemorations, and military parades). To the extent of its success, this operation sustains in the members of the public a sense of trust, mutual belonging, pride, and solidarity.

As a result of such socialization processes, a people who had lived for generations within the same framework of rule may come to share a value-laden, emotionally compelling image of its history and its destiny, a sense of its own uniqueness and superior value. It comes to perceive itself as a distinctively significant, binding, active, collective entity. It generally identifies closely with the territory of the state, which it considers its own cradle and the material ground of its identity. Alternatively, it aspires to make the territory on which it resides the seat of a new self-standing state, intended to give political expression to its unity, to redeem its population from its painful and demeaning subjection to a state governed by foreigners. It may then happen that the emergence of a nation as a cultural entity *precedes* the formation of a state, intended to become the nation's own institutional container and give it political expression.

The emphasis on nationhood counteracts the tendency of the public sphere to project into the political realm divisions arising from the diverse, often conflicting, interests which motivate the activities of private individuals in the civil society. But the appeal to nationhood has also a more positive significance, which relates it to citizenship and the trend towards widening and enriching its significance.

Earlier in this chapter, I considered citizenship as a set of arrangements for reducing the economic underprivilege of large social groups, and thus their material distance from privileged groups. But the effort to reduce greater socio-economic inequality can also impart more significance to nationhood itself. In the historical career of citizenship the rhetoric of 'one nation' has played at least as great a role as that of 'social justice'. In fact, the earliest modern state-wide 'welfare' policies, initiated by Bismarck in nineteenth-century Germany, were probably inspired more by the first concern than by the second. And one may detect a connection between the burden and suffering that the state's military ventures imposed on a people, supposedly on behalf of the national interest, and the state's attempt to ease those burdens or compensate for those sufferings through *welfare* initiatives.

Although, I would argue, political power maintains its ultimate grounding in the exercise or the threat of organized violence, the latter ceases to manifest itself openly and harshly in everyday experience. Most of the people professionally involved in (so to speak) the business of politics no longer differ markedly (as they did in earlier stages of state development) in their attire, their posture, their speech, the ways they relate to one another and to other people, from individuals involved in commerce, management, or the liberal professions.

Today, most kinds of political and administrative activity are carried out in peaceable and orderly sites (legislative bodies, courts, public agencies of various kinds), where people generally talk politely to one another, consult and refer to documents, argue about solutions to problems, negotiate arrangements, express reasons for their preferences, put forward proposals. Even when superiors expressly give binding orders to their subordinates, they refer at most in an implicit, covert manner to the sanctions which would follow from disobedience, and those sanctions rarely entail the exercise or the threat of violence. The highest and most general legal commands—say, statutes—are expressed in highly codified sophisticated language. Lower-level commands (say, a fine or an order to pay tax) are only valid and binding if they refer to higher-level ones.

This does not mean that political activity has lost its ability to threaten or exercise violence. However, the personnel routinely involved in it are generally (not in times of war) a minority among the multitude of people carrying out the manifold political activities characteristic of a developed state.

Generally, only people serving in the police and the armed forces are authorized and expected to bear arms, to wear uniforms. *They* belong to bodies where an imperious chain of command obtains; harsh sanctions may be promptly inflicted on those members who disobey or disregard orders. Thus, the threat or exercise of violence is entrusted to specialized personnel and separated from the normal practices of political authority, both materially (for instance, soldiers reside in barracks) and symbolically (consider again the uniforms worn by members of the army and the police, their visible markers of rank).

Punishment is no longer inflicted on miscreants in public places, or in a particularly visible, dramatic, cruel manner. The most common among serious punishments—imprisonment—is mostly carried out in a routinized, silent, invisible manner, in separate buildings, often out of the public eye. And the decision to bring to

BOX 4.1 DEFINITION Imagined communities

The nation is an 'imagined' political community.

- It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
- It is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if variable boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.
- It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born when Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained hierarchical dynastic realm.
- It is imagined as a *community* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep horizontal comradeship.

Source: Adapted from Anderson (1983: 6–7).

bear the means of violence on criminals or on enemies belongs in principle to political personnel not themselves directly involved in practising violence—judges, members of representative bodies, and top political officials.

This kind of 'civilianized' arrangement typically does not diminish the state's capacity for organized violence, but increases it. Paradoxically (but this effect had already been theorized by Hobbes) the increase in the *potential* for violence is typically accompanied by a decrease in the entity of *actual* exercise of violence. As they go about the ordinary business of their lives, individuals may be spared the experience of fear by the very fact that the potential violence monopolized by the state becomes more, not less, fearsome.

The conceptual portrait recapped

The modern political environment is composed of a plurality of states sharing some formal characteristics. Thanks to its monopoly of legitimate organized violence, each state exercises sovereign power over a population which inhabits a delimited territory, and constitutes a political community, often referred to as a nation. The interactions between states are normally peaceable, but since they are not overseen and regulated by a superior power capable of imposing sanctions, they ultimately depend on the armed might that each state can bring to bear in order to contrast or overwhelm other states pursuing interests opposed to its own. Thus those interactions are highly contingent and may periodically be adjusted by the threat or exercise of military action between the states involved.

Over the course of the last two or three centuries, many states have, to a greater or lesser degree, acquired additional traits. Their internal structure is generally designed and controlled by the laws each state produces and enforces, which in turn regulate its own activities. These are very diverse, and are generally carried out by a number of organs and specialized agencies. They deal directly with matters the state considers to be of public significance, viewing other matters as the primary concern of (civil) society, pursued on the initiative of individual citizens.

However, some state activities, including the making of laws and their enforcement, lay down frameworks for the pursuit by individuals of their own private concerns. Furthermore, the institutions of the public sphere may empower individuals to form and communicate opinions on state policies, and to organize themselves in parties which represent the diverse (and often contrasting) interests within the society, select the personnel of various state organs, and mandate their policies.

In the course of the last two centuries, most states have conferred on the individuals within their populations a variable set of citizenship entitlements, beginning with those relating to the public sphere, and comprising claims to various benefits and services provided by the state, ultimately funded from the proceeds of the state's fiscal activities. The advance of citizenship has often entailed making a public issue of socio-economic differences between individuals, and committing state policy to their moderation. For this reason it has often been contested. One may consider the appeal to nationhood, and the state's positive efforts to 'push' that appeal, as a way of curbing the divisive effects of the contests over the reach and content of citizenship entitlements.

BOX 4.2 DEFINITION Citizenship

So far my aim has been to trace in outline the development of citizenship in England to the end of the nineteenth century. For this purpose I have divided citizenship into three elements: civil, political, and social. I have tried to show that civil rights came first, and were established in something like their modern form before the first Reform Act was passed in 1832. Political rights came next, and their extension was one of the main features of the nineteenth century, although the principle of universal political citizenship was not recognized until 1918. Social rights, on the other hand, sank to vanishing point in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their revival began with the establishment of public elementary education, but it was not until the twentieth century that they attained to equal partnership with the other two elements of citizenship.

Source: Marshall 1950: 27–8.

KEY POINTS

- States differentiate between their political activities and those of the civil society (the pursuit of private economic interests and the expression of personal beliefs and values). They articulate themselves through legal instruments (constitutions, statutes, decrees, various kinds of rulings) into units operated by distinct bodies of personnel. In particular, they have entrusted practices concerning internal order and external defence to the police and the military.
- In the democratic state, decisions over state policies are the products of the peaceable competition between parties seeking to maximize their electoral support in order to occupy the top positions in various state bodies and to promote the interests of their supporters.
- Policies pursued by states since the middle of the nineteenth century have sought to moderate inequalities by assigning individual members of the population civil, political, and social rights—i.e. citizenship (see Box 4.2).
- To counter divisive tendencies between groups, states have undertaken policies intended to generate a sense of commonality—chiefly, a sense of national belonging.

State development

The features of the state presented in the preceding section are the outcomes of complex historical events (see Box 4.3). These differed not just in their location in space and time, but also in (1) the sequence in which they occurred, (2) the degree to which their protagonists expressly sought to produce those outcomes, (3) the extent to which the features agreed or conflicted with one another, and (4) the impact they had on the patterns of political activity of each state, its relations to the civil society, and its capacity to respond to new challenges.

Furthermore, as we have seen, all states-in-the-making operated in the presence of one another, which led some states to imitate some aspects of others, or, on the contrary, to emphasize their differences. This further complicated the historical processes. For instance, some states previously unified by the successful efforts of royal dynasties sought to strengthen their unity by promoting a sense of nationhood. Later, other states imitated such a nation-building project. Furthermore, populations which, despite being ruled over by foreign powers, had somehow acquired a sense of themselves as 'nations without states' sought to build states of their own. Thus, in some cases state-building preceded nation-building; in other cases, it was the opposite.

The study of comparative politics necessarily simplifies these complex phenomena, for instance by stressing either differences or similarities between units. It contrasts states built early, in late medieval or early modern Europe (for instance, England or France), with others built during later stages of modernization (for instance, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as in the case of Germany or Italy). It distinguishes states built upon successful conquest (for instance, England) from those owing their existence to the breakdown of larger polities (for instance, contemporary Serbia or Ukraine).

This section of the chapter distinguishes three main phases within the story of state formation and development, which unfolded first in Europe, then extended to polities established elsewhere by European powers (for instance, North America), and later encompassed other parts of the world. However, the way in which it is narrated here chiefly reflects the European experience. Even in this context the succession of phases suggested purposely abstracts from a huge variety of events, incidents, and episodes which a properly historical treatment would have to reconstruct.

BOX 4.3 DEFINITION Patterns of state formation

We can distinguish at least five paths in state formation.

1. Through *absolutist kingship* which obtained independent power by building up armies and bureaucracies solely responsible to monarchs (e.g. France, Prussia).
2. Through *kingship-facing judges and representative bodies* (and, within them, eventually political parties) which developed sufficient strength to become independent powers (e.g. England, Sweden).
3. State formation from below through *confederation or federation*, intended to preserve some degree of autonomy for the constituent 'states' and a general emphasis on the division of power within the centre through 'checks and balances' (e.g. Switzerland, US).
4. State formation through *conquest and/or unification* (e.g. Germany, Italy).
5. State formation through *independence* (e.g. Ireland, Norway, and cases of break-up of empires: Habsburg and Ottoman empires).

Source: Adapted from Daalder (1991: 14).

Consolidation of rule

We can label the first phase, which takes place largely between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, 'consolidation of rule'. During this phase, with different timings in different countries, a decreasing number of political centres each extend their control over a larger and larger portion of Europe. Each typically broadens the territorial reach of its own monopoly of legitimate violence and imposes it on other centres. The political map of the continent becomes simpler and simpler, since each centre now practises rule, in an increasingly uniform manner, over larger territories. Furthermore, these tend to become geographically more continuous and historically more stable—unless, of course, they become themselves objects of further processes of consolidation.

Sometimes these are peaceful. For instance, the scions of two dynasties ruling over different parts of Europe marry, and the territorial holdings of one spouse become welded to those of the other. However, consolidation is mostly the outcome of open conflicts between two centres over which one will control which territory. Such conflicts are mostly settled by war, followed by the winner conquering and forcibly annexing all or part of the loser's territory. 'States make war,' as someone memorably put it, 'and wars make states' (Tilly 1990: 42).

However, waging war requires a financial capacity to muster resources—troops, officers, hardware—and deploy them against opponents, making them prevail in the clash of arms against the resources wielded by the enemy. Very often, military innovation confers an advantage to larger armies and fleets, which can wage war over more than one front, and become internally differentiated into 'services' performing distinct complementary military tasks. But such armies and fleets can only be afforded

by rulers who marshal larger resources, which in turn requires raising troops from larger populations, tapping the wealth produced by larger territories. This premium on size is a strong inducement to consolidation.

But the recourse to war, however frequent throughout European history, is intermittent. When weapons are silent, however temporarily, resources of a different nature come into play. Often, political centres intent on consolidating rule do this in response to an appeal for peace, which recurs most frequently in European history, often voiced by religious leaders. Each centre seeks to prove itself by establishing its control over a larger territory, thus putting an end to rivalries between lesser powers which would otherwise occasion war. This does not always involve prevailing over those powers in battle. Diplomatic action, alliances and coalitions, the ability to isolate opponents or to make them accept a degree of subordination, and sometimes the recourse to arbitration by the empire or the papacy also play a role.

Besides, military activity itself requires and produces rules of its own, the very core of an emerging body of law seeking, more or less successfully, to regulate aspects of the relations between states. Another significant part of such law makes conflict over territory less likely by laying down clear principles for succession into vacant seats of power, which generally make the exclusive entitlement to rule dependant on legitimate descent. Other developments contribute to the same effect, which we might call 'pacification'. In particular, advances in geography, in the measurement of terrain, and in cartography allow the physical reach of each centre of rule to be clearly delimited by geographical borders, often determined by features of the terrain. It remains true, as Hobbes put it, that states maintain towards one another, even when they are not fighting, 'a posture of warre'. But they partition the continent of Europe, and later other continents, in a clear and potentially stable manner.[2]

Rationalization of rule

There is often an overlap between the processes of consolidation in the first phase of state formation and development, and the processes of a second phase, which I label the 'rationalization of rule'. Consolidation, we have seen, produces larger, more visible, and stable containers of state power; rationalization bears chiefly on the ways in which such power is exercised. We can characterize such ways by distinguishing in turn three aspects of it: (1) centralization, (2) hierarchy, and (3) function. Let us take them in turn.

Centralization

In consolidating and then exercising rule, rulers largely availed themselves of the cooperation of various subordinate but privileged power-holders—chiefly, aristocratic dynasties, towns and other local or regional bodies, bishops, and other ecclesiastical officials. Often that cooperation was granted only after the subordinate powers had been forced to renounce some of their privileges—in particular, especially as concerns aristocrats, that of waging private wars.

All the same, their later cooperation generally had to be negotiated, since the privileged powers maintained a degree of autonomous control over various resources, and managed them in the first instance on their own behalf. They could be induced to do so on the ruler's behalf only under certain conditions, sanctioned by tradition or by express agreements between themselves and the ruler. For instance, the cooperating lesser powers would extract economic resources from the local population under their jurisdiction in order to convey them to the ruler. But they would do so only if they had given their consent to the purpose to which the ruler intended to commit those resources. They often kept a fairly large part of those resources for themselves, and controlled locally the ways in which the remainder of them were managed and expended in their respective part of the territory.

Obviously, such arrangements considerably limit the rulers' freedom of action, their ability to lay down policy for the state as a whole and have it promptly, reliably, and uniformly implemented over the whole territory. They make the conduct of political and administrative business discontinuous and sometimes erratic, since who is charged with it at a given time—in particular, qua head of an aristocratic lineage—depends on the vagaries of hereditary succession, and often has no particular inclination or capacity for that business. Even the cooperation granted, as we have seen, by constituted collective bodies (the so-called 'estates') tends to give priority to their particular interests, and thus to preserve traditional arrangements, beginning with their autonomy. This makes it difficult for the ruler to coordinate and render predictable the practices of the several powers interposed between himself at the top and, at the bottom, a territory made larger by consolidation and its population.

To remedy this situation, rulers progressively dispossess the existent individuals and bodies of their faculties and facilities they had employed in their political and administrative tasks.[3] They put in place alternative arrangements for performing both those tasks and those required by new circumstances. Instead of relying on their former cooperators, they choose to avail themselves of *agents and agencies*, i.e. individuals and bodies which the rulers themselves select, empower, activate, control, fund, discipline, and reward. In other terms, rulers build *bureaucracies* (see Box 4.4).

In principle, this process could greatly increase the hold upon social life at large of the political centre, enable the ruler to exercise power in an unbounded, arbitrary, and despotic fashion, and expose all those subject to it to extreme insecurity. In fact, the previous cooperators who objected to the ruler's new arrangements often raised complaints to that effect, sometimes with considerable justification. But more often their objections simply reflected their attachment to their previous privileges. We would not characterize this phase as 'rationalization of rule' if its chief import had been solely to unbind rule.

It is a feature of 'the European miracle'—the title of the book by Jones (1981)—that this phase of state-building has two apparently contrasting aspects. Rulers do come to oversee, control, and to an extent manage social life at large in a more and more intense, continuous, systematic, purposive, and pervasive manner. However, to be legitimate, rule must appear to be oriented to interests acknowledged as general, and be exercised in a more and more impersonal and formal manner. The notion of *raison d'état* conveys both aspects. It asserts that the might and security of the polity are a general and paramount interest whose pursuit may occasionally override all others. But that interest is to be sought through self-conscious deliberation, grounded on an assiduous, detached monitoring of circumstances.

In fact, the rationalization of rule itself is part of a broader process of rationalization of social existence at large. Each major sphere of society (beginning with the three already mentioned: politics, economy, and religion) becomes the exclusive concern of a different institutional complex—a distinctive ensemble of arrangements, personnel, resources, principles, and patterns of activity. This allows (and perhaps demands) each concern to be pursued in such a way as to maximize a distinctive goal: respectively, the might and security of the state, the profitability of economic operations, and the individual's prospects of spiritual salvation.

BOX 4.4 ZOOM-IN
The bureaucratic state

Where the rule of law prevails, a bureaucratic organization is governed by the following principles.

1. Official business is conducted on a continuous basis.
2. There are rules in an administrative agency such that (1) the duty of each official to do certain types of work is delimited in terms of impersonal criteria, (2) the official is given the authority necessary to carry out his/her assigned functions, and (3) the means of compulsion at his/her disposal are strictly limited.
3. Official responsibilities and authority are part of a hierarchy.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary for the performance of their functions, but are accountable for their use. Official and private affairs are strictly separated.
5. Offices cannot be appropriated by their incumbents in the sense of private property that can be sold or inherited.
6. Official business is conducted on the basis of written documents.

Source: Bendix (1960: 418–19).

Hierarchy

In the political context, rationalization changes the basis of the routine exercise of power: the public understanding of its nature, its objective, its boundaries. As we have seen, that basis was traditionally constituted by the *rights and perquisites* of a number of privileged individuals and bodies (see Chapter 8). The new basis consists in the *duties and obligations* of individuals (we may label them 'bureaucrats' or 'officials') appointed purposefully to established offices. Their political and administrative activities can be programmed from above by means of express commands. Those issuing such commands can reward those to whom they are issued if they comply with them, and punish them if they do not. The commands themselves have two critical characteristics: (1) they tend to be general, i.e. they refer in abstract terms to a variety of concrete circumstances; (2) their content can legitimately change, and thus respond to new circumstances (see Box 4.4).

For this to happen, the new ensembles of individuals who carry out political and administrative activities—the bureaucratic units—must be hierarchically structured. At the bottom of the structure, even lowly officials are empowered to impart commands (issue verdicts, demand tributes, conscript military recruits, deny or give permissions) to those lying below the structure itself. However, those officials themselves are supposed to do so in compliance with directives communicated to them by superiors. These monitor the activity of their direct subordinates, verify their conformity with directives, and if necessary override or correct their orders. This arrangement, replicated at various levels within the whole structure, establishes an ordered array where higher offices supervise, activate, and direct lower ones. In a related hierarchical arrangement, lower offices *inform* higher ones—make suggestions on how to deal with situations—and higher ones *make decisions* and transmit them downwards to lower ones for implementation.

As already indicated, law plays a significant role in structuring these arrangements for rule. First, as we have seen, law itself is a hierarchically structured set of authoritative commands. Second, law can be taught and learned, and the knowledge of it (at its various levels) can determine, to a greater or lesser extent, the content of the agents' political and administrative operations.

This second aspect of the law points to a broader aspect of the rationalization of rule—the growing role of *knowledge* in the government and administration of the state. As rulers increasingly dispense with the

cooperation of privileged individuals and bodies, the agents who replace them are largely chosen on account of what they know, or are presumed to know, and by their having earned academic degrees and passed selective tests. Agents are expected to orient their practices of rule less and less to their own individual preferences or to local particular tradition and lore, and more and more to expressly imparted and learned systematic knowledge. Legal knowledge is the prototype of this, especially on the European continent, but it is increasingly complemented and supplemented by different kinds of knowledge—for instance, those relevant to equipping armies and waging war, building roads and bridges, charting the country, collecting statistical data, keeping financial accounts, minting money, policing cities, and safeguarding public health.

Function

Another principle structuring the centralized system of offices is *function*: the system is internally differentiated in order to have each part deal optimally with a specific task. To this end, the system parts must possess materially different resources—not only various bodies of knowledge, acquired and brought to bear by appropriately trained and selected personnel, but artefacts as diverse as weapons at one end and printing presses at the other.

For all its diversity, the whole structure is activated and controlled not only by knowledge but also by *money*, another public reality distinctly connected with rationality, chiefly acquired through taxation. Traditional power-holders had usually engaged in collaborating with rulers' material and other resources from their own patrimony; their collaboration was self-financed and unavoidably self-interested. Now, agencies operate by spending public funds allocated to them by express periodic decisions (budgets) and are held accountable for how those funds are spent. Office-holders are typically salaried, manage resources that do not belong to them but to their offices, and, as they comply with their duties, are not expected to seek personal gain, except through career advancement.[4]

To the extent that it is rationalized, the exercise of rule becomes more compatible with the individuals' pursuit of their interests within the civil society. From the perspective of those individuals, rule exercised by officials appears more regular and predictable, and occasional deviations from rules can be redressed. Rulers are interested in increasing the resources available to the society as a whole, if only to draw upon them in funding their political and administrative activities. But to this effect they must respect the requirements of the country's economic system, at best protect or indeed foster its productive dynamic, which rests increasingly on the market. To this end, again, the extraction from the economy of private resources by the state increasingly takes place chiefly by means of taxation.

The security of those resources and of their employment must be sustained by guaranteeing, through appropriate legislation and the machinery of law enforcement, the institutions of private property and contract. But other social interests and cultural concerns, not just economic ones, also benefit from the limits that rationalized rule sets on its own scope and from the arrangements it makes in order to recognize and protect the autonomy of civil society.

The expansion of rule

In the third phase, states display a dynamic which we may label the 'expansion of rule'. For centuries, the activities of each state had been oriented to two main concerns:

1. On the international scene, it sought chiefly to secure itself from encroachments on its territory by other states and on its ability to define and pursue its own interests autonomously.
2. Within its territory, it was committed to maintaining public order and the effectiveness of its laws.

In the second half of the nineteenth and through much of the twentieth century, however, states brought their activities of rule to bear on an increasingly diverse range of social interests.

Essentially, the state no longer simply *ordains* through legislation the autonomous undertakings of individuals and groups or *sanctions* their private arrangements through its judicial system. Increasingly, it *intervenes* in private concerns by modifying those arrangements or by collecting greater resources and then redistributing them, more to some parties than to others. Also, it seeks to *manage* social activities according to its own judgements and preferences, for it considers the outcome of those activities as a legitimate public concern, which should reflect a broader and higher interest (such as the promotion of industrial development, social equity, or national solidarity).

The expansion of rule modifies deeply the relationship between state and society of the previous phase. On this account, we can classify most of its explanations according to whether they locate the main source of the drive to expand in the state itself or in society.

The former accounts occur in various versions:

1. First, they impute to the state's administrative machinery an inherent tendency to grow, to avail itself of more resources, to take charge of more tasks, and to address more numerous and diverse social interests, instead of leaving them to the market or to the autonomous pursuits of individuals and groups (see Box 4.5).
2. Or, second, they may see the main reason for state expansion in the dynamics of representative democracy and of adversary politics. Putting it simply, it pays for a party out of power to increase its support by promising, if voted into power, to devote more public resources to this or that new state activity, and thus advance the interests of social groups responding to its appeal. Typically, it is parties of the left which have successfully played this card, and made new use of state activity and state expenditure to reduce the disadvantages inflicted on their supporters by market processes.
3. This interpretation fits closely with a third one, which imputes the expansion of the state chiefly to phenomena located in the society side of the state–society divide. Here, underprivileged groups stand to gain most by state expansion, and thus invoke it and favour it, through their suffrage or by other forms of mobilization.
4. However, according to a fourth interpretation, many aspects of state expansion support directly or indirectly, rather than correct and counteract, the workings of the market economy in the interest primarily of firms and employers. For instance, some colonial ventures of European states favoured major economic forces seeking privileged access to the raw materials, manpower, and market opportunities that they saw in foreign lands, or seeking profit from the supply to the state of military and naval hardware. Furthermore, for over a century now, many public resources have been committed to educational activities, which deliver to the labour market employees equipped with the diverse qualifications and skills the economy needs. In the second half of the twentieth century the state often underwrote, on behalf of firms and thus primarily of employers, substantial research and development costs to sustain advanced and profitable production processes and to fund innovation in them.

More widely, this fourth interpretation attributes much state expansion to the fact that, left to itself, the market often does not generate enough demand for industrial products to sustain capital investment, a reasonable level of employment, and thus domestic demand for industrial products. From this perspective, the main beneficiaries of state expansion are, in the end, the more established and privileged social groups.

In fact, the frequently evoked imagery of states expanding by considering as their own social tasks previously performed by autonomous social forces, and usurping society, is sometimes misleading. Many of the activities carried out, well or otherwise, by the expanding state, respond to *novel* needs, potentialities, and opportunities generated by ongoing social developments, such as the demographic explosion, urbanization, increasing literacy, mass motorization, further industrialization, and growing complexity of society itself. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, Durkheim had argued, in opposition to Spencer, that in the process of modernization the development of the private realm also requires the development of the public one.

Whatever the reasons for it, state expansion entails a growth in three interdependent aspects:

- the *fiscal take*, i.e. the portion of a country's yearly product extracted and managed by the state;
- the degree of *internal differentiation* of the organizational machinery of the state;
- the *total number of individuals* whom those units employ, and who possess increasingly varied qualifications and skills.

The last two phenomena not only displace the line between state and society, but also affect deeply the state itself, which increasingly resembles an ever-growing poorly coordinated ensemble of increasingly diverse units. The ordinary political processes—the articulation of collective interests via the parties and their periodic electoral competition, the determination of the executive by majorities, and the formation of policies through the interplay between the executive and parliaments—can less and less effectively activate and steer an administrative machinery so vast, expensive, complex, and diverse.

Much in political decision-making and in the subsequent administrative activity responds to the interests of the units themselves, or those of the specific, often

BOX 4.5 ZOOM-IN Wagner's law

Consider the following scattered indication of the validity of Wagner's Law, according to which government spending tends to rise faster than the growth of the national economy as a whole. In the UK, government spending accounted over time for the following percentages:

Year	%
1890	8.9
1920	20.2
1938	30.0
1960	36.4
1970	43.0
1981	50.3
1983	53.5

Similarly, in the US the amount of government (federal, state, and local) spending as a proportion of the net national product almost tripled between 1926 and 1979. For all OECD countries over the period 1953–73 the average of the national product accounted for by government spending rose from 34 to 39 per cent.

Source: Poggi (1999: 109).

narrow, sections of society they cater to, rather than expressing a political project reflecting a comprehensive view of the society as a whole. Thus, the administrative machinery becomes *overloaded* by multiple, ever-changing, conflicting demands. Furthermore, components of it are 'captured' by powerful and demanding social forces, and serve their needs rather than those of the public at large. All these phenomena make it more and more difficult for the political elites themselves to design and put into effect the policies for which the electorate has expressed a preference.

These phenomena manifest themselves in most contemporary states, but they do so to a different extent and in diverse ways. As the subsequent chapters show, one of the major tasks of the study of comparative politics is to establish empirically, and to account for, the variations present in the contemporary political environment, both in those manifestations and in the responses they find in the political authorities, the parties, and the social movements.

KEY POINTS

- One can distinguish, within the historical career of the modern state, three main phases which different European states have followed in somewhat varying sequences.
- *Consolidation of rule*: within each larger part of the continent (beginning with its Western parts) one particular centre of rule asserted its own superiority, generally by defeating others in war, subjecting the respective lands to its own control, and turning them into a unified territory.
- *Rationalization of rule*: each centre of rule increasingly relied on functionaries selected and empowered by itself, expressly qualified for their offices, and forming hierarchically structured units, within which their careers would depend on the reliability and effectiveness of their actions.
- *Expansion of rule*: states progressively took on broader sets of functions, in order both to confront social needs generated by ongoing processes of economic modernization and to respond to demands for public regulation and intervention originating from various sectors of society. They added new specialized administrative units and funded their activities by increasing their 'fiscal take' from the economy.

Conclusion

It can safely be assumed that the vast majority of this book's readers live in a political environment which resembles more or less closely the portrait of 'the state' given in this chapter, and whose institutions and practices bear traces of the developments sketched in the last section. For this reason, those readers—whatever their feelings about the state of which they are citizens, and however they position themselves vis-à-vis the particular government which runs it—may take for granted its main features, including the fact that they are able, among other things, to study scientifically that state itself and to compare it with others. However, this chapter, and others in this book, is intended to challenge the assumption that such matters can indeed be taken for granted.

The following statement by a notable German social theorist, Heinrich Popitz (1925–2002), entails such a challenge.

> The history of society shows only rare instances where the question 'how can one lay boundaries around institutionalized violence?' has been confronted in a positive and viable manner. Essentially, this has happened only in the Greek *polis*, in the Roman republic and a few other city states, and in the history of the modern constitutional state. And the answers given to that question have been astonishingly similar. The principle of the supremacy of the law and of the equality of all before the law (the Greeks named it *isonomia*). The notion that the making of norms by the state encounters limitations (fundamental rights). Norms assigning different competences to various political organs (division of powers, federalism). Procedural norms (decisions by collective bodies, their public nature, appeals to and review by higher organs). Norms on the occupancy of offices (turn-taking, elections). Finally, norms concerning the public sphere (freedom of opinion, freedom of association and assembly). The similarity, or indeed the commonality among such answers suggests that there are systematic solutions of the problem, how to limit institutionalized power and violence, and that these solutions, although they presuppose certain premises if they are to hold, can to an extent hold across different contexts—as different, say, as city states and those ruling over extensive territories. (Popitz 1992: 65)

Popitz's statement suggests some comments.

1. Although I have treated 'the state' as essentially a modern phenomenon (and its development as the chief political dimension of the broader phenomenon of modernization), some of its distinctive institutional arrangements had already manifested themselves in antiquity, as well as in the Middle Ages.
2. Both the earlier and the later (modern) arrangements appear at first as part of a distinctive Western story, for they originated in Europe and were subsequently transposed to parts of the rest of the world conquered and colonized by European powers, especially in North America and Australia. (However, the US was the first place where a peculiar arrangement, federalism, was more expressly and successfully experimented with, and it served as a model for further experiments—see Chapter 11.) Since then, some arrangements of this nature have become common to polities operating across the globe, although in different modes of interpretation and implementation. Sometimes these modes superficially imitate those of the more established states, but actually characterize the political units employing them as *failed states*.
3. The arrangements mentioned by Popitz, singly and together, succeed in an intrinsically difficult job—limiting, constraining, and 'taming' institutionalized political power.

This last point suggests a further consideration, left implicit in Popitz's statement. Such success cannot be taken for granted. It is a matter of degree, for it requires overcoming a built-in tendency of political power to grow upon itself, to escape limits and constraints, to 'go wild' as it were—a tendency that can manifest itself in many circumstances and in many ways. In fact, some states which shared the characteristics mentioned in the first section of this chapter have not presented all those mentioned in the second section, which have appeared in later phases of political modernization and which (in the author's personal judgement) go a long way towards 'civilizing' the state itself.

For instance, the Tsarist Empire refused to endorse many characteristic institutions of the constitutional, liberal, democratic states of Western Europe. Worse, even states which at a given point exhibited all those characteristics subsequently veered away from constitutionalism, liberalism, and democracy, and underwent institutional changes generally associated with the notion of 'totalitarianism'—as happened in the twentieth century in Italy and Germany (see Chapter 6). And even some of the constitutive features of states listed in the first section, such as 'sovereignty', are currently put under stress by a number of developments—for example, those associated with 'globalization' or with the formation of transnational polities (see Chapter 24).

Even apart from such dramatic developments, the liberal–democratic states themselves differ from one another in many relevant respects. For instance, some impart a centralized and some a federal structure to the relations between the state's political centre and its political periphery. States differ in the extent to which they have broadened and enriched the entitlements of citizenship, or in the extent to which and the manner in which a given state seeks through its policies to support and plan the development of its national economy, as against leaving such development entirely to the workings of the market. The size of the so-called 'public sector' of the economy, and the way in which it has been managed, again have differed from state to state, as have their respective taxation policies.

These and other issues have often been fought over in significant lasting confrontations between parties and between sectors of opinion, and their settlement has been more or less stable, creating affinities or contrasts between states. Besides being the themes of public life, those issues constitute the main topics of the scholarly study of politics, whether focused on a particular state or on the diversity and similarity between states. The latter, of course, is the main concern of this book as a whole.

? Questions

Knowledge based

1. What is civil society?
2. Do nations create states or vice versa?
3. What is meant by 'sovereignty'?
4. What part did military force play in the making of European states?
5. How do states typically acquire the economic resources they use?

Critical thinking

1. How can one explain the fact that members of a state's population progressively acquired rights vis-à-vis the state?
2. What part did law play in the development of the modern state?
3. For what reasons did rulers establish bodies of officials appointed and empowered by themselves?
4. What is meant by 'consolidation of rule'?

Further reading

Elias, N. (2000) *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell 1st edn 1938). The second large volume of this impressive work deals with the 'sociogenesis of the state'.

Lachmann, R. (2010) *States and Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press). A valuable interpretation of many phenomena considered in this chapter, mostly from a perspective at some variance from that adopted here.

Poggi, G. (1978) *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press). A compact and accessible statement, ranging from the Middle Ages to the contemporary era.

Tilly, C. (ed.) (1975) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). A very influential collection of major contributions to its theme, including its military, fiscal, and economic aspects.

Weber, M. (1994) 'Politics as a Profession and Vocation' (1919), in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. P. Lassman and R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 309–69. A compact but most illuminating and provocative discussion of the nature of politics and the modern state by one of the most significant modern social theorists.

Web links

http://www.pipeline.com/~cwa/TYWHome.htm
Webpage about the Thirty Years' War which gave rise to the modern states after the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

http://www.arcaini.com/ITALY/ItalyHistory/ItalianUnification.htm
Webpage about Italian unification, independence, and democratization.

http://www.americancivilwar.com
Webpage about the American Civil War.

online resource centre

For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at:
www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/

Endnotes

[1] One often speaks, today, of 'failed' states (see Chapter 25).

[2] The same rules of delimitation apply to the sea.

[3] However, they mostly do that without depriving those individuals and bodies of their private resources and their status advantages.

[4] Since not only more significant faculties and responsibilities correspond to higher offices, but also greater material and status rewards, the hierarchical structure we have talked about also constitutes a career system. It is a ladder which office-holders can climb to satisfy their legitimate ambitions.

CHAPTER 5

Democracies

Aníbal Pérez-Liñán

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

Democracy is the most legitimate form of government in our contemporary era, but the meaning of democracy is still highly contested. This chapter explores the defining elements of modern democracy and traces the origins of this form of government. It also describes different models of democracy (presidential and parliamentary, democracies oriented towards consensus or majoritarian rule), and it analyses the conditions—economic and political, domestic and international—that allow some countries to become democratic but preserve others under the rule of dictatorships. It finally discusses the future of democracy, and the challenges that lie ahead for new generations of citizens.

Introduction

What is democratic rule? Are all democracies equal? Why can some societies achieve democracy while others cannot? How shall democracies evolve in the twenty-first century? These questions shape policy debates throughout the world, from pubs and coffee shops to parliaments and international organizations. These questions defy any simple answers but we cannot ignore them. Democracy is the dominant principle of legitimacy for governments in our historical era, and rulers everywhere—even the most despotic ones—claim democratic credentials as justification for their power.

In this chapter we will address four crucial issues. First, what do we mean by democracy in the field of Comparative Politics? Contemporary democracy is an amalgam of political institutions and practices that originated in different historical periods and regions of the world. Moreover, the term 'democracy' describes an ideal as much as the reality of certain forms of government; for this reason, democratic practices are permanently evolving.

Second, we will explore the diversity of democratic regimes. Although all democratic systems share some common characteristics, democracies differ in important ways—and some democracies arguably work better than others. The diversity of this family of regimes has increased over time, as the number of democracies expanded in the late twentieth century. By 1974, only 35 countries in the world (about 26 per cent of all independent states) could consider themselves democratic; by 2014, some 95 countries (57 per cent of all states) displayed democratic characteristics.

The expansion in the number of democracies prompts our third topic: what variables facilitate the democratization of dictatorships, and what factors place democracies at risk of becoming authoritarian regimes? The question of regime change—how dictatorships transit into democracy, and vice-versa—connects this chapter with the discussion of authoritarian systems in Chapter 6.

Finally, if the survival of democracy is not guaranteed, we are forced to address the future of our favourite form of government. What are the main problems of contemporary democracy? How can democracy be reformed without being endangered in the process? These are the great challenges for generations to come.

KEY POINTS

- This chapter will address the meaning of democracy, types of democracy, the causes of democratization, and the future of democracy.
- Democracy is the dominant principle of legitimacy in our historical era.
- The number of democracies in the world expanded in the late twentieth century.

What is democracy (and who created it)?

The term democracy is used in daily life with multiple meanings. Democracy is, first and foremost, an ideal for social organization, a desired system in which—depending on who is speaking—social equality is pursued, freedoms are treasured, justice is achieved, and people respect each other. 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people', famously asserted US President Abraham Lincoln, commemorating the battle of Gettysburg in 1863. When used in this way, the term becomes an 'empty signifier', a carrier for our normative desires and concerns for the political system. This flexibility in meaning has allowed social movements to push the boundaries of democracy for over two hundred years (Markoff 1996). But this expansive use also implies that different people will invoke democracy to highlight different dreams and demands at different times. We shall return to this issue in the last section of the chapter.

There is also a historical meaning, since the term—combining the Greek words for 'people' and 'power'—originated in Athens in the sixth century before the Christian era. Athenian democracy would be a strange form of rule for any modern observer: it was *direct* democracy, in the sense that major decisions were made by citizens meeting at a popular assembly; only a very small minority of the city's population was granted citizenship (women, slaves, former slaves, foreigners, and minors were excluded), there was no constitutional protection of individual rights, and all citizens were expected to participate in the assembly. As a result, the system did not scale-up well beyond the size of an independent city, and popular decisions were often arbitrary and inconsistent. Ancient commentators criticized the Athenian regime as the rule of an uninformed mob and argued in favour of 'mixed' forms of government combining principles of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy (an inspiration for later ideas about separation of powers). The term 'democracy' thus carried a negative connotation for most educated readers until well into the eighteenth century.

The third and most common usage refers to 'really existing' democracies, the political regimes that rule in many contemporary societies. This form of government, which emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, can be best described as a *mass liberal republic*. Modern democracies are built on republican arrangements: most policy decisions are not made directly by citizens, but they are delegated to representative legislatures (Chapter 7) and executive leaders (Chapter 8) who are accountable to the electorate. Moreover, modern democracies are built on the liberal principles of the eighteenth century. Political rights are recognized for all citizens; social and human rights are recognized for non-citizens as well. The government is expected to respect such rights and to protect individuals when their rights are threatened by other actors, such as criminals or corporations (Chapter 9).

Liberal republics already existed before the industrial era, often under the guise of a constitutional monarchy, to represent the interests of a small aristocratic minority. For example, political scientist Samuel Finer described Great Britain in the eighteenth century as a 'crowned, nobiliar, republic' (Finer 1997: 1358). However, the past two centuries have witnessed an enormous expansion in the scale of political systems—both democratic and non-democratic—to incorporate large segments of the population into the political process. Modern societies achieved this mostly by progressively expanding the right to vote: to men without property, to women, to excluded ethnic groups, and to younger adults. Today, over eight hundred million people are eligible to vote in any Indian election, an impressive feat considering that this number of eligible voters is larger than the total population of Europe and more than two and a half times the population of the United States.

The historical result of this process is the familiar system of government commonly called 'Western democracy', 'liberal democracy', or plainly 'democracy' in our daily parlance. As the system evolved during the twentieth century, social scientists struggled to understand its defining characteristics. In 1942, economist Joseph Schumpeter argued that modern democracy is the 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter 1947: 269). This definition emphasizing competitive elections has been praised for its simplicity but also criticized for its limited understanding of the democratic process. In 1971, Robert Dahl extended this idea to argue that modern democracy is defined by the combination of open contestation for power and inclusive political participation. Dahl renamed this system as 'polyarchy' (the government of the many) to distinguish really-existing democracies from any abstract democratic ideal. Dahl argued that this system requires a minimum set of procedures and guarantees to work, namely: (1) freedom of organization, (2) freedom of expression, (3) the right to vote, (4) eligibility for public office, (5) the right of leaders to compete for support, (6) alternative sources of information, (7) free and fair elections, and (8) institutions that make policies dependent on voters' preferences (Dahl 1971).

Schumpeter's 'minimalist' definition and Dahl's conception of polyarchy have shaped in one way or another most definitions of democracy currently used in Comparative Politics. Those definitions vary in their details, but they generally acknowledge four principles identified in Box 5.1: free and fair elections, universal

BOX 5.1 DEFINITION Four defining attributes of modern democracy

1. Free and fair elections. National government is exercised by a legislature—parliament, congress, or assembly—and by an executive branch typically led by a prime minister or president. The legislature (at least a significant part of it) is elected by the people, while the head of the government can be elected by the people or selected by the majority in parliament. The electoral process leading to the formation of new governments is recurrent (elections take place every few years), free (candidates are allowed to campaign and voters to participate without intimidation), and fair (votes are counted without fraud, and the government does not create an unequal playing field against the opposition).
2. Universal participation. The adult population enjoys the rights to vote and to run for office without exclusions based on income, education, gender, ethnicity, or religion. Modern democracies may exclude some adults from participating based on their place of birth (foreigners are not allowed to vote in most elections) or their criminal record (although many countries allow incarcerated populations to vote). Moreover, all democracies exclude minors from participating. Standards of inclusion have expanded over time: most 'democracies' did not allow women to vote until well into the twentieth century, and the age for active citizenship has declined over time from 21 to 18, and even 16 years in many countries.
3. Civil liberties. Democratic governments do not commit gross or systematic human rights violations against their citizens, do not censor critical voices in the mass media, and do not ban the organization of legitimate political parties or interest groups (with 'legitimate' understood in a broad sense). Modern democracies usually codify citizen rights and government authority in a written constitution, and rely on an independent judiciary and other institutions of accountability (such as constitutional courts, independent comptrollers, and investigative agencies) to protect citizens' rights against government encroachment.
4. Responsible government. Once elected, civilian authorities can adopt policies unconstrained by the monarch, military officers, foreign governments, religious authorities, or other unelected powers. To protect civil liberties, some decisions may be overturned by a constitutional court. Interest groups intervene in the policy-making process, but executive leaders respond for their actions to the elected representatives in the legislature, and both executive leaders and elected representatives are ultimately responsible to voters for their policies.

Source: Adapted from Mainwaring *et al.* (2007).

participation, respect for civil liberties, and responsible government. All conditions must be simultaneously present for a country to be called democratic; if one of the conditions is conspicuously absent, the political system will fail—for one or another reason—to meet contemporary standards of democratic rule.

The four general conditions presented in Box 5.1 may be implemented in practice through diverse institutional arrangements. Two implications follow from this. The first one is that, if we look at their specific features, modern democracies can be quite different from each other. This topic will be explored in the next section of the chapter. The second implication is that no society has truly 'invented' modern democracy. Existing democracies combine institutions that originated in different countries and historical periods. John Markoff (1999) has shown that democratic innovations often emerge in peripheral countries that are not the great powers of the era. For example, the idea that political parties are necessary for democratic life—and not just selfish factions—probably gained root in the United States by the early 1820s. The requirement that voting is conducted in secret using a standard ballot was first adopted by British colonies in Victoria and South Australia in the mid-1850s. By 1825, most states in the US allowed all white men to vote without imposing property requirements; Switzerland eliminated income requirements for voters at the national level in its 1848 constitution, and several Latin American nations did so during the nineteenth century. New Zealand was the first democracy to guarantee women the right to vote in national elections by 1893. These innovations were progressively embraced by other societies, and today they are part of our standard repertoire of democratic practices.

How do we know if a country is democratic?

A working definition of democracy is crucial for research in Comparative Politics. We may want to establish, for example, if the economy grows faster in democracies or in dictatorships, if democracies invest more in health or education than authoritarian regimes, of if democratic countries are less likely to experience terrorism or other forms of political violence. These questions require an operational definition of democracy precise enough to classify specific countries as we observe them during particular historical periods. Such definition should be able to capture the traits described in Box 5.1 without conflating the concept of democracy with the outcomes that we want to explain (i.e., the 'dependent variables'; see Chapter 3), such as economic prosperity, social welfare, or political stability.

Some scholars have approached this task by creating a *dichotomous* measure of democracy. Przeworski *et al.* (2000), for example, identified four basic features of democracy (the chief executive must be elected, the legislature must be elected, multiple parties must compete for office, and alternation in power must be possible), and collected information to document these features in 141 countries every year between 1950 and 1990. Countries matching these four conditions by 31 December were classified as democracies during that year, and those missing at least one condition were classified as dictatorships.

Most scholars, however, have embraced an understanding of democracy as a *continuous* variable. Because the four conditions introduced in Box 5.1 can be present to different degrees, societies may become more or less democratic over time. Implicit in this approach is the idea of a continuum ranging between situations of blatant dictatorship, on one pole of the spectrum, and full democracy, on the other, with several intermediate stages (e.g., 'semi-democracies') in between those extremes. Some threshold along this imaginary continuum marks the point above which countries can be considered fully democratic.

Several research projects have created continuous measures of democracy for multiple countries over time. The Polity project (initiated by Ted Robert Gurr in the 1960s) provides an annual score ranging between −10 (institutionalized autocracy) and 10 (institutionalized democracy) for all countries with a population greater than half a million since 1800. Freedom House, an organization based in New York, has created yearly ratings for Civil Liberties and Political Rights for 195 countries and 15 territories since 1972. Each rating ranges between 1 (most democratic) and 7 (least democratic). More recently, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden and the University of Notre Dame in the United States, has provided annual measures for different understandings of democracy (Electoral, Liberal, Egalitarian, Participatory, Deliberative) ranging between 0 (least democratic) and 1 (most democratic) for 173 countries and territories since 1900. The information generated by these projects is open to the public and easily available online.

Although the specific definitions of democracy vary in each case, these projects follow a common strategy: they disaggregate the meaning of democracy into subcomponents or dimensions (e.g., civil liberties and political rights), they score country-years on each dimension based on the information provided by country experts (Freedom House and V-Dem) or trained coders (Polity), and then combine the information for these components to create an aggregate democracy score for each country-year (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). This approach is particularly useful to understand controversial countries: it is easy to classify extreme cases such as Switzerland or North Korea using a dichotomous scale, but complex cases such as Hungary under Viktor Orbán, Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or Venezuela under Hugo Chávez resist a binary classification and require a more nuanced understanding of democracy.

Hybrid regimes

To conceptualize political regimes that fall 'somewhere in between' full democracy and overt dictatorship, scholars have used a wide range of categories. For example, based on its ratings for Civil Liberties and Political Rights, Freedom House classifies countries every year as Free, Not Free, and Partly Free.[1] David Collier and Steven Levitsky identified hundreds of diminished subtypes employed by scholars to describe imperfect democracies, labels such as 'oligarchical democracy', 'restrictive democracy', or 'tutelary democracy' (Collier and Levitsky 1997). Diminished subtypes paradoxically add an adjective (e.g., 'oligarchical') to indicate that one of the defining attributes of democracy (e.g., universal suffrage) is weak or partly missing.

Some of these labels refer to regimes that generally meet the basic attributes of democracy presented in Box 5.1, but display a distinctive weakness. For example, Guillermo O'Donnell coined the term delegative democracy to describe a type of democratic regime in which the executive branch concentrates excessive power and is hardly accountable to other branches of government such as the legislature or the judiciary. 'Delegative democracies rest on the premise that whoever wins election to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office' (O'Donnell 1994: 59). Other labels refer to 'democracies' in which some constitutive attributes are so weak that it is dubious whether the regime truly meets the requirements presented in Box 5.1. For instance, Fareed Zakaria used the term illiberal democracy to describe regimes that display multi-party elections and universal participation, but generally fail to respect civil liberties and the rule of law (Zakaria 2007).[2]

KEY POINTS

- References to modern democracy, intended to describe a contemporary form of government, must be distinguished from normative uses of the term intended to denote an ideal and from references to government in classical Athens.
- Empirical definitions of democracy used in Comparative Politics usually connote free and fair elections, universal suffrage, civil liberties, and responsible government.
- No single society created democracy; representative and participatory institutions emerged in multiple places and disseminated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- The most commonly used measures of democracy—by Freedom House, Polity, and the V-Dem projects—provide yearly scores for a large number of countries.
- Defective democracies are often characterized with labels such as delegative democracy or illiberal democracy.

Types of democracy

In contrast to the 'diminished' subtypes discussed in the previous section, fully democratic regimes always display the four attributes presented in Box 5.1. However, the fact that all democracies share these fundamental characteristics does not mean that all democracies look alike. Democratic systems can be quite different in many regards. What are their main differences? Are some democracies *better* than others?

Parliamentary or presidential?

The most important difference among democracies involves the distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems. Parliamentary democracies emerged from the historical transformation of absolutist monarchies into democratic regimes. Their characteristic features are:

1. Citizens vote to elect members of the legislature (parliament), and the majority in parliament in turn determines who becomes the head of the government (i.e., the prime minister or chancellor). If no party has a majority in parliament, multiple parties must form a coalition to appoint the new government. This usually requires that several parties craft an agreement about future policies and share the ministerial positions in the cabinet (see Chapter 8).[3]
2. The prime minister and other ministers in the cabinet are, in most parliamentary systems, members of parliament as well. Even though there is a clear separation of functions between the executive and the legislature, there is no explicit separation of powers among these individuals.
3. Because parliamentary democracies emerged from the transformation of monarchies, there is a separation between the head of the government (the prime minister) and the head of state (the monarch). The principle of responsible government (Box 5.1) implies that the elected prime minister commands the administration; the political role of monarchs in modern parliamentary democracies is weak and oriented towards the preservation of national unity. Although Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and other democracies officially preserve—and love—their monarchs to this day, these regimes are effectively republics in disguise. Some parliamentary countries, such as Germany, India, and Italy, have adopted an explicitly republican constitution and appoint a president to perform the duties of head of state. This president is elected indirectly, by parliament or by an electoral college. For instance, the head of state is appointed by a college formed by the lower house of parliament and delegations of the states in

Germany, by the two houses of parliament and state legislatures in India, and by both houses of parliament and delegations of the regions in Italy. Irrespective of the election procedure, these presidents are politically weak figures.

4. Although parliamentary systems are mandated to call elections at certain intervals (for instance, every five years in the United Kingdom), an election can take place sooner than expected if the prime minister clashes with parliament. In agreement with the head of state, the prime minister can in most cases request the dissolution of parliament and call for a new election in the middle of the term. Alternatively, the majority in parliament can support a vote of no-confidence against the government, forcing the prime minister and the cabinet to resign. If the government considers a particular policy crucial for its legislative agenda, it can also present a motion of confidence to parliament. If parliament votes against the government's motion of confidence, the prime minister and the cabinet must resign; parliament must then appoint a new administration or the head of state must schedule a new election.

Presidential democracy originated in the United States' efforts to create a continental republican government in 1787. This constitutional model spread to Latin America in the nineteenth century and to parts of Africa (e.g., Ghana, Zambia) and Asia (South Korea, the Philippines) in the twentieth century. Under presidential systems:

1. Voters participate in separate electoral processes to elect members of the legislature (congress) and the head of the government (president). These elections may happen concurrently on the same day, but they are separate contests. Popular votes cast for congress members are typically tallied and aggregated at the local level, to elect representatives for particular districts; votes cast for the president are typically tallied and aggregated at the national level, to elect the country's chief executive.[4]
2. The president and (in most presidential regimes) the members of the cabinet are not members of congress. This creates a strict separation of powers between the two elected branches. Coordination among the executive and the legislature is achieved only to the extent that the president and some members of congress belong to the same political party, or if the president is able to form a coalition with members of other parties.
3. The elected president plays simultaneously the role of head of the government and head of state.
4. Once the president and the members of congress are elected, they are expected to serve in office for a fixed period until the end of their terms. The president has no constitutional power to dissolve congress and congress cannot issue a vote of no-confidence against the president.[5] Executive re-election is usually constrained. In the United States, for example, the president's term lasts four years, with a single possibility of immediate re-election. Representatives (members of the lower house of congress) last in office for two years, and senators for six years, with the possibility of indefinite re-election. In Uruguay, the president's term lasts five years but immediate re-election is banned—the person may return to the presidency only after a period out of office. Uruguayan representatives and senators are elected for a period of five years, concurrent with the president's term. Legislative re-election is allowed, but while more than 80 per cent of incumbent US congress members return to office in any given election, only 50 to 70 per cent of Uruguayan legislators are typically reelected (Altman and Chasquetti 2005).

Some countries have institutional arrangements that blend elements of presidentialism and parliamentarism. Semi-presidential regimes combine a directly elected president who serves in office for a fixed term and a prime minister who is responsible to parliament (Elgie 1999). Such arrangements are common in Western Europe (e.g., Austria, France, Ireland, Portugal), Eastern Europe (e.g., Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Turkey since 2007, Ukraine), Africa (e.g., Cape Verde, Mali), and Asia (e.g., Mongolia, South Korea, Taiwan). However, the powers accorded to the president in such regimes vary considerably. Some semi-presidential regimes, such as Austria or Ireland, have very weak presidents and effectively operate as parliamentary systems. Others, like South Korea or Taiwan, grant considerable authority to the head of state and effectively function as presidential systems (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009).

The literature in Comparative Politics sometimes refers to these as hybrid constitutions, but this concept of 'hybridity' used to depict a democracy that is in part parliamentary and in part presidential, must be clearly distinguished from the concept of hybrid regimes discussed in the previous section, intended to describe regimes that are in part democratic and in part authoritarian. Hybrid constitutions are discussed more extensively in Chapter 8.

Which constitutional arrangement is better for democracy? Not surprisingly, people disagree about this. About two decades ago, Juan Linz argued that presidential constitutions make the political process 'rather rigid.' Three institutional features of presidentialism are, in this view, dysfunctional for democracy. First, presidential elections are winner-take-all contests in which the prize (the president's seat) cannot be shared by multiple parties. As a result, electoral competition encourages political polarization. Second, because the president simultaneously serves as head of state and head of the government, he or she may claim to be the only true representative of the people, embrace a 'plebiscitarian' style of government, and dismiss all criticisms by the opposition. Finally, because the president and congress members are both elected independently and serve for fixed terms in office, disagreements between the two branches of government may lead to paralysis in the policy-making process. Without the possibility of anticipated elections or a vote of no-confidence, presidential constitutions create a system of dual legitimacy (Linz 1990).

Challenging this view, Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart argued that, despite some of these problems, presidential systems offer important advantages to voters. Presidentialism gives citizens the choice to support different parties in the legislative and in the presidential election. It also strengthens government responsibility (see Box 5.1). Many parliamentary regimes have coalition governments in which responsibility is shared by multiple parties and therefore blurred across party lines. In a presidential regime, where the head of the government is also head of state, by contrast, voters clearly know which party is in charge of the executive branch, and they can reward the party or vote against it at the next election depending on its performance in office. Finally, legislators have greater independence under presidentialism. Because presidential regimes do not have confidence votes, legislators of the ruling party may oppose the president's policies without fearing the fall of the administration. Similarly, legislators of the opposition may challenge the president's policies without fearing the dissolution of congress (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). Box 5.2 provides a comparison of the arguments in favour and against presidential constitutions.

BOX 5.2 FOR AND AGAINST Some arguments for and against presidentialism

Characteristics of presidentialism	Advantages	Disadvantages
The head of the government is elected by a popular election.	Voters have greater choice.	Winner-takes-all election induces political polarization.
President is head of state and head of the government.	Voters have more clarity about who controls the executive. Better government accountability.	President may adopt 'plebiscitarian' style and claim to be the only true representative of the people.
President and legislators have fixed terms in office.	Legislators have greater independence; they do not fear dissolution of parliament.	Dual legitimacy; executive-legislative deadlock.

Sources: Elgie (2008); Linz (1990a); Mainwaring and Shugart (1997)

Majoritarian or consensus?

A second set of differences among democratic systems involves the distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracies. This classification originates in the work of Arend Lijphart (1984, 1999, 2012), who argues that some democratic regimes are organized to facilitate majority rule, while others are designed to protect minorities (and thus promote decision-making by consensus). Such different conceptions of the democratic process effectively translate into unique constitutional features. For example, majoritarian democracies:

1. Adopt a disproportional electoral system for the election of legislators. Voters in the United Kingdom or in the United States, for instance, elect only one legislator (the candidate with the largest number of votes) to represent each district. Such an electoral system discourages voters from supporting smaller parties, and it makes it easier for the largest party to win a majority of seats in the parliament or congress, even when the largest party does not win a majority of the vote at the national level. For example, in the 2015 British election the Conservative Party obtained 37 per cent of the national vote and 51 per cent of the seats in parliament. Chapter 10 provides a more detailed explanation of how majoritarian electoral systems work.
2. Unwilling to 'waste' their votes on smaller parties with little chance of winning, voters will concentrate their support on the two largest parties, sustaining a two-party system (see Chapter 13).
3. Under a two-party system, it is very likely that the party winning the election will have a majority in the legislature. Moreover, if the country has a parliamentary constitution, the majority party will have no need to form a coalition in order to appoint the new government. Therefore, governments in majoritarian democracies are typically run by single-party cabinets (see Chapter 8).
4. If the executive branch is controlled by a single party which also has a majority in parliament (or congress), and if the head of the government is the main leader of this party, it is likely that the executive branch will

dominate the legislature due to the influence of party leadership on most legislators.

In addition to these traits that define the balance of power between the executive branch and the legislative parties, majoritarian democracies also have distinctive characteristics that define the relationship between the central government (representing the national majorities) and the local governments (representing sub-national minorities):

5. Majoritarian democracies tend to have unitary and centralized government, such that the institutions representing the majority at the national level will decide on policies at the local or regional level (see Chapters 11 and 15).
6. Because local governments are weak and unable to demand equal representation in the legislature, a federal senate is typically not included in the constitution. Thus, legislatures are more likely to be unicameral (Chapter 7).
7. Because the will of the majority at the national level is expected to define the organization of government at the national and the local levels, the constitution is flexible—that is, relatively easy to change. An extreme example of constitutional flexibility, the United Kingdom does not even have a written constitution; legislative majorities can therefore eliminate or create new institutions—such as the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, inaugurated in 2009—through a simple act of parliament.
8. Since the constitution is flexible, legislative majorities are rarely constrained by the legal interpretation of the constitution exercised by courts. Majoritarian democracies typically have limited judicial review (see Chapter 9).[6]

In contrast to this set of arrangements, consensus democracies are designed to protect the power of partisan and regional minorities. Therefore, they:

1. Adopt proportional electoral systems that translate the percentage of votes obtained by each party into a very similar proportion of seats in the legislature. For example, in the 2014 Belgian election the incumbent Socialist Party obtained about 13 per cent of the national vote and gained 15 per cent of the seats in the lower house of parliament.
2. Because votes count even when citizens support a small party, electoral rules will sustain a multi-party system. For instance, even though the outcome of the 2015 Swiss election was described by the media as a 'landslide victory' for the Swiss People's Party, more than ten parties won seats in the lower house of the Swiss Federal Assembly. The successful Swiss People's Party captured only 29 per cent of the vote at the national level, and about 32 per cent of the seats in the lower house.
3. With a large number parties represented in the legislature, it is unlikely that any single organization will control a majority of the seats. In countries with parliamentary constitutions, several political parties will need to form a coalition to appoint a new government. And in order to achieve broad consensus about future policies, these government coalitions will often include a large number of partners—even small party blocs that are not strictly necessary to form a legislative majority.
4. Since coalition governments depend on the agreement of all partners in the legislature to preserve their unity and avoid a vote of no-confidence, consensus democracies provide a balanced relation between the executive and the legislature.

These features make consensus democracy the best option for plural societies, nations divided along ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines. In order to protect regional minorities from the dictates of nation-wide majorities, consensus democracies also:

5. Have a federal system with decentralized government, such that local governments (e.g., states in the United States, cantons in Switzerland) enjoy extensive authority to shape policies at regional level.
6. Since local communities demand balanced representation in the national legislature, the constitution usually provides for an upper house, such as the United States Senate, the German Bundesrat, or the Swiss Council of States. Thus, legislatures are likely to be bicameral.
7. To guarantee the autonomy of local communities embedded in the constitution, constitutional reforms require large majorities (e.g., two-thirds of the votes in the legislature) and additional ratification (e.g., public support in a referendum, or approval by a majority of state legislatures). Constitutional rigidity thus discourages national majorities to alter the constitution without extensive consultation.
8. Since the constitution is rigid, proper interpretation of the constitution is crucial for the political process. Consensus democracies typically have powerful Supreme Courts or Constitutional Tribunals that exercise strong judicial review.

Box 5.3 summarizes the main attributes of majoritarian and consensus democracies. These are ideal types, never found in pure form among really-existing regimes. Real democracies usually involve some combination of majoritarian and consensus elements. The United States, for example, looks majoritarian regarding the first set of features, but it operates as a consensus democracy for the second set of features. Some countries, however, are very close to one of the two ideal types. The United Kingdom generally matches the characteristics of a majoritarian democracy—in fact, this model is also discussed in the specialized literature as the Westminster model of democracy, in a reference to the palace housing the British parliament. By contrast, Belgium and Switzerland are very close to the consensus model.

BOX 5.3 ZOOM-IN Majoritarian and consensus democracies

	Majoritarian	Consensus
Electoral system	Disproportional	Proportional representation
Party system	Two-party	Multi-party
Government	Single-party	Coalitions
Inter-branch balance	Executive dominance	Balanced power
Interest representation	Pluralism	Corporatism
Local government	Unitary	Federal
Legislature	Unicameral	Bicameral
Constitution	Flexible	Rigid
Judiciary	Weak or no judicial review	Strong judicial review
Central bank	Dependent on executive	Independent
Optimal for	Homogeneous societies	Plural societies

Source: based on Lijphart (2012).

As in the case of parliamentary and presidential constitutions, scholars have debated the advantages and disadvantages of these models of political organization. Majoritarian democracies are *decisive*: they can make policy changes quickly and effectively, but they are potentially volatile, since policies will shift with the whims of the majority. Consensus democracies, by contrast, are *resolute*: they will agree on major policies and sustain them based on broad agreements (Cox and McCubbins 2001). Decades ago, scholars feared that democratic systems with too many parties would be prone to political unrest, and thus favoured the two-party systems characteristic of majoritarian democracies or at least moderate forms of multipartism (Sartori 1976). More recently, George Tsebelis argued that institutions designed to empower minorities create multiple 'veto players' and encourage policy paralysis (Tsebelis 2002). However, Arend Lijphart has argued that consensus democracies perform at least equally well, and often much better than majoritarian systems when we consider macroeconomic outcomes, social unrest, voter turnout, women's participation in politics, and other indicators of democratic quality (Lijphart 2012).

KEY POINTS

- Parliamentarism involves the election of the chief executive by parliament, separation between head of government and head of state, and the possibility of a vote of no-confidence or anticipated elections.
- Presidentialism allows for popular election of the chief executive, a unified head of state and government, and fixed terms in office.
- Majoritarian democracies involve disproportional elections, two-party systems, and single-party governments; unitary government, unicameralism, flexible constitutions, and weak judicial review.
- Consensus democracies involve proportional elections, multi-party systems, and broad coalition governments; federalism, bicameralism, rigid constitutions, and strong judicial review.
- Scholars have articulated arguments in favour of parliamentarism over presidentialism, and of consensus over majoritarian systems, but there is no agreement regarding the 'best' form of democracy.

Why some countries have democracy and others do not

For many people in the world today, the fundamental question is not what kind of democracy is better, but how to achieve any democracy at all. About half of the world's population still lives under regimes that cannot be considered democratic. This begs an important question: what factors facilitate the process of democratization? How can democracy be established and preserved? For scientific purposes, this issue can be disaggregated into two separate analytical problems. First, countries that suffer a dictatorship may, under the right circumstances, adopt a democratic regime. We call this process a *transition* to democracy. Second, countries that have a

troubled democratic regime may, in unfortunate circumstances, slide back into dictatorship. We call this process a democratic *breakdown*.[7]

This analytic distinction is relevant whether we treat democracy as a continuous or a discrete variable. If we conceptualize political regimes as located in a continuum between full authoritarianism and full democracy, a transition means 'moving up' along this continuum, while a breakdown means 'sliding back' from the democratic into the authoritarian region. If we conceptualize regime types in a dichotomous way (democracy vs dictatorship), dictatorships constitute a set of political regimes exposed to the probability of democratic transition, while democracies constitute a set of regimes exposed to the risk of breakdown. Explaining the survival of a democratic regime is equivalent to understanding why a breakdown does *not* occur.

No single explanation can account for why some countries enjoy democracy while others do not. In general, theories seeking to explain the causes of democracy—and its downfall—have emphasized four types of variables: structural (social and economic) factors, institutional conditions, the role of political actors (leaders, organizations, and social movements), and international forces.[8] Some theoretical explanations discussed in this section claim to account for transitions as well as breakdowns, while others only seek to explain one of the two outcomes.

Structural factors

Among social and economic explanations, two have received distinctive attention among scholars. The first one relates to the role of economic development as a precondition for democratization. In a classic article published in 1959, sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset claimed that 'the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy' (Lipset 1959: 75). Lipset was perhaps the most influential of modernization theorists, a group of scholars that emphasized how the social transformations produced by long-term economic development—transformations leading to better living standards, greater urbanization, higher levels of literacy and technical education, the emergence of a middle class, a greater role of industrial activities vis-à-vis traditional agriculture—create conditions that facilitate the emergence of modern democratic politics. Later scholars seeking to test this hypothesis found a strong correlation between economic development and levels of democracy (Cutright 1963; Jackman 1973; Needler 1968), a correlation which is mostly driven by the fact that wealthy countries almost always have democratic regimes. By contrast, poor countries can be democratic or authoritarian—although very poor nations have a greater propensity towards authoritarianism. This pattern is depicted in Figure 5.1, which plots country-years

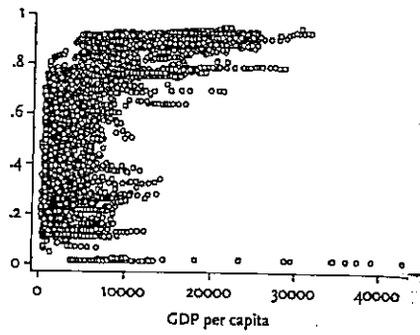

Figure 5.1 Electoral democracy and per capita gross domestic product, 1960–2014

Source: V-Dem Project (v. 5): https://v-dem.net/en/.

between 1960 and 2014 according to Per-capita Gross Domestic Product (in the horizontal axis) and V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Score (ranging between 0 and 1).

Figure 5.2 noticeably displays a few countries with annual incomes above $10,000 dollars per capita which are surprisingly undemocratic (with values close to zero in the vertical axis). These points in the plot correspond to Qatar and Saudi Arabia, major hydrocarbons exporters in the Middle East, for several years after the oil boom of 1973. Michael Ross argues that authoritarian rulers can employ extraordinary revenues from oil exports to expand patronage, reduce taxation, and strengthen repressive security forces, preventing challenges from democratic groups (Ross 2001). In turn Kevin Morrison claims that oil revenues stabilize any regime, democratic or authoritarian, because they minimize the need to collect unpopular taxes (Morrison 2014).

Already during the heyday of modernization theory in the 1960s, some scholars questioned the optimistic view linking development and democracy. Samuel Huntington warned that, in the absence of solid institutions, fast social and economic transformations can cause political turmoil and violence (Huntington 1968); in turn, Barrington Moore noted that in some countries modernization produced fascist or communist dictatorships (Moore 1966). More recently Przeworski *et al.* claimed that the correlation between development and democracy is not driven by a greater rate of *transitions* among wealthy dictatorships, but by a low rate of *breakdowns* among wealthy democracies. In other terms, authoritarian regimes may democratize for a number of reasons, but once democracy is established in a wealthy country, it is very unlikely to backslide into authoritarian rule (Przeworski *et al.* 2000). Moreover, most economists argue that this correlation reflects the reverse causal relationship: development does not cause democracy, but better institutions facilitate economic growth (Acemoglu *et al.* 2008).

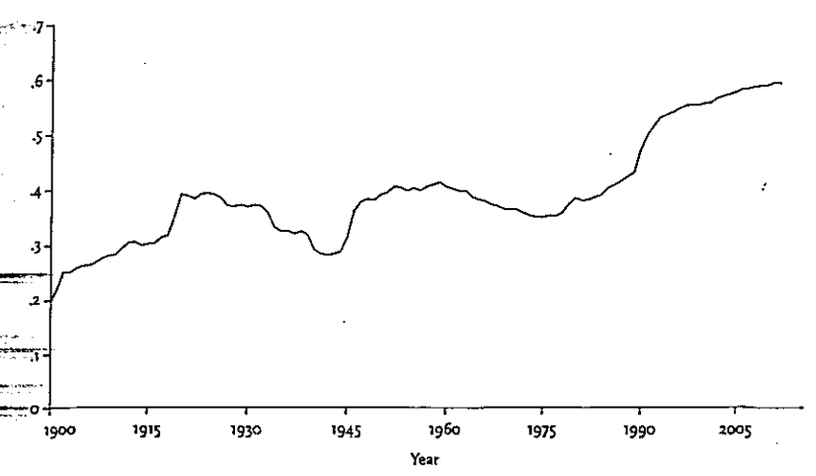

Figure 5.2 Average electoral democracy index worldwide, 1900–2014

Source: date from V-Dem Project (v.5) https://v-dem.net/en/.

A second structural condition presumed to influence democratization is the level of social inequality. Proponents of this theory assert that in societies where wealth is very unequally distributed, economic elites resist democratization because democratically elected governments will redistribute income in favour of the poor. The reason for this expectation is that, if a majority of voters are poor, they should demand redistributive policies—that is, higher taxes for the rich and more generous social policies for the poor—in exchange for their electoral support. Based on these assumptions, Carles Boix has argued that, in dictatorships with high levels of inequality, transitions to democracy will be unlikely because powerful elites will resist them. And if democracy is ever established, a democratic breakdown will be likely unless wealthy elites can avoid taxes by taking their assets out of the country (Boix 2003). In a more sophisticated argument, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson claim that transitions to democracy are unlikely in dictatorships that are highly unequal, because wealthy elites fear democracy, and in those that display very low levels of income inequality, because the poor do not push for democratization (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

These arguments have faced criticism for being excessively simplistic. Land inequality, which empowers landowners in the countryside, may have very different effects on democracy than income inequality, which sometimes results from processes of economic modernization (Ansell and Samuels 2014). Moreover, not all dictatorships favour the rich, and not all democracies favour the poor (Levitsky and Mainwaring 2006). Consider, for example, the Soviet Union, Mao Zedong's China, or Fidel Castro's Cuba. Although undemocratic, those regimes redistributed wealth extensively in favour of the poor. By contrast, even though some democracies have reduced social disparities in the developing world (Huber and Stephens 2012), income inequality has been growing among advanced industrial democracies since the 1970s (Piketty 2014).

Institutions

The nature of some democratic institutions may also facilitate authoritarian backsliding. Almost three decades ago, Juan Linz argued that presidential democracies are more likely to break down than parliamentary ones because presidential elections encourage political polarization, foster a 'plebiscitarian' style of government, and facilitate deadlock between the executive and the legislature (see Box 5.2) (Linz 1990*a*). Scholars testing this hypothesis with statistical data found that, indeed, presidential systems face a greater risk of breakdown than parliamentary ones (Stepan and Skach 1993). But other studies qualified this finding by noting that not all presidential regimes are equally exposed to the risk of authoritarian reversion. They argued that presidential democracies are more fragile when the constitution gives presidents greater powers over legislation, discouraging negotiations with congress (Shugart and Carey 1992); when the party system is fragmented, such that the president's party is consistently unable to have a majority in congress (Mainwaring 1993); and when military officers have a tradition of political intervention (Chelbub 2007).

Just like some democratic institutions may produce fragile democracies, some authoritarian institutions may also produce fragile dictatorships. Military regimes are more likely to democratize than other types of dictatorship because military officers—unless they anticipate trials for human rights violations—can always return to the barracks and pursue a military career after civilian rulers regain power. Moreover, generals want to preserve military unity and often dislike the factionalism introduced in the armed forces by the exercise of day-to-day government (Geddes 2003). By contrast, authoritarian regimes with stronger 'representative' institutions, such as political parties or legislatures, create a stronger base of mass support, coordinate the ambitions of authoritarian elites, and delay transitions to democracy (Gandhi 2010; Magaloni 2006; Svolik 2012).

Actors and agency

Theories based on structural factors or institutional conditions can offer frustrating lessons for advocates of democracy. Structural factors like economic modernization or income inequality change slowly and over the long run; political institutions can be modified by constitutional reforms and other forms of human action, but institutions tend to be quite enduring and change at a slow pace (Krasner 1984; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). However, these conditions cannot fully explain the dynamics and the timing of regime change. Within the boundaries imposed by structures and institutions, regime change is ultimately triggered by political actors exercising moral choices—that is, agency.

The role of leaders, organizations, and social movements in democratic transitions has been a matter of scholarly concern for decades. Almost fifty years ago, Dankwart Rustow claimed that democracy emerges when leaders of contending factions realize that it is impossible to impose their views unilaterally, and they voluntarily establish an institutional arrangement for sharing power like the one described in Box 5.1 (Rustow 1970). In a similar vein, O'Donnell and Schmitter noted that transitions to democracy occur when the coalition of actors supporting an authoritarian regime faces internal divisions, and democratic leaders engage in a series of pacts to strengthen the project represented by a democratic coalition (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986).

Seeking to understand the breakdown of democratic regimes, Juan Linz argued that democracies become easy targets of authoritarian forces when moderate leaders abdicate their responsibilities and let 'disloyal' politicians—those who use the rules of democracy to pursue authoritarian goals—polarize the electorate (Linz 1978). A similar conclusion was reached by Nancy Bermeo, who showed that social conflict and polarization preceding democratic breakdowns in Europe and Latin America were driven by political elites, not by ordinary people (Bermeo 2003). In turn, Giovanni Capoccia claimed that democracy survived in inter-war Europe where key parties supported a legal strategy to repress extremist leaders and to incorporate their followers to democratic life (Capoccia 2005).

Recent works have also emphasized the importance of political actors and their choices. Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán showed that authoritarian regimes are more likely to democratize, and democracies are less likely to collapse, when political leaders express normative commitments to democracy (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013). In turn, Chenoweth and Stephan argued that the use of nonviolent strategies by social movements—such as protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience—is more likely to trigger a transition to democracy than violent resistance against authoritarian rule. Once established, the new regime will be less likely to suffer a civil war than democracies emerging from violent transition processes (Chenoweth and Stephan 2012).

International forces

Explanations based on structural factors, institutions, or local actors focus on domestic variables to understand regime change. But some important forces driving (or hindering) the emergence and survival of democracy originate outside of the country. Chapter 25 shows that the United States, the European Union, and some new democracies such as Poland or the Czech Republic have been active promoters of democracy across the world in recent years.

There is a simple way to visualize the contribution of international factors in processes of democratization. Figure 5.2 shows the average level of democracy for all independent countries in the world between 1900 and 2014, using V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index. The series show that the average level of democracy in the world has grown since 1900, but not at a constant pace. During some historical periods consecutive countries adopt democratic practices, and worldwide levels of democracy grow considerably in a relatively short span. In other historical periods, democracy recedes concurrently in multiple places, and the global average declines.

Decades ago, Samuel Huntington described historical cycles of democratic expansion as 'waves' of democratization (Huntington 1991). At least three such waves are visible in Figure 5.2. The first one started in the nineteenth century (although data for the figure is available from 1900), when North American, most Western European, and some South American and Pacific countries embraced democratic principles, and lasted until about 1920, when European democracies confronted the threat of fascism. The second wave took off at the end of World War II, when most of Western

Europe re-established democratic practices, India became independent, and some Latin American societies toppled their dictators. It lasted until about 1960, when democracies in Latin America and other regions were challenged by military intervention and fragile democracies broke down in Africa. The third wave of democratization started slowly in the mid-1970s, as Portugal, Spain, and Greece overcame their dictatorships; it took off in the 1980s, as Latin American countries overcame military rule; and accelerated in the 1990s, when the decline of the Soviet Union allowed for democratization in Eastern Europe and democracy spread to important parts of Africa and Asia.

These 'waves' of democratization are hard to explain if we focus exclusively on domestic explanations for regime change. Multiple countries would have to experience similar changes in their internal conditions simultaneously (e.g., changes in levels of economic development, income inequality, institutions, or actors' orientations) to account for convergent patterns of regime change in a short historical period. Because countries—even those located in the same geographic region—can be quite different, this is a rather implausible explanation for most waves of democratization.

A more plausible explanation is that democratization in one country will influence the perceptions and expectations of actors in other countries, triggering democratic 'contagion'. Several studies have documented processes of democratic diffusion among neighbouring countries or even across geographic regions (Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Gleditsch 2002; Wejnert 2014).[9]

External actors can play important roles in domestic democratization in several ways. Jon Pevehouse has documented that regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States, can oppose authoritarian reversions and promote democracy 'from above' (Pevehouse 2005). Finkel *et al.* established that wealthy democracies can promote democratization through foreign aid programmes oriented towards this purpose (Finkel *et al.* 2007). Chapter 25 addresses international support for democracy in greater detail.

However, it is important to keep in mind that external influences ultimately operate through domestic coalitions. John Markoff has shown that social movements play a key role in the process of democratic diffusion (Markoff 1996). Kurt Weyland warns that successful movements against dictators may spread to other countries very fast, but they fail when there are no political organizations able to direct (and moderate) their struggle. This partly explains the disappointing outcomes of the 'Arab Spring' in the Middle East after 2011 (Weyland 2014). In the end, external influences can have limited impact in the absence of domestic actors committed to foster a democratic transformation (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013).

KEY POINTS

- To understand the presence of democracy in some countries (and its absence in others) we need to account for the establishment of democracy (democratic transitions) and its survival (i.e., avoidance of democratic breakdowns).
- Structural explanations: modernization theory claims that economic development promotes democratization; theories of inequality underscore that social inequities hinder it.
- Institutional explanations: Critics of presidentialism argue that presidential democracies are more likely to break down than parliamentary ones. Students of authoritarian regimes claim that dictatorships with parties and legislatures are more resilient than military regimes.
- Political actors: Individuals and organizations exercise agency in the transformation of political regimes. Leaders committed to democracy foster transitions and resist breakdowns.
- International forces: External factors influence domestic democratization through contagion (diffusion), through the diplomatic action of international organizations, and because established democracies can use foreign aid to support domestic democratic groups.

Conclusion: the future of democracy

Democracy is a reality as much as it is an ideal. Because of this reason, democratic regimes are always in flux. The gap between the experience of existing democracy as it *is* and our expectations for democracy as we would *like it to be* inspires political action in rich and in poor countries, in old as well as in new democracies. The future of democracy will result from the ability of new political actors to expand the frontiers of democratization without undermining the democratic achievements of past generations.

Democratic regimes will be tested by important challenges in the decades to come. Among those challenges are the limits imposed by supra-national institutions (Chapter 23) and globalization (Chapter 24), the resurgence of intolerant nationalism, and the temptation to limit civil liberties in the name of national security. But beyond those issues, crucial for the survival of existing democratic systems, future generations will struggle to redefine the meaning of democracy itself. The contemporary definition presented in Box 5.1 focuses on electoral procedures and civic liberties. Yet, more ambitious conceptions of democracy call for the enrichment of these minimum requirements with additional criteria

such as substantive equality (egalitarian democracy), citizen engagement (participatory democracy), and respectful and reasonable dialogue (deliberative democracy) (Coppedge *et al.* 2011).

Moreover, the history of modern democracy entails the progressive expansion of citizenship to groups previously excluded from the political process. This expansion is always contested because it is not obvious that new groups should have the right to enjoy citizenship. After the process is completed, however, the boundaries of citizenship shift and a new definition of 'the people' becomes entrenched. In the early nineteenth century, most republics considered property and literacy as 'natural' requirements to grant men the right to vote. In the early twentieth century, most democracies still excluded women and ethnic minorities from the electoral process. Such restrictive definitions of the people were widely accepted at the time, but are morally unacceptable for our contemporary observers.

It is certain that the future of democracy will bring the expansion of rights to new groups, but it is hard for us—as it was for any society in the past—to anticipate who the people will be in the future. One possibility is that young individuals, now considered dependent minors, will acquire greater rights. Throughout the twentieth century, democracies reduced the minimum age to participate in politics—from 21 to 18, and later to 16 years of age in many countries—but it is still unclear when individuals should be considered mature enough to exercise full citizenship. Consider, for example, the case of the United States: individuals are considered responsible enough to drive at the age of 16; to vote, join the army, and own handguns at the age of 18; and to drink alcohol only at the age of 21.

Another possibility is that migrants will acquire increasing political rights. Our traditional understanding of democracy assumes that the people were born and raised in a given territory, but human populations are increasingly mobile. By 2015, 244 million people—more than 3 per cent of the total world population—lived outside their countries of origin (United Nations Population Division 2015). This poses two parallel challenges. The first one is to allow greater political participation by citizens who are physically located outside their national territories. A 2007 report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance showed that 115 countries and territories currently allow their expatriates to vote from abroad, in most cases with little restrictions (Ellis *et al.* 2007). The second—and more controversial—challenge is to grant representation to foreign residents who are active community members in their host countries. According to David Earnest, at least twenty-four democracies have allowed foreign residents to participate in elections since 1960. Earnest showed that a majority of such democracies grant voting rights to non-citizen aliens only at the local level; just a very small group (eight nations) allows non-citizens to vote at the national level, and in all but two cases—New Zealand and Uruguay—the right to participate in national elections is restricted to migrants from preferred countries (Earnest 2006).

Even more puzzling is the possibility that some kinds of democratic rights will be extended beyond human populations in the future. In June 2008, for example, the Environmental Committee of the Spanish Parliament approved a resolution to grant basic rights to the great apes—orangutans, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, and humans—including the rights to life, individual liberty, and the prohibition of torture. Similar bills were introduced in the US House of Representatives in 2008 and reached the Senate in 2010. Advocates of animal rights, however, argue that even this radical expansion of legal rights would be insufficient to prevent the massive abuse and slaughter of animals raised for human consumption in factory farms (Wolfe 2013: 104–11).

Irrespective of future trajectories, which are hard to anticipate, any real expansion of democratic rights will require building on the foundation of existing democratic achievements. Because of this, readers should remember that modern democracy is a fledgling form of government, with roots that barely extend two hundred years into the past. The Roman Republic lasted for almost 500 years before giving way to imperial rule, the Byzantine Empire survived for 1,100 years before falling to the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman Empire in turn lasted for more than 600 years before giving birth to modern Turkey. Such successful regimes—long gone after their heyday—remind us that modern democracy is just a newcomer to the history of political systems; it cannot be taken for granted and it should be carefully nurtured if it is going to survive and thrive.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. What are the four traits that define modern democracy? Can a regime be democratic if only one attribute is missing?
2. What are the main differences between the president of a parliamentary democracy and the president of a presidential democracy?
3. Which features distinguish a majoritarian democracy from a consensus democracy?
4. Are theories explaining transitions to democracy also useful to explain democratic breakdowns?
5. Why do democracies emerge in 'waves'?

Critical thinking

1. Is presidential or parliamentary democracy a better choice for newly democratic regimes?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of consensus vis-à-vis majoritarian democracy?
3. Which configuration of conditions (economic, social, institutional, political, and international) would create the most adverse historical context for the survival of a democratic regime?
4. Which of those conditions would be, in your opinion, the most important factor for the survival of democracy?
5. Provide three reasons for why resident aliens should be granted the right to vote, and three reasons for why they should not be granted the right to vote in a democratic country.

Further reading

Bermeo, N. (2016) 'On Democratic Backsliding', *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.

Lijphart, A. (2012) *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (2nd edn) (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Linz, J. J. (1990) 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, 1(1), 51–69.

Markoff, J. (1999) 'Where and When was Democracy Invented?' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41(4), 660–90.

Munck, G. L. and Verkuilen, J. (2002) 'Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy—Evaluating Alternative Indices', *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(1), 5–34.

Web links

Freedom House:

https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016

Website for the organization that produces a report on *Freedom in the World* every year.

Inter-Parliamentary Union:

http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm

Website of the IPU provides data on legislatures and women in politics across the world.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance:

http://www.idea.int/

Website with information on electoral systems, political parties, and the quality of democracy.

Varieties of Democracy:

https://www.v-dem.net/en/

Website provides hundreds of indicators of democracy for all countries, going back to 1900.

Polity Project:

http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html

Website with information on forms of government in independent states since 1800.

online resource centre

For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at:
http://www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/

Endnotes

[1] Freedom House's ratings for Civil Liberties and Political Rights range between 1 (most free) and 7 (least free). After taking the average for both ratings, the organization classifies countries as Free (if the average rating is between 1 to 2.5), Partly Free (3 to 5), or Not Free (5.5 to 7).

[2] For countries below this threshold, students of Comparative Politics also use similar labels to describe authoritarian regimes that display some democratic attributes, for example 'electoral authoritarianism' (Schedler 2013) or 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way, 2010). For a discussion of this topic, see Chapter 6.

[3] After the election, the head of state (monarch or president) usually 'invites' the leader of the largest party in parliament to form a new government. Many parliamentary systems also require that the parliamentary majority formally supports the new government in a 'vote of investiture' before the new cabinet takes office.

[4] The United States is the only presidential democracy that still preserves an Electoral College to elect the president. Under this indirect procedure, designed in the eighteenth century, votes are tallied and aggregated at the state level in order to appoint a certain number of 'electors' from each state, who then cast their votes for particular presidential candidates. Nowadays, electors pre-commit to support specific candidates and they have no autonomy once appointed. Therefore, the Electoral College is simply an intermediate source of 'noise' between the popular vote and the final selection of the US president.

[5] Few constitutions empower the president to dissolve congress, and they do so only under very restrictive circumstances. More constitutions grant congress special powers to impeach the president, but this action requires evidence that the president has committed serious misdemeanours in office (Pérez-Liñán 2007).

[6] Lijphart also identifies two additional traits of majoritarian democracies: a pluralist system of interest representation, and a central bank dependent on the executive (as opposed to corporatist representation and more independent central banks in consensus democracies), but these characteristics are less clearly related to the other institutional features described in the chapter.

[7] When changes towards authoritarianism occur at a slow pace—sometimes over several years—scholars also refer to *democratic erosion* or *democratic backsliding* to describe the process (Bermeo 2016).

[8] A fifth set of theories emphasizes the role of political culture as an explanatory factor. Those arguments are discussed in detail in Chapter 17.

[9] Besides multilateral diffusion, international powers may in extreme circumstances impose unilateral regime change. For example, domestic political conditions changed abruptly in Western Europe with the expansion of Nazi Germany, and again after the Allies prevailed in World War II.

CHAPTER 6

Authoritarian regimes

Paul Brooker

Chapter contents

Reader's guide

The concept of an authoritarian regime is a residual one that throws all the non-democratic political systems in together. Apart from the fact that they are *not* democracies, these regimes have little in common and, in fact, display a bewildering diversity: from monarchies to military regimes, from clergy-dominated regimes to communist regimes, and from seeking a totalitarian control of thought through indoctrination to seeking recognition as a multiparty democracy through using semi-competitive elections. The chapter begins with an introduction to the historical evolution of authoritarian regimes, especially the three-phase modernization of dictatorship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then the chapter examines the key questions of who rules an authoritarian regime, why they rule (their claim to legitimacy), and how they rule (their mechanisms of control). Finally, the conclusion discusses whether these regimes are becoming extinct or will come up with some evolutionary surprises.

Introduction

Until modern times states were normally ruled by authoritarian regimes, and most of these were hereditary *monarchies*. These monarchical authoritarian regimes were based on a traditional form of inherited personal rule that was restrained to varying degrees by traditional customs and institutions. However, the notion that rule over a state and its people could be inherited like private property—like a family business concern—would seem very primitive once democracy began to compete with the monarchies. In order to survive, let alone flourish, the authoritarian regime had to modernize by introducing a new and modern form of *dictatorship* rather than monarchy. The notion of dictatorship could be traced back to ancient Rome's invention of the post of 'Dictator', which enabled the Roman republic in an emergency to appoint someone to act as a temporary monarch-like ruler with extraordinary powers but without the ceremonial trappings of royalty (see Box: The Roman connection, in the Online Resource Centre). Since then the notion of dictatorship had acquired a broader meaning that included 'self-appointed' dictators who had taken power and did not intend to relinquish it. But the modernization of dictatorship went much further in terms of organization and legitimation during the three phases of modernization that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Brooker 2014: 6–8).

The first phase of modernization was not very innovative organizationally, for dictatorship by a military organization or its leader had actually appeared as long ago as Julius Caesar and other politically ambitious commanders of ancient Rome's professional army (see Box 6.1). But when General Napoleon Bonaparte pioneered first-phase modernization after his military coup in 1799 in post-revolutionary France, he took the innovative step of using a plebiscite, or referendum, to claim a form of *democratic* legitimacy for his seizure of power. Thus, the first phase in the modernization of dictatorship involved (1) rule by a military organization *or* its leader, and (2) 'democratic' legitimation through a plebiscite or one-candidate presidential election *or* by claiming that it was a temporary dictatorship aimed at democratizing or 'cleansing' the political system. During the nineteenth century, such modernized dictatorships often appeared in Latin America, but in the twentieth century they spread to other parts of what became known as the Third World. In fact, they were the most common form of authoritarian regime in the twentieth century and therefore numerically overshadowed the new form—the *ideological one-party state*—that appeared with the *second* phase of modernization of dictatorship (Brooker 2014: 30).

Second-phase modernization created the ideological one-party state by two radical innovations. First, it adopted democracy's key organization, the *political party*, but as a single-party rather than a multiparty system (see Chapter 13). Second, it claimed legitimacy through an *ideology* of some kind, such as communism or fascism. This new and distinctively twentieth-century form of authoritarian regime first appeared after the October 1917 socialist revolution in the former Russian Empire, which was later renamed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or 'Soviet Union'. The post-revolutionary dictatorship established by the Communist Party espoused a Marxist–Leninist ideology that legitimated a one-party state in which the party ruled over state and society. By the 1930s a new party leader, Stalin, had established a personal dictatorship that was rivalled for 'totalitarian' thoroughness (see later section on totalitarianism) only by the two *fascist* ideological one-party states established by Mussolini in Fascist Italy and by Hitler in Nazi Germany. The Second World War destroyed these two fascist regimes but also led, directly or indirectly, to a huge expansion in the number of communist regimes, which were established throughout Eastern Europe, in North Korea, and, most importantly, in *China*. There were occasional additions to the number of communist regimes during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, such as Cuba and Vietnam (see Box: Revolutionary seizures of power, in the Online Resource Centre). However, these additions were numerically overshadowed by the swathe of non-communist ideological one-party states that emerged in the 1950s–70s as decolonization greatly increased the number of states in what became known as the 'Third World'.

The dissolution of the British, French, and Portuguese colonial empires in the 1950s–70s created dozens of new states in Asia and Africa and also led to a surprisingly large number of second-phase dictatorships. Some developed innovative ideologies or versions of the one-party state, notably what became known as 'African socialism' and then 'the African one-party state'.[1] And several arose from military dictatorships developing military versions of the second-phase format by claiming legitimacy through some kind of ideology and acquiring an official political party, which in these cases was subordinate in some way to the military. In addition, the *first-phase* military dictatorship found a new niche in decolonized Asia and Africa and also began a new cycle of 'popularity' in Latin America in the 1960s. So, by the mid-1970s it seemed that the authoritarian regime was dominating the globe not only numerically but also politically.

However, the mid-1970s also saw the beginning of a *global wave of* democratization (see Chapter 5). Although it 'missed' the Middle East, it swept through the other regions of the world in an almost sequential manner: southern Europe in the mid-1970s, Latin America and Asia in the later 1970s and the 1980s, Eastern Europe in 1989, and Africa in the early 1990s, not to mention the 1991 disintegration of the Soviet Union into more than a dozen new and non-communist states (Brooker 2014: 208). The global triumph of democracy seemed assured with this collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the end of the African one-party state, and the demise of most military regimes. But there now appeared a *third* phase in the modernization of dictatorship, the *democratically disguised* dictatorship, which involved (1) replacing the one-party state with a supposedly 'democratic' multiparty system and (2) replacing ideological legitimation with a claim to democratic legitimation based on having supposedly 'competitive' multiparty elections. The third phase of modernized dictatorship further increased the already amazing diversity of authoritarian regimes in present times as well as throughout history. Such a huge variety of regimes is best categorized, described, and compared by applying the formula of who rules, why do they rule, and how do they rule.

BOX 6.1 ZOOM-IN Military seizures of power

Historical background

The seizure of power by a military organization or its leader is historically the oldest way of setting up a modern form of authoritarian regime. Napoleon's 1799 coup and the later seizures of power by armies or military leaders in Latin America starkly revealed how the private ownership of public offices can occur in other ways than through ownership by a royal family. Clearly public offices could be 'stolen' by an organization or its leader that uses force to take power from an old monarchy or a young democracy.

The seizure of power

This seizure of the country's public offices is carried out by means of an actual or threatened *coup d'état*, which means literally a blow by/of the state, but in practice is an often bloodless attack by the military arm of the state against its own government.

Types of coup

- The *corporate coup*, which is carried out by the military as a corporate body and under the command of its most senior officers.
- The *factional coup*, which is carried out by only a faction of the military and often under the command of only middle-ranking officers (and so is often described as a colonels' coup).
- The *counter coup*, which is launched against a *military* government by a disaffected or ambitious faction of officers.

Practical implications

Such distinctions are important in practice as well as theory. For example, most coups are factional and most factional coups fail, so any democratic government faced with a military coup has a good chance of defeating it unless the coup happens to be one of the relatively rare cases of a corporate type of coup.

KEY POINTS

- Until the nineteenth century most of the world's states were ruled by authoritarian regimes which were mostly hereditary monarchies.
- During the nineteenth century an important new form of authoritarian regime emerged, namely modernized dictatorship by a military organization or a military leader with some—however spurious—claim to democratic legitimacy.
- In the twentieth century there was a second phase in the modernization of dictatorship, with the emergence of the ideological one-party state, such as the communist and fascist regimes.
- In the third quarter of the twentieth century the majority of the world's states were ruled by first-phase and second-phase modernized dictatorships—including such new varieties as the African one-party state.
- The final quarter of the twentieth century saw a global wave of democratization but also saw a third phase in the modernization of dictatorship, with the appearance of democratically disguised dictatorships claiming the democratic legitimacy of having 'competitive' multiparty elections.

Who rules?

The question 'who rules?' has long been used—since the time of ancient Greece—to categorize regimes. But the three-phase modernization of authoritarianism has created a complex categorization of 'who rules?' that distinguishes between (1) the *organizational* rule of a dictatorial military or party and (2) the *personal* rule of (a) the *leader* of a dictatorial organization or (b) a *democratically disguised* dictator who is typically a 'populist presidential monarch', as will be described in the section on monarchical dictators. Furthermore, the category of personal rule has to be extended to include the pre-modernization era's typical form of personal rule, the ruling monarchy, because there are still some surviving examples and those in the Arab world, notably the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are still internationally significant.

Dictatorial monarchs

Although all monarchs are clothed in the ceremonial trappings of royalty, only *ruling* monarchies exercise the same kind and/or degree of power as a dictatorship. In contrast, *reigning* monarchies are typically found in democracies, where the monarch is a hereditary but largely ceremonial head of state with constitutionally very limited powers. Of course, throughout history even *ruling* monarchies have had their power limited by traditions, religions, constitutions, or just the power of other players in the political game, as King John discovered in 1215 when his barons forced him to accept Magna Carta as written confirmation of the traditional limits on a feudal monarch's power. The absolutist monarch exercising unlimited powers in a discretionary or even arbitrary manner is very much the historical exception rather than the rule. None of the world's surviving monarchies are absolutist and some are merely reigning rather than ruling, such as the reigning monarchies to be found in several Western European democracies. The surviving *ruling* monarchies are to be found predominantly in the Arab world, and notably in the Arabian Gulf, where there are such important examples as the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman.

So how have these Arab ruling monarchies managed to survive—and in such a politically unstable region? Their survival cannot be explained by the hold of tradition, as most of them originated in the nineteenth or even twentieth centuries. For example, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 as the culmination of decades of political and military endeavours by a great Arab tribal leader, Ibn Saud. In contrast, it was British imperialism that established the Gulf emirates' monarchical rule in the nineteenth century, through treaties that recognized some prominent families as royal and ruling families (Anderson 1991). The British also created Arab monarchies in other parts of the Middle East, notably the still surviving Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, when Britain and France carved out a group of new states—including Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon—from the Arab territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire after the First World War.

It is tempting to explain the survival of the Saudi and other Arab monarchies by pointing to their oil wealth. And indeed 'rentier state' theories argue that oil-rich authoritarian regimes survive by exploiting the 'rent' revenues from the oil industry. These revenues allow a regime to provide its subjects with substantial material benefits without the need for heavy taxation and therefore without the need for democratic representation: in other words, 'no representation without taxation'. But, as Herb (1999) points out, oil wealth has proved neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the survival of a ruling monarchy in the Middle East. For example, it has not been necessary for the survival of Jordan's monarchy, and it was not sufficient to prevent the Iranian monarchy being toppled by the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Herb suggests that a better explanation for the survival of the Arab ruling monarchies is that they are often *dynastic monarchies*. Their royal families do not have to follow the rule of primogeniture (where the eldest son of the monarch automatically succeeds him) that is characteristic of the Western monarchies. The dynastic royal family can prevent an incompetent or unreliable person from succeeding to the throne, and can also remove a monarch who has become incompetent or unreliable. Furthermore, these dynastic royal families have ensured that any intra-family rivalries about succeeding to the throne have not torn the family apart and left them vulnerable to outsiders, such as military officers, seeking to dispossess the family of their power.

Another distinctive feature of these dynastic monarchies is that their royal families are very large and have an extensive presence in government, the civil service, and the military. The numerous members of these royal families not only occupy key posts in the government, but are also widely employed in the civil service and the military—in fact, there is a 'profusion' of royals in the military (Herb 1999: 35). Such an extensive presence in government and the state machinery can give the dynastic royal families the sort of control over the state that is characteristic of a ruling communist party in a second-phase modernized dictatorship.

Furthermore, the subjects of some Arab monarchies have the right to present in person their grievances and requests to the monarch—a practice that has been trumpeted as 'desert democracy' (see Herb 1999: 41–2). The rulers' democratic-like accessibility may be intended to compensate for a lack of democratic institutions but the *non*-dynastic Arab monarchies of Jordan and Morocco have gone further by establishing supposedly democratic parliamentary institutions and even sharing power with elected politicians. That both these successful monarchies lack oil but not political skill is another indication of the 'primacy of politics' in the survival of such a primeval anachronistic form of authoritarian regime.

Monarchical dictators

Just as it is crucial to distinguish between monarchs who rule and those who only reign, it is crucial to distinguish between dictators who are personal rulers and those who are only agents of the ruling organization. For example, the president and the prime minister of communist China are more comparable in power to a ruling than a reigning monarch, but they are still merely *agents* of the communist party that they lead and that is the organizational ruler of China. (To use the language of the 'new institutionalism', there is a principal–agent relationship between the party as the organizational principal and the public officials as its two individual agents.) In contrast, the communist party leader Mao Zedong was the *personal ruler* of China in the 1960s–70s, and in fact his power was comparable to that of an *absolutist* ruling monarch. Like the three classic totalitarian dictators described in the later section on totalitarianism, Mao had actually *reversed* the principal–agent relationship with his party and had converted this supposedly 'ruling' party into merely an agent or instrument of his personal rule.[2] Although relatively few personal dictators have been absolutist rulers, they have achieved varying degrees of *autonomy* from the party or military that they have led to power or have led during the organization's consolidation of power. To use the language of the 'new institutionalism', the principal–agent relationship between him and his party or military has become so weak (or even non-existent) that he is able to 'shirk' his responsibilities to this organizational principal (Brooker 2014: 31, 63–4).

An indication of this autonomy is the tendency to become monarchical rulers 'for life' and even to be succeeded in hereditary fashion by a son or brother—they have established what political scientists in the 1960s termed a *presidential monarchy* (e.g. Apter 1965). By then it was apparent that Third World personal dictators were institutionalizing their personal rule through the monarchical post and extensive powers of a president of the republic (Apter 1965: 307, 309). The presidential monarchy was becoming prevalent in Africa and would soon become prominent in other parts of the Third World, as in the case of President Suharto of Indonesia and President Hafiz Assad of Syria, and it even appeared in the communist world, with such presidential monarchies as those of Kim Il Sung in North Korea and Fidel Castro in Cuba. Although most presidential monarchies were overthrown by the global wave of democratization in the 1980s–90s, Hafiz Assad was succeeded by his son Bashir in 2000, Kim Il Sung was succeeded by his son Kim Jong Il in 1994 (who in turn was succeeded by his son in 2012), and Fidel Castro was succeeded by his younger brother Raul in 2005 when the president retired for health reasons.

The global wave of democratization that removed most of the presidential monarchies also produced a political climate in which an unusual form of presidential monarchy has now become the standard form and should be distinguished as a separate category of personal rule—the *populist* presidential monarchy. It is a historically old form of personal dictatorship that dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century and occasionally thereafter appeared in Latin America (see Box 6.2). However, the 'mainstream' personal dictatorships of the first and second phases of modernization were much more numerous and historically momentous; it was only with the recent third-phase shift to democratically disguised dictatorship that the populist presidential monarchy came into its own. This is partly because it is so well suited to being a democratically disguised personal dictatorship, but it is also because the way in which a populist presidential monarchy is established is so well suited to the world's democratic political climate.

Since at least the 1990s it has no longer been acceptable to take power by military coup or by revolution unless these seizures of power are aimed at democratization and are quickly followed by democratic elections. But the populist presidential monarchy emerges through an *elected* president's personal misappropriation of power, which Latin America long ago labelled an *autogolpe* or 'self-coup' (see Box: Misappropriation of power, in the Online Resource Centre). This misappropriation has tended to occur during or soon after democratization and has been very rare among older democracies, but that pattern may not continue in the democratic political climate of the twenty-first century.

Like other forms of personal dictatorship, the populist presidential monarchy can be analysed in principal–agent terms, but in this case there is a reversal of the

BOX 6.2 ZOOM-IN Louis-Napoleon as a 'chip off the old block'

Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, proved himself as politically innovative as his uncle by pioneering a new type of personal dictatorship—the 'populist' presidential monarchy. Louis-Napoleon was elected president of France after the 1848 revolution and three years later followed in his late uncle's footsteps by establishing a personal dictatorship. But this was a populist rather than a military personal dictatorship and was established by misappropriating power through an *autogolpe* (self-coup) rather than by seizing power through a military coup (see Box: Misappropriation of power, in the Online Resource Centre). After his presidential *autogolpe*, Louis-Napoleon presented the country with a new constitution to be approved by plebiscite/referendum, and during the short period that he retained the republican title of president he created the prototype of the populist form of presidential monarchy (see McMillan 1991: 43–54). This type of personal dictatorship would be much rarer than the military type pioneered by his uncle but would occasionally be found in Latin America, with the most notable case being the *autogolpe* of President Vargas of Brazil and his innovative period of populist presidential monarchy in the 1930s–40s (see Box: The Latin American connection, in the Online Resource Centre).

relationship between the *electorate* as the principal and the elected president as its agent. By reversing that relationship the president makes the electorate the instrument of his personal rule in the sense of providing him with a claim to democratic legitimacy, which he usually confirms by having himself re-elected. These new elections will be undemocratic, but the populist presidential monarch may be genuinely popular with a wide section of the people and, what is more, the third-phase cases of populist presidential monarchy are using *semi-competitive* elections rather than non-competitive one-candidate elections in order to make their re-elections appear more democratically credible (see semi-competitive and non-competitive elections in section on 'Democratic claims to legitimacy').

During the third-phase modernization of dictatorship there was also a regional shift in the prevalence of populist presidential monarchy. The Latin American tradition of *autogolpe* and populist presidential monarch was maintained in the 1990s by Fujimori in Peru and, his opponents might say, by Chavez in Venezuela (see Box: The Latin American connection, in the Online Resource Centre). By then, however, the populist presidential monarchy was becoming more commonly found among the fifteen new states that were created by the 1991 disintegration of the Soviet Union, especially those created in Central Asia (Brooker 2014: 237–40). Several of these countries have evolved a new and more sophisticated version based upon a more gradual or 'creeping' *autogolpe* misappropriation of power and upon a new variant of semi-competitive elections that includes puppet parties offering phony opposition to the regime (see section on 'Democratic claims to legitimacy').

However, it is time to shift attention from the various and varied examples of personal rule to the almost as diverse examples of *organizational* rule and dictatorship, which can be categorized into two basic types: *military* rule and one-party rule. Before doing so, though, it is important to emphasize that there is often some *overlap* with cases of *personal* dictatorship by an organization's leader because in these cases his personal rule has emerged *from* or *with* the rule of the military or party that he leads. Therefore, overlapping cases are normally described in terms of both the leader's organization *and* his personal rule, such as Nazi Germany being described as 'Hitler's regime' as well as 'a fascist regime' or, more fully, 'an example of the fascist subtype of one-party rule'. And this overlap is just one of the many complications involved in analysing the two different types of organizational rule: the military and the one-party.

Military rule

The *military dictatorship* is a very obvious case of rule by a 'distinctive' organization, which in this case has its own uniforms, barracks, career structure, and even legal system. There was a time in the mid-1970s when it appeared that the military was well on the way to ruling every country in the Third World; during the previous thirty years the military had intervened in more than two-thirds of these countries and was exerting some form of rule over a third of them (Nordlinger 1977: 6). On the other hand, the military had often relinquished power to civilians by holding democratic elections, whether because it never intended to hold power for long or because it discovered that the institutional costs of holding power outweighed the benefits. Therefore it was not surprising that military rule had an average lifespan of several *years* rather than decades (Nordlinger 1977: 139). And the global wave of democratization that began in the mid-1970s not only removed most of the existing military dictatorships, but also drastically reduced the number of countries prone to military intervention in their politics.

Military intervention in politics has produced several different structural forms of military rule. As Finer (1976) pointed out, these structural forms include:

1. *open forms* of military rule, and
2. *disguised forms* of military rule, including
   (a) civilianized rule or
   (b) indirect rule through a civilian government.

Open military rule

Undisguised open military rule occurs when a military coup leads to officers appointing themselves to key positions in the country's presidential or ministerial government *and/or* forming a junta (council) to act as the country's *de facto* supreme government (see Box: Military juntas, in the Online Resource Centre). Two recent examples of a military junta are the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces that presided over Egypt's democratization in 2011–12 and the National Council for Peace and Order established in Thailand after the 2014 military coup. Although juntas are supposed to represent the military as an organization, they have often failed to prevent the emergence of personal rule by a military leader, while some of the military dictatorships that did *not* use a junta still succeeded in remaining cases of organizational rather than personal rule.

Disguised military rule (civilianized or indirect rule)

Disguised military rule occurs when the military's rule has either been civilianized or operates indirectly through behind-the-scenes influence over a civilian government.[3] The *civilianization* of a military dictatorship involves a highly publicized ending of such obvious features of military rule as a junta or a military officer holding the post of president (though often the supposed

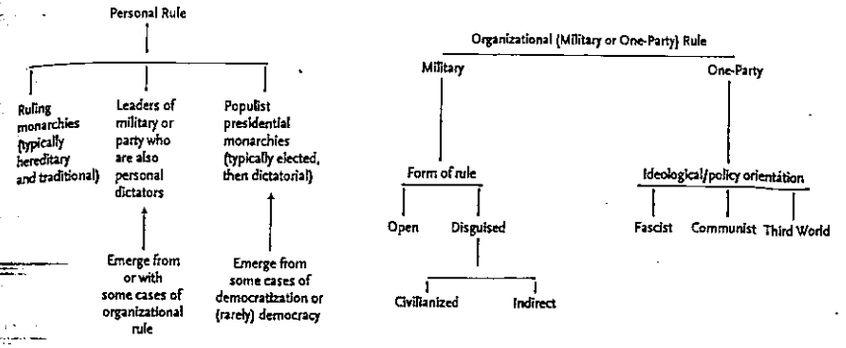

Figure 6.1 Types of authoritarian regime

civilianization of the presidency involves no more than the military incumbent resigning or retiring from the military). Civilianization has usually included a supposed democratization through some form of elections to the legislature and/or presidency.

The military's *indirect* rule disguises its dictatorship by controlling a civilian government from behind the scenes, and even perhaps as a puppet-master pulling the strings of a puppet government. As Finer (1976: 151–7) pointed out, indirect rule can take the form of continuous control of the government or of exerting control only intermittently and over a limited range of policies, such as military budgets and national security policy. For example, after the 2013 coup that removed Egypt's democratically elected president, the military may well have shifted from limited to continuous indirect rule—exerting continuous behind-the-scenes influence upon the democratically disguised dictatorship that was established after the coup.

One-party rule

The other type of organizational dictatorship, one-party rule, has not been as common as military rule but has tended to produce longer-lasting dictatorships. They come about through a dictatorial party either seizing power through a revolution or misappropriating power after it has won key government positions through democratic elections (see Box 6.2 and Box: Misappropriation of power, in the Online Resource Centre). The party then establishes one of the three structural forms of one-party state: (1) the openly and literally *one*-party state in which all other parties are banned either in law or in practice, (2) the partly disguised and *virtually* one-party state in which the regime's official party 'leads' some form of coalition with one or more puppet parties, and (3) the disguised and *effectively* one-party state in which all other parties are prevented from competing properly against the official party (on single-party systems, see Chapter 13).

However, a one-party state is not necessarily a case of one-party *rule*. The various structural forms of the one-party state have sometimes been established by military dictatorships, military personal dictators, and even a few ruling monarchs as merely an instrument of their rule. There are also many occasions when the party's own leader has converted his party into merely an instrument of his personal rule, but at least this personal dictatorship has emerged *from* or *with* rule by his party. Furthermore, the dictator usually continues to display some of the characteristic features of his party, especially its ideological and/or policy orientation.

The subtypes of one-party rule have usually been categorized by political scientists according to variations in this ideological/policy orientation rather than variations in the structural form of the one-party state. The two obvious ideological/policy categories are the communist and fascist subtypes, but there is also a large residual grouping that is difficult to categorize in ideological/policy terms and will be labelled simply the 'Third World' subtype because it emerged in Africa and other parts of the Third World. Of these three subtypes, the fascist, has been historically the rarest—Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were the only examples—and has been extinct since Germany was militarily defeated in 1945. In contrast, the communist and the Third World subtypes have been relatively numerous historically and the communist subtype has managed to avoid extinction.

Communist

The communist regime is historically the most important as well as the most numerous subtype. It produced

one of the twentieth century's superpowers, the now defunct Soviet Union, and seems set to produce another superpower in the twenty-first century if China maintains its rate of economic progress—and its communist one-party rule. At their numerical peak in the 1980s there were nearly two dozen regimes that espoused the basic communist ideology of Marxism–Leninism (Holmes 1986: viii). However, about a third of these regimes were actually military leaders' personal dictatorships and/or were using Marxism–Leninism only as an ideological façade and symbolic claim to legitimacy. Even amongst the core examples of communist regimes there were some cases of personal rule by the party leader, notably Fidel Castro in Cuba and Kim Il Sung in North Korea, which left less than a dozen 'true' cases of organizational rule by the communist party. And so many communist regimes collapsed in the late 1980s and early 1990s that now only three of these organizational dictatorships still survive—China, Vietnam, and Laos.

Third World

The 'Third World' subtype is a residual category with a diverse collection of examples. Its most significant subgrouping are the many 'African one-party states' that emerged from the decolonization of the British and French Empires in Africa from the 1940s to the 1960s (Brooker 2014: 87, 93–4, 99). Each ruling party had won elections during the transitional period of decolonization and went on to misappropriate power after the country became independent, establishing an openly *one*-party state in law or in practice. But these regimes soon shifted from organizational to personal rule, with the ruling party's leader becoming a presidential monarch and, in a few such cases as Nkrumah and Nyerere, also becoming internationally prominent spokesmen about African and Third World issues. Some of the African one-party states were also replaced by military regimes and all the surviving examples were eventually removed by the wave of democratization that swept through Africa in the 1990s.

Latin America produced three notable examples of one-party rule: the Party of Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) in Mexico from the 1940s to the 1990s, the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) in Bolivia in the 1950s, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in the 1980s—the most ideologically leftist of these three revolutionary regimes. They preferred a disguised rather than openly one-party form of rule and they were also less vulnerable than other Third World cases to being converted into personal dictatorships. In fact the Mexican PRI developed the unique system of installing temporary presidential monarchs, with each president being allowed a degree of personal rule but only for a single six-year term of office.

KEY POINTS

- A ruling monarch is a personal ruler, but a merely reigning monarch is typically a democracy's constitutional head of state.
- Dictatorship by an organization, such as the military or a party, is often transformed into personal rule by the organization's leader.
- Dictatorship can result from a military or revolutionary seizure of power or from a misappropriation of power by an elected party or an elected president through an *autogolpe* (self-coup).

Why do they rule?

Authoritarian regimes do not claim that 'might is right' or that those they rule should be obedient solely out of fear of the punishments inflicted for disobedience. Even the most tyrannical and brutal of regimes will claim to exercise a ***legitimate authority*** that gives it a right to rule and gives its subjects a ***duty***—a moral obligation—to obey. When authoritarian regimes ask themselves the rhetorical question 'why do we rule?' they have an answer ready, no matter how spurious or self-serving, that proclaims their right to rule and therefore the duty of the ruled to obey. For example, authoritarian regimes typically make some claim to *legal* legitimacy by claiming a legal justification and basis for their rule. In fact, apart from 'emergency' or 'temporary' versions of military rule through a junta and martial law, authoritarian regimes typically have some sort of constitution, legislature, and judiciary that can provide an impressive formal claim to legal legitimacy even if the substance or practice falls far short of being 'the rule of law'. In addition to this claim to legal legitimacy, there will be (1) a claim to religious or ideological legitimacy and/or (2) some claim to democratic legitimacy. So the ruled can have no cause for complaint, according to the regime, if their obedience is also enforced by fear and through an authoritarian regime's various control mechanisms (see the section on 'How do they rule?').

Religious and ideological claims to legitimacy

Religion

Religious claims to legitimate authority have historically been the most common but are now relatively rare and found only in the Middle East and the Vatican City. Religious claims to legitimacy have been associated with monarchies for more than a thousand years, perhaps most famously with the European monarchs' coronation anointing and their claims to rule by 'the grace of God' or 'the divine right of kings'. And religion is still used by contemporary ruling monarchies to bolster their legitimacy, as in the case of the Saudi monarchy's alliance with the Islamic Wahhabi movement (Anderson 1991).

However, religious claims to legitimacy re-emerged in a new guise with the 1979 revolution in Iran that established a self-proclaimed Islamic Republic (Brooker 1997: chapter 9). The new constitution included several religious elements, and also a new public office had been designed for the religious and political leader of the 1979 revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. This unique public office not only included religious as well as political responsibilities, but also constitutionally 'outranked' the president and therefore is often described in the West as the post of 'supreme leader' rather than 'spiritual leader'. After Khomeini's death in 1989 it was conferred on another politically active member of the Shiite clergy, Ayatollah Khamenei, in what appears to be another lifetime appointment.

Ideology

During the twentieth century, claims to legitimacy based on religion were largely 'replaced' by claims based on ideology. These ideologies ranged from the communists' systematic and comprehensive Marxism–Leninism to the grievances and aspirations of Latin American populism (see Box: The Latin American connection, in the Online Resource Centre). But all ideologies are similar to religion in holding certain things to be sacred, even if ideologies are more concerned with 'this worldly' than 'other worldly' matters and with ideas, goals, and principles rather than rituals and symbols. An ideology usually lacks the social presence and influence of such long-established religions as Christianity or Islam, which also have a network of churches or mosques staffed by professional clergy who are expert in maintaining and propagating the religion. So if an ideology is to be as effective as these religions in providing a basis for an authoritarian regime's legitimacy, it will have to be given a similar social presence and influence by 'its' regime—through use of mass media, the education system, and mass-mobilizing organizations, such as the regime's official party, youth movement, and labour unions.

This investment of time and energy may be acceptable to an ideologically driven dictatorship, such as Hitler's Nazi regime, that already has a usable ideology and political party. But a dictatorship that is not ideologically driven may well baulk at the cost of this investment (and also perhaps at the possibility of having to take ideological matters into account in its policy-making). It may well prefer instead to avoid ideological claims to legitimacy, as many military regimes have done, or to adopt a merely token ideology that provides a symbolic claim to legitimacy. Therefore the ideological diversity of authoritarian regimes includes not only the content of their ideologies, but also the fact that many of these ideologies are not taken seriously and that many military regimes have never bothered with even a token ideology.

Another source of diversity is that ideological claims to legitimate authority take different (but often overlapping) *forms*. There have been ideological claims to legitimacy in:

- the personal sense of leaders claiming a prophetic legitimacy as ideologists;
- the organizational sense of parties or militaries claiming an ideological right to rule;
- the visionary or programmatic sense of a regime claiming that the goals and principles enshrined in its ideology give it a right to rule.

The communist ideology has been the most widely used ideological claim to legitimacy, with its core of Marxism–Leninism providing both a Leninist organizational form and a Marxist visionary form (see Box 6.3 on the visionary form). Its organizational form of claim to legitimacy is based on Lenin's theory of the communist party as the vanguard party of the proletariat (working class) that leads the proletariat not only *to* revolution but also *after* a revolution, when the post-revolutionary regime is seeking to achieve Marx's visionary goal of a classless, communist society. All the many communist regimes that arose during the twentieth century adopted this ideological justification of one-party rule as part of their commitment to Marxism–Leninism. The communist regime in China may well abandon Mao Zedong's ideological additions to Marxism–Leninism, and may even abandon the visionary, Marxist component of the ideology, but would the regime ever abandon the Leninist legitimation of one-party rule?

There has been no equivalent of Leninism among the rare attempts to justify *military* rule ideologically. The leader of the 1952 military coup against Egypt's monarchy, Colonel Nasser, claimed in somewhat Leninist fashion that the Egyptian military was acting as the temporary and transitional 'vanguard of the revolution'.[4] But Nasser's ideological justification of military rule was not adopted by coup-makers in other countries, except by the Nasser-emulating Colonel Gadhafi when he overthrew Libya's monarchy in 1969. An even less influential military equivalent of Leninism was the Indonesian military's 'dual function' ideology of the 1960s–90s, which claimed that the army had a permanent political–social as well as military function. Armies have, in fact, tended to be wary of any ideology and have preferred to express an ideological commitment only to introducing or restoring democracy.

BOX 6.3 ZOOM-IN Communist ideological vision and Chinese economic practice

Communist ideology

The communist ideology has provided the most widely used *visionary* or programmatic form of legitimacy. It views rapid economic growth as a sacred goal because this will produce the material abundance required for the envisioned shift to a fully communist, classless society.

Stalin's influence

In the late 1920s Stalin initiated an economic Five Year Plan in the Soviet Union that also produced a new economic doctrine for orthodox communists to believe in. This Stalinist economic doctrine declared that a state-planned and largely state-owned economy was needed to progress through the transitional 'socialism' stage that would eventually lead to full communism. During this socialist stage the urban economy of industry and commerce would be owned as well as planned by the state, while agriculture would be state-planned but owned by huge 'collective' farms that would each be owned and worked cooperatively by thousands of peasants.

The new pragmatism

In the 1980s the post-Mao Chinese communist regime introduced a pragmatic reinterpretation of the communist economic approach. The new economic doctrine, 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', argued that capitalist economic methods were a more effective way of attaining the rapid economic growth required in the transitional socialist stage of progressing towards full communism. In fact the regime had already begun to shift to an increasingly market economy with an increasing amount of private enterprise and private ownership (except of land, which could only be leased). Furthermore, the economic emphasis had shifted from the Stalinist focus on heavy industry towards first agriculture and then increasingly the consumer and export sectors of the economy.

A long transition to full communism?

The notion of a specifically 'Chinese way' was supplemented in 1987 with the new theory of a 'primary' stage of socialism. The main medium-term goal was to raise living standards and develop productive forces—through capitalist methods. And later it was suggested that China would remain in this primary capitalist-like stage of socialism for a hundred years!

'Democratic' claims to legitimacy

Since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's plebiscites most dictatorships have claimed a form of democratic legitimacy. Sometimes it has taken the ideological form of claiming to be a special or superior type of democracy, as with a communist regime's claim to be a 'proletarian democracy' and an African one-party state's claim to be an 'African democracy'. Even the Fascist and Nazi regimes claimed to be, respectively, an 'authoritative democracy' and a 'German democracy'.

But always the claim to democratic legitimacy has also or instead taken an institutional form. There has been a claim either to be ***using democratic institutions***, such as an elected parliament or presidency, or to be ***preparing to introduce/reintroduce them***. The latter case typically arises after the military has seized power from what it claims to be an undemocratic, corrupt, or incompetent government. Usually the military then quickly reassures international and domestic audiences that military rule is only temporary and is preparing the way for the (re)-introduction of democracy. But it may take a long time to 'deliver' on its promises, as in the case of the Burmese military waiting until 2011 to dissolve the military junta that had ruled since the 1988 'democratizing' coup.

In contrast, the claim to be *using* democratic institutions is based on the 'delivery' of an elected parliament and/or president, but they have been elected *undemocratically*. For example, a parliament may be elected in the plebiscitary manner pioneered by the first phase of modernization, whereby voters are given the 'choice' of either approving or rejecting the official candidate or list of candidates (if proportional representation elections) that is the *only* candidate or list appearing on the ballot paper. An early example of a second-phase dictatorship electing a legislature in this plebiscitary manner arose in 1938 in Nazi Germany—five years after it had become literally and legally a one-party state. Hitler held new elections to the Reichstag (parliament) that appeared to use a proportional representation list system (see Chapter 10), but with just the *one* list of candidates to approve or reject. And it was not a Nazi *party* list, but instead 'the list of the Fuehrer [Leader]', i.e. Hitler's personal list of candidates that he wanted elected to the Reichstag. Thanks to vote-rigging and other undemocratic methods, the election result was a more than 99 per cent vote in favour of the list. 'Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry congratulated itself. "Such an almost 100 per cent election result is at the same time a badge of honour for all election propagandists" it concluded' (Kershaw 2001: 82).

Although such elections have been termed one-list or one-candidate elections, a broader and better description is 'non-competitive' elections. They were taken to a higher level of sophistication by the communist regimes established in Eastern Europe and Asia after the Second World War. These virtually one-party states included one or more puppet parties in a communist-dominated combined or coalitional list of candidates that would produce a 'multiparty' election and legislature while retaining the simplicity of a non-competitive election. China's communist regime differed from the other virtual one-party states in using indirect elections to its NPC legislature but it also had no fewer than *eight* puppet parties, with a total membership in recent years of more than 700,000, and has officially described its system as 'multiparty cooperation' rather than a one-party state (Saich 2015).

However, even when including puppet parties, non-competitive elections cannot match the sophistication of the *semi*-competitive election, which was invented long ago in Latin America and has become the standard method of the third phase of modernization and its democratically disguised dictatorships. Semi-competitive elections provide a more credible claim to democratic legitimacy than any non-competitive election because they allow some electoral competition between parties, even if the official party or candidate cannot lose—if necessary, the regime will resort to vote-rigging or even annulling the election in some manner. The third-phase modernization has already produced new variants of semi-competitive elections, notably adding puppet parties or candidates to provide phony competition and 'opposition' to the government or regime. This variant emerged in Kazakhstan and other parts of Central Asia as early as the 1990s, and more sophisticated mixtures of phony and genuine competition or opposition soon appeared in Azerbaijan and Belarus in the 2000s (Brooker 2014: 237–40).

Electoral and Competitive Authoritarianism

A democratically disguised dictatorship using semi-competitive elections can also be described as an example of 'electoral' authoritarianism, whose distinguishing feature is that an authoritarian regime presides over 'unfree' electoral competition (see Schedler 2006). However, the concept of electoral authoritarianism has been applied so broadly that it may include some of the many ***hybrid*** regimes that are to be found in the grey area between authoritarianism and democracy (Brooker 2014: 36–7). A recent large-scale study of a hybrid category labelled 'competitive authoritarianism' used a sample of more than thirty cases and acknowledged that it was covering a broad range of hybridity that extended 'from "soft," near-democratic cases' at one extreme 'to "hard," or near-full authoritarian cases' at the other extreme, such as Putin's Russia in the mid-2000s (Levitsky and Way 2010: 34). The near-full-authoritarian extreme is often difficult to distinguish from electoral authoritarianism, even if the latter is narrowly defined as referring to a fully

BOX 6.4 ZOOM-IN Classifying 'electoral' and 'competitive' authoritarian regimes

This is a list of nine countries, drawn from three different regions of the world, which experienced either electoral or competitive authoritarianism in 2010–20: eastern Africa's Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania; southeast Asia's Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore; and the former Soviet Union's Belarus, Russia, and Uzbekistan. Which of the nine cases should be classified as electoral authoritarian regimes and which should be classified as competitive-authoritarian hybrids of authoritarianism and democracy?

authoritarian regime—to a democratically disguised dictatorship or ruling monarchy. The most useful basis for distinguishing this electoral authoritarianism from any competitive-authoritarian hybrid regime is that the latter's 'competitive' elections are not merely a façade and in fact 'opposition groups compete in a meaningful way for executive power' or at least 'democratic procedures are sufficiently meaningful for opposition groups to take them seriously as arenas through which to compete for power' (Levitsky and Way 2010: 7). But even the experts agreed that there were borderline cases. For example, Levitsky and Way acknowledged that Azerbaijan and Singapore 'arguably could be included' in the category of competitive-authoritarian hybrid even though these cases were 'insufficiently competitive' for their book to classify them as hybrids rather than fully authoritarian regimes (2010: 34). Another way of illustrating the classification problem is to list some contemporary examples of electoral and competitive authoritarianism and ask which should be classified as electoral and which as competitive (see Box 6.4).

KEY POINTS

- Authoritarian regimes claim that they have *legitimate* authority, i.e. a *right* to rule.
- Dictatorships claim to be a form of democracy or to be preparing the way for democracy.
- Holding elections is a sign of shrewd dictatorship rather than real democracy if these elections are non-competitive or semi-competitive.

How do they rule?

This section describes how authoritarian regimes have used various mechanisms to exert *control* over state and society. It also describes the most extreme way in which dictatorships have ruled—what political scientists have

termed *totalitarianism*. Few authoritarian regimes have attempted to be so extreme, but the very concept of a 'totalitarian' regime has led political scientists to develop a concept of 'authoritarianism' that describes the less extreme and standard way of authoritarian rule.

Totalitarianism and authoritarianism

Totalitarianism

The term 'totalitarian' was first popularized in the 1920s–30s, when Mussolini described the fascist state as totalitarian. The term was adopted by political scientists after the Second World War, but they gave it a wider application which included Hitler's Nazi regime and also Stalin's communist regime in the Soviet Union. Occasionally, it was also applied to the new communist regimes that had emerged in China, North Korea, and Eastern Europe. Unlike previous types of dictatorship, totalitarianism sought to transform human nature by indoctrinating people with an official ideology and by establishing 'total' control over state and society—a control imposed by the regime's party and other organizations, especially the fearsome secret police.

The early theorists of totalitarianism paid special attention to the role of ideologically inspired *leadership* by the Hitler or Stalin leader figure who prophetically interprets and is driven by the ideology (see Box 6.5). But this and other aspects of the concept of totalitarianism had to be reappraised after Stalin's death in 1953 because the post-Stalin leadership of the Soviet Union criticized Stalin's personal rule and reined in the secret police. What is more, by the 1960s historical research was beginning to show that the three classic totalitarian dictatorships had failed to achieve a total control of actions, let alone thought, and that the concept of totalitarianism could only be applied to the aspirations or goals of these regimes rather than their actual 'achievements'. In fact, it seems that a few later dictatorships, such as the communist regime in North Korea, have been better examples of totalitarianism.

Authoritarianism

The difference between the totalitarian way of ruling and the authoritarian regimes' standard way was highlighted by a sophisticated concept of authoritarianism developed by Linz in the 1960s (Linz 1970). He described four

BOX 6.5 ZOOM-IN Fascist totalitarian leaders

Fascist Italy

Origins

In 1922 Mussolini led the militaristic, radically rightist Fascist party in an attempted 'revolutionary' coup, the March on Rome, which led to the king of Italy appointing Mussolini as his constitutionally legitimate prime minister.

Consolidation

Mussolini took several years to convert what remained of Italy's democracy into a one-party state. He also converted the post of prime minister into the more powerful post of 'Chief of the Government' and reversed the principal–agent relationship between himself and the Fascist party, which was relegated to the subordinate role of assisting the new 'Fascist State'.

Personal rule

By the 1930s Mussolini was clearly the personal dictator as well as *Duce* (leader) of Italy. For example, his personal propaganda cult had become so prominent that *mussolinismo* seemed to overshadow Fascist ideology and such ideologically inspired innovations as the 'Corporative State' economic policy. But Mussolini never replaced the king as head of state, and was sacked by him in 1943 when the Allies invaded Italy and seemed certain to win the war.

Nazi Germany

Origins

The fascist Nazi party came to power in Germany after a series of increasingly successful *election* performances in the early 1930s, when the country was suffering from the social and economic effects of the Great Depression.

Consolidation

As the Nazis had become the largest party in parliament, the president appointed Hitler to the post of head of government in early 1933. Hitler took only a few months to take over the parliament's legislative powers and establish a one-party state.

Personal rule

Hitler's personal rule became absolutist in 1934 under his new legal title of *Führer* (leader), which combined the powers of head of state and government. This was accompanied by a personal oath of allegiance from all members of the military as well as from civil servants, police, and even the judiciary. Like Mussolini, he had the power to take his country into an ideologically-driven, unwinnable war which would bring an end to his regime.

defining elements or features of authoritarianism that delineated something that was more than monarchy but less extreme than totalitarianism:

- the presence of some limited political pluralism;
- the absence of an ideology that is elaborate and/or used to guide the regime;
- the absence of intensive or extensive political mobilization;
- a predictably limited rather than arbitrary or discretionary leadership by a small group or an individual.

These four features have been present in the great majority of dictatorships, regardless of whether the dictatorship was personal, military, or one-party. In fact, Linz suggested that even totalitarian regimes might eventually develop into something that looked more like an authoritarian regime. He later coined the term 'post-totalitarian' to describe this development and to provide more differentiation and categorization within the very broadly applicable concept of authoritarianism (Linz and Stepan 1996). Later, he also coined the term 'modern sultanism' to describe absolutist personal dictators who not only lacked the ideological motivation and legitimation of totalitarian leaders but also used *greed* as well as fear to motivate key subordinates (see Chehabi and Linz (1998) for an extension of the concept of sultanist dictatorship to mean a tendency that appears in different varieties of regime, to varying degrees, and in different stages of a personal dictator's career).

Exercising control

Both totalitarianism and authoritarianism deploy a range of control mechanisms to ensure that the regime will be obeyed even if its claims to legitimacy are not effective. The control is exercised by monitoring and enforcing political loyalty as well as by implementation of the regime's policies.

The most effective control mechanism is a force of competent political or 'secret' police. Depending upon the regime and its circumstances, the political police's methods (1) of information-gathering range from using torture and informers to merely electronic surveillance and (2) of punishment range from execution or 'disappearance' to merely ending a person's career prospects. Totalitarianism is more likely than authoritarianism to involve extreme methods of political policing, but any dictatorship may use them in a peak period of repression. In these periods of extreme repression the political police may be so concerned with *potential* as well as *actual* disloyalty or disobedience that even politically reliable sectors of the population are 'terrorized' by the repression's scope and apparent arbitrariness.

A military regime has some distinctive control mechanisms, notably the junta and the declaration of martial law. The latter bestows policing and judicial powers upon the military, which can then use its soldiers to police and control society at street and village level. The junta can be used to control the military regime's presidential or ministerial government and counterbalance the civilian influence upon and *within* the government, especially that of the civilians used to fill technical posts such as minister of finance. A few military regimes have further extended their control over the state by appointing military officers to important positions in the civil service and regional or local government. And one of the reasons why the military have occasionally adopted a military version of the one-party state is in order to use a political party as a means of extending control over state and society.[5]

One-party rule's distinctive control mechanisms have been based on using a political party to control state and society. The communist regimes have led the way since 1917 in seeking strong and extensive party control of the state from the top downwards. The party's Politburo or Standing Committee of the Politburo (in the case of China) is the equivalent of a junta and acts as the country's *de facto* government, with its decisions being passed on to the state's legal government—the council of ministers—for implementation. The party also uses its extensive membership in the civil service and the military to ensure that these policies are carried out. Party members monitor policy implementation as well as political loyalty, while party officials may actually provide 'guidance' to civil servants about how to implement party policy—indeed, regional and district party leaders have often been the *de facto* governors of their areas. Considering that even a generation ago the Chinese regime had some 600,000 party officials and administrators, the extent and range of this party control mechanism is very impressive (Hamrin 1992: 96). On the other hand, the fascist and Third World cases of one-party rule have seldom adopted the communist practice of strong and extensive party control; for example, a party committee has not often acted as a junta-like *de facto* government of the country. This may be at least partly because of their tendency to be transformed into personal dictatorships by their party's leader, who is unlikely to favour institutions that represent 'collective leadership' and organizational rule by the party.

KEY POINTS

- Totalitarianism seeks total control, including control of thought, but is a historically rare way of dictatorship.
- Authoritarian regimes use various control mechanisms, such as the political or secret police, which monitor and enforce obedience.

Conclusion

The safest way to draw conclusions about the past and future of authoritarian regimes is to present two differing perspectives: (1) the extinction interpretation and (2) the evolution interpretation. The *extinction* interpretation would argue that authoritarian regimes are political dinosaurs in a world whose political climate clearly favours democracy. It would back up this argument by citing such large-scale theories as Fukuyama's 'end of history' claim that liberal democracy was the end of humanity's ideological evolution and its final form of government (Fukuyama 1992: xi). An older and larger-scale theory is Weber's early-twentieth-century interpretation of modern history as the tendency towards formal rationalization and its emphasis on rules-and-numbers calculability; the *economy* will be rationalized through the development and spread of market capitalism, *administration* will be rationalized through the development and spread of bureaucracy, and therefore, by implication, *politics* will be rationalized through the development and spread of representative *democracy* (Brooker 2014: 221).

The *evolution interpretation* uses the biological analogy to emphasize the proven ability of authoritarian regimes to adapt to change in their political environment. After all, they are now engaged in a *third* phase of modernization that may well be as successful as the nineteenth-century first phase and twentieth-century second phase. Furthermore, the third-phase modernization has adapted to the democratic political climate by evolving democratically disguised dictatorships that use democratically credible semi-competitive elections. And this evolution interpretation becomes very plausible if the biological analogy is used to argue that competitive–authoritarian *hybrid* regimes should be classified as part of 'modern authoritarianism'. Then the recent history of authoritarian regimes can be interpreted as a very successful adaptation to the democratizing change in the political climate that was explained by Fukuyama and predicted by Weber. In other words, there has been what Polanyi described long ago as a 'double movement' (2001[1944]: 136–8), which in the present case meant a global movement away from the outdated forms of authoritarian regime and then a global movement towards the more modern democratized forms of authoritarianism.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. What is the difference (a) between a reigning and a ruling monarch, (b) between a ruling monarch and a dictator, and (c) between personal rule and rule by an organization?
2. Who rules in authoritarian regimes and how do they legitimize their rule?
3. What is the difference between totalitarianism and authoritarianism?
4. In what ways do elections in authoritarian regimes differ from elections in democracies?
5. What control methods are used by authoritarian regimes?

Critical thinking

1. Why have authoritarian regimes been much more diverse than democracies?
2. Why have there been so few totalitarian regimes?
3. Can an authoritarian regime win much popular support? If so, how?
4. Are authoritarian regimes likely to be less successful in the twenty-first century than they were in the previous century?
5. Why have authoritarian regimes been allocated only one chapter in this book?

Further reading

Brooker, P. (2014) *Non-Democratic Regimes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Finer, S. E. (1988) *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview).

Herb, M. (1999) *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democratic Prospects in the Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).

Levitsky, S. and Way, L. A. (2010) *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Saich, T. (2015) *Governance and Politics of China* (4th edn) (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Schedler, A. (2006) (ed.) *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner).

Web links

http://www.freedomhouse.org
Website of Freedom House with assessments of global trends in democracy that also highlight cases of dictatorship.

http://www.amnesty.org
Website of the worldwide movement Amnesty International that campaigns for human rights and, therefore, also highlights cases of repression.

http://www.hrw.org
Website of Human Rights Watch that seeks to protect human rights around the world and, therefore, also highlights cases of repression.

http://www.wmd.org
Website of World Movement for Democracy that seeks to promote and advance democracy and, therefore, to help challenge dictatorships and democratize semi-authoritarian systems.

online resource centre

For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at:
http://www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/

Endnotes

[1] Innovative ideologies or structures had already appeared in Turkey and Mexico in the 1930s, with visionary military dictators seeking to Westernize the former and to civilianize the latter's military-dominated politics into democratically disguised one-party rule.

[2] Reversing the principal–agent relationship is not sufficient, though, to produce absolutist personal rule if the dictator's party or military is a relatively weak institution. For example, Mussolini's fascist party was too weak to control or counterbalance Italy's military and reigning monarch.

[3] Civilianization and indirect rule have also been favourite strategies of military *personal* rulers in the Middle East and Latin America, respectively.

[4] The military's temporary vanguard role was converted into a civilianized presidential monarchy for Nasser, who was succeeded by his deputy, ex-Colonel Sadat, who was in turn succeeded by his own deputy, ex-General Mubarak, who continued to rule Egypt as a third-generation civilianized presidential monarchy until overthrown in the 2011 Arab Spring.

[5] The military's control mechanisms can be exploited by a military leader establishing and maintaining a *personal* dictatorship. Two particularly useful mechanisms are (1) the official party in the military version of a one-party state and (2) the appointment of officers to positions in the civil service and other civilian posts.